

136th Annual Meeting
Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ
(Congregational Christian Churches)
Meeting in the 205th year of the Missionary Society of Connecticut
Saxe Middle School, New Canaan, Connecticut
October 17-18-19, 2003
THEME: "A People of Hope" "La Gente de la Esperanze"

MINUTES

Prior to the opening of the meeting, authorized ministers gathered at the First Congregational Church of Darien for luncheon and the speaker was the Reverend Dr. John H. Danner, Senior Pastor at the Saugatuck Congregational Church in Westport. The presentation was "From Chanting to Chat Rooms: Different Prayers for Different Pastors."

At the Saxe Middle School hearings were held prior to dinner for the Resolutions to come before the meeting and the registration area and display areas opened. Following dinner the opening session was held.

Friday Evening—Session One

Introductory music was provided by the Reverend David Jarvis. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Erskine McIntosh, Moderator and welcome was extended to those gathered. The Reverend Dwight Juliani, Conference Chaplain, of Madison was introduced, and he led the opening prayer and the opening hymn. The Reverend Jeffrey Crow, Moderator of Fairfield West Association, shared words of welcome and expressed appreciation to Kelly Morrissey, Administrator of the Congregational Church of New Canaan for all her assistance in planning the meeting. The Reverend Harold E. Masback, III, Pastor of the Congregational Church of New Canaan, expressed his welcome to the body and introduced Mr. Richard Bond, First Selectman of New Canaan. Mr. Bond presented a proclamation to a people of hope for the weekend on behalf of the town. The Reverend Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister, introduced Conference staff. She then presented Mr. McIntosh with a UCC medallion to wear during the meeting this year and to present to the new Moderator elected to wear during the next meeting. The Moderator introduced the Reverend Paul Goodman of New Haven as Scribe and the Reverend Thomas Ratmeyer of Mystic as Assistant Scribe.

Mr. Erskine McIntosh, Moderator, introduced Honored Guests by having them stand:

- The Reverend Malcolm Bertram of South Wellfleet, Massachusetts, Parliamentarian
- Connecticut persons serving on boards of national ministries of the United Church of Christ
- General Synod Delegates
- Any national staff present
- Representatives of Health and Human Service institutions and seminaries of the UCC
- Missionary: Ellen Tompsett from India
- Partners from Kyung-Ki Presbytery from Korea

Motion was made and duly seconded and it was

VOTED

2003-10C-01 to grant voice without vote to these honored guests.

The motion was voted by unanimous consent.

Adoption of Annual Meeting Rules The Moderator introduced the Reverend Donald Ketcham of West Avon Congregational Church, Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Mr. Ketcham moved the adoption of the Rules of Procedure for the meeting. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-02 that the Rules of Procedure are adopted as printed.

The motion was voted by unanimous consent.

Adoption of Annual Meeting Agenda – Mr. Ketcham moved the adoption of the printed agenda. It was duly seconded and it was

VOTED

2003-10C-03 that the Agenda as printed and distributed in the packets was adopted.

The motion was voted by unanimous consent.

Approval of 135th Annual Meeting Minutes – Mr. Ketcham moved the adoption of the Annual Meeting minutes. Being duly seconded, it was

VOTED

2003-10C-04 that the Minutes of the 2002 Annual Meeting as printed in the Annual Report, Volume 2, pages 1-28 are approved.

The motion was voted by unanimous consent.

The Moderator announced the appointment of a Resolutions Committee as follows:

RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

NAME	CHURCH
2003 Robert I. Brockett	Granby, First
2003 Edward Carter	Fairfield, Greenfield Hill
2003 Rev. Louise Higginbotham	New Haven, United
2004 Ms. Jen Lee	Higganum
2004 Rev. Alice O'Donovan	Chair; Storrs
2004 Rev. Wilma White	Ridgebury
2005 Mr. Gordon Mounts	Newtown

The Moderator announced the appointment of the Executive Committee of the Board to act as the Business Committee of the Annual Meeting as follows:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ACTING AS BUSINESS COMMITTEE
OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

NAME	POSITION/CHURCH
Rev. Donald H. Ketcham	Chair; West Avon Church
Ms. Joan Kratzert	Vice Chair; Old Lyme, First
Mr. Robert Giles	Treasurer; Granby, First
Mr. Erskine D. McIntosh	Moderator; New Haven, United
Rev. David W. Spollett	Assistant Moderator; Fairfield, First
Rev. Ronald B. Brown	Chair- Silver Lake Board; New Britain, South
Ms. Jane Cerri	Chair-Personnel Committee; Clinton

The Moderator announced the appointment of the Program Committee for the Annual Meeting to act as the Committee on Amenities.

STEERING COMMITTEE of the ANNUAL MEETING

NAME	POSITION/Church
Rev. Bonnie Bardot	Chair; Danbury, King Street
Mr. Erskine McIntosh	Moderator; New Haven United
Ms. Susan Waldron	At Large; Woodstock-First
Rev. Dwight Juliani	Conference Preacher; Madison, First
Rev. David W. Spollett	Assistant Moderator; Fairfield, First
Rev. Jeffrey G. Crow	Moderator-Fairfield West; No. Stamford
David Foy Crabtree	Staff
Peggy Wright	Staff
Jan Bittner	Staff
Charlie Kuchenbrod	Staff

Mr. McIntosh reviewed the procedure for participating in the "Speak Out" sessions

Report of the Wider Church Ministry Team – Mr. Elizabeth McCosh-Lilie of Mansfield presented the report. She introduced members of the Wider Church Ministry Team. She introduced Ellen Tompsett, Missionary from India. She is a Global Missions intern serving in a family village farm as an English teacher. She is helping to bring three generations together and fashion a family. She will be leading a workshop on "What God is Doing in an Indian Village."

Ms. Deborah Blood of Essex, new Chairperson of the Colombia Partnership Committee, shared about what was happening in Colombia and what you can do to become involved. One minute of silent prayer was held for the people of Colombia.

The Reverend Linda Barnes of Franklin, Co-Chairperson of the Korean Partnership Committee, shared the work they have been doing with our partners the Kyung-Ki Presbytery from Korea. The Reverend Kim Hyo-Sung, Moderator, Kyung-Ki Presbytery shared these comments:

Dear Moderator, Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Davida Crabtree and Members of the Connecticut Conference UCC.

As the moderator of Kyung Ki Presbytery, it is my honor and great joy that I bring greetings as you gather for the 136th Annual Meeting. These opportunities to be together strengthen our Partnership and reaffirm the wondrous unity we know in Jesus Christ.

In these days when violence, war and hostility seem to dominate our world, we are especially thankful to have you who show us witness on behalf of human rights, justice and peace as partners in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.

We, Kyung-ki Presbytery, pray for peace with justice and reconciliation for our world, for Iraq, for Afghanistan, for Palestine, for North Korea, and particularly for America.

The world is not made up of one part but of many. If an American should say "Because I am not an Iraqi, I do not belong to the world," or if a Korean should say, "Because I am not a Colombian, I do not belong to the world," they would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the world. We must know that if one part suffers, every part suffers with it

Partners in Christ! You are the world we are the world. We must take care of the other parts of our world. A piece of bread can make a friend but the thousand dollars of bullets will only make enemies.

I believe that through our partnership, Christ is at work for peace.

Last but not least, In behalf of Kyung Ki Presbytery, I would like to thank you for your hospitality to the members of "Family Mission Trip 2003." Also I would like to extend our special thanks for support in passing the resolution "Advocating Peace and Reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula" at the 24th General Synod.

We hope that you will come and visit us and we will return the love, which you have shown us.

May God bless the ministries of the Connecticut Conference and our partnership. Thank you.

The Rev. Kim Hyo-Sung, Moderator, Kyung-Ki Presbytery

Conference Minister's Address – Mr. McIntosh introduced the Reverend Davida Foy Crabtree for her Conference Minister's Address as follows:

Hospitality as a Sign of Hope for the World

Have you ever visited a church and felt less than welcome? Ever stood in a coffee hour wondering whether anyone would speak to you?

This past summer David and I took a four-day vacation to another area of New England. While there, we decided we wanted to visit a particular church in a thriving small city on Sunday morning. So on Friday afternoon, I called the church to find out the time of services. The telephone rang and rang. No answer. After repeated attempts, I gave up on that approach, and tried the local newspapers. No listing. So we decided to head that way for dinner and see what the sign said. The church was shrouded in scaffolding and no sign was visible.

Finally on Sunday morning, I decided to make one last attempt and reached the minister forty-five minutes before the service began. So we went. Somehow, we had managed not to get the message! We did find a parking place, but only after driving around the building twice were we able to tell where one should enter, given the construction. As we went in, a woman handed us a bulletin with a smile on her face and pointed us toward the sanctuary. We sat near the front

because of our hearing challenges. Most everyone else was to the back or side, but there was one pewful of people nearby. The passing of the peace came, and one woman reached across the pews and greeted us, saying, "It isn't usually this empty." At the close of worship, we walked down the center aisle to greet the minister. People were standing all around talking with one another. Finally when we got to the last pew, one man stepped out and greeted us. The minister walked away before we got to him.

Now I was getting very interested in just how far this would go. So I said to David, "let's go to the coffee hour." He made a stop on the way, so I went alone, got a cup of punch, and stood by myself in the middle of the room, looking a little lost yet interested. That didn't work. I went to the display about the construction work. No takers. So I went over to a kiosk with displays about the church's many activities. I halfway expected a sign to declare, "First Congregational Church, the friendly church"! By now David had his coffee and had joined me. No one else ever did, and we left, knowing that was one place we'd not be likely to return.

What an experience that was! I surely hope it cannot happen among us, yet I know that portions of it do happen every Sunday across our Conference. They happen when we are not intentional about the ways we receive visitors, and not committed to the sharing of the gospel through our life as well as our words. They happen when we forget the words of Hebrews 13:1: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it"

Contrast that experience, if you will, with an evening visit I made recently to First Church in Danbury, where the church council all had nametags on and people greeted me warmly. They even have a tradition of escorting visitors to the parking lot afterward and being sure they know how to get back to the highway!

Or contrast it with First Church in Mansfield Center, where I arrived very early for my preaching engagement, was greeted by several people in the parking lot, shown my way into the building, and invited to listen to the choirs rehearse while other preparations were being made. Their worship on world communion Sunday was engaging, dynamic and multicultural, with a drum choir as well as a voice choir, a processional of elements and a circular tablecloth made by the children of the church with people of many colors joining hands around its perimeter. Youth joined adults in every aspect of worship, including the serving of communion. What a welcoming, reconciling and joyful spirit there was that day!

Hospitality. It is at the core of Christian identity in many respects. Yet it is not just about the way we receive and welcome people, not just about friendliness. When I was young, I associated the word hospitality with entertaining people in our home or our church, with fancy little sandwiches and silver tea service and silly little aprons. As I begin, I invite you to empty your minds of all such associations!

The hospitality I mean is about the way we worship and what our worship says to people of all ages, races and conditions of life. It is about the way we talk with one another about difficult matters, the effort we make to reach out in evangelism, the freedom we experience in our new life in Christ. It is about the mission and ministry we share as we seek to be signs of hope in an increasingly hostile and despairing world.

