

03-GS-42 VOTED: The Twenty-fourth General Synod adopts the resolution “Support of Calhoun County, Alabama, and Citizens of Communities Living Near Chemical Weapons Stockpiles.”

**SUPPORT OF CALHOUN COUNTY, ALABAMA, AND CITIZENS OF COMMUNITIES LIVING NEAR CHEMICAL WEAPONS STOCKPILES**

WHEREAS the U.S. stockpile of lethal chemical weapons must be destroyed, as mandated by Congress and through the Chemical Weapons Convention;

WHEREAS Congress directed the U.S. Army to destroy these chemical weapons while providing “maximum protection” to workers and citizens throughout the weapons destruction process;

WHEREAS the Army’s initial proposed method of weapons disposal was incineration, without consideration of the health consequences of incineration emissions;

WHEREAS incinerators of all kinds emit large amounts of contaminated gasses into the air, containing a number of toxic compounds that are irrefutably linked directly to cancer, birth defects, reproductive disorders, developmental delay, and many other chronic illnesses;

WHEREAS hazardous waste incinerators, landfills and other polluting industry are located near communities of color and low-income populations;

WHEREAS the list of common incinerator emissions – dioxins, furans, PCBs, mercury, lead, and other persistent pollutants – are also emitted from chemical weapons incinerators;

WHEREAS the Army’s chemical weapons incinerators also emit chemical agents into the environment, through the smokestack, via contaminated materials, and via chemical agent which may still be present in secondary wastes;

WHEREAS technologies demonstrated by the Department of Defense through its Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment(ACWA) Program can destroy chemical agents at low temperature and pressure, in a system that contains chemical agents and other toxics without any uncontrolled releases of these toxics into the environment;

WHEREAS these safe technologies are now being used, or will soon be used to destroy chemical weapons stockpiles in Indiana, Maryland, Colorado and Kentucky;

WHEREAS there is unanimous support for these safer technologies from local citizens as well as from local, state and federal elected officials and government

agencies;

WHEREAS the communities living near chemical weapons stockpile sites in Utah, Oregon, Alabama and Arkansas are already overburdened with contamination from nuclear weapons testing and storage, industrial processes that have dumped high levels of dioxins, PCBs and heavy metals into the air, soil and water;

WHEREAS the United States Army and state governments' preferred weapons disposal technology for those stockpiles is incineration, despite the fact that safer technologies are being use elsewhere;

WHEREAS the risks associated with incineration – including toxic smokestack emissions and unsafe worker conditions – are not acceptable if they are avoidable;

WHEREAS preventing the use of safer technologies in disproportionately impacted communities in Utah, Oregon, Alabama and Arkansas violates the Principles of Environmental Justice.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourage state and local governments to continue seeking safe disposal of proscribed chemicals and chemical weapons in their regions, and calls on the Department of the Army and the Department of Defense to suspend the incineration of chemical weapons, and begin immediately to replace hazardous incinerators with safer non-incineration technology.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ and the Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ in consultation with the appropriate conference ministers express the Twenty-fourth General Synod's opposition to the use of incineration technology in Calhoun, County, Alabama and other communities designated as incineration sites, by contacting the appropriate governmental agencies and representatives.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED THAT we prayerfully request the United States Department of Defense implement a decision-making dialogue that allows citizens living near all chemical weapons stockpile sites direct involvement in the process of choosing an acceptable technology to replace the incinerators.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Twenty- fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests that Justice and Witness Ministries recommend specific actions and encourage local congregations, associations and conferences to follow up on these actions in support of this resolution.