

Social Witness Policies of the
General Assemblies of the
United Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA)
and the
Presbyterian Church in the U. S. (PCUS)
on the
VIETNAM WAR

- 1966 South Vietnam
- 1967 Vietnam: A Declaration of Conscience, Study of the Issues and a Call to Prayer
- 1968 The Vietnam War and Its Lessons
- 1969 Conscience, Conscription, and the Church
- 1970 Conscience and War by L. William Yolton
- 1970 Not Lightly, But Under Grave Constraint
- 1971 War, Indochina, Arms: The Moral Crisis of the United States in Indochina
- 1973 Indochina: The Indo china Quagmire
- 1974 Vietnamese Political Prisoners—The Responsibility of American Christians

These are the primary official statements of the church during the years 1966-1974. Most texts are taken from the *Church & Society* magazine annual issues reporting on General Assembly Social Witness actions.

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See website: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/acswp/>

UPCUSA 1966

1966]

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

399

D. South Vietnam

The hard moral facts that underlie our active engagement in the Vietnamese conflict make difficult a clear delineation of right from wrong. This difficulty is mirrored in the widely divergent opinions held by Christians all over the world concerning this war. It is true that the United States forces are in South Vietnam because of a firm commitment, entered into sincerely with the desire to protect the lives of millions of people. South Vietnam is threatened by a movement well known to be merciless and murderous, determined by the basic concepts of class war, and revolution through guerrilla tactics and subversive activity. It is also true, however, that efforts to suppress this threat in Vietnam have led the South Vietnamese and us into actions that have inflicted suffering comparable to that which we seek to overcome. Terror has been used by both sides in the war. No government has arisen in South Vietnam with the ability to institute extensive social reform. Our involvement, meant to prevent disaster, may even have increased the suffering of the people while their hopes for a free and peaceful future are continually postponed.

The ability to resolve this problem in Vietnam does not lie with our nation alone. Christians will therefore commend to their government

realism in evaluating both friend and foe and a responsible relationship to both. No nation is righteous before God; therefore, we ought not to suppose our cause completely just or our motives completely pure. We are committed to the reconciling power of the servant of all men, Jesus Christ, who gave his life for all sorts and conditions of men. As Christians, therefore, we must accept the risk of living and working for the triumph, not of any nation or ideology, but of all humanity. This is the basis of our concern about the war in Vietnam.

The 178th General Assembly (1966):

1. Encourages free, full, open and responsible debate of foreign policy by American citizens, even during periods of crisis and war.
2. Supports the publicly and repeatedly expressed intention of the Administration to seek peace in Vietnam, and urges the Administration to continue to resist pressures for extreme actions that would jeopardize the quest for a negotiated settlement.
3. Urges the United States Government to make unremitting efforts to bring about negotiations with all parties involved in the conflict.
4. Regrets that it has so far been impossible for the United Nations to play any effective part in ending the conflict in South Vietnam, and urges the Administration to continue to seek international means for settlement.
5. Reminds United Presbyterians and the American public that neither abandonment of the struggle in Vietnam nor escalation of military action will end the suffering and terror there.
6. Urges the President to continue to direct the United States Armed Forces to alleviate the desperate plight of the South Vietnamese non-combatants.
7. Urges the United States Government to increase its aid and development efforts in Vietnam with at least the same sense of urgency with which we are seeking a solution by force of arms.
8. Recognizes that the crisis in Vietnam must be viewed in a broad regional context and urges United States support for greatly enlarged economic and social programs in all of Southeast Asia.
9. Supports the Administration's efforts in behalf of free elections in South Vietnam.
10. Commends the May-June 1966 issue of *Social Progress* entitled "Alternatives in Vietnam" for study and discussion.
11. Reminds United Presbyterians and all Americans that it is people and not simply ideas that are in conflict in Vietnam and urges regular prayer that God may grant wisdom and responsibility to the leaders of all nations involved so that the suffering imposed by long years of war can end.

VIETNAM

Introduction

In response to our concern and consternation about the war in Vietnam, the Standing Committee on Church and Society recommends the following to the 179th General Assembly (1967) :

- I. The adoption of the following Declaration of Conscience;
- II. The initiation of a high-priority Study, throughout the church, of the issues involved in the war;
- III. The Offering of Prayers for Peace.

I. A DECLARATION OF CONSCIENCE

“Grace be unto you, and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is no moral issue more urgently confronting our church and nation than the war in Vietnam. The hour is late; the church dare not remain silent. We must declare our conscience.

We share widely held feelings of sadness that steps were taken in the past which have involved our nation in its present difficulty. Although each step was taken with hope it would be the last, their cumulative result has brought us to an agonizing dilemma. On the one hand, we cannot responsibly withdraw our military forces unilaterally from Vietnam. On the other hand, further escalation seems to us to raise the specter of World War III and the possibility of a nuclear holocaust.

A. We recognize that our leaders desire an end to the war, and believe that their motives for pursuing the war are those of honorable men. We must nevertheless declare our deep misgivings at the policy of military escalation (further steps being taken during the week of this Assembly) which leads the world daily closer to the danger of wider war. Acts of escalation tend to commit us to further acts of escalation and may lessen the possibility of settlement by negotiation.

B. We realize that a decision to change national policy in the midst of military conflict is an agonizing one for the President and his advisers. Nevertheless, in the light of the increasing cost and peril of our present course of escalation we ask for ourselves and our nation:

1. The moral courage to acknowledge our obligation, as the stronger nation, to act first taking initiatives that will create a climate of trust leading finally to the negotiating table.
2. The recognition that with such information and such insights as we now possess, it appears that the immediate need is an alternate to the bombing of North Vietnam. Mindful of the fact that our forces have already interrupted the bombing on several occasions for varying periods

of time, we nevertheless urge our Government to consider again cessation of bombing as one tangible evidence of our desire to negotiate.

3. Renewed attempts to get all parties concerned to seek arbitration of the war through the United Nations, to accept its decisions as final, and to cooperate with the United Nations in assuring peace by means of an international peace-keeping force on the scene.

4. Exploration of other alternatives, such as a purely defensive war behind a fortified demilitarized zone in South Vietnam with the subsequent pacification of the South Vietnamese countryside.

We understand this Declaration of Conscience to be required of us by our Confession of 1967: "The search for cooperation and peace . . . requires the pursuit of fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security." Just as our present policy of escalation involves risk, so also does a policy of de-escalation. We believe it is a risk we must take for the sake of the future of mankind.

C. We call upon members of every religious faith and communion, and upon all men of goodwill everywhere, to make common cause with us in an effort to bring about an end to the war. As we do so:

1. *We must continue to affirm the morality of dissent.* Increasing numbers of citizens, including some in high office, are equating dissent with disloyalty.

The enemy can always misunderstand the meaning of dissent. We, however, must affirm unequivocally that the right of dissent is the life-blood of democracy. We also affirm unequivocally that the first mandate under which the church lives is the mandate, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). We acknowledge that "the church which identifies the sovereignty of any one nation or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and betrays its calling" (Confession of 1967).

We remind ourselves and other citizens addressing themselves to public questions that we must speak in an informed way, and must avoid impugning the loyalty or integrity of those with whom we disagree. We call for candor on the part of policymakers, and the abandonment of clichés and slogans, in order that there may be a frank facing of the extent and limitations of our national interest in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

2. *We must continue to affirm the morality of restraint.* We recognize that our military actions have been conducted with a high degree of restraint in comparison to the military power we possess. Nevertheless, we are dismayed that as the war gathers momentum this restraint shows signs of erosion. Our people seem willing to accept as normal today what was unthinkable yesterday. We recoil from rash proposals to use nuclear weapons, or to invade the North. We deplore the increasing willingness at home to justify inhumane acts because the enemy also commits them.

We mourn the fact that although we had hoped to be in Vietnam to liberate its people, our use of modern weapons is increasingly destructive both to that people and to their country.

3. *We must break new moral ground in courage and in ecumenical action.* Let men of all faiths pray that our nation will have the moral courage to undertake these steps of redirection.

We support the concern over Vietnam already expressed by many Jewish groups, by Protestant and Orthodox bodies such as the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, and join in the plea of Pope Paul VI that "men must come together and get down to sincere negotiations. Things must be settled now, even at the cost of some loss or inconvenience, for later they may have to be settled at the cost of immense harm and enormous slaughter that cannot even be imagined now."

4. *We must declare our conscience at whatever cost.* We recognize that if our military escalation is not reversed, the time may come when those who dissent because they seek peace will be placed under even greater pressure, and that the possibility of significant influence by the church on public policy will have disappeared. Should that time come, we urge our corporate church and our individual church members still to exercise the voice of conscience, so that faithful witness may be rendered to God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ, which is the only ground of peace.

II. A STUDY OF THE ISSUES

In view of the gravity of the Vietnam situation and the necessity for the church to discover effective ways by which the members and pastors can express their informed concern about the issues and dangers in Vietnam that confront this nation and the world it is recommended:

1. That a Special Committee of the General Assembly for Vietnam Study be appointed by the Moderator, with a membership of qualified United Presbyterians; and that it be understood that the committee shall be free to engage necessary technical consultants.

2. That this Special Committee act as quickly as possible to design for presbyteries and congregations a serious study of the issues and dangers in the Vietnam war situation and the responsibility of the church to bear witness to the gospel in the formation of national policy. The committee shall provide necessary resource material for the study, guidance for the study, and a method by which reports of the study may be returned to the committee, for report to the 180th General Assembly (1968).

3. That the General Assembly urge presbyteries and congregations to give high priority to this study and engage in it with the seriousness required by the urgency of the situation.

We recognize that The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. has already committed itself through the National Council of Churches to a major priority for peace and has committed funds to make it possible for the churches to act responsibly in concert in this area. Therefore, the Assembly

takes this action as its particular responsibility in commitment to that priority and will develop this study and interpretation program in The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in cooperation with efforts already under way in the National Council of Churches.

III. A CALL TO PRAYER

Bearing in mind and heart that in Jesus Christ we are called to love our enemies and to forgive those who offend us, the Standing Committee on Church and Society hereby recommends:

1. That the 179th General Assembly (1967) hereby docket Wednesday, May 24, as a Day of Prayers for Peace, and

a. request all commissioners and guests to forgo lunch on that day, offering the money thus saved to the civilian victims of the war in Vietnam; and

b. request all commissioners and guests to join in a lunch-hour period of meditation and prayer for this nation and its Armed Forces and for the people of South and North Vietnam.

2. That the General Assembly seek through the National Council of Churches the widest possible participation of all faiths in a Day of Prayers for Peace in Vietnam on a date to be mutually agreed upon as soon after June 1 as possible; and that in United Presbyterian congregations the Declaration of Conscience be read on the Sunday nearest that date, and that United Presbyterians be urged to fast on that Sunday and receive offerings for civilian victims of the war, offering prayers for all persons caught in this tragic struggle.

3. That the Assembly hereby direct the Presbyterian Office of Information to seek the widest mass media coverage for the Declaration of Conscience.

Commentary

Copies of the Declaration of Conscience were sent to all ministers and churches shortly after the meeting of the General Assembly in Portland. It was also published in *Presbyterian Life*, June 15, 1967, with the suggestion that it be read in the churches on Sunday, June 25.

A Special Committee on the Study of "issues and dangers in the Viet-

nam war" has been appointed by General Assembly Moderator Eugene Smathers. In due time a method of study, with resource materials, will be available to presbyteries and congregations, along with forms for reporting. The Committee will prepare a comprehensive report of the study for the 180th General Assembly in Minneapolis, in 1968.