Christian hospitality is a radical disposition toward the world that runs against the kind of exclusion and judgment that so pervades our culture. Deep hospitality is about the ministry of reconciliation Christ gives us to live. After all, it is Christ who is our host at the table, Christ who forms us into community, and Christ who enables us to be mutual guests and disciples of one another. Every encounter with the living Christ graces us with strength to live the reconciling and healing love he makes available to us. True hospitality transforms life for both those who give and those who receive as well as for the community at large and the world around us.

Hearing One Another

At this Annual Meeting, as delegates you will be addressing a number of difficult concerns. So as I address the theme of hope and hospitality tonight, I charge you to remember that you are the Body of Christ assembled in this place. You are Church. You are the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. As such, we are together responsible to extend hospitality to one another. That means, to my mind, that we will honor the differences among us, listen thoughtfully to others, speak with care and loving honesty. It means that we will remember that when votes are taken that are not unanimous, we can easily hurt one another by our response. Hospitality is challenging, as it means earnestly seeking the good in the other. It also means we need to be authentic in our expression so that the real me is meeting the real you.

One of the privileges of being the United Church of Christ is also its burden. This is one place where we really do live in community without a human authority over us. Since this is a rare experience, we are out of practice. Yet we need practice in these days. Your Conference staff is observing strange conflicts and behaviors among our people. We see anxiety and irritability at new highs, with people leaning toward ultimatums as they try to exert their power or overcome their powerlessness. As the economy turns down and insecurity rises, as people are unemployed and underemployed, they tend to live all this out in the life of the church. So more and more of our churches are developing behavioral covenants that address the way they will live together as a faith community. Conference Annual Meeting is a good time for us all to put our learnings to work.

It is tempting and easy to let hospitality be a gloss on life, a superficial coffee and biscotti sort of thing. Yet I believe we all know that we are here seeking the mind of Christ for our time, awaiting the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. More than anyone else, it is Christ whom we need to receive with a spirit of hospitality in these three days. I would remind us that though it is one and the same Christ whom we encounter and know, our way of experiencing Christ differs and we have much to teach and learn from one another. So we come with open minds, believing that God is still speaking ... in our age... to our times...and to us.

Welcoming One Another

In Christian hospitality, we are motivated not only by scripture's call to us, but also by the seed of caring that has been planted in us by our baptism. We reach out in loving welcome because that is Christ's expectation of us and because we are so grateful for the embracing welcome we have received that we want to share it with others.

What are the ways we express the hospitality of Christ? Through refugee resettlement in our local churches and nationwide. Through starting new churches of many cultures. Through

advocacy on behalf of and with immigrants. Through evangelism that tells the story of Jesus and his love to the unchurched. Through ministries that build and manage affordable housing and through other ministries with the increasing numbers of poor people in our nation. Through open and affirming ministries that assure gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people that God and the church love and accept them. Through seeking to embrace one another despite our theological differences. Through expansion of the numbers and kinds of worship services in our churches. Through Silver Lake Conference Center. Through gifts that strengthen other churches in our partnership through Our Church's Wider Mission.

Through all these and hundreds of other ways, we live a ministry of Christian hospitality.

Yet Christian hospitality is not uncritical. Within the loving embrace of the community of faith, we are held accountable for actions that harm the wholeness of the Body of Christ. We seek to balance a loving welcome with discernment about participation that is healthy and builds up the Body, and participation that harms it. Every one of us needs both loving embrace and caring discipline for the sake of our own growth as well as the wellness of the Body of Christ.

At our last Annual Meeting, I spoke to you in part about the toll racism takes on our life together. I had hoped that we would be able to begin some long overdue work among our churches and in our Conference. Here is part of what I said (and for those who were not here last year, copies are available at this meeting): "Racism abounds - around, among and within us. It abounds not only as personal prejudice, but in its institutionalized forms as well. It abounds not only in relation to African Americans, but also in relation to Latinos and Latinas, to Asian and Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans. If we want to be a church for the future, we must find creative and persistent ways of addressing racism in our day - and eliminating it!" I went on to propose that some among us work on developing resources for study and for worship, that some form a focus group on racism, and that every church work with its members on teaching about racism because that work can affect entire communities and workplaces as well as our churches.

Then in the months following Annual Meeting, events developed at Silver Lake, with Conference finances, and with unexpected searches for staff that required an extraordinary investment of time and energy, and we had to delay other work. One might say it has been a case of the urgent having overwhelmed the important, except that work on racism is urgent, and these other matters are important too.

As we went into each successive search, I had great hopes that we would be able to expand the diversity of our staff. We recruited candidates actively nationwide, worked hard at having a diverse pool, ensured that each search committee itself was inclusive, and yet we did not succeed in adding any persons of color to our staff. We continue to believe that in order for the Conference to serve all of you well, we need a multicultural and multiracial staff. In my frustration, I talked with two Conference Ministers who are themselves persons of color, and asked for their guidance and feedback. Each in their own way shared his frustration as well, one of them saying, "Don't beat yourself up, Davida, we weren't able to do it either." I try not to beat myself up, but on the other hand, I do hold myself accountable for this failure, even as I know how hard we all tried.

Having said that, I also need to say that I have great confidence in the staff whom we have called to serve among you, knowing that each of them is profoundly committed to work against racism

and for a transformed and transforming Connecticut Conference. We can't do it as well as we could if we were more diverse, but we will do it as well as we can.

Feeding One Another

Prophetic hospitality may seem to some like a contradiction in terms. Yet in important ways, authentic Christian hospitality is always prophetic. We seek to be a place of "extravagant welcome", to quote our General Minister and President, John Thomas. The welcome we extend is not just for "our kind of people", as I have heard it described, though I must admit I never know who that is. Rather, as a people of God we try to nurture a home for dissent, a spiritual place where those with no homes and those with too much home can come together, where those who suffer and those who are liting through life can love one another into new depth, where those for whom God is more real than food can join with those who have serious doubts.

Prophetic hospitality is rooted in the vision of Matthew 25: we inherit God's true world when we feed the Christ who comes to us in others, when we give drink to the Christ who comes to us thirsty, when we welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned. It is in our being the hospitable community that we learn to ask the hard questions of which prophetic stance is born. From our service in the soup kitchen, we begin to ask how we can live in a society in which the poor are increasing at such a rate and the disparity between rich and poor grows each day. From a visit to the prison, we ask, how is it that a disproportionate percentage of the prisoners are African American and Hispanic and poor? And in the asking of the questions, we become more deeply hospitable, not only to those who are disenfranchised, but also to the Spirit of Christ himself.

Learning to live prophetic hospitality is fundamentally a matter of being secure in our faith, not necessarily certain, not necessarily absolute, but secure. Secure enough to be open. Secure enough to be passionate. Secure enough to challenge. And secure enough to welcome those who think differently than we do.

For in these days of serious economic suffering, when food pantries cannot keep their shelves stocked, and winter approaches without enough shelters, in these days of ever increasing violence in the world around us, what is the community the church needs to become? When the material security so many have counted on now seems elusive, and relationships are falling apart, what do we need the church to be? People seem to be searching for places with spiritual depth and richness, places where they can be fed both literally and metaphorically, and where they can participate in feeding. We yearn to be that kind of community.

Thousands of people are hungry for a faith community that will teach them how to live in this strange new world we now inhabit. They are troubled by the silence of so many of the churches in the face of our nation's use of military power in many areas of the world. They are looking for another way to live, one that has integrity with their core spiritual values, and for a faith community that will support them in their search. I, for one, am bold enough to believe that we can be that for them!

It requires two things of us, however: first that the pastors and teachers among us commit to studying nonviolence as a Christian discipline; and secondly, that we overcome our shyness about telling our story as the United Church of Christ.

Most clergy have studied the teachings of Gandhi and Dr. King and have a working knowledge of the principles. Yet the need is so profound now, that I do not believe that background is sufficient. If we will provide a spiritual home for these thousands, we need to deepen our understanding and our conviction that Christ offers another way through life than that propounded by the world around us. To that end, I invite our clergy to consider becoming a part of a new effort that will be led and taught by the Rev. Allie Perry specifically focusing on the theological and spiritual base of nonviolence in the Christian tradition. Allie has taught this discipline at Andover Newton Theological School for several years now and her course is acclaimed by her students. It carries many implications for our life together as well as our witness in the world. I hope that many of our pastors, and ultimately our churches, will have the benefit of her gentle yet convicted teaching.

Imagine churches all across Connecticut that live out a deeply rooted commitment to nonviolence, churches that work locally to dismantle racism and its effects, churches with labyrinths, global music, and prayer communities, churches that foster environmental concern with theological depth. Churches where members have no trouble articulating the connection between their faith and their daily work. Churches where children and youth are integrally part of the whole life of the church. Imagine churches where God is worshipped with awe and joy. All of this makes for a deep prophetic hospitality, a radical welcome that transforms people and their lives.

It takes courage as well as security to offer that kind of ministry. It doesn't come easily. Resistance is strong among many of our people because in order to usher in this kind of transformation, leaders need to be willing to lead differently or get out of the way. Pastors need to be able to articulate the vision with confidence and not fear. Yet it is worth the daring!

Yet being that kind of church and offering that kind of ministry is self-serving at best if we do not invest ourselves in communicating who we are and what we stand for. It may not be quite as true in Connecticut as it is in other parts of the country, but the United Church of Christ is one of the best kept secrets of Christianity. We do a disservice to the very people we would serve by not overcoming our shyness about evangelism and our reluctance to speak of ourselves and what we have to offer. All around us are people looking for this kind of church, but they are not willing to take the risk of crossing the threshold for fear of what they might encounter. Tell the story, my friends! Reach out and share your joy! God is still speaking, and we are still listening!

There are churches among us who can teach the rest of us about how to become this visionary church. Many already have glimmers of what such transformation can mean. I've witnessed it as I've visited among you and so have the rest of our staff. Yet it requires amazing discipline and persistence to pursue. We who are your staff stand ready to assist because we believe this is what needs to lead us through this new century.

Sustaining One Another

A similar commitment and similar courage is required if our Conference is going to step up to the challenges of this time. We need to continue strengthening our ability to network you together so that you can teach and support each other. We need to discern what it means to offer Conference services to the churches as we enter a time of challenge for our way of being the Church of Jesus Christ. We need to find among you those prepared to lead as we set about

becoming a truly multiracial and multicultural Conference. We must increase our support of scholarships to attract the best theological students. We must uphold the highest standards of ethics within the lives of our churches and ministries. We must bring Silver Lake up to code, make it handicapped accessible and invest in it so that future generations will benefit from it as we have. We must address the tremendous disparity of opportunity among the youth of Connecticut and enable our churches to make a difference among them. Most of all, we need to be a flexible, strategic, and bold set of God's people in this place and time.

During this meeting, you will need to decide the level of support you want to give to the Conference. In essence, you need to decide who we will be together and what we will do. That is by no means entirely a question of finances. There are substantive ministry questions before us. The Board of Directors and the Senior Staff are beginning this fall a process of engagement in exactly these issues of transformation and their implications for our ministry.

