

97-GS-46 VOTED: The Twenty-first General Synod adopts the Resolution "Reclaiming the Church's Ministry of Health and Healing."

RESOLUTION ARECLAIMING THE CHURCH-S MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND HEALING@

WHEREAS, recognizing many illnesses and premature deaths may be prevented by lifestyle choices and belief systems, (i.e. diet, exercise, substance abuse, violence, and risk-taking behaviors), health ministers/parish nurses integrate current medical and behavioral knowledge with the belief and practices of a faith community to prevent illness and promote wholeness;

WHEREAS, the UCC Statement of Health and Welfare (1985) states that, ABased on our understanding of Shalom - of God-s intent for harmony and wholeness within creation -- and on the examples of Jesus Christ-s ministry which expressed God-s intent through acts of love and justice, we must be committed as a church to a mission of Shalom and to a lifestyle compatible with that mission;@

WHEREAS, essential elements of a health ministry/parish nursing program include (but are not limited to):

- C a philosophy of health and wholeness as a part of the faith community-s mission,
- C a designated person or team to be concerned about health ministry,
- C a commitment to continued learning regarding health and wellness issues,
- C a process to develop and evaluate health and wholeness goals and objectives,
- C health education and programming according to assessed health needs of the congregation,
- C awareness of health and wellness celebrations designated in the UCC calendar;

WHEREAS, General Synod Eighteen (June, 1985) adopted the AMission Statement on Health and Welfare@ which states that:

It is clear that the whole church is involved in this mission (in health and welfare). Whether represented in local churches, associations, conferences, or national level bodies the whole church is itself the creation of God-s compassionate mercy in Christ, and as such, the instrument of God-s intention for all humankind. (II Corinthians 5:13-21);

WHEREAS, good health is a part of God-s intention for all people, health involves the whole person -- body, mind, and spirit and healing and health care are valid ways of proclaiming the Gospel and ministering in the name of Jesus Christ;

WHEREAS, the Gospel proclaims that health is a relationship to God set forth in Baptism and Holy Communion in which God makes wholeness as the Divine Gift.

WHEREAS, the wholeness ascribed by God as a gift recognizes that illness and disability exist, but the presence of these does not define the individual in the sight of God, or limit the ability of such individuals to be in a whole relationship with God; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church for which ecclesiastical authorization is recognized by commissioning, licensing, and ordination; health ministers and parish nurses may feel called to one of these authorized ministries;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Twenty-first General Synod encourages local congregations to develop/include in their mission a commitment to health and wholeness, engage health and wholeness issues through an ongoing health cabinet/health ministry team, and consider the implementation of a health ministry/parish nurse program;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-first General Synod calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and Office for Church Life and Leadership, in conjunction with conferences, United Church of Christ seminaries, the Council on Health and Human Services Ministries and local congregations, to begin and/or continue to develop resources that support the development and enrichment of health ministry programs in local churches;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-first General Synod calls upon conferences and associations to:

1. establish or designate a body to address health and human service issues confronting members and

- their communities; and
2. recognize health ministry and parish nursing as a specialized ministry; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Twenty-first General Synod calls upon the Office for Church Life and Leadership to recognize and consider including health ministry/parish nursing in the listing of specific church-related ministries qualifying for commissioned ministry, and to consider developing guidelines and educational standards to be included in the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry.

Subject to the Availability of Funds.