THE VIETNAM WAR AND ITS LESSONS

An Appraisal of Vietnam Policy

Major United States objectives in Vietnam, as stated by federal officials, have emphasized: maintaining and strengthening instruments of international order; preventing Communist control of Southeast Asia, particularly the political or territorial expansion of the People's Republic of China; fulfilling treaty commitments of mutual defense and defeating aggression; protecting our national security interests there; demonstrating that Communist "wars of national liberation" cannot succeed; helping independent nations of Asia build viable social institutions; and attaining a degree of toleration and cooperation among all the countries in the region.

The Vietnamese sociopolitical context in which the United States involved itself has been a crucial factor throughout this war. After decades of warfare in the land, a fragmented society with an unstable and weak government has given limited response to U.S. involvement. Between the forces of democracy and communism, the Vietnamese have been struggling to develop a national identity and a degree of social equality consistent with their culture. In spite of massive U.S. economic assistance and pressure for social reform, the problem of security became crucial, and the United States proceeded on the assumption that security could best be achieved by defeating the guerrilla forces in South Vietnam and the intervening forces from North Vietnam.

The effort to counteract the insurgents and their North Vietnamese supporters has led to a steady widening of the war on both sides. This gradual expansion of commitment contributed to a spiral of military escalation which brought the demand for reevaluation of goals and policy of the United States.

Whatever progress toward representative government was made by adoption of a constitution, the holding of elections, and increase of responsibility at the local level, most of the South Vietnamese people remain uncommitted to the Saigon Government, passively resist reorganization, and bitterly resent resettlement. More and more Vietnamese have become civilian casualties or war refugees.

While our actions in Vietnam are in response to certain treaty obligations, the tangle of overlapping and sometimes conflicting treaty systems places us in a position of violating certain provisions of other international treaties.

The enemy's terrorism and murder are quite obvious and personal. Allied acts of warfare are more impersonal, including bombing, crop destruction, and a strategy that results in refugee creation. The Vietnam war is destroying some of the very people whose freedom the United States intends to defend.

From Escalation to Peacemaking

Now there is new hope for a resolution of the war. A mutual will to negoti-

ate is apparent, though the search for a mutually acceptable settlement has only begun. Current U.S. efforts to achieve progressive disengagement from the warfare in Vietnam depend to a large degree on consistent statesmanship by our national leaders and expressions of mature citizen opinion. The decision to change the emphasis of U.S. policy, after three years of military escalation and counterescalation, rests on changed perceptions of the situation in Vietnam and a reappraisal of U.S. national interests there.

No matter how much or how little may have been gained from this war, we pray that it can be resolved creatively.

The Negotiating Process

Initial Stages: Both sides have behaved ambiguously even as they indicate a desire for negotiation of the issues underlying the war. Little de-escalation has occurred to date; each side is attempting to strengthen its military position. Each has charged the other with bad faith, but without foreclosing further discussion of de-escalatory steps. A degree of actual, though perhaps unannounced, disengagement may result from preliminary talks.

Next Steps: Progress in negotiation and steps of de-escalation do not depend on each other. Negotiations can be initiated independently of de-escalatory achievements; de-escalation can occur even though negotiations reach an apparent impasse. Fighting and talking often occur simultaneously.

Part of the difficulty is that the North does not admit to having its troops in the South, though it acknowledges its intervention on the side of the Viet Cong. On the other side, the South Vietnamese Government does not yet grant any legitimacy to the National Liberation Front as a party to negotiations or an element in a new political coalition. In such a situation the negotiating process will be lengthy and occur at several levels.

The most basic problem of negotiation is the conflicting interests of the various parties engaged in the warfare. The stakes involved and the questions that are deemed negotiable are perceived differently by each side and different groups on each side. The common ground for negotiation is a firm resolve to curtail the violence and to achieve prompt social reconstruction.

Beyond Vietnam

Postwar Justice: The misery of Vietnamese people and the destruction of their traditional social institutions have escalated along with the fighting. The South is particularly disorganized, with millions of refugees and an absence of basic social services. The South Vietnamese Government can hardly be said to govern even in the areas it claims to "control." The North has achieved far more discipline, but its adjustment to war conditions has been under very authoritarian control by the Communist leadership. The United States through multilateral channels, and citizens through private agencies, can contribute much to the reconstruction of Vietnamese society, both South and North.

Christians should be aware of the disruptive impact of the war on much

Conscience and War

Christians in the United States, along with other citizens, are deeply troubled over dilemmas of dissent and rights of dissent exercised by those conscientiously opposed to public policy. Freedom of conscience is a fundamental human right superior to the claims of the state when conscience and law conflict. Recognizing this tension between lawful order and liberty of conscience, the 178th General Assembly (1966) urged "every citizen conscientiously to obey the law and to support policies of government; but when impelled by conscience, to advocate alternatives to the law, to criticize and to dissent from law and policies, to remonstrate, to seek modification and change, and only as a last resort to practice conscientious disobedience, realizing the serious responsibility placed upon those who disobey, and accepting the legal consequences of such conscientious disobedience." The same Assembly affirmed "the right of all persons engaged in criticism or protest to protection from brutality, intimidation, or reprisal from any source." The same rights belong to proponents of policy. Last year in its Declaration of Conscience on Vietnam, the 179th General Assembly affirmed the morality of dissent and warned all citizens against equating dissent with disloyalty or impugning the integrity of those with whom we disagree.

Men of conscience in the responsible exercise of their citizenship differ as to acceptable limits of warfare and the nature of their obligation to military service. Love for peace and commitment to justice mean for some that they must be ready to establish or defend them by force of arms, even though the warfare be evil. For others, war or particular causes and methods of warfare so violate their conscience that love for peace and commitment to justice force them to refuse military service. Some Christians feel that the war in Vietnam is an undesirable, even tragic, but necessary responsibility of a nation with the power to defend the liberty of a weak country. Other Christians judge the scale and quality of U.S. military action in Vietnam to be intolerably brutal and an "unjust" corruption of national purpose. Some who dissent to the war policy are willing to accept combatant or noncombatant military service. Others are forced by conscience to dissent more completely, even to the point of disobeying particular laws and facing imprisonment.

Both those who conscientiously accept the call of government, choosing to serve in the Armed Forces, and those who are led by conscience to resist the war in Vietnam, disobeying provisions of Selective Service, have common claim on the ministry of the Christian community. In penitence, Christians respect and sustain one another as persons who disagree about what responsibility requires them to do.

In Conclusion

The war in Vietnam has already cost the United States dearly by killing and disabling tens of thousands of our young men, diverting billions of dollars from urgent programs of domestic social reform, and intensifying citizen disillusionment over the nation's purpose and leadership. Our inter-

national priorities are also skewed by this war, curtailing constructive foreign policy tasks and resources, and adversely affecting the moral leadership of the United States in the world community. While some governments and peoples support and appreciate U.S. policy, for others our nation's behavior in Southeast Asia has contributed to the erosion of America's reputation for discriminating and magnanimous behavior toward weak countries, and an isolationist mood among the U.S. public tempts us to withdraw from problems of multilateral development and disarmament.

This 180th General Assembly (1968) affirms its commitment to international reconciliation and rejects as dangerous to national and world interest any policy of nations that assumes inevitable warfare between social systems. We accept the responsibility to participate as Christians, corporately and singly, in the national evaluation of U.S. foreign policy, now focused by the war in Vietnam.

1. We support a continuing deliberate de-escalation of the Vietnam war as the wisest policy. We advocate this as an essential policy direction, apart from the specific means of implementation. We desire moderation and settlement of the conflict in a manner that recognizes the essential interests of all parties involved.

We recognize the agonies of decision and the moral complexities with which the U.S. Government has been confronted in its prosecution of the war in Vietnam.

We commend the Government of the United States for the recent unilateral de-escalation of the Vietnam war in an attempt to gain peace. We pray that this attempt to gain a just peace will be successful.

Because the peacemaking process is complex, we caution our fellow church members and cocitizens against impatient reactions to apparent setbacks in negotiations begun in Paris and to developments in Vietnam.

Specifically we urge that:

a. additional steps should be taken by all of the warring parties to de-escalate the warfare in South Vietnam and Laos. We urge further restraint in U.S. bombardment of the North and other initiatory steps that demonstrate our intentions and can invoke a response of reciprocal restraint.

b. Christians should recognize and accept the risks of negotiation with all parties to the conflict, including the National Liberation Front, and actively prepare themselves and their fellow citizens to support the kinds of compromises that the United States may find necessary for a negotiated settlement of the war.

2. We abhor indiscriminate means of warfare, and enjoin all parties in the Vietnam war to take all precautions to spare the civilian population from the direct ravages of conflict.

3. We support governmental modes of humane relief and civilian service in Vietnam, and we support impartial, nongovernmental efforts to express compassion to suffering friends and enemies alike wherever Vietnam warfare impinges. At the same time we seek intervention by international authority to assure humane treatment of prisoners by both sides and regularized arrangements for the exchange of prisoners of war.

4. We anticipate a staggering need for human reconciliation and social revitalization of North and South Vietnam, as well as neighboring countries, when the fighting ends. This should be accomplished by modes of

assistance that are planned multilaterally, include nongovernmental efforts, and are shaped by Asian people. Toward this end:

a. We urge the U.S. Congress officially to support President Johnson's pledge of at least one billion dollars for postwar regional development in Southeast Asia, the funds to be available for reconstruction of North and South Vietnam and related to multilateral planning through the United Nations.

b. We request the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, in cooperation with the Office of Church and Society and the Office of the General Assembly, to initiate a study committee for postwar justice in Southeast Asia, which will relate as appropriate to similar studies by ecumenical church structures and secular groups in giving attention to:

(1) concrete needs of people and societies in that region,

(2) creative processes of social reconciliation and rehabilitation to meet those needs,

(3) the appropriate role of Western resources, in the light of the history of the Vietnam conflict

and will plan with other nongovernmental organizations for raising and administering a fund for postwar justice.

5. We request the Moderator to appoint a special committee of the General Assembly, including expert legal counsel, to keep in touch with efforts of the American Bar Association and bar associations of other countries, as well as other responsible groups, to organize the international community in such a way as to prevent the unilateral use of force by any state and to preserve essential human values.

Recognizing the inadequacies of existing international legal norms and institutions to deal with the problem of unilateral intervention and civil strife;

a. We support the efforts of the International Law Commission to draft a code that explicitly prohibits intervention, at the request of a recognized government or the rebelling opposition, which code to be presented to either the General Assembly of the United Nations or a diplomatic conference of nation-states for approval and subsequent ratification by governments and to be administered by the International Court of Justice;

b. We urge the Government of the United States to continue in the international effort to draft such a code, and we urge every nation to withdraw any insistence on determining what disputes it would submit to the International Court of Justice;

c. We specifically request the special committee of United Presbyterians to press for the development of such a code, informing the church of its progress.

6. We call the attention of the church to the fact that, regardless of settlement which may or may not emerge from the Paris peace talks, grave dangers exist to the cause of international peace and ordered change. We have particularly in mind the fact that there has been a gradual erosion of confidence in international institutions and that several major countries, including some of the most powerful states, are in the process of reducing their international responsibilities. There exists a grave danger that, following the conclusion of the Vietnam war, the United States will recoil in disillusionment from its international responsibilities and that what remains of the existing international order will collapse in anarchy and confusion, and render the search for a viable, just international order impossible. We, therefore, call upon the church to reaffirm its commitment to the attainment of international stability and the strengthening of international institutions and to support the efforts of the U.S. Government to

preserve and extend these institutions and the cause of peaceful change and stability in the years that lie ahead. To this end we affirm, with a renewed sense of urgency, the action of the 179th General Assembly (1967) when it advocated strengthening the United Nations by appropriate means so that it may become an organization with power adequate to make, interpret, and enforce world law for the assurance of world peace.