Part of the question facing us together is how do we receive and respond to one another's ministries? How does your Conference staff receive and support the ministries of your church? How does your church receive and support the ministries of your Conference? How do we in Connecticut receive and respond to the ministry of the national setting of the church? What would it mean for us to exercise radical and deep Christian hospitality? Hospitality is of course, one aspect of covenant - a readiness and eagerness to receive the gifts of the other, an awareness that we need one another and are less than God needs us to be when we isolate ourselves, whether that be out of fear, out of impatience, or out of ignorance. Mutual hospitality in covenant is our calling, our polity, and our identity.

We are in a different era. That is being signaled all over the church and all around the world. Where once the church was a major institution in every community, now it can seem invisible in many. Where once the tried and true forms of worship drew people in, now they keep many away. Where once a denomination was a source of identity and loyalty, now people shift that identity with every move and have little concept of loyalty, even to the local church. A colleague Conference Minister commented last week that while the Constitution of the United Church of Christ declares the local church to be the basic unit of the denomination, the truth is that in this era, it is the individual member who has become the basic unit. The radical individualism of our culture has crept into the church and taken it over. Our reliance on covenant is one of our great strengths and makes us truly counter-cultural. Yet without intentionality in teaching about that covenant and the mission we share, without our living it, we will be unfaithful to both our heritage and our future.

The deep hospitality I see as a sign of hope in a fractured age is a dynamic, enriched covenant that always calls us beyond ourselves and our comfort. That is because this covenant, this hospitality, is born of the triune God. We are given to one another by God as gifts for our mutual upbuilding. There are some among us who are strong and do not believe they need the rest of us right now, but in the past and most likely in the future, they have needed and will again need the strength of our relationships. There are some among us whose very existence is threatened, and we are here to stand with them and support them, just as they have supported others in the past. Perhaps it is the nature of human institutions that our memory of need is weak and our self-reliance always seems perpetual. As a student of the history of the churches of this Conference, however, I can tell you, every church has its day of need and every church is called to faithfulness in this covenant we share.

We cannot offer our ministry of deep and prophetic hospitality to the world unless we passionately claim the movement that is the United Church of Christ. And the world needs us. The people of Connecticut need us. We need one another.

And so I give thanks to God for the Connecticut Conference, for all 258 of its mission outposts known as local churches. I praise God for churches like Mystic, Wapping, and Southington where seekers' services and exciting new programs are underway; for preachers like Lillian Daniel, Barbara Headley and Ron Evans and so many others, for churches like Greenfield Hill and Second Church in Greenwich, whose responses to the events of the past two years have been faithful and creative; for First Church in West Hartford, where they have turned the front lawn into a memorial garden with a labyrinth.

And I sing a song of joy, knowing that the General Synod of the United Church of Christ will come to Connecticut in just four years, and give God praise that you are the churches who will extend to them the deep hospitality of which we in Connecticut are so capable.

May God bless us as we grow in Christ's Spirit, and strengthen the bonds among us!

Davida Foy Crabtree
Conference Minister
Connecticut Conference
United Church of Christ
October 17, 2003

Following her address, worship was held with the Installation of new Conference staff: Charlie Kuchenbrod, Associate Conference Minister for Administration; James Morgan, Associate Conference Minister for Wider Church Ministries; and Tim and Anne Hughes Co-Directors of Silver Lake Conference Center.

The Moderator declared that at the conclusion of worship the meeting would be in recess until 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning.

Saturday Morning – Session Two

An Orientation of Delegates was led by Mr. Erskine McIntosh with an informal review of the agenda, vote card procedures, and microphone usage. The Reverend Davida Foy Crabtree welcomed the delegates and described the purpose for the meeting was to set goals and directions for the Conference for the coming year by voting what we (the staff) are committed to implementing.

Following the Orientation the meeting was called to order at 8:59 a.m. by Mr. McIntosh. The Reverend Dwight Juliani, Conference Chaplain led Morning Prayer.

Report on 2002 Resolutions and Set Priority Order of 2003 Resolutions

The Moderator made announcements and called upon the Reverend Alice O'Donovan, Chairperson of the Resolutions Committee, who reported on the 2002 Resolutions and explained the process for setting the priority order for the consideration of the 2003 resolutions.

*REPORT TO CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING
By Justice/Witness Ministries Office
October 2003*

In 2002, at the 135th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference during October 18-20, four resolutions were passed. What follows is a summary of the actions taken relative to those resolutions by the Office of Justice/Witness Ministries.

***The first resolution** to be passed was entitled: "Advocating Peace and Reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula." Copies of this resolution, as with each of the others, was sent to all churches of the Conference, with a cover letter urging each congregation to consider their contents with prayer and to follow that with actions as the Spirit moved them to do so in accordance with the resolution.*

E-mail messages were sent to all our congressional delegates, and to the President of the United States, commending their support of peaceful, diplomatic solutions within the Korean peninsula and urging a pursuit of policies that will ensure the reduction of weapons of mass destruction.

As specified in the resolution, it was sent on for consideration at the XXIV General Synod of the UCC, where that body approved it in July.

***The second resolution** was entitled "The Connecticut Conference, UCC, Our Churches and their Relationship with the Boy Scouts of America." A copy was sent to each church, encouraging consideration and action in accordance with the resolution, which urged each congregation to consider the implications of sponsoring a scout troop in the light of the UCC's consistent opposition to discrimination against gay persons in all walks of life. A letter was sent by the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Conference to the head of the national BSA Council in December, with a copy of the resolution, urging the Council to reconsider its discriminatory practices against Gay leaders and scouts. A copy of this letter was also sent to the regional offices in Connecticut. No reply being received, a second letter was sent in February, to which a non-committal reply was received, indicating, to no one's surprise, that no major changes were anticipated at the national level.*

Although not specified in the resolution, calls by the J/W Ministry Office to the Vermont and Rhode Island Conferences did obtain the necessary signatures from delegates to the General Synod to enter it into consideration. The resolution was merged with a complementary resolution from a sister Conference and the General Synod approved the resulting resolution in July.

***The third resolution** was entitled: "Affirming Peaceful Alternatives to War on Iraq." The resolution declared that a pre-emptive strike against Iraq was not consistent with Jesus' message and would be a path to increased suffering and terrorism. A copy was sent to each congregation in the Conference. The Office of Justice/Witness Ministries has been in regular communication with the UCC offices in Washington, D.C. and Cleveland to apprise them of this resolution and to coordinate contacts with congressional delegates regarding the pursuit of diplomatic and non-military means to deal with the crisis in Iraq.*

The fourth resolution was entitled: "A Call for Prayer and Dialogue." It urged churches to provide opportunities for dialogue and education concerning the crisis in Iraq and asked the JWM office to provide information and resources to that end. A copy was sent to each congregation. During the first six months of 2003, packets of such material were sent to churches on the topics of peace and non-violence. The Justice Witness Ministry Team has also provided leadership for seminars and adult education in each of these areas.

Rev. Gordon S. Bates

Cecile H. Gilson

Associate Conference Minister Justice & Witness Coordinator Justice & Witness

Report from the Local Church Ministry Team – Ms. Doby Hall, Chair of the Local Church Ministry Team reported the responsibilities of the Team include helping local churches to be covenantal by networking together to provide workshops and resources to further the ministries of the local church.

Report from the Reverend Susan Townsley, Western Regional Minister – Ms. Townsley spoke of the relationship between pastor and congregation as a marriage and the job of the Regional Minister as a shepherd, cheerleader, and coach for the team. She used images such as teacher/student; friends with each other; resident critic; conductor of the symphony.

Keynote Speaker – The Reverend Davida Foy Crabtree introduced Judge Frederica Brenneman, member of the Saugatuck Church, United Church of Christ in Westport.

Remarks by the Hon. Frederica S. Brenneman Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, New Canaan, Ct., 10/19/03

Six months ago, when Davida Foy Crabtree and Gordon Bates invited me to be the keynote speaker at this annual meeting, I thought that overwork had caused them to make a serious error of judgment. I thought of at least three good reasons why I was an unlikely choice for this signal honor in the life of the United Church of Christ in Connecticut:

First, I have been a practicing Christian for only 47 years (you can say "only" when you've passed the three-quarters-of-a-century mark). I was not baptized until I was nearly 34, a few weeks before the birth of our first child in 1960. Why didn't Davida and Gordon invite a birthright Congregationalist, someone with generations of Congregational and UCC forebears, raised and educated in the church from birth?

Second, I have been a judge specializing in child protection cases involving neglected and abused children for more than a third of a century. How could my very specialized experience in that court relate to your theme this year, "A People of Hope"?

And Third, I spent much of last year reading James Carroll's book, "Constantine's Sword", a study linking the tragedy at Calvary with the tragedy at Auschwitz, experiencing some pretty negative feelings about organized Christianity over the last seventeen hundred years. How could I relate the pain suffered, and caused, by Christians, in the name of Jesus Christ, to the hope that this conference has made its theme this year?

But they persisted. Your Hartford staff is nothing if not persistent. And Davida is persuasive as well as persistent. So I began to think a lot about possible connections between the church--the body of Christ--being composed of people of hope and my own personal journeys, both in my faith and in my profession. And I think-I hope-that I have found the connections that Davida and Gordon must have sensed were there, long before I did.

First - My faith journey: I was raised with no exposure to any formal or informal religious practice and I had no experience with any faith community until we moved to northwestern Connecticut in 1956. There we found that, for non-Catholics, the only action in town (beside singing in the annual Goshen Players' musical production that kept us out of trouble from January to May each year) was in the Goshen Congregational Church. At that time, although Russell and I were lumped into what the natives called "The New York Crowd", meaning anyone not born and raised in Goshen, we were nonetheless immediately embraced by that welcoming church community as if we had been natives. In a small church in a town with 1500 people (and, at that time, 1, 500 cows) it was easy to learn the good and bad fortunes of every parishioner, and the immediate sympathetic response to both the good and bad fortunes from the members of that church was something I had never experienced before. For the first time in my life, I felt I was a member of a true community, with the glue holding us all together not a similarity of education or political preference or profession or hobbies, as with all the other groups in which I had participated before, but rather the common desire to discern the will of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and to carry out that will in our daily lives. That sounds like a rather grandiose purpose behind making mac-and-cheese casseroles for covered dish suppers, or singing in a choir accompanied by an organist who was almost as old as the organ. But the purpose was there; I could feel it--a true faith community to which we became more deeply committed each year.

When, shortly after we moved to Goshen, the church called a Yale seminarian as its minister, my life really changed. Even though everything the late Ray Phibbs preached and taught made complete sense to me, I still felt like an outsider because of my lack of Christian education and exposure to Church life. In March of 1960, a month before our first child was born, we knew we wanted to have him baptized in that church, to be enfolded into that loving Christian community from the moment of birth. But I did not feel it right for me to want him baptized when I never had been. I asked Ray what I had to do to join the Congregational church, and even asked with a naiveté that embarrasses me to recall, if I should start by reading a biography of Jesus. I wanted to know if I had to believe in miracles, in the Immaculate Conception and the physical resurrection to become a Christian. His response was to tell me what was referred to at the Yale Divinity School at that time as "the Christ event". He asked if I believed that such a person had once lived, and thereafter cast his shadow on all the rest of human history. I did believe that, as well as in the practicing Christian community that we had found in that tiny church. Able to commit to a church with those beliefs as its cornerstone, I was baptized one night in the Goshen Congregational church with only Ray, my husband Russell, and eight-ninths of Matthew Brenneman in attendance.

