

03-GS-35 VOTED: The Twenty-fourth General Synod adopts the resolution entitled “The United Church of Christ - Thirty Years of Faithful Accompaniment With Farm Workers.”

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST -- THIRTY YEARS OF FAITHFUL ACCOMPANIMENT WITH FARM WORKERS

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ, through the former United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the commitment of Executive Vice President Dr. Howard Spragg and Secretary for Special Programs John Moyer, was one of the founding members in 1971 of the National Farm Worker Ministry, an interfaith organization, whose purpose is to support farm workers as they organize for justice and empowerment and equality; and

WHEREAS, in 1973, thirty years ago this July, the United Church of Christ through its Ninth General Synod demonstrated exceptional courage, support, and commitment to farm worker organizations when it chartered a plane and sent ninety-five General Synod delegates to help prevent violence on the picket lines during the United Farm Worker strike in Coachella, California; and

WHEREAS, the experience of the delegates who went to Coachella and the testimony they offered on return only deepened the commitment of the United Church of Christ to farm worker self-determination and their nonviolent struggle to organize; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the United Church of Christ through its Presidents Robert Moss, Avery Post, Paul Sherry, and John Thomas and the ongoing support of the Justice and Witness Ministries have affirmed that commitment through continued assignment of staff and resources to the National Farm Worker Ministry and through their prophetic witness and voice both within the denomination and the larger church; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ, in refusing to allow itself to be paralyzed by the fear of controversy, has consistently been one of the first denominations to endorse the farm workers’ organizing campaigns and consumer boycotts such as the grapes and lettuce, Campbell’s, Norpac, Mt. Olive, and Taco Bell boycotts; and

WHEREAS, countless staff, ministers, congregations, and individual members have acted on those endorsements, demonstrating their solidarity with farm workers by standing on picket lines, visiting supermarkets, writing letters, and witnessing from the pulpit; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ continues to be on the forefront of the farm worker struggle through its support for current organizing efforts by

the United Farm Workers (UFW), the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW); and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has celebrated the victories brought about through organizing and the changes it has made in thousands of workers' lives; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ recognizes that the struggle remains difficult and that there are hundreds of thousands of farm workers who continue to work under abusive conditions without access to just wages, medical care, safe and sanitary working conditions, or decent housing and who fear being fired or deported if they complain.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ offers its gratitude for Cesar Chavez, on this tenth anniversary of his death, and to Dolores Huerta, valiant cofounder of the United Farm Workers, for offering the church the opportunity to put its faith into action and to serve with them in the struggle, and to other leaders in the movement who continue to do so, such as Arturo Rodriguez, President, UFW; Baldemar Velasquez, President, FLOC; Ramon Ramirez, President, PCUN; and Lucas Benitez, co-director, CIW; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ offers its gratitude to Olga Sierra Sandman and others within the church who had the vision, foresight, and courage to put themselves on the front lines with the farm workers and to urge others to follow; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Church of Christ affirms its intent to continue partnering with the National Farm Worker Ministry and pledges its ongoing commitment to justice for all farm workers. *Si se Puede!*

Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.