We especially urge our Government to further all efforts to restore channels of communication between our people and the people of the People's Republic of China in the spirit of reconciliation. To further this action we propose to work to establish friendly relations with the People's Republic of China (Mainland) and look forward to the day when both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) will be in the United Nations.

7. We urge that United Presbyterians and other Americans not permit the war in Vietnam to dilute our attention and our energies in dealing with the national and worldwide crises of poverty, racism, and population growth. The ranking and meeting of these priorities demand increasing national and personal sacrifice.

8. As a contribution to democratic dialogue in 1968, we urge United Presbyterians to register informed opinion about U.S. policy in Vietnam with Congress and the Administration, and based on critically evaluated information and in the light of Christian values, to examine the Vietnam policy stances of candidates for national office.

a. We urge United Presbyterian judicatories to work for full, open, and rational exploration of Vietnam issues, to study and analyze the policy alternatives, to enjoin candidates to make their Vietnam positions clear, and to examine these positions in the light of the Confession of 1967 and the position of this General Assembly.

b. We also direct the Office of Church and Society to inform the incumbent President and Congress, as well as the major political parties, of our position on Vietnam as specified in the 1967 Declaration of Conscience and in this present statement.

Commentary

Several considerations are important for any study and interpretation of this General Assembly statement on "The Vietnam War and Its Lessons":

1. A corporate theological orientation is assumed. The Preamble (page 5, above) introduces this pronouncement as well as the statement on "The Crisis in the Cities." The concluding recommendation of this Vietnam statement also points to value commitments of the church as expressed in the Confession of 1967 and in A Declaration of Conscience

by the 179th General Assembly (1967). The Declaration of Conscience affirmed the morality of dissent to national policy, the morality of restraint in warfare, the need for ecumenical action in quest of peace in Vietnam, and our Christian obligation to remain faithful to conscience at whatever cost.

2. A major purpose of this pronouncement is to be timely. Preliminary talks had begun in Paris, but had not yet led to significant progress in de-escalation of the warfare or in negotiation among all parties to the

war.
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war. The commissioners to this General Assembly, on May 21, stressed that de-escalation and negotiation are imperative, and success in both requires the United States to take peacemaking risks. Recommendation 1 states the matter clearly, after commending the President for his March 31 initiative.

3. This pronouncement results from a majority consensus of United Presbyterian commissioners, who dealt as they wished with the preliminary suggestions of the Counseling Committee on Church and Society (published in the preparatory *Blue Book* for commissioners). The Standing Committee on Church and Society deliberated about emphases and phrases of the Vietnam statement for at least twenty hours, and floor debate exceeded two hours. The result is inevitably dissatisfying to some and rough at points. The commissioners whose judgment this expresses do not speak as policy experts or with special regard for the niceties of social ethics.

A body of Christians in America very much wanted to express what *they* thought and to avoid speaking on aspects of the subject where they felt no consensus. A lack of consensus helps to explain why the Assembly said little or postponed judgment about methods of warfare used in Vietnam, criteria for U.S. intervention in future situations of insurgency involving Communists, and *extension* of the church's corporate ministry to conscientious objectors, including those whose positions are not now legally recognized.

Themes of the Pronouncement

The following comments, orga-

nized topically, show the connections between introductory sections of the pronouncement and its numbered recommendations, noting some of the statement's major points as well as portions that were most debated or deleted.

The Plight of the Vietnamese. The first introductory section, "An Appraisal of Vietnam Policy," summarizes both the purposes of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and the ambiguous results of U.S. activity in support of the Saigon Government. The misery experienced by the Vietnamese is stressed. "Most of the South Vietnamese people remain uncommitted to the Saigon Government, passively resist reorganization, and bitterly resent resettlement. More and more Vietnamese have become civilian casualties or war refugees." After considerable discussion, the last two paragraphs of the "Appraisal" were substituted for the Standing Committee's suggested wording:

The behavior of both sides is immoral in violating some provisions of international treaties that define norms of warfare. The enemy's terrorism and murder are quite obvious and personal. Allied acts of warfare are more impersonal, but comprehensive—saturation bombing, crop destruction, intolerable use of weapons, and a strategy that results in refugee creation. The Vietnam war is destroying many of the very people whose freedom the United States intends to defend.

There are civilized laws of warfare as specified in The Hague Conventions of 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the Nuremberg Principles, and sections of the U.S. Department of the Army Field Manual entitled "The Law of Land Warfare." To what extent does the United States violate these norms of warfare

in Vietnam? Without answering the question, recommendation 2 underscores the church's abhorrence of any methods of warfare that wreak destruction on civilian populations.

Recommendation 3 emphasizes the urgent need for humane relief of civilians and humane treatment of prisoners. The Protestant churches' ministry of relief in Vietnam is conducted primarily under the auspices of Church World Service. A small portion of One Great Hour of Sharing offerings goes for this purpose. Church World Service also welcomes special gifts for Vietnam relief purposes.

The Peacemaking Opportunity. The spiral of military escalation having led to such suffering and destruction, the only way ahead is by patient de-escalation and negotiation. This is the point of the section "From Escalation to Peacemaking." Paragraphs on "The Negotiating Process" summarize the existing situation and suggest some of the roadblocks to, as well as mutual ground for, negotiations. "The common ground for negotiation is a firm resolve to curtail the violence and to achieve prompt social reconstruction."

Recommendation 1 supports continuing, deliberate de-escalation as the essential and wisest policy direction, rejoices in the President's partial restriction of bombing since March 31, and cautions fellow church members and cocitizens against impatient reactions to lack of clear progress in negotiations and developments in Vietnam (where each side, with good reason during May, officially accused the other of trying to gain new military advantage).

Points a and b of recommendation

1 are especially pertinent. To achieve reciprocal restraint in the warfare, the General Assembly asks our Government to take further initiatory steps. Point b notes that negotiations must encompass all the warring parties, including the National Liberation Front. Christians should accept such risks and support such compromises as the United States may find necessary.

Responsibility for Postwar Justice. Beyond a resolution of the immediate fighting, there are large problems of human reconciliation, social reconstruction, and intergovernmental cooperation among the nations of South Asia. "The United States through multilateral channels, and citizens through private agencies, can contribute much to the reconstruction of Vietnamese society, both South and North." The pronouncement suggests that beyond Vietnam itself, "postwar justice" also requires effective regional development plans, strengthening of the United Nations as peace-keeper, and acceptance of the People's Republic of China, preferably by its admission to the UN.

Recommendation 4 urges Congress to endorse President Johnson's pledge of at least one billion dollars for postwar regional development, a pledge first made at Johns Hopkins University, April 7, 1965. Because the church is well placed ecumenically to explore concrete needs for social reconciliation and rehabilitation in Southeast Asia, recommendation 4 also requests the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations to initiate a study committee for this purpose.

Imperatives of World Order. The section entitled "Lessons of Viet-

nam" offers a timely and quotable theological judgment about the Vietnam experience. In this perspective, the war demonstrates our collective sin in the application of armed force, as well as the evils of international anarchy. Because situations of insurgency invite illegal acts of war on all sides, "there is a pressing need for an enforceable international code that explicitly prohibits unilateral intervention on the side of a government in power or its rebelling opposition."

Two recommendations relate to this matter. Recommendation 5 institutes a special committee of the General Assembly which will have the expertise to support and interpret efforts to draft an international code prohibiting unilateral intervention, pressing the U.S. Government and other governments for the development of such a code. Note the process by which a code against intervention is likely to be formulated and administered.

Recommendation 6, speaking to the quest for a viable, just international order, urgently reaffirms *two* pronouncements of the 179th (1967) General Assembly — quoting the statement on "War and World Order" and reiterating the emphasis of last year's pronouncement on "China" (*Social Progress*, July-August, 1967, pp. 5-8 and 19-20, respectively).

The Standing Committee wanted to specify the need for UN admission of Mainland China, but a flurry of floor debate led to the substitution of the final paragraph of recommendation 6 in place of a single, direct sentence proposed by the Standing Committee: "To further this action

(i.e., to strengthen the UN's ability to make, interpret, and enforce world law) we firmly propose admission of the People's Republic of China as a member nation of the United Nations."

To conclude the introductory section on "Lessons of Vietnam," the Standing Committee proposed some guidelines for U.S. foreign policy decision in the future. The wording, which was deleted by motion from the floor, read:

The Vietnam experience suggests several guidelines for U.S. foreign policy decision: (a) We should not intervene at all in cases where a campaign of insurgency is full-blown and deeply rooted. (b) Intervention should never be unilateral unless a clear threat to our most vital interests is involved and we are unable to secure action through the United Nations Organization. (c) We should not intervene in any country which has an unstable and inept government. The application of these criteria would be a signal that we have learned from the tragedy of Vietnam to accept more definite limits to our national power and purpose in the world arena.

Political Action Priorities. The concluding paragraph before the recommendations and the last two recommendations highlight a central issue of campaign '68—the question of national priorities. The pronouncement does *not* advocate U.S. withdrawal from overseas commitments; on the contrary, recommendation 7 urges fresh attention and commitment to meet the crises of poverty, racism, and population growth at home *and* abroad.

Meanwhile the war drags on, and it remains a political issue of great import. There can be no moratorium on citizen judgment about the way a minor commitment was escalated and

implemented. Nor can the setting of priorities proceed without a major curtailment, if not resolution, of the war in Vietnam. For the war continues to skew national priorities, claim many human lives and economic resources, balloon the federal budget, and agonize persons of good will.

Conscience and War. The alert reader will note that there is no recommendation concerning ministry to conscientious objectors, despite the introductory section on "Conscience and War" and prominent public ferment over Selective Service punctuated by the stance of particular war objectors (including such notable United Presbyterians as William Sloane Coffin and Robert McAfee Brown). Both the Counseling Committee (in the *Blue Book*) and the Standing Committee (see below) offered a recommendation to implement the General Assembly's stance on "Conscience and War." Clearly, more is necessary to keep faith with such propositions as: "Freedom of conscience is a fundamental human right superior to the claims of the state when conscience

and law conflict. . . . Men of science in the responsible exercise of their citizenship differ as to acceptable limits of warfare and the nature of their obligation to military service. . . . Both those who conscientiously accept the call of government, choosing to serve in the Armed Forces, and those who are led by conscience to resist the war in Vietnam, disobeying provisions of Selective Service, have a moral claim on the ministry of the Christian community."

But a majority of the commissioners were reluctant to approve the Standing Committee's implementation recommendation, perhaps for a variety of reasons: unfamiliarity with the variety of legitimate Christian stances concerning war, uncertainty about the implications of the recommendation, or opposition to an special extension of ministry with conscientious objectors. The recommendation was referred (by non-debatable motion and a close vote) to the Council (Counseling Committee) on Church and Society for further study and action. The Council will probably establish a task force for this purpose.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

PREAMBLE

The church is called to follow her Lord, to participate in the humanity and sufferings of every man. As the church's understanding of society increases, it becomes more aware of exactly how persons are kept from justice and growth by those very customs and institutions that unite them into a society. The hedge that blocks the future of one group has long been cherished as protection by another. The church finds its own self-interest called under judgment by those in need.

Nevertheless, we must continue to seek the emergence of God's New Humanity, participating in the pain of judgment, repentance, and new birth. Some of that pain and hope are reflected in this report of the Standing Committee on Church and Society to the 181st General Assembly (1969).

CONSCIENCE, CONSCRIPTION, AND THE CHURCH

I. A Statement on War, Peace, and Conscience

A. *The Affirmation of Peace.* The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America is a church unequivocally committed to peace among men and nations. The Confession of 1967 affirms that

"God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace." (9.45)

The declarations of the gospel ("blessed are the peacemakers") and the traditions and confessions of the church are clear in making the quest for peace a central priority for the church and its members. War is not desired or normative for man; indeed, warfare is the very antithesis of peace and contradicts the attitudes toward others taught by our Lord and his apostles: "Love one another," "Live at peace with all men," and "Overcome evil with good." The faith commends to us and to all men the use of every possible alternative to violence for the just settlement of human issues, for in violence and war the powers of sin and death are at work.