We have moved three times in Connecticut since then: Goshen to Essex to Glastonbury and, eight years ago, to Westport. In each town, the church has become the focal point of our lives - our support group, our emotional anchor, a welcoming community of people trying to learn God's will for their lives as revealed in the teachings and examples of Jesus. Wherever we have lived, my church has become my refuge, the only place I can always count on where striving for

peace and healing and justice and love take precedence over the striving for material things and the power to control both things and people so ascendant in our society today. And the culmination of my 47 year faith journey is having been invited to speak to you on this day, in this place, and among these like believers.

Second - The connection between the Church as the people of hope, and my work as a Juvenile Court Judge was a little harder for me to see. The Child Protection jurisdiction of the Superior Court, which has been my specialty since 1967, to a large extent involves members of our society who have the least to hope for: The poor, the mentally challenged, substance abusers, misfits in the community. How could my work with them suggest a basis for hope? But in preparing for today, I reviewed some speeches I have recently made to groups of lawyers and judges and social workers concerning when children should-and should not-be removed from their parents because of being abused or neglected. To my surprise, I found an amazing relationship between the message I intend to convey in those speeches and what I want to share with you today. I have been urging professionals in all aspects of child protection to make objective, informed predictions of the probable impact on individual children of leaving them home with inadequate parents, compared with the probable impact on them of abruptly placing them in foster care. Where the risk of harm from leaving them home outweighs the predictable psychological harm of placement, children must be removed to ensure their physical safety. But unfortunately, too often the focus is only on the first end of that scale with too little, if any, attention paid to the predicted harm from placement. After every tragic death of a child who has ever been referred to the state as neglected and the resulting ugly headlines and critical editorials, the noose tightens and state social workers are instructed that even a remote possibility of future neglect outweighs the parents' right to privacy in raising their child AND the child's right to be raised by his parents. "Better to be safe than sorry" is always the command to state social workers investigating suspected abuse after such deaths, but while "playing it safe" with no regard for the impact on the children being removed may go a long way to avoid those ugly headlines and editorials, it may also cause lifetime psychological damage to those children, harm which never makes it to the headlines and editorials.

Let me give you some examples from my work: Everyone agrees that being raised, as a foster child is not an ideal way to grow up. For the past 25 years, legislation and policy in the field of child protection has been focused on ending "foster care drift", either by rehabilitating inadequate parents or by terminating their parental rights and freeing their children for permanency through adoption. To ensure that this policy is embodied in practice, even the U.S. Congress-usually so deferential to states' autonomy in these matters-has waded in, requiring actions to terminate parental rights to be filed whenever any child has been in foster care for 15 out of the past 22 months. But such policies, blindly applied, do not recognize differences in individual children depending upon their ages when removed from home, the nature of their bond with their parents, the availability of an appropriate adoptive home for each child legally severed from all ties with their biological parents. When I confront a termination petition on an older child who still loves and is bonded with a parent who is chronically inadequate due to mental incapacity or longstanding unaddressed drug problems, I always ask the agency, "What is your plan if termination is ordered?" If the child has failed in a succession of foster and institutional placements, is it realistic to think there is a family out there who will commit to his adoption? Will the child benefit or be harmed by severing all ties with his biological family? What if the child is comfortably settled in a foster home that, for whatever reason, is not willing to adopt him? Will he benefit from being removed to the home of strangers who are willing to

adopt? Or take a baby born to a drug-abusing mother. Standard practice is to remove the baby at birth and give the mother months, even years, to demonstrate sobriety before the baby is returned. Experts in this field suggest that this can be devastatingly destructive for the formation of parent-child bonding, that it would be preferable for the mother and infant to be placed, immediately after birth, in a residential placement that would ensure both the mother's treatment and the baby's safety. The practice of requiring the mother to demonstrate cooperation with such a program for a month or two or three before reuniting her with her infant can have permanent detrimental effect on the parent-child bond, but that is rarely considered. Or take the current thinking that children "similarly situated" to a sibling who has been neglected are potentially subject to harm and should be -can I say preemptively?-removed even before any neglect has occurred. This is routinely done, even required to be done by the highest levels of state administration, with little apparent regard for the impact of what is proposed on the particular child involved.

But what does "Impact Thinking" in child placement decisions have to do with living a Christian life as a People of Hope? Speaking for myself, I have come to the conclusion that all of us have an obligation as individuals, as church members and as citizens of the most powerful country on earth to make realistic and accurate predictions of the impact of any proposed action or policy on the people who will be affected by them. I emphasize "realistic" and "accurate" since predicted outcomes based on inaccurate or prevaricated or, as the British say, "sexed up" data will not give estimated impacts that can be relied upon.

Let me give you some examples: Conservatives in policy making positions in both state and national governments in the U.S. oppose abortions, a position that many of us here today may share. But look what happens when ideology outweighs impact thinking: Last year, when the U.S. withdrew its \$34 million contribution to UN funded family planning programs all over the world because China's "one family, one child" policy may have included coercive abortion policies in that country, the result was an enormous increase in abortions world wide. Why? Because the principal work of the UN's population fund is advising families how to avoid unwanted conceptions. The loss of this large percentage of its global funding (something like 12%) is predicted to result in approximately two million unwanted pregnancies, 800,000 of which will result in abortions. Was the motivation of withholding this funding laudable? Maybe. But was the predicted impact considered? I am sure it was not.

Another example: In response to a terrorist attack on the US, we invade and occupy a country that had nothing to do with the terrorist attack. Were there other reasons to invade Iraq? Many have been given. But in terms of responding to the tragedy of 9/11, will the impact of our invasion of Iraq be to increase or decrease the risk of further acts of terrorism? 9/11 was not the work of a sovereign nation but of religious fanaticism among Moslem extremists in many different countries. Saddam Hussein's Iraq, while a nightmare for Iraqis, was a secular tyranny that did not tolerate religious fanaticism. Yet the newspapers today carry stories of religious extremists now infiltrating Iraq, carrying their messages of hatred, and the schools in which they are taught, with them. If religious fanaticism feeds on the perception that the strongest country in the world, the country that possesses most of the world's weapons of mass destruction, is imposing its will on Islam, how will the unprovoked, "preemptive" invasion of Iraq lessen the danger of future terrorism?

This audience, I am sure, does not need yet another reminder of what will be the fate of our planet, and its inhabitants both human and otherwise, if the shortsighted overuse of fossil fuels by the developed nations is not curbed. Ostriches with heads in the sand may think we can go on overheating and over cooling our homes and shops, go on driving elephantine gas-guzzling Hummers to soccer practice, go on ignoring the "dirty" sources of electricity generation, but our grandchildren and great grandchildren and great great grandchildren will be the ones who feel the impact of such behavior. And what will be the impact on developing nations if the most developed nation-the U.S.-declines to participate in the Kyoto Protocol and other international agreements on the limitation of greenhouse gases?

There are many examples much closer to home. The US is the only country in the First World that does not provide health care as one of the obligations of government, just as important to the welfare of its citizens as is national security or education or the maintenance of highways. Health care became linked to employment in the US (nowhere else) due to a fluke of history: Wage controls after World War II led to the offering of non-wage incentives to employees, one of which was group health insurance, some or all of the premium for which would be met by the employer. The result is that when employment is lost, health insurance is lost. I recently read that something like three million more American lost their health insurance last year, reflecting the continued growth in unemployment and bringing the total number of uninsured Americans to something like 43 million. When you don't have health insurance, you tend to avoid seeking medical advice until the symptoms become too burdensome. A recent study estimated something like 18,000 deaths last year were directly ascribable to delays in seeking medical care for conditions that would be remediable if treated at the outset. What is the actual impact of linking employment to health care? The answer is sadly obvious.

Education is one area that all agree is an obligation of government. But when standardized tests are required in all schools, and federal subsidies are reduced for schools which do not show sufficient "improvement" in these test results, the impact is that the schools with the lowest scores, usually reflecting the economic and social impoverishment of their students, will lose resources, rather than have them supplemented. I don't think it is necessary to remind this audience of the impact of growing up in America without an education. And what will be the effect if taxpayer money is used for vouchers to attend private schools instead of improving public schools? Private schools have intake discretion in selecting students. Who will be left behind? The most needy children in our society, the ones who lack strong advocates as well as abilities and motivations that would make them attractive to private schools. And doesn't the shadow that Jesus cast upon all of subsequent history include the need to accept and nurture the least of these, his children?

These are all examples of unpredicted and unfortunate results from the failure to think realistically of the impact of proposed actions. But impact thinking can sometimes lead to positive outcomes: One example of started in 1945, when, after four years of war with Germany and Japan, the U.S. did an amazing thing. It decided to spend billions of dollars not to exact revenge or retribution but to rebuild our former enemies into strong and prosperous nations. And what was the impact of the Marshall Plan, this unprecedented generosity of the unquestioned victor toward the unquestionably vanquished? Germany and Japan have become strong friends, allies and trading partners-the polar opposite to their former roles as our implacable enemies.

The Marshall Plan was like a miracle, the birth of which I partially witnessed. I went off to college in the middle of that war, and for three years, in every course, every semester, in economics and government and history classes, we were taught that we must never repeat the mistakes following the First World War of reducing our vanquished enemies to humiliated weaklings, thus laying the groundwork for the rage and passion for revenge that resulted in what became the Third Reich. We had learned the hard way what would be the impact of this course of action if repeated after 1945, and wisely changed course. The impact of the decisions we did make after World War II was a half-century of peaceful relations with our former enemies. We did something else after that war, the impact of which changed our history for half a century. With the G.I. Bill and G.I. Loans, we ensured that hundreds of thousands of veterans could achieve an education and buy that first house, and in so doing enlarged and strengthened a middle class that could earn for itself the right to a better life.

The world is a very different place today than it was in the forties and fifties, but applying "impact thinking" to everything we do as individuals, as church members, as citizens of a country and inhabitants of Spaceship Earth, is just as essential now as it was then if we are to avoid making decisions guided by ideologies which disregard their realistically predictable consequences. Unlike in hierarchical religions, Protestant Christians have an ongoing obligation, as individuals, to discern the will of God in making decisions that determine their behavior in every sphere. The accuracy of that discernment should always be tested by determining realistically the impact of those decisions on others, and on God's created world. If I believe that it is inconsistent with God's will to permit abortions, but I embark on a course of action that will actually increase the number of abortions in the world, I am not carrying out the will of God. Impact thinking requires constant consciousness that we are all ministers to our world. Every one of our words and actions has an impact on other people, or on our fragile and beloved planet, or on both. We should let our words and actions be guided with this consciousness so that their impact is always consistent with God's plan for the world.

