

75-GS-37 VOTED: The Tenth General Synod adopts the alternative statement on "Criminal Justice and Penal Reform" as amended.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PENAL REFORM

WHEREAS The bible heritage and mandate of both the Old and New Testament call for just and responsible treatment of the disadvantaged and oppressed: "You people hate anyone who challenges injustice and who speaks the whole truth in court. You have oppressed the poor and robbed them of their grain .. You persecute good men, take bribes, and keep the poor from getting justice in the courts." (Amos 5: 10-15), and

WHEREAS it is the purpose of the criminal justice system in the United States to help deter crime and, when a crime has been committed, to deal justly and humanely with both the victim and the accused through due process of law, with equal justice equally applied, and

WHEREAS the current application of the criminal justice system in the United States is frequently punitive and prejudicial toward lower income and minority groups, which now constitute the bulk of the prison population, and

WHEREAS there is a growing public awareness of the current staggering cost and ineffectiveness of our criminal justice system, and

WHEREAS the Federal Bureau of Prisons master plan to construct sixty-six new federal prisons offers little in alternative treatment procedures, and

WHEREAS the Eighth and Ninth General Synods of the United Church of Christ mandated a national program of reform directed at criminal judicial and penal systems, and

WHEREAS the Tenth General Synod affirms and recognizes the accomplishments of the Criminal Justice Priority Program which was instituted to fulfill that mandate,

THEREFORE the Tenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the following goal, objectives and strategies for the 1976-77 biennium:

GOAL:

To maximize the involvement of the United Church of Christ its agencies, Conferences, Associations, and local congregations in a national campaign to promote progressive changes in the American Criminal Justice and Penal System.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The educating, training and mobilizing of the various agencies, Conferences, Associations, and local congregations of the United Church of Christ.

2. Developing co-operative efforts with other denominations through the individual denominations and the National Council of Churches.
3. The organizing and mobilizing of community groups, organizations, political leaders, students, professional groups and others to develop a nationwide movement to bring about the reformation of the criminal justice system.

STRATEGIES:

1. Conduct public hearings and investigations into the administration of justice and accompanying abuses with organizing and mobilizing efforts on the local level to redress these abuses.
2. Develop model programs that provide alternatives to incarceration.
3. Develop model programs in the field of juvenile justice.
4. Develop legislative proposals that promise to remedy the present abuses of the criminal justice system.
5. Publish on a regular basis Criminal Justice Issues and other research and investigative reports that inform and educate the constituency of the United Church of Christ and the general population to specific abuses of the criminal justice system.
6. Initiate legal actions where necessary to bring about relief through the nation's courts and administrative agencies, i.e., Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Treasury Department (revenue-sharing).
7. Cooperate with local congregations, Associations, and Conferences of the United Church of Christ to increase their active involvement in criminal justice and crime prevention concerns on the local level.
8. Others as may be deemed appropriate.

THEREFORE the General Synod calls upon the United Church of Christ to give the Criminal Justice Priority Team the mandate to continue this most effective and essential program and to implement this program within the proposed 1976-77 budget.