B. *The Tragedy of War.* Peace is our high priority and our urgent quest, but at the same time we recognize that in our sinful and broken world, marked by the absence of an enforceable international law, resort to restrained and legitimized military action has sometimes been judged neces-

sary in order to foster the political conditions for peace. For peace is often destroyed by human pretension, arrogance, and lust for power. The aggression arising from such human sin has on occasion been countered only through the use, or threatened use, of military action.

The church acknowledges therefore that while war is evil, it may on occasion be judged a tragically necessary evil as a last temporary resort in opposing greater evils. Christians and others of goodwill and sensitive conscience must balance the demands of the gospel for love and peace among men with the additional demands for justice, order, and freedom in a fallen, sinful world. Each man in his heart and soul must face these painful issues and choices and cannot ultimately allow others to choose for him the course he must undertake.

C. War and the Individual Conscience. The church at its best has traditionally restricted the option of participation in armed conflict to participation that is conscientiously judged to be the lesser of two evils. It has relied upon a doctrine technically called the "just war theory," which emphasizes the following sorts of criteria:

- "a. All other means to the morally just solution of a conflict must be exhausted before resort to arms can be regarded as legitimate.
- "b. War can be just only if employed to defend a stable order or morally preferable cause against threats of destruction or the rise of injustice.
- "c. Such a war must be carried out with the right attitudes.
- "d. A just war must be explicitly declared by a legitimate authority.
- "e. A just war may be conducted only by military means that promise a reasonable attainment of the moral and political objectives being sought.
- "f. The just war theory has also entailed selective immunity for certain parts of the population, particularly noncombatants." (Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., *War and Conscience in America*, pp. 22-23; The Westminster Press, 1968.)

The term "just war" should never be construed as meaning "righteous war" but should be understood as closer in meaning to "justifiable war" in the sense that armed conflict may be determined as the most responsible of various moral options in a given situation. Historically this concept was used to guide the magistrate in his responsibility for the preservation of justice and order. But with the democratization of moral responsibility, and the liberation of conscience, which are basic to the gospel, implicit in the Reformation, and explicit in the American heritage, the just war concept must now be understood as a guide to the thinking of individuals.

The individual Christian therefore is called upon to decide and to act within his own immediate circumstances, free in his conscience formed under the judgment of God and the gospel as he seeks to balance the demands of peace with the demands of justice in a broken world. Whatever the judgment made by the church or the state, we affirm the sanctity and necessity of the individual conscientious decision, as declared in the time-honored statement in the Westminster Confession: "God alone is lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also." (6.101)

As recently as 1967, the United Presbyterian Church adopted as its own

the German Confessional Church Barmen Declaration of 1934, in which the following reaffirms the limited power of the state in vital issues of moral concern.

"We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well." (8.23)

While granting the authority of the state, with its legitimate powers, we also acknowledge the freedom of the individual conscience under God which may lead a person, when he judges that the pretensions and injustices of the civil authorities endanger human welfare, to reject, ignore, or oppose the authority of the state. We note that our government recognizes the importance of respecting the individual conscience by deeming it more essential to respect a man's religious convictions than to force him to serve in the Armed Forces.

D. *The Church's Responses to War—The Church's Teaching.* The United Presbyterian Church does not teach a single response to war, which all members must accept, for God alone is lord of the conscience, and not the state or church. God is lord of the conscience of those who, in good faith and sensitive spirit, conclude that military power must sometimes be employed to establish the preconditions for justice, order, and freedom. God is also lord of the conscience of those who conclude that they cannot support military action because they judge either that it is antithetical to order and justice or against the teachings of the gospel.

Both of these—the agonized participant in war and the pacifist who objects to war—can draw equally upon the church's teaching in support of their position. And it is also clear that a third group—individuals who object to particular wars which they judge to be unjust or unconscionable—is entitled to appeal to the teaching of the church as the foundation of its moral stand. God is the lord of conscience, not only of a participant in war for moral reasons, or of the objector to all war on pacifist grounds, but also of those who conclude that a particular conflict is morally unconscionable and indefensible.

The Church's Task. The church has a prime responsibility to assist in forming the conscience of and to render pastoral care and understanding to all persons in agony of conscience. Just as the church has sought to minister to those persons and their families who suffer separation, hardship, danger, and death due to military service, so the church must offer equally vigorous concern for conscientious objectors and their families who often suffer scorn, suspicion, and rejection of society. The church must render pastoral service to those who, in obedience to their readings of the moral imperatives of the gospel, become outcasts and nonconformists.

Furthermore, the church must realize that its failure to recognize the position of the selective conscientious objector and to work for the legal recognition of his claim is a breach of fidelity to one of its own basic moral concepts. In addition to pastoral solicitude the church has a responsibility to urge the state to respect the conscientiously held scruples of those who oppose a particular war. The responsibility of the church to urge legal respect for conscience is defensible on both theological and political grounds. Theologically, it witnesses to the priority of conscience central to the exercise of true religion; politically, it is grounded in confidence that the free society is the most justifiable mode of human government.

E. *The Relief of Conscience.* Present provisions of the Military Selective Service Act of 1967 permit alternatives to combat service for those who establish bona fide religious/moral objection to training with and use of

arms. Such persons should be classified I-A-O and are assigned by law to noncombatant units in the Armed Forces. The present law also provides for individuals who establish bona fide religious/moral objection to any service in the Armed Forces to be classified I-O and to render alternative service for a period of time equal in length to that served by draftees into the armed services.

These provisions in the law are a response to the appeals of many religious groups throughout the years, and now receive the general acceptance and support of sensitive Americans. They are central to freedom of conscience in our society.

However, it is now evident that consideration must also be given to providing legal relief for the moral position of the selective conscientious objector. Objection to a particular war judged by the individual conscience to be wrong is a moral obligation which may stem from Christian just war teaching.

Despite the difficulties involved, a free society determined to respect conscience must seek ways to provide legal acceptability for this moral imperative. To do so is to serve the public interest by providing the dissenting conscience an alternative to disobedience, rebellion, or exile.

The present provisions for conscientious objection to all wars recognize the validity of moral and religious training that forms the conscience, acknowledging that finally men must obey God (or whatever ultimate concern forms their conscience) if they are to be morally whole. The fact that obedience to religious/moral scruples is now a matter of legitimate conscientious objection only in the case of military conscription laws (or laws requiring the swearing of oaths) stems in part from the unique demands made upon individuals by such laws. Compared to other laws, conscription laws take the whole commitment of an individual, requiring total service and unreserved obedience including willingness to become a personal agent of destruction.

No government is viable if individuals are permitted to ignore the requirements of a law simply because they do not agree with the political or economic reasons that brought the law or policy into existence. But conscientious objection to military service does not seek to dodge the law or its requirements; it is a matter of being permitted to render a different kind of service as fulfillment of the law. Under the peculiar moral urgencies attending war such a choice may be offered by the state as its means of enhancing freedom of conscience without abdicating its claim for service. At present the conscientious objector does not have the legal option of refusing to serve his country. Rather he has the option of rendering a type of service useful to the nation, compatible with his own convictions, and at least as long and arduous as military service. To extend this choice to the selective conscientious objector is fully consistent with the American tradition and would strengthen the freedom of our society.

To institute the right of selective conscientious objection will require considered thought and careful administration. It will require an examination of all claimants to conscientious objector status as to their sincerity, rationale, consistency, and depth of moral conviction. Such an examination should be provided according to nationally established criteria and uniform procedures and should be administered by area tribunals of specially qualified persons. Anything less than such a procedure could not hope to penetrate the ambivalence and complexity of human motivation or to avoid the injustices of impromptu decisions.

Moreover, to carry out a program of this sort will require administrative definitions of alternative service prepared with the full intention of doing

justice to both the claims of the government and those of the individual conscience. We believe that genuine efforts to arrange such provisions could result in tolerable, if not perfect, adjudications of the conflicts of value entailed in this complex situation. The effort is worth making for the sake of enhancing the freedoms afforded to conscience by our society.

F. Draft Noncooperation. In addition to the three responses to war recognized above, there are many young men who, in good conscience, choose not to cooperate with the Selective Service System in any way. For them, any form of conscription in a democratic society is unconscionable, and they feel compelled either to ignore it, to oppose it, or to exile themselves, taking the consequences of the penalties the law provides for such choices, in the same manner as those selective conscientious objectors who are without relief under the present law.

With such men, the church affirms that God is lord of their conscience also, and hence along with those who make the other response to war the church offers them her ministries of compassion and pastoral care without necessarily approving or encouraging such responses.

G. Redress. Available evidence indicates that the present administration of the Selective Service law has led to miscarriage of justice in some individual cases; and furthermore, the law itself does not provide relief for those who are morally and conscientiously opposed to a particular war. It is imperative that steps be taken to redress whatever miscarriages of justice have occurred under these conditions as soon and as systematically as possible. Moreover, amnesty for those whose violations of law are based upon higher loyalties is a cherished possibility within the American tradition and compatible with the understanding of God as a God of mercy. Therefore, redress of grievances should include consideration of amnesty in appropriate cases.

H. The Resources of Faith. Faced with the agonizing choices of war, each Christian must satisfy his own conscience under God and with his fellowmen, that any war is "just and necessary." We call upon each church member, facing these choices, to inform and enliven his conscience, using as resources the fellowship of the church, the counsel of the clergy, the Bible, sacraments, and prayer as means of grace, the Confessions, statements, and traditions of the church, together with adequate information on the facts of a particular war. Without these resources, decisions may be ill-formed, ill-advised, and contrary both to the will of God and the best interests of mankind.

II. Recommendations to the Church for Ministry Among Conscientious Participants, Objectors, and Noncooperators

A. To the Office of the General Assembly. The General Assembly, having adopted the Statement on War, Peace, and Conscience, now directs its office, in consultation with the Office of Church and Society, to publish the Statement separately as an official position of this General Assembly of The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., notifying public authorities and spreading it abroad among the congregations where it may become integral to the teaching, preaching, and pastoral ministry of the church and a guide and help to new generations of Christians. The Statement should be accompanied by its appendixes and by an explanation of established procedures for conscientious objectors to file written statements of their beliefs with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

B. To the Board of Christian Education. The General Assembly hereby directs the Board to prepare and include within its curriculum for youth

and adults materials that focus upon current issues of war and peace and the vocation of the Christian, such as military service, alternatives to violence, loyalty and dissent, conscientious objection, and other responses to war and the draft. Biblical, theological, and ethical teaching shall be included. In particular, the curriculum for youth shall focus on the issues youth face as potential participants in armed conflict.

C. To the Office of Church and Society. The General Assembly hereby directs the Office to inform and assist the work of the various judicatories in implementing the concerns of this pronouncement. The Office shall report to the 182d General Assembly on the response of the judicatories in this ministry and shall propose to the 182d General Assembly needed programs for further implementation.

D. To the Various Judicatories, Congregations, and Members. The General Assembly hereby recommends:

1. That sessions and other judicatories take steps to initiate and/or support responsible draft information and counseling centers in and through which all young men of a community may receive expert guidance and help as they face (a) the legal options and demands of the Selective Service System, and (b) the problem of conscience involved in their response to it.

2. That pastors and selected laymen participate in educational events that will provide sensitivity to and information on the draft, voluntary enlistment, issues of conscience concerning war, peace, and alternatives to violence, and related subjects in order that the preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministries of the church may be more adequate to these crucial concerns.