And third, how could I speak of hope from a faith symbolized by the cross, which, from my reading of "Constantine's Sword", had become a sign inviting exclusion and persecution from the fourth century on. Constantine saw the cross, which had become the symbol of the new religion of Christians, as a sword of righteousness, and used that symbol to begin the exclusionist thinking-if you are not one of us, you are the enemy-that led tragically to Auschwitz. Small wonder that the author, James Carroll, a former Catholic priest, found the large cross erected by an order of Catholic nuns at the entrance to Auschwitz an affront to the six million Jews murdered by at least nominally Christian Europeans. Anti-Semitism, in Carroll's study, was born in the shadow of the cross and thrived on its use as a symbol for degrading and persecuting those whose religion was not symbolized by the cross. In my view, that was a tragic misuse of a symbol that could be- should be-the ultimate symbol of tolerance and love and, yes, of hope for all the world. Think of what the cross must have meant to the followers of Jesus on the day of his crucifixion: The end of their hope for a conquering messiah. Yet what happened three days later, and is still happening all over the world, transformed the cross into the ultimate symbol of hope. At the time, only Jesus must have known how humanity would be impacted by his gospel of peace, healing and, above all, of love without exclusion. So far, just starting the third millennium since his death, we have only seen a portion of that potential impact. Just think of the kind of world we could have-can have-if we really try to model our lives on his teaching, if we heal instead of hate, feed food to the hungry instead of bullets to the guns, plant our swords in the ground and harvest ploughshares. As Christians we should see the world and our obligation as

Christians, through the lens of these teachings: We see hungry people, and we feed them; we see the sick and heal them; we see the despoiling of God's creation for short-term human satisfactions, and we join together as a community of stewards to restore it. And we confront the fear and pain and death that are essential parts of being human, by joining together as a community of hope. In the touching opening of Elaine Pagel's book, "Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas", she writes of learning that her two year old son had a rare and invariably fatal lung disease. She found herself entering a church in mid-service and, in her words, thought:

"Here is a family that knows how to face death... here was a heterogeneous community that had gathered to sing, to celebrate, to acknowledge common needs, and to deal with what we cannot control or imagine. Yet the celebration in progress spoke of hope; perhaps that is what made the presence of death bearable."

All of us live in the certainty of death and the unknowability of what lies beyond death. Our gratitude to the creator that made each of us in the image of God--but wholly unique in our interpretation of that image--should be matched by our faith that whatever lies beyond will be as remarkable and as wonder-filled as our lives have been. During those lives we have all become acquainted with pain and disappointment, betrayal, failure and loss. But the cross tells us that nothing is ever beyond hope, that after pain comes healing; after disappointment fulfillment; after betrayal is fidelity, after failure victory, and after loss the regaining of hope. Constantine's sword should be buried, and in its place should be erected the ultimate symbol of hope: The cross of resurrection, of reconciliation, of tolerance and above all of love. And how to we engender hope in others? By living as Jesus lived his life and as he taught us: By feeding and healing, by making peace and loving God and all of God's creation.

It may be hard in times like these to hang on to such hope when all around us we see courses of action being taken by individuals and governments in apparent disregard of their likely impact. But when we talk of having faith, doesn't faith in the God revealed by Jesus Christ inevitably nurture the spark of hope that lies within each of us? It may not be rational. It certainly cannot be proven or demonstrated. But hope is the necessary consequence of having faith even if it cannot be described any more clearly than Emily Dickinson tried to do 150 years ago:

*Hope is the thing with feathers
that perches in the soul
and sings the tune without words
and never stops-at all.*

Frederica S. Brenneman

Report of the Board of Directors – The Reverend Donald Ketcham, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, expressed appreciation to Judge Frederica S. Brenneman and gratitude that she was a member of a Connecticut Conference congregation.

Mr. Ketcham expressed appreciation to the members of the Board for their patience, time, Christian minds and hearts. He further expressed appreciation to all members of the staff, especially Mr. Robert Giles, Treasurer of the Conference, and reviewed the activities of the Board this past year. Mr. Ketcham made the motion to receive the Report of the Board of Directors as shown in the Annual Report, Volume 2, Pages 30-41. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-05 that the Report of the Board of Directors as shown in the Annual Report, Volume 2, Pages 30-41, be received by Unanimous Consent.

Report of the Capital Campaign – Mr. McIntosh called upon Kate and Hugh McLean, Chairs of the Proposed Capital Campaign - Now For the Future.

1. What is Now for the Future? It is a response to identify ministry needs within the Conference and the church at large: to reach out to at-risk youth; to address seminary students indebtedness; to address geographic Conference needs; and to address physical needs of Silver Lake Conference Center.
2. Where did it come from? Concerns of the churches, inadequacies in public education, disparity of incomes in towns, rising costs of seminary, desire to give concrete expression with the national setting of the church.
2. What have we learned from our experience so far? We have been completely unrealistic in expectations of completing the listening phase in 6 months; timing extraordinarily poor of economy; new appreciation for local church roles in fund raising for the Conference and national church. We need to own the vision.
3. Where is Now for the Future going? We are gaining learnings from all we do: participation and ownership at each church after dialogue/discernment process; we need to serve ministry needs in local church as well as ministry needs in the Conference; need to encourage all churches to participate with decisions made by each church as determined by their timetable and circumstances.

Report of Silver Lake Conference Center – Anne and Tim Hughes, Directors of Silver Lake Conference Center, were introduced. They feel blessed, excited and pleased to be able to serve the Conference as Directors of Silver Lake Conference Center. Some of the challenges that have happened since the last Annual Meeting include the departure of the Director, the tragedy of the loss of the Health Center to fire, the loss of a much beloved Silver Laker who passed away at SLCC last winter. Out of tragedies has grown miracles and the blossoming of SLCC's ministry. Joyce Yarrow, Transitional Director, helped to turn things around; Chris Mereschuk and Matt Peters, Summer Co-Directors; Mike White, Property Manager; new cabins, churches raising money and sweat equity are renewal symbols, new mattresses, ropes course, new couches—gifts of First Church, Old Greenwich—all help to make SLCC a place of ministry where lives can be transformed and miracles can happen. That is why they are committed!

Worship was led by the Reverend Bette Anne Crowell, Alternate Conference Preacher. Grace was offered, announcements were made, and the meeting was in recess for lunch and workshops.

Saturday Afternoon – Session Three

The session was called to order by the Moderator, Erskine McIntosh, and opening prayer was offered by the Reverend Joshua Crowell, Alternate Conference Preacher. Following announcements, the first Speak Out Session was held.

Seminary Support Committee Report – The Reverend Kenneth C. Brookes, Newington, introduced Dr. Benjamin T. Griffin, President of Andover Newton Theological School and Dr.

William C. Imes, President of Bangor Theological Seminary. They spoke to the significance of the schools that train people who touch our lives with God's grace.

Treasurer's Report – Mr. Robert Giles of Granby, Conference Treasurer, presented a video report pointing out the results of the stock market in our investments. He reported that we have had clean audit reports for the last few years. He further reported that Basic Support has been flat. Upon motion made and duly seconded, it was

VOTED 2003-10C-06 that the Report of the Treasurer as printed on pages 41-103 of the Annual Report, Volume 2, is received by unanimous consent.

Appreciation was expressed to Mr. Giles for his work as Conference Treasurer.

The Reverend Donald Ketcham, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, and the Reverend Thomas Stiers, Chairperson of the Budget Committee, reported on the budget process for the Missionary Society of Connecticut and the Trustees of the Fund for Ministers. Mr. Giles reviewed recent budgets, trends, and background. Questions were addressed.

Recognition of Tithing/Step Up Churches – Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister, recognized the Tithing churches—those which give 10 percent of their operating budget—and the Step Up Churches—those that increase their giving by one percent of operating budget

Tithing Churches

Western Region

First Congregational Church of Norwalk
Monroe Congregational Church
First Congregational Church Watertown
First Congregational Church of Derby
Congregational Church of Salisbury

Northern Region

United Congregational Church of Tolland
First Church of Christ, Congregational, Granby
Wapping Community Church, South Windsor
First Church in Windsor
First Congregational Church Bristol
Congregational Church of Plainville
Rocky Hill Congregational Church
Congregational Church in South Glastonbury
First Church of Christ, Simsbury
Hampton Congregational Church
Talcottville Congregational Church
First Church of Christ, Congregational Farmington

Unity Hill UCC, Trumbull

SouthEastern Region

First Congregational Church of Guilford
North Guilford Cong. Church UCC
First Congregational Church of Madison
First Congregational Church of Essex

Step-up Churches

Western Region

Greenfield Hill Cong. Church, Fairfield
Ridgebury Cong. Ch. UCC, Ridgefield
First Cong. Church of Greenwich
Second Cong. Church in Greenwich
First Congregational Church, Stamford
First Cong. Church of Waterbury, Inc.
Harwinton Congregational Church
Center Cong. Church, Inc., Torrington
Unity Hill UCC, Trumbull

SouthEastern Region

North Guilford Cong. Ch UCC Inc
Spring Glen Church, Hamden
Dunbar UCC, Hamden
Pilgrim Cong. Church, New Haven
First Cong. Church of East Haven, Inc.
First Congregational Church of Griswold
Newent Congregational Church, Lisbon
The United Church of Chester
First Congregational Church of Madison
First Congregational Church of Essex

Northern Region

First Church of Christ in Hartford
Broadview Community Church, Hartford
First Congregational Church of Plainfield
Union Congregational Church of Christ, Inc., Rockville
Central Village Congregational Church
Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Hartford
Gilead Congregational Church, Inc., Hebron
First Church of Christ, Simsbury
Hampton Congregational Church
Talcottville Congregational Church
First Church of Christ, Congregational Farmington

Action on Resolutions – The Reverend Alice O’Donovan, Chairperson of the Resolutions Committee, reviewed the process used to discuss the resolutions.

AFFIRMATION: EQUAL CIVIL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES

Ms. O’Donovan moved the affirmation, and called upon Ms. Sally Taylor of the Immanuel Congregational Church of Hartford, as the presenter. Discussion began. The Reverend Pershing Parker, of the First Church of Christ in Wethersfield, was the designated responder. He requested to yield to and grant Voice Without Vote status to Mr. Mark Dawes of First Church of Christ in Wethersfield. Permission was granted and discussion continued. An amendment was presented by the Reverend Kate Bartos of Morris; it was duly seconded and discussion was held. This amendment was ruled out of order by the Moderator and tabled temporarily while the Parliamentarian conferred with the maker of the amendment.

Discussion continued on the affirmation, and consent to allow editorial correction on the amendment was declared by the Moderator. Discussion continued on the amendment; point of order was called to move the question. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-07 to move the question on the edited amendment.

It was then

VOTED

2003-10C-08 to adopt the amendment as edited.

There were abstentions.

A second amendment was moved, seconded, discussed, and withdrawn.

The question was called, and it was

VOTED

2003-10C-09 to close debate.

A moment of prayer was called for and held.

