

**Toward a new Urban Agenda
A Resolution Approved by General Synod XI (1977)**

“They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastation of many generations.” Isaiah 61:4

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this overture is 1) to begin a process by which the United Church of Christ can reaffirm its historic ministry in, to, and for the city, 2) to consolidate the social policy of the church in such a way as to bring fresh focus on the current conditions of human living, and, 3) to develop a procedure whereby the diverse ministries of the church can be integrated to address the complex problems facing Urban America.

From Paul’s journeys to the cities of the biblical world, through the Reformation in the cities of Europe, to the UCC priorities on the cities of the last decade, this urban agenda continues a long term commitment of the faithful to urban people. Throughout this tradition, many theologians have held that the church is the soul of civilization, and that any civilization that does not love its cities cannot long survive.

In our age, we see ourselves as a people of God whose destiny is 20th Century urban America. The membership of our church represents a broad cross section of the American people. We are middle class, poor and affluent. We come from different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. We live in towns, cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Yet, whatever the various settings and circumstances of our lives, we are a people bound together by a culture, a political order, and an economy which are dominated by urban patterns of life. Our cities, on the one hand, continue to gather, store, exchange, and disseminate, as does no other place, the goods, the knowledge, the wealth, the memories and hopes of humanity. On the other hand, precisely in these centers, we know that poverty persists, inequity is rampant, injustice continues, and a sense of powerlessness infects the soul of many who at one time felt hope.

In this situation, our commitment to work for social justice under God arises from the awareness that we ourselves are partners in suffering so long as we live in a society which oppresses any of our brothers and sisters. With the Prophet Isaiah, we believe that when we turn to one another rather than away from one another, “our healing shall spring up speedily.” We hear also the New Testament calling to repentance, to a turning around, in preparation for the anticipated New Jerusalem.

With this hope and under that vision we call for a renewal of the Church’s urban mission.

Be it resolved:

1. that the XI General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls for a renewal of urban mission for itself, its instrumentalities, agencies, conferences, and local churches;
2. that the Executive Council authorize a two year process of development, to be under the direction of the Board for Homeland Ministries, which shall:

- a. review and evaluate all recent programs of the instrumentalities and agencies of the church which are pertinent to a renewal of urban mission and of the theological assumptions on which they rest;
 - b. analyze the prospects and strategies for the survival and vigor of the churches' presence and ministry in the cities;
 - c. review and consolidate all social policy positions now on record pertinent to these concerns as voted by the various branches of the church;
 - d. prepare a theologically grounded statement on the responsibilities of the church in and with the city for the 1980's; and on that basis,
 - e. make recommendations concerning the integration of future programs and priorities to the XII General Synod.
3. That this process be funded with a team assigned which shall consist of instrumentality, conference, and local church leadership with special competence in various issues and disciplines related to the city.

It was noted in accordance with Standing Rule 16 that an estimated cost would be \$40,000.