3. That pastors and sessions interview, and counsel with, each young man in their congregation at age seventeen regarding his own conscientious response to war and the draft. If the young man so decides, his response should be recorded with his session. Continued contact should be maintained with each young man through prayer, counsel, letters, and visits. The families of such young men are also commended to the pastoral care and oversight of the pastors and sessions and specialized ministries. Each presbytery is urged to include this concern in its pastoral oversight of its congregations. The judicatories should give special attention to young men under their care for the gospel ministry who are questioning their relationship to the Selective Service System.

4. That these ministries of pastoral care shall include those who take unpopular stands based on sincere religious grounds, including draft non-cooperation. Care and oversight may in these instances include full moral and functional support for young men who refuse induction, or stand trial, or go to prison. Such care may also include affirmative demonstration of support in several forms, such as undertaking ways to provide legal assistance, public statements of support, and other personal involvements of time, effort, influence, and money. Visits to them in prison and concern for them following the completion of their prison terms are also appropriate. The families of these young men are also commended to pastors and sessions. Such care may include direct moral and financial support to the men and their families to defray the sometimes burdensome cost resulting from the stand of conscience.

5. That all judicatories and members be alert and sensitive to real and alleged injustices in the administration of the Selective Service System, reporting these to the appropriate authorities in the government and in the church with clear evidence and carefully reasoned argument.

6. That sessions, other judicatories, and the various boards and agencies of the church seek to provide employment, acceptable to the government, for conscientious objectors as a form of alternative service in the I-O category of the Selective Service System.

7. That all judicatories, local congregations, and members stimulate general debate and education on issues of conscience concerning war and peace and alternatives to violence, especially in the mass media and in the secondary schools.

E. To the Military Chaplains. The General Assembly hereby commends their work and urges them to study the Statement on War, Peace, and Conscience and the various recommendations here made. Further, the Assembly takes notice of and affirms the instructions given chaplains by the Department of Chaplains and Military Personnel, specifically calling attention to their responsibility as ministers of Christ to go beyond government regulations in counseling young men in the service who are faced with dilemmas of conscience on war and military service.

III. Recommendations to Public Authorities and the General Society Regarding Social Policy

The 181st General Assembly (1969)

1. Calls attention to the statements made by former Assemblies in the areas of the draft, conscientious objection, and dissent, particularly those made in 1954, 1966, and 1967 [see Appendix One, page 40, Social Progress, March-April, 1969]. The 1967 statement exposed additional difficulties resulting from the draft, namely,

“We believe the present Selective Service System is highly discriminatory in taking those who gain least from the society and effectively exempting those who gain most. It is an unjust and inequitable expedient that takes the economically deprived, in a degree beyond their proportion in our society as a whole, sacrificing them to national interests.”

2. Urges those who administer the Selective Service System to observe scrupulously the various provisions of the law and the court decisions regarding conscientious objection in order to provide for a fair, nonpunitive, and equitable administration of the present law, and to make every effort to adjudicate present inequities and injustices in the operation of the draft.

3. Urges public officials and all citizens to respect the sanctity of the individual conscience, especially in matters pertaining to war, and to refrain from ostracizing and mistreating conscientious objectors and noncooperators.

4. Petitions the Congress to review the administration of the Selective Service System and to give renewed and most serious consideration to various proposals for amending the Military Selective Service Act so as to provide the privilege of rendering alternative service for those who are conscientiously opposed to a particular war. Such objection should have the option of service unrelated to the particular war to which objection is made, and for duty at least as long and arduous as that required of nonobjectors.

5. Urges the Congress to enact legislation directing the establishment of national standards and uniform procedures, administered by tribunals staffed by specially qualified personnel, for judging all claims based on conscience.

6. Asks the Congress, the President, other public officials, and our fellow citizens for a reconsideration of the plight of those young men who, in good and sensitive conscience, have found that they cannot participate in a

particular war but have had no redress or relief under existing laws. We urge retroactive recognition of their claims and reduction of punitive sentences together with appropriate amnesty as soon and as systematically as possible.

7. Requests the Department of Defense, in concert with such action as is taken in recommendation "d" above, to establish procedures for considering requests within the Armed Forces for reassignment to noncombatant duties or for discharge for conscientious objection to a particular war, when the objections grow either out of experience prior to entering military service, but which did not become fixed until after such entry, or from a development of conscience that has occurred since entering military service.

APPENDIX

A Resolution Approved by the 109th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, April, 1969

(To be included with similar statements of other religious bodies,
Appendix Three, page 50, SOCIAL PROGRESS, March-April, 1969.)

Whereas, the failure of the Selective Service System to provide for conscientious objection to participation in a particular conflict is discriminatory in that it respects conscientious objection of one sort but not of another, and unjust in that it deprives an individual of his right to make a conscientious decision in a particular situation; and

Whereas, the consequences of this failure are disruptive to the health of the nation and harmful to the body politic in that loyal and patriotic citizens are punished as criminals because they dare to be faithful to the dictates of their consciences in objecting to combative rather than alternative service in a particular conflict;

Therefore, be it resolved that the 109th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States:

(1) Recognizes the right of citizens to object conscientiously to combative participation rather than alternative service in a particular conflict as well as the right to object conscientiously to combative participation in all war; and

(2) Urges the Congress of the United States to move with all dispatch in amending the Universal Military Training and Service Act to provide for suitable alternatives of military or civilian service for those who conscientiously object to combative participation in a particular conflict; and

(3) Commends with all urgency a full and immediate review of the entire Universal Military Training and Service Act, and immediate legislation, to remove the inequities that now exist in this archaic law; and

(4) Directs the Stated Clerk to send copies of this resolution to the President, the Secretary of Defense, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States.

Conscience and War

By L. WILLIAM YOLTON

The United Presbyterian project on draft information and aid to conscientious objectors and other dissenters has been extended for a second year. This Emergency Ministry on Conscience and War is administered through the Board of Christian Education in the Department of Church and Society. Nearly \$60,000 was appropriated in the first year for grants to local units of the church which were ready to deal with problems created by the draft in their communities, and for special conferences and programs designed to develop competent formation of conscience about war and peace.

Quiet, direct relationships with other sectors of church concern, such as military chaplains, Christian education specialists, ministries in higher education, and theological education leaders have elicited positive responses. Close cooperation with other groups having parallel programs, such as the Episcopal Church and the Church of the Brethren, has had high priority. Co-operative activity has also entailed a variety of relationships with groups having different types of programs, such as the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples), The United Methodist Church, Friends, Mennonites, Roman Catholics, Jews. Interdenominational and interfaith efforts are aided through the good offices of the Department of Social Justice of

the National Council of Churches' Ad Hoc Committee on Conscientious Objectors, which is also known as the Interfaith Committee for Draft Information.

The fundamental strategy of the church-sponsored efforts has been to stress the pastoral and counseling orientation in giving impartial aid to draft registrants and their families. The Emergency Ministry on Conscience and War has pursued this strategy at three levels of involvement.

The *first* level is information and education about the draft, enlisting the cooperation of the Selective Service System where this is possible. We have sought to alert lay counselors and pastors to the personal dimensions of counseling draft-age men. Then we have provided resources and matching funds for them to organize training for themselves under judicatory sponsorship and to support semipermanent draft information centers in metropolitan areas. Creative, responsible projects embracing an ecumenical spectrum have emerged in a field heretofore restricted to "peace groups." Judicatory leadership is willing and the grass roots were already active.

At a *second* level we have sought to develop competent ethical analysis, with a reemphasis on "just war" teaching in line with traditional Christian teaching. The publicity given the latest reports of atrocities and violations of international law in Vietnam has given unexpected support to this line of inquiry. For the first time significant sections of the population are looking for guidance in understanding what constitutes justifiable violence, with the converse question lurking: Might

there be an unjust war? The balanced pronouncement of the 181st General Assembly (1969) of the United Presbyterian Church on "War, Peace, and Conscience" is proving very helpful in this teaching ministry. The prior action of the Presbyterian Church U.S. in urging provision for selective conscientious objection was an important advance. Provision of articles in church and secular magazines has helped disseminate information and understanding. The theological seminaries are responding by providing draft counseling training and a greater emphasis on the Christian ethical teaching about war and conscience.

Finally, we have from the beginning encouraged direct aid to both conscientious participants and conscientious objectors to the war policy. The ministry staff has provided general, impartial draft counseling, special assistance to conscientious objectors in gaining recognition for their claims and securing the mandatory alternative civilian work. The Emergency Ministry is a sponsor of the Prison Visitation Service. After review by a blue-ribbon team, special funds were sent to the Canadian Council of Churches for pastoral aid to refugees from the States. Projects for black draft counseling are being supported, and efforts to provide information in Spanish begun. New efforts with films, radio, and TV are in process. Pilot projects with high school students and school administrations are going on. Several school systems, most notably in Philadelphia, are facilitating draft information programs.

A special but limited fund for personal aid to conscientious objectors and other dissenters is being established.

Projects involving United Presbyterian judicatories are widespread. The Wisconsin Synod spurred an ecumenically sponsored program of six all-day conferences spotted throughout the state. Almost every synod has adopted resolutions of support for draft counseling or engaged in a training program or support for draft information centers. The Cincinnati United Christian Ministries with synod support has conducted a series of training programs and helped organize the Cincinnati Draft Information Services. The Synod of the Golden Gate is supporting projects that meet especially the needs of disadvantaged persons. The Synod of Washington-Alaska gave approval to an ecumenically sponsored center for the Seattle area which is based in the Woodland Park Church. Among the best counseling centers is that of University and City Ministries in Pittsburgh, which has its biggest support from the presbytery and from the Synod of Pennsylvania.

Under the auspices of the Topeka Council of Churches and the Selective Service System a training program for high school counselors and pastors was carried out in November. In Louisville, presbyteries of the two Presbyterian denominations joined in a conference with leadership from the state Selective Service headquarters.

The active leadership of the seminaries will make pastors in training more knowledgeable about the draft and war and peace in the context of Christian social ethics. In November, the Council on Theological Education, with urging from students and the Committee on Continuing Education, adopted resolutions recommending practical training in draft counseling, and background studies in war, peace,

and conscience. These matters are to be included in continuing education programs. McCormick Seminary is already taking steps to implement the resolutions.

A beginning has been made in meeting the pastoral problems associated with conscientious dissent about the war. The draft law will itself be under debate early in the

92d Congress. An informed electorate will create the climate for statesmanlike reforms or even outright repeal. Those who have developed an informed understanding should work actively now to make their views known to their representatives, supplying them with details and cases as well as reasoned ethical analysis.

PRACTICUM

Not Lightly, But Under Grave Constraint

The 182d General Assembly (1970) of The United Presbyterian Church U.S.A.:

1. Declares its opposition to the continuation of military combat by the Armed Forces of the United States of America in Southeast Asia particularly because the Congress of the United States has not declared a state of war with the Government of North Vietnam.

2. Urges that, in the absence of a declaration of a state of war made by the Congress of the United States in conformance with the Constitution, all military combat by U.S. Armed Forces in Southeast Asia be terminated.

3. Urges, in the light of the horrors of war and the grave internal divisions within the United States, the adoption of a specific timetable for the termination of the American commitment in Southeast Asia. We are convinced that this action can also avert the alienation of major segments of opinion and preserve the solidarity of American society. A general commitment to withdrawal will neither meet our national needs nor produce the necessary sense of urgency in the Government of South Vietnam. We therefore ask our Government to commit itself to a withdrawal of all military personnel from Vietnam by June 30, 1971. To that end, we support the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment.

4. Calls on all parties to facilitate a cease-fire and an immediate exchange of prisoners.

5. Recognizes that the continuation of the war has increased the polarization between affirmers and dissenters to the point where force has increasingly replaced reason, so that we urge support of the right of nonviolent dissent and call for nonviolent handling of such dissent.