It was then

VOTED

2003-10C-10 to adopt the Affirmation Equal Civil Rights and Responsibilities for Same-Sex Couples as amended as follows:

**AFFIRMATION: EQUAL CIVIL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SAME-SEX
COUPLES**

WHEREAS, over the last three decades delegates to annual meetings of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ have established a biblical/theological rationale to address justice issues related to all people, regardless of sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, in the 1970's we resolved to work for legislation at state and federal levels to guarantee civil liberties for all persons, calling on churches and associations to initiate discussion and study of issues pertaining to homosexuals; and

WHEREAS, in the 1980's we resolved to encourage legislation ensuring equal standing before the law for lesbian, gay and bisexual persons and declared our Conference to be Open and Affirming; and

WHEREAS, in the 1990's we resolved to urge churches in the conference to support legislation which affirms gay, lesbian, bisexual persons; and

WHEREAS, in the year 2002 we resolved that discrimination against any persons based on sexual orientation is contrary to our understanding of the teachings of Christ; and

WHEREAS, all of the aforementioned resolutions originated in our denomination's historic commitment to empower the marginalized and liberate the oppressed; and

WHEREAS, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons still do not enjoy equal civil rights and have a long way to go to gain full equality;

THEREFORE BE IT AFFIRMED that we, the delegates to the 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, are called to step forward in this new decade to reaffirm our support of equal civil rights and responsibilities for same-sex couples in fully committed, faithful relationships;

BE IT FURTHER AFFIRMED that we commit ourselves to work toward expanding the rights and responsibilities of same-sex couples by actively encouraging churches and governmental agencies to ensure equal liberty and justice for all;

BE IT FURTHER AFFIRMED that we the delegates to the 136th annual meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ recommit ourselves to address the inequalities that still exist and to further the cause of justice for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals and couples in our generation.

BE IT FURTHER AFFIRMED, that this affirmation is an affirmation of delegates attending the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, that the vote represents the position of the Connecticut Conference, that the vote at the Annual meeting is not binding on churches within the Connecticut Conference, and that churches within the Connecticut Conference are free to follow the affirmation, reject the affirmation, or to take no position on the affirmation.

There were abstentions.

RESOLUTION: IN SUPPORT OF LEGAL MARRIAGE FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES

The motion was moved by Alice O'Donovan, Chairperson of the Resolutions Committee, and the Proponent was Rev. John Hall, First Church of Christ, Congregational, Middletown. The Responder was Rev. Frank Haggard of Wolcott, who yielded Voice Without Vote to Mr. Mark Dawes of Wethersfield. Consent was declared by the Moderator. Discussion was held.

Point of Order was called by Mr. Robbins Barstow of Wethersfield. The motion was made to table the Resolution until the next Annual Meeting; it was seconded. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-11 that the Resolution: In support of Legal Marriage for Same-Sex Couples was declared tabled until the next Annual Meeting as follows:

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF LEGAL MARRIAGE FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES

Resolution introduced by: First Church of Christ, Congregational, Middletown, CT and The First Church in Windsor

WHEREAS Jesus, throughout his short ministry, emphasized God's compassion for and inclusion of all humanity (Matt. 20:30-34, Luke 17:11-19 and Gal. 3: 28); and

WHEREAS Jesus overturned purity laws which maintained cultural walls between Jews and others around them (Matt. 22:34-40 and 12:9-14); and

WHEREAS one purity law in Leviticus is often cited in opposition to same-sex relationships (Lev. 20:13) while other acts equally condemned are ignored, such as eating creatures of the water that do not have fins and scales or wearing clothes made of two blended fabrics (Lev. 11:9-12; 19:19); and

WHEREAS we understand many of Jesus' teachings require the church and society to welcome people whom others shun; and

WHEREAS legal marriage, which strengthens the union of committed couples by adding to their economic, emotional and social stability, is a civil right currently denied to same-sex couples; and

WHEREAS a partial precedent has been set by individual congregations within many religious communities (American Baptists, Buddhists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Reform Jews, the Society of Friends, Unitarian Universalists, and the United Church of Christ) which already allow "holy unions" or "commitment services" of same-sex couples even though Connecticut law has yet to recognize such unions; and

WHEREAS the principle of separation of church and state assures that no law passed by the Legislature would require a particular religion or a particular congregation to perform marriages for same-sex couples;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates to this 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, declare that the denial of the civil right of marriage of same-sex couples is an unwarranted act of exclusion; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we ask our Conference staff and church leaders to urge our congregations to prayerfully consider and support legislation to legalize marriage of same-sex couples; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that our Connecticut Conference staff and public policy advocate be instructed to communicate this resolution to our representatives in the state legislature, urging them to adopt marriage of same-sex couples as public policy for the State of Connecticut.

The Moderator declared a required vote count: 215 to table; 208 not to table. It was declared tabled until the next Annual Meeting.

Justice & Witness Team Report – the Reverend Lee Ireland of Niantic reported that the Team's responsibility was to discern key social justice issues and to study/restudy resolutions passed by the Conference. She introduced members of the team. Appreciation was expressed for Cecile Gilson, Coordinator for Justice/Witness Ministry for Gordon Bates, Associate Conference Minister for Justice/Witness Ministry. Mr. Bates received a certificate of Green Power certifying that the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ offset 45,000 kilowatt-hours of hydroelectric power representing 100% of the electricity consumed annually at the Hartford office.

New Open and Affirming Churches – The Reverend Sarah Verasco of Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford affirmed and congratulated the new Open and Affirming Churches this year; making a total of 26 churches in the Connecticut Conference: First Congregational Church of Woodstock, South Congregational/First Baptist Church, New Britain; and First Congregational Church of Greenwich.

There being no objection, the Moderator moved the A People of Hope Youth Presentation to Sunday on the agenda.

Permission from the body was granted to extend the Order of the Day 10 minutes with no objections.

Point of Personal Privilege was granted to the Reverend Nancy Milton, Interim Minister from Hartford East Association, who presented a motion on Same Gender Marriage. Objection was made to unanimous consent. The motion was then seconded and discussion was held.

Point of Order was raised by the Rev. Vernon Phelps of Windham Association that it was out of order to make a motion at this time. The Moderator declared that it was not and discussion continued. Mr. Robbins Barstow of Wethersfield moved the question, and it was

VOTED

2003-10C-12 to close debate.

It was then

VOTED

2003-10C-13 to refer the following motion to the Board of Directors: The delegates of the 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ request that the Board of Directors and the Conference Minister develop a study dialogue process for our churches with appropriate materials which set forth the Biblical, theological and civil considerations as concerns same gender marriage.

The vote count was 117 for; 96 against.

Speak Out – The Speak Out Session was held.

The Reverend Dwight Juliani offered prayer, and the Moderator declared the meeting in recess until 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning.

Following dinner in the cafeteria on Saturday evening, the Reverend Carole Carlson, Associate Conference Minister for Clergy Concerns; the Reverend Rick Mapes, Minister to Retired Clergy-SouthEastern Region; and the Reverend Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister made presentations to clergy celebrating 50 and 25 years of ordination as follows:

50-YEAR ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Alvord Beardslee

Chaplain and Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Hollins College in Roanoke, VA. Historian and Scholar and Writer. Strong involvement with UCC and with social justice ministries.

Charles Campbell

20 years ministry in Connecticut: Poquonock, 2nd Church in Waterbury, and United Congregational Church of Norwalk. 18 years as pastor in Springfield, Vermont. In addition, long-time ministry in pastoral counseling.

Joseph Clemmons

Continues to serve actively as pastor of Miracle Temple Church of God in Christ/UCC in Norwalk. His father continued preaching until he was 93, and Joe hopes to do the same! Extensive community outreach and involvement, including service in State Legislature.

Sidney Lovett

Sr Pastor for 12 years at First Church, West Hartford; Senior Pastorates in VA, MA, and IL. Conference Minister in Central Atlantic Conference. Extensive involvement in U.S. Institute for Peace; vocal peace and justice advocate as member of New Hampshire legislature.

Hugh Penney

Retired from 27-year pastorate at South Congregational/First Baptist Church in New Britain. Pastorates in MA prior to CT. On Conf staff for past 12 years providing Coordination of services and Pastoral Care for Retired Clergy/Widows/Widowers in CT.

Robert Raines

Director of Kirkridge Center in Bangor, PA.

Raymond Sikkell

42-year active ministry in 6 pastorates, including 15 years in Danielson and 5 in Darien. Retired as Sr. Pastor in Exeter, NH in 1989 after 8 years of service there.

Vardell Swett

Retired after a 22-year pastorate in Terryville. 3 previous pastorates in New York. Enjoying retirement in warm North Carolina.

Henry Yordon

Celebrating 41st year of service as Pastor of First Church, Norwalk. Entire ministry has been in CT; previous service at Southbury (11 years) Quote from his message on the 40th anniversary of his call to Norwalk, "...*What I tend to recall is the joy, the joy of Sunday after Sunday...proclaiming the joyous Gospel of our Living God, experiencing the joy ...of ministry on the green and down and throughout our City....*"

50 YEAR ORDINATION CELEBRATION: Not Able to be Present

J. Merlyn Bilhorn

Served churches in IL and WI. Retired from First Congregational in Stonington.

James Hansen

Retired in 1991 as Minister of CE in Wapping. Pastorates in MA and OH.

John Hosmer

Served in E Hampton, Southington, and Meriden. Retired from Veteran's Hospital Chaplaincy.

Don Morgan

Sr. Pastor in Wethersfield for 17 years. Also served in Litchfield, OH, and VT.

Wayne Sandau

Sr. Pastor in Cheshire for 34 years. Previous pastorate in Ellington.

25-YEAR ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Keith Bolton, Hartford
Margaret A. Brown, Norwalk
J. Shannon Clarkson, Guilford
Steven P. Gordon, Newtown
Mark A. Horton, Danbury
Richard H. Huleatt, Windsor
Gretchen Law, New Haven
Douglas A. Miller, Jr., Bridgeport
David W. Minnick, Middletown
Carl P. Reynolds, Stafford Springs

Olivia Hayes Robinson, Branford
Toni T. Smith, Chester

Musical entertainment was presented by Tim and Anne Hughes, Co-Directors of Silver Lake Conference Center.

Sunday Morning—Session Four

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by the Moderator, Mr. Erskine McIntosh. Opening prayer was offered by the Reverend Dwight Juliani, Conference Preacher.

A People of Hope—Our Youth – The Reverend Kathleen Peters, Associate Conference Minister for Local Church Ministry, reported that in 2002 the Conference voted that each local church send one additional delegate to the Annual Meeting if that person was a youth. This is a wonderful sign of Hope and growth. This year we have 40 youth registered in attendance; in 2002 there were 2. We wish to extend the hand of hospitality to youth of your local church when we gather in 2004. Workshops will be available for youth; evaluations will be available to them for their comments. There was no mission project in 2003 so that youth could participate fully in the Annual Meeting experience—in our being the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. We really need young people here! A Mission Day for Youth will be held in the spring of 2004; invite youth to have mission opportunities. A hope is: youth will be giving the youth report in 2004.

Election of Officers and Committees – Ms. Esther Shoup, Chairperson of the Conference Nominating Committee presented her report and moved its adoption.

