

81-GS-49 VOTED: The Thirteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution Toward a Covenant in Mission and Faith: The United Church of Christ and the Evangelical Church of the Union, German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany.

RESOLUTION: TOWARD A COVENANT IN MISSION AND FAITH: THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE UNION, GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Summary

The resolution recalls the history of UCC relationships with the ECU and places them in the context of our partnerships with churches around the world. It acknowledges with gratitude the Kirchengemeinschaft action taken by the ECU Synods in 1980, and responds by calling for the development of a UCC/ECU Covenant for joint action in faith enrichment and mission outreach.

Preamble

A gift is offered to the United Church of Christ by an overseas partner.

- This gift comes in a form which can have a very significant impact upon our life as a church.
- It emerges from the pattern of richly diverse partnerships in mission which the United Church of Christ sustains around the world. It will move the United Church of Christ toward another pilgrimage in mission and faith.

Background

For more than 170 years the United Church of Christ fellowship has responded to the great commission to make disciples of all nations. Through the Board for World Ministries the witness of the United Church of Christ is now joined to that of nearly 50 churches and church councils abroad. This globally shared "doing and telling of the Word" calls the United Church of Christ into a style of faithfulness which discloses ever new horizons in the shedding abroad of God's grace. The Lord of all people in all places is present in the Church as we share with these many partners. The Lord of all creation is present in this global mission. These partnerships include ties with those fellowships which are the ancestors in faith of the United Church of Christ. One of our ancestors in faith is the Evangelical Church of the Union (ECU). In 1972 the ECU organized the Synod, the Council and the Secretariat into regional bodies. The Regions are: Region German Democratic Republic/Region Federal Republic of Germany and Berlin (West). The UCC has maintained a close relationship with the ECU since the Uniting Synod of 1957. This contact has been sustained primarily in the form of regular exchange visits of pastors and laity and in theological study projects with both regions. In 1975, the ECU and the UCC were participants in a consultation among "united churches" and "committees on union" in Toronto, Canada. Leaders of these communions joined with others in affirming the value of deepening our relationships and building a firm foundation for unity in Christ. In 1976, the ECU and the UCC designated official working groups to explore our common history and the meaning of our unity in the faith for today. The UCC/ ECU Working Group has served through the United Church Board for World Ministries and is carrying out its work with the support of and in regular consultation with the

President of the United Church of Christ. In June 1980, representatives of these three fellowships shared dialogue, prayers, and explorations during a crucial meeting in Berlin (East), German Democratic Republic. In May and June of 1980, the Synod meetings of the ECU in both regions respectively voted a recognition of their deepened relationship with us – acknowledging the integrity of the faith and mission of the United Church of Christ. The vote was based upon twenty years of dialogue, mutual visits, and concerted theological work. This action, 'Kirchengemeinschaft' (the shaping of full community within the church – "full communion") recognizes and affirms the members, the ministers, and the sacraments of the United Church of Christ.

This ecumenical moment offers us new possibilities among the pathways of global Christian witness to the truth:

- In renewing our common faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord of history;
- In sharing our heritage as reformed and reforming churches;
- In responding together to the Gospel call to enact hope for all humankind.

This is also a moment of stark realism and urgency:

- A world agonizing in the pain of East/West and North/South conflicts;
- A world teetering on the threshold of nuclear destruction;
- A world with hundreds of millions of persons suffering violent oppression and living in absolute poverty.

All of these elements have served to move these working groups to believe that within the wholeness of our global mission, this ecumenical moment comes as one more gift from the Spirit.

THEREFORE, the United Church of Christ continues to "acknowledge as kindred in Christ all who share" in the confession of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior, as sole Head of the Church (Constitution, p. 2), and aspires to be a "uniting church" (Constitution, p. 33).

The Thirteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

1. Celebrates the global partnerships in the one mission which the UCBWM. makes possible for the whole United Church of Christ, and recognizes each of these partners as "kindred in Christ;"
2. Affirms the UCBWM and the President of the UCC in deepening our relationships with the Evangelical Church of the Union;
3. Gratefully acknowledges and celebrates the action of Kirchengemeinschaft voted by the ECU, and looks forward to shared ministries and the sacrament;
4. Recognizes a growing relationship between our churches as a mandate for renewal in mission and faith:

- Renewal in mission coming from stirring one another up to respond together to the world's cry for justice and peace;
- Renewal in faith as, mindful of our roots in the Reformation, we seek to meet the complex needs of faith today and to revitalize the local congregation in the whole range of its witness;

5. Urges the UCBWM, in continuing consultation with the Council for Ecumenism and the President, to pursue the development and implementation of a covenant with the ECU, in which our two churches will:

- a) Develop, in cooperation with the Office for Church In Society and ECU counterparts, strategies for witness in common tasks of justice and peace for the whole world;
- b) Develop, in cooperation with the Office for Church Life and Leadership and ECU counterparts, strategies for exploring and recasting the catholic, evangelical, reformed, and covenantal aspects of our theology for issues of faith today; and for providing resources to local churches for performing the tasks which God requires of us now;
- c) Explore these forms of mission and faith action for their possible significance in the relationships of our two churches with the other churches with whom we are jointly called to discipleship.

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