6. Affirms that this war, like all wars, presents grave moral dilemmas impossible of easy, guilt-free solutions, and calls on our Government to accept its responsibility to act decisively to end the war as quickly as possible in ways that will preserve the greatest number of human lives. Specifically, we must accept the responsibility of providing for the safety of any South Vietnamese who might be endangered as a result of their support for U.S. policy, without falling into the trap of letting the war continue for so long that more are killed in the course of combat than we would save from possible post-war retaliation by opposing forces.

7. Calls upon the President to appoint a distinguished American of ambassadorial rank to head the U.S. delegation at the Paris peace talks in the understanding that regardless of the state of withdrawal of American combat forces, a bloody war is still going on in South Vietnam that must be brought to a negotiated settlement, and in the further understanding that America has a moral stake and responsibility to assist in achieving such settlement for the preservation of human life and world stability.

8. Further recognizes that American goodwill in the matter is not enough by itself and that their share of responsibility for the continuation of the war lies with all the Vietnamese parties. We therefore call upon them to negotiate a settlement in good faith and to take meaningful steps to reduce and finally to eliminate the use of armed force.

9. Urges that the congregations and judicatories of the United Presbyterian Church organize discussions of the war in Indochina, during the week of June 1-7 or some other appropriate time during June, and that Sunday, June 7, 1970, suggested as Peace Sunday by national religious leaders, be observed by the reading of this statement.

The War in Southeast Asia

The Lord of the church is the Prince of Peace; therefore, the business of the church is the bringing of peace.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States views with dismay the continuing war in Southeast Asia. We are convinced that the stated purpose of the U.S. intervention—the self-determination of the people of Southeast Asia—cannot be realized through too lengthy or too precipitous an end to U.S. military participation in this tragic conflict. Therefore, we urge our Government to continue, and insofar as possible accelerate, the orderly withdrawal of all American troops from Southeast Asia and to announce its firm intention to provide massive economic aid for the reconstruction of the countries involved.

We pray for the President of the United States and ask God's continued blessings upon him as he seeks to achieve peace.—*1970 General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.*

INDOCHINA: Stop the Killing.... Work for Peace

Editorial—A Time to Repent	3
Reflections on Vietnam	Carey B. Joynt 7
Dead Policy, Revived Conscience	Robert McAfee Brown 15
War Crimes and Individual Responsibility: After the Calley Verdict	Richard A. Falk 23
Moral and Military Aspects of the War in Southeast Asia	John C. Bennett 33
Upon Return from Paris, 1971	L. B. "Roy" Horn, Jr. 38
The Buddhist Position	43
From the General Assembly Record	47
Practicum	
SET THE DATE NOW	51
Visual Expression of the Gospel	52
Council Action on the SST	53
Dear Editor	55
"Sexuality and the Human Community"	55
Corporate Responsibility	56
University and City Ministries	57
Street Minister in Minneapolis	58
The Cost of the War	59
A Billion Dollars Is a Lot of Money	60
Bibliography on Indochina and the U.S.A. Today	60

Church and Society

MAY - JUNE 1971



INDOCHINA

*Stop the Killing
...Work for Peace*

WAR, INDOCHINA, ARMS

The Moral Crisis of the United States in Indochina

*Adopted by the 183d General Assembly (1971) of
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*

I

“There is no moral issue more urgently confronting our church and nation than the war in Vietnam.” . . . So said the 179th General Assembly (1967).

We, the 183d General Assembly (1971) of The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., say our Government’s continuing military involvement in Indochina is immoral and unjust.

We confess that we have shared responsibility for all that has been done and is being done in Indochina by all nations involved. We are acutely conscious of:

- A. The illusory justification of policy by our Presidents;
- B. The death, pain, and homelessness of millions of civilians in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia;
- C. The incarceration of thousands of political prisoners by the Saigon regime and the Hanoi regime;
- D. The agony of fellow Americans who relive brutal deeds, who must live with wounds or loss of loved ones, or who suffer anguish of separation from those who are prisoners of war;
- E. The debilitating effects on civil life and liberties here at home;

Therefore, the 183d General Assembly (1971) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America affirms its conviction that a political settlement is the only legitimate solution to the war in Indochina.

To this end, appreciating the fact that 50 percent of all U.S. troops have been removed from South Vietnam, we

Urge our Government to commit itself to complete termination of all military involvement in Indochina as soon as possible, but no later than the end of 1971 and to seek to arrange with all parties an immediate cease-fire, realizing that our primary goal must be to stop the killing. Such a step would also help ensure the safety of the withdrawing troops. We urge all parties involved to enter discussion of procedures to guarantee the safety and political freedom of those South Vietnamese who have cooperated with the United States or the U.S.-supported government.

Oppose the policy of Vietnamization which provides arms for Asians to kill other Asians, continuing the brutalization of the people of Indochina.

Recognize the enormous postwar economic reconstruction needs in Indochina, and call for a strong U.S. commitment to provide resources through appropriate multilateral channels responsive to the self-determined goals of the nations in the area.

Concur with the Protestant Church Leaders Consultation on Vietnam in Paris that "the only way to secure the release of prisoners of war is through a political settlement. . . . The Provisional Revolutionary Government and North Vietnamese have expressed their willingness to discuss the release of all prisoners as soon as the United States sets a date for the withdrawal of U.S. forces." The precedent for such a prisoner release is found in the action of the "Viet Minh" after the signing of the armistice in 1954; French soldiers held by the enemy were released in 30 days.

Welcome President Nixon's initiatives to improve U.S.-China relations, and encourage the possibility of the entry of the Peoples' Republic of China into the United Nations, recognizing that a permanent and just peace must consider the interests of China.

Warn that the civil rights of dissenters are particularly vulnerable during times of national crisis and tension, and that therefore special diligence must be exercised by the church, citizens, and the government to preserve those rights. We specifically urge Presidential amnesty for those who are imprisoned or expatriate for conscientious dissent to this war.

Recognize the need for thorough inquiry into the question of war crimes in Indochina, and request the Department of Church and Society to study this question and report to the church.

Direct the Board of National Missions, the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, the Board of Christian Education, the

Department of Church and Society, and the United Presbyterian Washington Office to design a Peace Priority program to implement these recommendations between now and the 184th General Assembly (1972) and direct the General Council to provide for funding this program in an amount not less than \$50,000, which will be supplemented by personnel and program resources of the cooperating agencies.

Direct that this pronouncement be delivered to the President of the United States, his advisers on foreign policy, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense.

Request the United Presbyterian Washington Office to convene a meeting of United Presbyterians in Congress and relevant executive branch posts and request the Moderator and the Stated Clerk to present and interpret this pronouncement to them.

Further urge each commissioner to this General Assembly to seek opportunities to present this pronouncement in person to his own congressman and senators.

II

Commentary

The church has a responsibility through word and deed to quicken the conscience of its members and the civil community. America needs more than intelligent decisions on issues of war and peace. It needs more than the language of morality to clothe expedient acts. It needs a revived conscience, expressive of basic human values, able to cut through propaganda, open to repentance, animated to act with decency and generosity. Whether or not government officials ponder the effects of their deeds on the human spirit, Christians are called to attend to this question. Even after events have occurred or particular decisions have been made, the insistent voice of conscience among people can provide a corrective to the course of national policy.

Christian moral discourse is concerned with the direction and profile of human activity. Prevailing patterns of conduct must be evaluated in the light of what God has been doing for man, what is happening to people and institutions under present power arrangements, and what is right or wrong, or better and worse, for the fulfillment of human community.

Moral discourse encompasses personal *and* political decisions. This is clearly the case in ethical thought about the requirements for a "just war" (i.e., a morally justifiable war). While the Christian community abhors the use of armed violence, many Christians recognize that war may on occasion be judged a tragically necessary evil as a last tem-

porary resort in opposing greater evils. Thus, "just war" thought asks: What are the norms that govern recourse to the violence of war (*ius ad bellum*), and what are the norms that govern the measure of violence to be used in war (*ius in bello*)?

"In other words, when is war rightful, and what is rightful war? One may indeed refuse the questions, but this is a form of moral abdication, which would likewise be fatal to civilization. . . . The essential significance of the traditional doctrine is that it insists, first, that military decisions are a species of political decisions, and second, that political decisions must be viewed, not simply in the perspective of politics as an exercise of power, but of morality and theology." (John Courtney Murray.)

Historically, the "just war theory" was used to guide the magistrate in his responsibility for preserving justice and order. But in modern culture, the just war concept also functions as a guide to the moral thinking of individuals and groups. The 181st United Presbyterian General Assembly (1969) clearly affirmed this approach to questions of War, Peace, and Conscience.

The "just war" criteria provide a basis for evaluating the morality of U.S. warfare in Indochina. Some of the appropriate questions are: Has the war been entered and pursued in due proportion—namely is the good sought by U.S. military intervention less than the harm being inflicted on all parties in Indochina and here at home? Is America waging war with just intentions, as a last resort, by lawful authority, with a reasonable hope of attaining valid moral and political objectives, and is our country adhering to just means? Does the military combat and weaponry of the U.S. Armed Forces provide immunity to civilian combatants and other helpless persons?

We find that U.S. policy in Indochina does not meet these criteria. Therefore, we also conclude that it is morally imperative that our military involvement in Indochina be speedily terminated. Several realities inform this judgment, as underlined in the following points:

First, American policymakers have disregarded the cost in Asian lives of the policies they pursue. It is not enough to find the war policy "misguided" or to emphasize the pragmatic conclusion that "the costs of Vietnam outweigh the benefits." One of the crucial moral realities is that Vietnamization continues the warfare by proxy. Changing the color of the corpses does not achieve justice, even though it may mollify U.S. public opinion for a time. A Vietnamized war, with American technology, economic support, and the use of Asian mercenaries, will only compound the disaster being experienced by the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian population. In many Asian eyes, Vietnamiza-

tion is a way in which Asians are armed to perpetuate the killing of Asians. This is antithetical to the immediate need of the people—a cease-fire so that the sufferings will end.

Second, the effects of the warfare are even more dire than the threat that aroused our military intervention. Any subsequent imaginable “bloodbath” could not be worse than the brutality of the present conflict. Since 1964, over one third of the 18 million South Vietnamese people have become refugees, mostly because of bombardment and forced evacuation by the Allies. The refugees are often without food, shelter, or medical care. Since the beginning of the massive American military presence, civilian war casualties have exceeded 1 million South Vietnamese. Our side kills more civilians every six months than the other side has in 16 years! These facts contradict any claim that U.S. policy is working to preserve freedom for the people of South Vietnam.

Third, justice requires that we attend to achieving a political settlement that represents the full range of Vietnamese people. Continued military action by the United States in Indochina merely thwarts this objective. The civil war provoked 10 years ago by repression from Saigon is not resolved, but prolonged, so long as U.S. Armed Forces operate in the area, killing and uprooting people in behalf of an unjust Saigon regime. We are still being told that the South Vietnamese must “have a chance of preventing a Communist takeover.” But there is no longer any reasonable expectation of attaining this objective by means of U.S. military intervention and assistance. Our might, money, and manpower have failed to preserve the minimal conditions of a free society in South Vietnam. In addition to military ferocity, the country experiences annual inflation of 30-50 percent and is now almost totally dependent on U.S. economic aid. Corruption abounds at great expense to American taxpayers and to the detriment of South Vietnamese society. Furthermore, there are no reliable civil liberties. Between 40,000 and 200,000 South Vietnamese are held prisoner by the Saigon authorities for their political beliefs. The basic needs of millions of South Vietnamese are being ignored.