There being no nominations from the floor, the Moderator declared the nominations closed. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-14 that the Scribe of the Conference cast one ballot for those who have been nominated for the terms stipulated in the Report of the Nominating Committee as follows:

Report of NOMINATING COMMITTEE of the Conference October 17-19, 2003

Conference Officers (2003-2004)

Moderator

The Rev. David W. Spollett (Fairfield, First)
148 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06430

Assistant Moderator

Mr. Jay Krusell (Newington Church)
56 Crestview Drive, Newington, CT 06111

Chair of the Board of Directors

Ms. Joan Kratzert (Old Lyme, First Church)
9 Lyme Street, Apt. 1A, Old Lyme, CT 06371

Scribe

The Rev. Thomas Ratmeyer (Mystic Congregational Church)
43 East Main Street, Mystic, CT 06355

Assistant Scribe

The Rev. Charlotte K. White (Guilford, First Church)
128 White Birch Drive, Guilford, CT 06437

Treasurer

Mr. Martin Ewing (Guilford, First Church)
20 Wood Road, Branford, CT 06405

Co-Conference Preacher/Chaplain

The Rev. Bette Anne Crowell/ The Rev. Joshua L. Crowell
(formerly Pastor & Associate at Essex Church – now retired)
PO Box 21, Dennis, MA 02638

Alternate Preacher/Chaplain

The Rev. Barbara E. Headley (Pastor, Faith Church, Hartford)
2030 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06120

Board of Directors

Class of 2005

Mr. R. William Fairbairn (Washington, First)
PO Box 1018, Washington, CT 06793

Western Region

Class of 2006

The Rev. Ronald B. Brown (New Britain, South)
90 Streamside Lane, New Britain, CT 06052

SouthEastern Region

Class of 2006

The Rev. Edward G. Horstmann (Hartford, Immanuel)
10 Woodland Street, Hartford, CT 06105

Northern Region

Class of 2006

Ms. Joan Kratzert (Old Lyme Church)
9 Lyme Street, Apt. 1A, Old Lyme, CT 06371

SouthEastern Region

Ex-Officio

The Rev. David W. Spollett
148 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06430

Moderator

Mr. Jay Krusell
56 Crestview Drive, Newington, CT 06111

Assistant Moderator

Justice & Witness Ministry Team

Class of 2006

The Rev. Carol Bass, 173 Picketts Ridge Road, West Redding, CT 06896
The Rev. Denise Esslinger, 672 Gilead Street, Hebron, CT 06248

Ms. Ruth Healy, 9 Dukeland Drive, Woodstock, CT 06281
Mr. Michael Litwinka, Jr., 205 Tallwood Drive, Vernon, CT 06066
Mr. J. David Maier, 309 West Ben Rock, Orange, CT 06477
Ms. Nancy Martinez-Fuentes, 88 Strickland Street, Manchester, CT 06040
The Rev. Dorothy Slater, PO Box 72, Beebe Hill Road, Falls Village, CT 06031
Ms. Susan Waldron, 17 Maple Lane, Thompson, CT 06277

Local Church Ministry Team

Class of 2004

Ms. Barbara Leary, 48 Doubleday Road, Columbia, CT 06237

Class of 2006

The Rev. Denise Clapsaddle, 115 Lyons Street, New Britain, CT 06053
The Rev. John Danner, 245 Post Road, East, Westport, CT 06880
The Rev. Paulette Harwood, 143 Kinne Road, Canterbury, CT 06331
The Rev. Linda Higgins, P.O. Box 55, 359 Route 6, Andover, CT 06232
The Rev. Carolyn L. Young, 1242 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517
The Rev. Thomas I. Burlington, 47 Stanton Road, Clinton, CT 06413

Wider Church Ministry Team

Class of 2005

Ms. Elizabeth McCosh-Lilie, 130 Mansfield Road, Ashford, CT 06278

Class of 2006

The Rev. Wendy Sue Kissa, P.O. Box 390, Church Road, East Granby, CT 06226
Mrs. Betsy Work, 2 Spencer Avenue, Guilford, CT 06437
Mr. Clyde Work, 2 Spencer Avenue, Guilford, CT 06437
Mrs. Norma Comins, 30 Valley Street, Waterford, CT 06385
The Rev. Susan M. Craig, 108 Sound Beach Avenue, Old Greenwich, CT 06870
The Rev. Lindsay L. Fulmer, PO Box 36, 549 Storrs Road, Mansfield Center, CT 06250

The Reverend Peter Wiley of Brookfield presented the Report of the Board of Directors Nominating Committee. Upon motion made and seconded, there being no nominations from the floor, it was

VOTED

2003-10C-15 that the report is received as follows;

**NOMINEES FOR THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE FROM
THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD:**

Class of 2004

The Rev. Erick R. Olsen, 12 Village Green, Norfolk, CT 06058 (replacing Greg Schmidt)

Class of 2005

The Rev. Pèrsida Rivera-Méndez, 837 Main Street, East Hartford, CT 06108 (replacing Edwin Ayala)

Class of 2006

Mr. Martin Donovan, 37 City Brook Road, Naugatuck, CT 06770 (Western Region)
Ms. Elizabeth O'Shaughnessy, Oyster River Landing Unit D-16, Old Saybrook, CT 06475 (SE Region)
Ms. Gwen Lewis, 30 Old Village Road, Bloomfield, CT 06002 (N Region)

General Synod Report – Ms. Joan Kratzert, Chairperson of the Delegation, reported that it was a wonderful experience, with wonderful hospitality. There were 52 delegates from Connecticut, plus staff. Appreciation was expressed for Peggy Wright’s hard work to make sense of it all. A video was presented.

Continuation of Action on Resolutions – The Reverend Alice O’Donovan presented the next resolution to be considered.

RESOLUTION: RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The proponent was Mr. Robbins Barstow of Wethersfield. A friendly amendment was made and acceptable to the committee. There was no Reactor. Discussion was held. The question was called, and it was

VOTED
2003-10C-16 to close debate.

It was then

VOTED
2003-10C-17 to adopt the Resolution: Religious Expression in the Public Schools as amended as follows:

RESOLUTION: RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, Jesus said, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17, NRSV), which we interpret to mean that: human beings do not owe religious obligations to the state but only to God; and that, therefore, religious beliefs and practices should not be mandated by the state; and that protecting freedom of religious expression requires a separation of the jurisdiction of state and church; and

WHEREAS, we believe, as stated by former United States Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, that: “The United States remains the most successful experiment in religious freedom that the world has ever known because the First Amendment uniquely balances freedom of private religious belief and expression with freedom from state-imposed religious expression”; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the First Amendment requires public school officials to be neutral in their treatment of religion, showing neither favoritism toward nor hostility against religious expression in the public schools; and

WHEREAS, in February 2003, the United States Department of Education issued a “Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools” clarifying the rights of students to pray in public schools, and pointing out that “the First Amendment forbids religious activity that is sponsored by the government but protects religious activity that is initiated by private individuals” such as students; and

WHEREAS, this guidance indicates that under the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," as a condition of receiving funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, every local educational agency must certify to its State educational agency in writing "that it has no policy that prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in public schools"; and

WHEREAS, we believe that it is equally important for every local educational agency to uphold the principle of neutrality in relation to religious expression in the public schools, and to affirm that it has no policy in effect that would compel students to participate in prayer or other religious activities, or that would allow teachers, school administrators and other public school employees, as representatives of the state, to encourage or discourage prayer, or to participate in such activities with students;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates to the 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, reaffirm our commitment to the two-fold constitutional standard of support for privately initiated religious expression and activity by students in public schools and opposition to government-sponsored religious expression and activity by school officials; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we request the Office of Justice and Witness Ministries, in cooperation with the Public Education Advocacy Group, to make educational resources available on this subject to every local church, and urge congregations to study this issue; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Office of Justice and Witness Ministries in cooperation with the Public Education Advocacy Group, shall offer educational materials and consultative services upon request of a local church, when problems involving Religious Expression in the Public Schools arise, in order to help ensure that genuine freedom of religion is maintained according to constitutional and established law requiring on the one hand that no child be compelled to worship in the public school setting, and on the other hand that no child be denied the right to private religious expression.

RESOLUTION: ON THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS AND YOUTH MINISTERS IN THE LIFE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The resolution was moved and the proponent was Ms. Margie Hughes of CAUCE. No responder; discussion was held. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-18 to adopt the Resolution: On the Essential Role of the Professional Christian Educators and Youth Ministers in the Life of the Local Church as follows:

RESOLUTION: ON THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS AND YOUTH MINISTERS IN THE LIFE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

WHEREAS, In Paul's letter to the Ephesians we are told: "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for the building up of the body of Christ,..."...(Ephesians 4:11-12 NRSV); and

WHEREAS, "The complicated, rapidly changing and pluralistic environment in which today's congregations live present new challenges which require a professional educational ministry...." (The Professional Church Educators Guide by the Association of United Church Educators 2000); and

WHEREAS, The Mission statement of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ states: "We come together as Local Churches and members to equip one another to proclaim the Gospel to the communities of Connecticut and to the world by teaching the Good News of Jesus Christ, doing the work of reconciliation and justice and living faithfully in daily life. Amen" (Mission Statement of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ adopted October, 1998); and

WHEREAS, Christian Education and Youth Ministry is understood as a professional vocation whether as paid staff or volunteers in the local church setting; and

WHEREAS, These professionals are engaged in ministries that are vital to the spiritual formation, education and growth of our children, youth and adults in these times when it is often difficult to learn what it means to live as a person of faith;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we the delegates of the 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference affirm the vital and essential role of Professional Christian Educators and Youth Ministers in the local church;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge local churches to provide opportunities for continuing education, professional training and spiritual nourishment such as are offered by the Connecticut Conference, professional organizations including the Connecticut Association of United Church Educators (CAUCE) and other educational organizations and institutions;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That we urge local churches to provide fair wages and benefits to Christian Educators and Youth Ministers as voted and recommended by the Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference in 1999 as well as the salary guidelines as recommended by CAUCE in 2003;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That we join with all clergy and lay members of the Connecticut Conference in prayerful support and appreciation of the vital ministries of the Professional Christian Educators and Youth Ministers of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.

There were abstentions.

RESOLUTION: ON PRISON REFORM AND EDUCATION

The resolution was moved by Alice O'Donovan, Chairperson of the Resolutions Committee. The proponent was Ms. Anna Lee Van Allen of Naugatuck; there was no Reactor. Discussion was held, and it was

VOTED

2003-10C-19 to adopt the Resolution: On Prison Reform and Education as follows:

RESOLUTION ON PRISON REFORM AND EDUCATION

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture tells us that God dreams of liberty for the prisoners and freedom for those held captive: "Happy is he who.... executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free" (Psalms 146: 7 Revised Standard Version), "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives." (Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18 RSV); and

WHEREAS, statistics show that approximately 50% of inmates in all Connecticut prisons have no High School diploma or General Education Diploma¹; and

WHEREAS, the prisoners' lack of knowledge or skills keep them captive, both in and out of prison; and

WHEREAS, women who have successfully experienced educational opportunities during incarceration are more likely to pursue education upon release, have an increased sense of self esteem, want to live their lives in the present, enjoy the freedom and richness that life offers and are less likely to return to prison; and

WHEREAS, there is no doubt that higher education for prisoners is one of the most effective ways to reduce repeat offenses, reduce crime and lessen the tax payer burden, and

WHEREAS; while statistics from York Correctional Institution concern only the women of that facility, the plight of men in other facilities is similar concerning lack of encouragement to further their educational status while incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, ignorance of the plight of inmates in the Connecticut prison system keeps the situation from changing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we the delegates to the 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, ask that the Justice and Witness Ministry Team of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ gather materials and provide all churches in the Conference with resources that will assist them in becoming better informed about the plight of women and men in the Connecticut prison system, helping our churches to become advocates and agents for real change in the lives of offenders from each and every town in Connecticut; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that our Public Policy Advocate inform the churches of upcoming legislation concerning prison reform; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Connecticut Conference Board of Directors and the Conference Minister are requested to communicate frequently with the Department of Corrections recommending the establishment of incentive programs that will encourage inmates to continue their education while in prison.

