

## **Pronouncement on UCC Full Divestment of All Financial Resources from All Corporations Doing Business with South Africa**

**Approved by General Synod XV (1985)**

### **SUMMARY**

Since there has been discussion within the United Church of Christ at all levels of the Church, dating back to the Fifth General Synod in 1965, concerning the escalating oppression by the racist apartheid regime of South Africa and the responsibility of the Church to sever all support for this regime, the time has now come for the United Church of Christ to fully divest all financial resources from all corporations doing business with South Africa. This pronouncement is a call to the Church to fulfill our Statement of Faith through this action. The Word of Life, Jesus Christ, mandates the Church to be responsible and to challenge the evil injustice of apartheid through an effective strategy.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1965 the Fifth General Synod recommended “economic sanctions as a remedial action pending changes in apartheid.” In 1969 the Seventh General Synod recommended that “all investments and funds be withdrawn from financial institutions doing business with South Africa.” However, the action of the Seventh General Synod has yet to be fully implemented. Subsequent General Synods have raised the issue of divestment for discussion and internal analysis throughout the Church. What has intervened since has been the grim reality of increasingly vicious beatings, murder, rape, unjust imprisonment and other forms of violence committed against those opposing the racist South African regime. In 1977 the Eleventh General Synod affirmed:

We now believe that withdrawal of business and investments from South Africa is a central expression of the Gospel witness.

The Gospel witness involves living out the mandates of the Word of God in human history. The background of dialogue and debate within the United Church of Christ on this Issue is extensive and has brought the Church to the threshold of concrete action. We have all witnessed the failure of the Reagan Administration’s policy of “constructive engagement” towards South Africa. It is important that the Church of Jesus Christ not be engaged in similar “engagements” with corporations that constructively support the present regime in South Africa. “Selective or phased divestment” in essence is no different from the Reagan Administration’s supportive foreign policy towards South Africa. In October of 1984, the Commission for Racial Justice, at its annual meeting, voted unanimously to call upon the whole United Church of Christ to fully divest its financial resources from all corporations doing business with South Africa. A similar resolution was unanimously passed in November 1984 by the Eighth Biennial Convention of United Black Christians.

### **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

Jesus Christ is our paradigm for challenging the evil of racism and injustice. The Biblical and theological imperatives of the Gospel are clear. We are called to take action to help liberate

those who are oppressed at home and abroad. In the Gospel According to John, Chapter 3, it is written:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him...And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.

Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, is the true light of the world that exposes the evil deeds of nations, institutions, and societies. The Church is in the world but not of the world.

The evil of apartheid is an affront to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let our deeds and actions against the racial and human injustice of apartheid be clearly seen as deeds that have been wrought in God.

#### THE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

The Fifteenth General Synod affirms the following:

1. We accept the costs and the joy of Christian discipleship and we are called at this moment in history to take concrete action against all forms of human evil and injustice, in particular, racist apartheid in South Africa.
2. We believe it is a sin to directly or indirectly support the present regime in South Africa by investing in businesses which do business with South Africa.
3. We are now called by God through Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, to withdraw the resources of the Church from direct and indirect support of apartheid and, thus, we commit ourselves to full divestment now.
4. As Christians we pray that our actions will effectuate a change in the present situation in South Africa toward justice and righteousness for all of God's people.

#### **Proposal for Action**

**On UCC Full Divestment of All Financial Resources from All Corporations Doing Business with South Africa**

**Approved by General Synod XV (1985)**

WHEREAS, the Fifteenth General Synod has adopted the pronouncement on United Church of Christ Full Divestment of All Financial Resources from All Corporations Doing Business with South Africa, and whereas this pronouncement calls the Church to fulfill our Statement of Faith through this action; therefore the Fifteenth General Synod:

1. Calls upon all instrumentalities, agencies, national bodies, conferences, associations, congregations and members of the United Church of Christ to begin immediately the process of divestment, and to complete divestment within two years.
2. Defines as entities to be divested those corporations with direct investments in South Africa and banks and other financial service institutions engaging in loans, credits or services to the Government of South Africa or its instrumentalities or agencies.
3. Calls upon the President of the United Church of Christ to inform the major corporations involved and investing in South Africa of the passage and implementation of this pronouncement and proposal for action, and to encourage the withdrawal of these corporations and their financial resources from South Africa.
4. Calls upon the President of the United Church of Christ to call upon the President and the Congress of the United States to terminate all U.S. government economic, scientific and military support of the apartheid regime of South Africa.
5. Calls upon the United Church of Christ, in cooperation with the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and other denominations to encourage this nation and other nations of the world to participate in full divestment of financial resources from South Africa.
6. Calls upon agencies, instrumentalities, national bodies, conferences, associations, congregations and members of the United Church of Christ to combine divestment with other forms of economic pressure to maximize our effectiveness as instruments of change by:
  - a. Engaging in acts of public witness directed at corporations supportive of the apartheid system such as prayer vigils, demonstrations and letter and postcard writing campaigns:
  - b. Withdrawing bank accounts and investment funds from financial institutions which continue to lend to the Government of South Africa or its agencies or instrumentalities or which make strategic loans to the private sector for the provision of products, services or technology that helps maintain the apartheid system;
  - c. Abstaining from buying gold, Krugerrands (South African gold coins), diamonds and other products from South Africa;
  - d. Supporting the campaign of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility to bring pressure on key corporations assisting the apartheid system in their demands that these corporations cease immediately all sales and service relationships with the South African Government and government-owned corporations and inform the South African government that the dismantling of the apartheid system is a prerequisite for their remaining in South Africa.

7. Calls for a major effort to educate members of the UCC regarding the role of the U.S. investment in South Africa in supporting the apartheid system.
8. Calls for action by the Congress of the United States to limit economic relations between the U.S. and South Africa and impose economic sanctions on the apartheid regime.
9. Calls for members, congregations, and agencies of the United Church of Christ to support state and municipal legislation limiting investment and business relations with corporations with direct investments in South Africa and financial institutions making loans to the public sector or strategic loans to the private sector in South Africa.
10. Asks that individuals, congregations, agencies and instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ take into account whether corporations have direct investments in South Africa as they make consumer decisions and whenever possible abstain from the purchase of products manufactured by corporations continuing to do business in South Africa.
11. Calls for the development of a United Church of Christ pastoral letter, "South African Apartheid and Full Divestment and other forms of Economic Pressure" by a drafting committee representing the United Church Board for World Ministries, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, Pension Board, Office for Church in Society, Commission for Racial Justice and Council of Conference Ministers, and to widely circulate the document throughout the United Church of Christ and the nation for discussion and theological reflection.
12. Calls upon the President of the United Church of Christ to strengthen our ecumenical partnership with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and to initiate planning for a Day of Prayer for the people of South Africa, inviting church bodies in South Africa to join us in that solemn observance, in faith and hope that repentance and redemption might be revealed through the healing love of God in Jesus Christ.
13. Requests the United Church Board for World Ministries and Commission for Racial Justice to coordinate this Proposal for Action and calls upon the instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ to make a detailed report to the Sixteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

Financial Implications: Implementation of this Proposal for Action is subject to the availability of funds.