Fourth, American military policy has led to the violation of international and American norms of warfare. The United States has adopted a strategy of massive destruction through the use of indiscriminate, if not diabolical, weapons. American combat policy, as reflected in the “body count” philosophy and as carried out by such battlefield practices as “free-fire zones,” “search and destroy,” “targets of opportunity,” and “harassing and interdiction fire,” have been immoral when compared to the norms of civilized warfare, at the heart of which is the

requirement to safeguard defenseless human life. In Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, as in wars past, the conduct of U.S. Armed Forces should be evaluated not by what the enemy does but by our country's laws and ideals. These norms are embodied in treaty law, and are clearly stated in U.S. military manuals. They must not be ignored by the country that insisted on international affirmation of the Nuremberg Principles. Yet the system of warfare practiced by the United States in Indochina has failed to avoid indiscriminate destruction and to prevent atrocities. Claiming success in terms of bodies counted, the United States has relied on the massive firepower of antipersonnel weapons, helicopter gunships, B-52 bombers, long-range artillery, napalm, and automatic rifles. Under command authority, our Armed Forces have routinely, but illegally, bombarded enemy hospitals and peasant hamlets, forced the evacuation of millions from the South Vietnamese countryside, used toxic chemicals against the peoples' food sources, and emulated techniques of torture and assassination that would classify as barbaric. We cannot accept these policies. We can only encourage prompt investigation and disclosure of the pattern of military conduct, assist in public education on the limits of lawful warfare, and be thankful that many, though not enough, persons in and out of uniform have refused to participate in such acts of inhumanity.

Fifth, the United States, having failed to pursue a just cause by just means of warfare, and having tarnished American honor with the brutal use of extraordinary military power, should take extraordinary steps to move the negotiations by setting a definite date for complete disengagement and withdrawal of our Armed Forces (including air power) from Indochina. This will signal our just intentions. The settlement of other issues, including the repatriation of prisoners, will follow a public commitment to a definite date of withdrawal. To maintain that "a promise to discuss means nothing from the North Vietnamese" and to blame the other side alone for the negotiation deadlock, or to dismiss their proposals as mere propaganda, will not hasten the settlement of any of the outstanding issues. The enemy will not be forced to negotiate by our military pressure. But the enemy has signaled a willingness to "discuss the date for withdrawal from South Vietnam of U.S. forces . . . so as to be able then to take up the question of the guarantee of the security of U.S. soldiers during their withdrawal, and the question of the release of the prisoners." Previous discussions have foundered on the enemy demand for unconditional withdrawal as a precondition to a discussion of the release of prisoners. But that precondition has been softened, if not removed. To fail to explore this potential opening will not help Americans who are held prisoner by the enemy.

Sixth, Americans who have conscientiously refused to participate in the Vietnam war are morally vindicated. Their legitimate protest needs to be affirmed, and injury done them through rigid application of law or harsh sentences needs to be redressed. This is not to say we support ill-advised or ill-conceived protest tactics. But we are more appalled at the continued stereotyping of dissenters by high public officials and the erosion of constitutional processes of law in our Government's response to groups exercising their rights of dissent. Government harassment has resulted in the deplorable and unconstitutional tactics of illegal electronic surveillance, the subversion of the grand jury process by intimidating witnesses rather than pursuing its proper pursuits, and the release of irresponsible and confusing statements which threaten the sanctity of defendant's rights to an unbiased jury. It is no defense to argue that due process must be violated because radical dissenters would like to destroy this nation's system of liberty. A society is civilized to the extent that it treats troublesome minorities fairly. Justice must be dispensed and laws enforced according to Constitutional standards. Furthermore, the war itself has been undeclared and unjustly conducted. So, does this not require that as soon as possible amnesty should be sought for those who conscientiously refused to participate in the war but were convicted or forced to flee on the grounds that their refusal was illegal?

Youth Statement on Conscience

*Received by the 183d General Assembly (1971) of
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*

As youth in the church we are faced with practical dilemmas as we confront this war and the draft. We care about our country. We respect the principle of law. We desire to be obedient to the highest standards of both personal integrity and social responsibility. Now the church's teaching heightens the moral tensions in which we live.

We have come to believe the time-honored statement of the Westminster Confession that "God alone is lord of the conscience," reaffirmed by the 181st General Assembly (1969) in its counsel to the individual on conscience and war.

This same General Assembly instructed us further. It gave the

church's support to both the agonized participant in war and the traditional conscientious objector to all war. But also, it recognized the moral basis of "individuals who object to particular wars which they judge to be unjust or unconscionable." Finally, it acknowledged "the freedom of the individual conscience under God which may lead a person, when he judges that the pretensions and injustices of the civil authorities endanger human welfare, to reject, ignore, or oppose the authority of the state."

This 183d General Assembly (1971) has now applied the traditional "just war" teaching of our church to the Vietnam war stating that "our Government's continuing military involvement in Indochina is immoral and unjust."

Yet we see that our church's teaching and our own conscience come into clear conflict with the laws of the state. The Selective Service Act of 1967 (section 6j) limits the acceptable grounds of conscientious objection to those who are "conscientiously opposed to participating in war in any form." And the Supreme Court has ruled (*Gillette v. U.S. & Negre v. Larsen*) that a man, though religiously motivated and sincere, cannot receive Conscientious Objector status if he objects to taking part in the Vietnam war or some other specific war but believes he should fight in some other wars.

This is our dilemma: that our church and conscience make claims on us contrary to the claims of the laws of the state. Therefore, we Youth Commissioners, Youth Advisory Delegates, and Youth Visitors make this statement of conscience:

Though we know that others will be sent in our place unless the war is ended quickly, we can no longer in good conscience lend our bodies and our consent to the prosecution of this war which so many of us protested before our church declared herself at last.

Recognizing that some in our number make this decision on the grounds of "selective conscientious objection" in accord with the teaching of our church who are not provided for by the law, we regret that in varying degrees we will be compelled to acts which may later be judged illegal. Our conscience says that we must obey God rather than man.

We submit ourselves to you, our brothers and sisters in Christ, seeking your counsel as to our appropriate action in resisting unconscionable policies and laws.

At the same time, we caution you that should we together even contemplate an illegal act, you are coconspirators with us and subject to prosecution under current government policy. Furthermore,

your confidential counseling records may be subpoenaed, you may be called to testify against us, and if any of us as your counselees engage in obstructive nonviolent actions, you may be imprisoned for forty-eight hours without charges, or even for weeks.

The War in Indochina

**Adopted by the 111th General Assembly (1971) of the
Presbyterian Church in the United States**

In 1967 the Presbyterian Church in the United States in its 107th General Assembly declared: "As Americans, we love our country, cherish its traditions, and endeavor to support its causes. Yet as Christians, above everything we love the Lord of all nations. . . . We are deeply perplexed and anguished by the tragic war in Vietnam."

Now—four years later—our loyalty to the Lord of all nations and our love of our country and concern for its integrity remain undiminished. But our anguish over what the war in Indochina is doing to our neighbors, our nation, and ourselves, and our painful concern for all prisoners of war have substantially increased. We are now convinced that the continuation of this war cannot be morally justified. The killing must be stopped.

The Presbyterian Church in the United States in its 111th General Assembly (1971):

1. **Publicly commends and supports** the President of the United States in his efforts and those of the Government to bring about an end to the unfortunate conflict in Indochina, and for the disengagement and return of our forces.

2. **Encourages** the commissioners, youth delegates, and congregations to express their views concerning the war in Indochina to the President and their congressional representatives by letter, telephone, and in person.

3. **Designates** October 3, 1971, as a Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace in Indochina.

Statement of the 41 Youth Delegates

Received by the 111th General Assembly (1971) of the
Presbyterian Church in the United States

We, the . . . youth delegates to the 111th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, would record our deepest disappointment at the adoption of the Assembly of [a portion] of the report [on "The War in Indochina"].

It is our feeling that, by commending the President, the statement of the General Assembly treats lightly the great hurt and deep frustration which we and this nation experience arising from American involvement in Southeast Asia.

Statement of the 10 Pages

The pages of the 1971 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. unanimously express their deep disagreement with the action of the General Assembly in adopting the . . . [report on "The War in Indochina"].

We feel that the Assembly erred in:

1. Failing to address itself effectively to the theological and ethical issues involved in the war.
2. Supporting a policy that does not call for an immediate cessation of conflict.
3. Failing to condemn decisively this immoral conflict.

INDOCHINA

The Indochina Quagmire

**Policy Statement and Recommendations
Adopted by the 185th General Assembly (1973) of
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.**

IN EARLY 1973, when the Paris Agreements were signed and the cease-fire was announced, the church shared the nation's profound hope that the war was over. The United States was leaving Vietnam at last, along with American prisoners of war. Possibilities for reconciliation and reconstruction seemed immediate. At the time of the signing of the cease-fire agreement the Moderator and Stated Clerk said in a letter to the churches:

The sounds of devastation and death are stilled. A blasted land and a battered people can for a while at least hear the ordinary sounds of life after more than two decades of death. Prisoners of war will go home. American military forces will leave Vietnam. American bombers will no longer darken the skies.

We will give thanks for this moment of hope, quietly in our hearts and openly in our churches. . . .

We are finally freed from the mystifying and obstinate grasp of a war that shook our confidence in ourselves as much as it shook the world's confidence in us. ("A Letter to the Churches," *PPS*, January 24, 1973.)

But these hopes are still far from realization. The Paris Agreements are frequently ignored by all parties. Congress has shown great reluctance to approve reconstruction aid. Indochina remains at war. The Vietnamese are still fighting as if there were no cease-fire. Countless civilians still experience pain, death, and homelessness. The United States is still militarily involved, especially in massive bombing of Cambodia. President Nixon has even threatened to renew military action against North Vietnam.

Renewed bombing of Vietnam would compound the enormous suffering of the peoples of the area. It would lead also to the moral and

political isolation of the United States. We believe such intervention to be neither in the interests of the United States nor consistent with the demands of honor.

In the light of this ongoing tragedy, the church must commend "the use of every possible alternative to violence in the just settlement of human issues" (181st General Assembly, 1969). Is our nation again seeking military solutions to political objectives? The 183d General Assembly (1971) declared that "our Government's continuing military involvement in Indochina is immoral and unjust. . . . A political settlement is the only legitimate solution to the war in Indochina."

Last year the 184th General Assembly (1972) expressed its conviction that "there is no honor for America in subjecting her democratic institutions to the personal policies and pride of Presidents who ignore the constitutional responsibility of Congress to declare war. Congress has not declared war in Indochina. To the contrary, Congress has repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which has been so often referred to as the legal justification for our involvement, and has adopted a resolution declaring speedy termination of our involvement to be the policy of the United States."

The more recent House of Representatives vote of May 10, 1973, refusing to grant transfer authority for funds for the Cambodia bombing, has further eroded the Administration's justification for continuing American military involvement in Indochina.

Facing the possible breakdown of the Paris Agreements, an end to the cease-fire, and a renewal of American intervention, the 185th General Assembly (1973) records its profound disquiet at the prospects that confront the peoples of Indochina and the United States.

1. Concerning Vietnam

- We deplore the evasions of the Paris Agreements which have occurred on the part of all signatories and we call upon the parties to observe the agreement and cooperate with the International Commission of Control and Supervision.
- We support the efforts of the United States to make the agreements effective by diplomatic action.
- We wish to record our outright opposition to any attempt by our Government to enforce the agreements by unilateral means; in particular, we would deplore any renewed bombing in North or South Vietnam.

2. Concerning Cambodia and Laos

- We grieve over the fratricidal strife that racks the unfortunate nations of Cambodia and Laos; we oppose North Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia and Laos; we oppose as inhumane and possibly unconstitutional the continued United States bombing in Cambodia and Laos.