¹ Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, *Recidivism in Connecticut* (Hartford: Connecticut General Assembly, December 2001), 31.

There were abstentions.

Following announcements and a Break, Mr. McIntosh, called upon the Reverend Donald Ketcham for continuation of the report of the Board of Directors.

Basic Mission Support Goal for 2004 – Mr. Ketcham moved the Goal. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-20 that the Conference, upon recommendation of the Board of Directors, adopts a Basic Mission Support Goal of \$2,617,560 for 2004.

There were abstentions.

Distribution of Monies – Mr. Ketcham moved the Distribution of Monies. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-21 that the Conference adopts the following distribution of monies received for the Connecticut Conference and the ministries of the United Church of Christ:

- A. Basic Mission Support monies to be divided on the basis of 37% for the Conference and 63% to the United Church of Christ nationally for distribution among the ministries according to the payment schedule adopted by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ.
- B. Investment Income to be used entirely for Conference work unless otherwise stipulated by the donor.
- C. Special Support, capital and emergency appeal monies to be designated entirely to the purposes for which they were authorized.

There were abstentions.

Per Capita Contributions – Mr. Ketcham moved the per capita contributions. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-22 that the Conference, upon recommendation of the Board of Directors, establishes the per capita contribution request for 2004 at \$4.00 per member to be used entirely for Conference work.

There were abstentions.

Proposed 2004 Budget for the Missionary Society of Connecticut – Mr. Ketcham moved the proposed budget for 2004 for the Missionary Society of Connecticut. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-23 that the 2004 Proposed Budget of \$5,392,652 for the Missionary Society of Connecticut is adopted, and the Conference grants to the Society the privilege of revising the budget during the year as funds are available and needs arise.

Proposed 2004 Budget for the Trustees of the Fund for Ministers – Mr. Ketcham moved the proposed budget for 2004 for the Trustees of the Fund for Ministers. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-24 that the 2004 Proposed Budget of \$958,929 for the Trustees of the Fund for Ministers is adopted, and the Conference grants to the Trustees the privilege of revising the budget during the year as funds are available and needs arise.

The Reverend Davida Foy Crabtree announced that the Conference Staff and Members of the Board of Directors are available to come to local churches to tell the Story and to help them understand the Mission.

Ms. Crabtree expressed appreciation to Mr. Erskine McIntosh for his facilitation of this meeting with the presentation of a plaque. The meeting was then turned over to the Assistant Moderator, the Reverend David Spollett of Fairfield.

Speak Out – The final Speak Out Session was held.

Mr. Spollett called upon Ms. Susan Waldron of Woodstock, a member of the Annual Meeting Steering Committee, who presented a resolution on Amenities. It was

VOTED

2003-10C-25 to adopt the Amenities Resolution as follows:

The 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ (Congregational Christian Churches), meeting in the 206th year of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, gathers it's members and guests from across the Connecticut Conference at Saxe Middle School in New Canaan, Connecticut. The weather is continuing to improve, but the fellowship & hospitality has remained wonderfully constant these three days, October 17-19, 2003.

Whereas gathered here in this lovely little town of New Canaan, we give special thanks to the Fairfield West Association that has hosted us, the host churches and pastors, and most especially The Rev. Jeffrey Crow, the Association Moderator, Pastor Harold E. Masback, III; Kelly Morrissey and the members of the Congregational Church of New Canaan for all the special things that they did for this Annual Meeting. We are especially grateful for the hospitality of all the church members of this association who volunteered to make our time in their midst enjoyable, efficient, and comfortable.

Therefore be it resolved, that we are deeply appreciative for the Authorized Minister's Event – "From Chanting to Chat Rooms: Different Prayers For Different Pastors" presented by The Rev. John Danner. We thank the First Congregational Church of Darien and especially Polly Moorehouse, for hosting this event and feeding our clergy.

Be it further resolved, that we humbly acknowledge the gifts of ministry of the thirteen 50 year and twelve 25 year ordinands, representing 950 years of ministry, who were recognized this year for their collective decades of service.

Be it further resolved, that we thank the Moderator, Attorney Erskine McIntosh, the Assistant Moderator, The Rev. David Spollett, the Scribe, The Rev. Paul Goodman, the Assistant Scribe, The Rev. Thomas Ratmeyer, the Parliamentarian, The Rev. Malcolm Bertram, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, The Rev. Don Ketcham, the Resolutions Committee Chair, The Rev. Alice O'Donovan, as well as the entire staff of the Conference Office for their many hours of hard work to prepare for this Annual Meeting. We offer special thanks to Alison Tamucci, the administration, staff and students of the Saxe Middle School for their assistance. We praise and thank Bruce Gluck and the Cafeteria staff for the satisfying meals and friendly service.

Be it further resolved, that we offer prayerful thanks to The Rev. Dwight Juliani, Conference Preacher and Chaplain, The Rev. Bette Anne Crowell and The Rev. Josh Crowell, the Alternate Conference Preachers, and Worship Committee members: The Rev. Kathy Peters, The Rev. Skip Masback, The Rev. David Jarvis, The Rev. Bette Anne Crowell, The Rev. Josh Crowell, Dr. Allen Hilton, William Stokes, The Rev. Dwight Juliani, the Chancel Choir of the Congregational Church of New Canaan, and all those who were involved in leading worship this weekend—in the liturgy and in the music which made our worship time meaningful. We also thank The Rev. Jim Silver for creating the peaceful Prayer Room.

Be it further resolved, that our Conference Minister, The Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree, offers each of us her Prophetic Hospitality, while reminding us to look for the strangers to share our hospitality, always mindful that we might entertain angels! She reminds us that true hospitality is a sign of hope, reforming us, while it challenges us. Davida's secure Faith inspires us all and her continuing excitement for General Synod 2007 in Connecticut is contagious!

Be it further resolved, that we recognize with new blessings the team of Tim and Anne Hughes, recently appointed Directors of the Silver Lake Conference Center. Their excitement and enthusiasm as well as their dogged dedication will inspire their staff at Silver Lake to continue to make us proud. We applaud them and their staff of spirited workers.

Be it further resolved, that we thank the following guests for sharing this time with us:

- Missionary: Ellen Tompsett from India
- Partners from the Kyung-Ki Presbytery from Korea
- General Synod Delegates
- Dr Benjamin T. Griffin, President of Andover Newton Seminary
- Dr. William Imes, President of Bangor Theological Seminary

Be it further resolved, that we are happy to have our Regional Ministers, The Rev. Judith Hjorth, The Rev. Kent Siladi, and The Rev. Susan Townsley, our newest Regional minister for

the Western Region with us throughout the weekend. The work they do with congregations in their regions satisfies many needs and we thank them for all they do.

Be it further resolved, that we thank the members of each of the Conference Wider Ministry Teams for the work that they do and for the time they dedicate to their Team. We are especially thankful for the leaders guiding these Teams, The Rev. Lee Ireland, Chair, Justice & Witness, Jill Shaw & Elizabeth McCosh-Lillie, Co-Chairs of Wider Church and Doby Hall, Chair of Local Church Ministry.

Be it further resolved, that at least 40 youth attended this Annual Meeting as delegates and many more attended as visitors, reminding us that our hope for the future lies in the youth of all of our congregations.

Be it further resolved, that we thank Judge Frederica Brenneman, a member of the Saugatuck Church, United Church of Christ for being our keynote speaker and inspiring us about "Impact Thinking." She reminded us that the cross of resurrection, reconciliation and hope is a necessary consequence of having Faith.

Be it further resolved, that we acknowledge with great appreciation the gifts and talents of Judge Brenneman and her husband, Russell, both in her arena as an advocate for children and families and his specialty writing environmental law.

Be it further resolved, that we thank all of the Workshop Leaders and all those who set up displays for our viewing. We also give thanks for those who participated in the luncheon sponsored by Connecticut Women of the United Church of Christ and for The Rev Olivia Hayes-Robinson who shared so many of her creative gifts with us. We thank as well the Congregational Church of New Canaan for hosting the meal and the women of the church for our special box lunches.

Be it further resolved, that we thank Kate & Hugh McLean and the members of the Proposed Capital Campaign Planning Committee for their hard work and extreme dedication to **Now For The Future**. They are still listening....

Be it further resolved, that we appreciate the diligent work of our treasurer, Robert Giles and accept his report. We especially thank Bob for his six years of service as our Treasurer. We also thank the Rev. Thomas Stiers, for the Budget Committee presentation. We recognize each of the 15 Tithing Churches and each of those 24 Step Up Churches. We especially honor the 7 Step up and Tithing Churches

Be it further resolved, that we thank those who participated in the resolutions process and we further thank the Rev. Alice O'Donovan and the Resolutions Committee for all their conscientious, hard work during the past year.

Be it further resolved, that we thank the Rev. Don Ketcham and all of the Board of Directors for their many hours of dedicated work during the past year.

Be it further resolved, that we accept with enthusiasm the commitment of all of those persons who have agreed to hold an elected office in the upcoming year.

Be it further resolved, that we acknowledge the newest Open & Affirming Churches, First Congregational Church, Woodstock, Inc, South Congregational Church, New Britain, & First Congregational Church, Greenwich.

Be it further resolved, that we extend a special debt of gratitude to The Rev. Bonnie Bardot, Chairperson of the Annual Meeting Planning Committee and her committee members for their hard work and attention to details that make this Annual Meeting a success. Their flexibility is truly amazing!

Be it further resolved, that the delegates and friends of this 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, shall return to their churches to spread the word that God is expecting us to show that **Prophetic Hospitality** to all that we meet without consideration for their sexual orientation, their skin color, their age or their abilities. Listen....God is still speaking.....

Appreciation was expressed for the quilt makers at Norwalk, United; and for the Reverend Mal Bertram, Parliamentarian; and for the Reverend Eric Anderson for his E-media work.

Announcement of the location of the 2004 Annual Meeting at Suffield High School, Suffield, and the Reverend Karen Bailey-Francois and Mr. Douglas Andrews of Hartford Association, who will be hosts of next year's Annual Meeting. The keynote speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Park Jong-Wha, Vice President of the Korea National Council of Churches, from our partners in Korea. Also, rocks will be presented from Korea to the Second Congregational Church in Greenwich, for placement into their Memorial Garden together with rocks from places of suffering around the world.

Mr. Erskine McIntosh, Moderator, shared some closing thoughts, expressed appreciation to the Reverend Mal Bertram for his invaluable knowledge about parliamentary procedure, and officially turned the over the gavel and cross to Moderator-Elect the Reverend David Spollett of Fairfield. Mr. Spollett then declared that following worship, the 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, acting also as the Connecticut Conference of the Congregational Christian Churches, is adjourned. It was 11:21 a.m.

The Reverend Joshua Crowell lead the body in Grace and luncheon followed prior to the Festival Worship with Communion and Installation of Officers held at the Congregational Church of New Canaan.



The Reverend Paul F. Goodman
Scribe