3. Concerning the United States

- We deplore the silence and apathy of Christians concerning the continued American intervention in Indochina and urge them to register their opposition with the President and their representatives in Congress.
- Specifically we urge support of any legislation designed to end American participation in the war and toward reasserting the constitutional powers of the Congress to control the nation's involvement in war.
- We strongly urge the Government of the United States to call upon all governments in Indochina to account fully for all persons who are held prisoner in their countries as a result of hostilities.
- We call upon our Government to provide massive economic resources in all parts of Indochina for reconstruction purposes, relying upon channels that enhance self-development by the peoples of Indochina.
- We encourage prayer for the President, for the leaders of our nation, for the leaders in Indochina, and for all peoples bound in conflict toward the hope that our common humanity be recognized and peace be established.
- As devoted followers of Jesus Christ, we reaffirm our unshakable determination to work for peace and declare our readiness to sacrifice in order to repair the ravages and ruins that war has brought to Indochina.

Report of the Task Force on Indochina

Report received and Recommendations adopted
by the 185th General Assembly (1973) of
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

PERSPECTIVE

Following the longest war in the history of the United States, and a peace without victory, the United States people are challenged to scrutinize the lessons of their involvement. While we have employed the most military force, the other side has employed a sophisticated political and military strategy that at least has enabled them largely to preserve the situation that existed in 1954 at the time of the Geneva Accords. After nineteen years, 46,000 American dead, 190,000 ARVN soldiers dead, 900,000 NFL and DRVN soldiers dead, 400,000 civilians killed and 8 million homeless, a country is devastated and the political realities are very little changed.

These facts mean that, although our own forces are withdrawn and the American military will cease operations in Vietnam, those whose destinies are at stake, the people of Indochina, face an uncertain future and a problematic peace. We cannot fail to be concerned for them. At the same time, we can avoid repeating the mistakes of war. Difficult as the prospects appear, the people of Indochina must look primarily to themselves to determine their destiny without the intervention of foreign power. Our concern and support must be conditioned by our commitment to the principles of self-determination and to the terms of the cease-fire agreement.

The continued unsettled state of affairs in Indochina will make the possibility of outside assistance questionable. The problem of extending aid to advance political goals will also exist.

The postwar situation is therefore a challenge both because the conditions of peace are unique and because our previous involvement raises so many questions. Whatever wrongs have been committed by the other side, we have much to regret ourselves.

The American people and Christians in particular ought to reflect upon the implications of the war before responding too quickly in either a guilt-ridden orgy of reconstruction and restoration plans or, even more frightening, in a victor's attitude of, "now we can be friends again." We can reflect on the effects of the war both physically and spiritually upon the people of Indochina. We can also recall

that they have been struggling for their own independence for over one thousand years.

Our initiatives need to be formed in compassion, humility, and in respect for the dignity of a people who have not succumbed to the travesty and destruction of modern war. No doubt exists that their needs will be great. Ours are too. We cannot point with superior pride of achievement and determine what their needs are, lest they say, "Physician, heal thyself." We can be generous and ready to respond within terms that they can define of themselves and for themselves.

PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

The Administration will propose to Congress some form of economic assistance to North and South Vietnam for reconstruction. It is clear that such a proposal will be opposed in Congress for various reasons: (a) by those who oppose aid that has political strings attached and is linked with continuing military support to certain regimes, (b) by those who oppose any aid to Communist-controlled governments or areas in Indochina, and (c) by those who fear that postwar aid to Indochina will curtail further appropriations for national priorities at home.

There is considerable anxiety on the part of legislators and groups in the United States who are alarmed by the President's assertion that any reconstruction assistance for Indochina will have to be taken from some part of the current budget. In the same week that the announcement was made of the cease-fire agreement, Americans heard that fifteen major domestic programs, including the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), would be curtailed or concluded, and that money saved from the conduct of the war was not to be applied to the domestic situation. With domestic social programs already being drastically cut we call for a reordering of our national budget priorities involving a reduction in wasteful and unnecessary military spending.

There is much confusion and disarray among religious and secular organizations disposed to support public assistance for reconstruction of North and South Vietnam. Some are concerned about the future of foreign aid in general. Some are hoping to become newly involved in reconstruction efforts in Vietnam (either by their physical presence or the sending of funds). Others (such as UNICEF) are already involved in Indochina but are planning expanded programs.

Thus there are a wide range of public policy issues that need to be

addressed and a clear lack of an appropriate forum for such a discussion to take place.

ACTION BY PREVIOUS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 182d General Assembly (1970) authorized the formation of a Task Force on Indochina, through which United Presbyterian agencies have coordinated their own program and strategy, and set forth the guidelines which have been followed:

1. Faithful participation in efforts to bring peace to Vietnam is a precondition of participation in planning for the postwar period.

2. Religious planning for "peace, postwar justice and development in Southeast Asia" should provide a way of coordinating the perspectives and activities of various interests—overseas mission, international affairs, relief and service, self-development, etc.

3. The principles of self-determination and self-development must be respected in postwar activities—"the locus of planning, execution, and review . . . be within an Asian context . . . and local national leadership, whether secular or religious, be responsible for the design and management of all programs of this nature within their bounds."

4. Reaffirmation of "willingness and commitment, if called upon by the people of Vietnam, to appeal for significant resources from constituent membership and churches" to help meet postwar needs.

5. A commitment to channel such aid through international and ecumenical structures.

6. An attempt to relate religious planning and assistance to the work of governmental and other private agencies.

7. Support for official governmental funds to aid reconstruction and development efforts throughout Indochina, including both North and South Vietnam.

8. Preference for multilateral planning and aid channels for governmental efforts, preferably through the United Nations, as well as church channels.

Subsequent General Assemblies have reviewed and reaffirmed the direction outlined in these guidelines and the Task Force on Indochina, through the United Presbyterian Peace Priority Program, has continued to serve as a coordinating center for their implementation.

ECUMENICAL COORDINATION

The widest possible collaboration must be sought in order to maximize effectiveness and achieve a united front. Although it is seldom possible to consolidate all church efforts into one single effort, United Presbyterians should demonstrate a full commitment to a collaborative style that shuns unilateralism in favor of a multilateral style, especially with regard to postwar efforts in Indochina. In 1971, the Task Force on Indochina stressed this by urging that we begin conversations to explore the means of establishing a new unitary ecumenical structure which can relate to the development process. We have been following closely the development of a Fund for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Indochina by the World Council of Churches. In addition, support of the National Council of Churches' programs of relief and rehabilitation has been generous. Such a program carried on as it is under American supervision will be reviewed as we enter a significant new phase of postwar relationship in order to determine the best means for enhancing self-development among the people of Indochina. As the Director of Church World Service cautions, "the temptation will be to release the energies potential of a larger reconstruction and reconciliation effort to a 'business as usual' effort rather than to research out with Indochinese their own felt needs and their own priorities." He goes on to state that the Fund (of the World Council of Churches), "to do the tremendously important task before it, will have to take deliberate time to ascertain that its actions from commencement will be in response and integrity of what the people of Indochina feel is the urgent area of need." (Disaster Report and Response No. 221, February 2, 1973.)

FUND RAISING

It is already obvious that many will be pressing (in and out of the church) for an outpouring of funds in order to "reconstruct Indochina." It is the judgment of the task force that any fund-raising programs should be preceded by a careful examination of the moral dilemma this war has posed for the American people and of what have been some implications of our involvement in Indochina. Money should not be raised merely because it is required. The spirit and intention with which it is given also deserve attention.

The Task Force on Indochina has consulted with the Support Agency and the World Relief and Emergency Service Committee concerning the implementation of Overture 142, 1972, calling for the establishment of a special fund. It has also been continuing consulta-

tion with the World Council of Churches through United Presbyterian representation in Unit II on Justice and Service as well as by direct communication with the Board of the Fund for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Indochina. These consultations have sought to ensure full United Presbyterian coordination and cooperation as well as to emphasize the main guidelines established by the GA concerning our response to the postwar Indochina situation.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

1. Publications

A recent issue of CHURCH AND SOCIETY magazine and of *Trends* magazine deal with a number of topics related to the postwar situation. Conversations are scheduled to discuss the insertion of articles on this theme in *A.D.* magazine.

2. Continuing Program

The Emergency Ministry on Conscience and War and the Service Ministry to Returning Veterans continue to operate.

The United Presbyterian Peace Priority Program, which was mandated by the 183d General Assembly (1971), has provided pastors and judicatory leaders with the *Peace Priority Manual*. This instrument suggests channels for reconstruction and contributions to congregations, presbyteries, and synods. The sections on legislative and civic actions are to be revised to account for postwar situations.

We are also involved with seven other denominations and the National Council of Churches in planning regional Ecumenical Peace Action Consultations in 1973-1974 with the aid of matching grants from the churches and the Johnson Foundation.

In November, the Task Force on Indochina brought the request of the World Council of Churches for a medical program to North Vietnam civilian casualties before the General Council. Approval was given for a specific limited appeal to individuals and congregations to respond. This appeal continues and to date over \$5,000 in individual contributions and \$15,000 in congregational pledges have been received.

The One Great Hour of Sharing appeal continues to be a major channel for contributions toward relief work in Indochina, primarily South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Over the next few months the Peace Priority Program will seek to keep synods and presbyteries informed of development in this area of postwar reconciliation and reconstruction.

One synod, the Synod of the Covenant, has made world peace one of its major priorities for emphasis.

In addition, the Task Force on Indochina has supported and collaborated with a number of coalition efforts related to the war and its aftermath. Included among these are the IMPACT Network for legislative alerts, the Coalition on National Priorities, and the Indochina Resource Center.

At this critical stage of transition the task force intends to support the call for a national interreligious convocation of interested parties (e.g., churches, voluntary agencies, legislators, United Nations special agencies, and the State Department) to examine the postwar situation in depth and to take account of the larger implications it has for the American and Indochinese societies.

3. Mission Involvement

The United Presbyterian Church has no direct mission involvement in Indochina. Through the Christian Conference of Asia, the Evangelical Church of Vietnam and the Evangelical Church of Laos have had some contacts with the other member churches of the CCA.

We are currently involved with other churches in supporting the assignment of an Indochina Church Consultant for the Division of Overseas Ministries, National Council of Churches. Mr. Alex Grant, of the EACC Institute on Ethnic Communities, located in Manila, travels to South Vietnam frequently. He is in touch with religious groups in Indochina to explore their hopes, aspirations, and problems as he seeks to determine appropriate ways in which the churches outside Vietnam can be concerned with these aspects of their life.

Recently our church was in communication with a newly established Presbyterian Church of Vietnam, which initiated correspondence with the Moderator of our General Assembly. The Presbyterian Church of Vietnam was founded as the result of the effort of some Korean Presbyterian chaplains serving in South Vietnam. The policy of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America will be to seek to establish a relationship which does not create a pattern of dependence and which recognizes our commitment to ecumenical participation with Vietnam.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE POST CEASE-FIRE INDOCHINA SITUATION

I. Based upon the actions and the mandate of previous General Assemblies with respect to the postwar situation, we recommend that

the United Presbyterian Church continue to press for a broad ecumenical forum involving substantial Indochinese participation to develop guidelines for postwar response.

This strategy has two focuses:

1. Support for an international ecumenical structure which coordinates world Christian response to postwar reconciliation and reconstruction in Indochina and serves as a funding channel. The newly established World Council of Churches' Fund for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Indochina is designed to fulfill this purpose.

2. Support for a national ecumenical-interreligious forum in the United States which involves all primary interested parties (e.g., churches, voluntary agencies, legislators, United Nations special agencies, State Department-AID, plus Indochinese nationals and experts) to examine the postwar situation in depth and to take account of the larger implications it has for the American and Indochinese societies.

II. We recommend that The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America seek financial support toward those goals which are identified in relation to postwar reconstruction in Indochina.

1. Immediate response can be channeled through the One Great Hour of Sharing for 1973 and the Special Medical Program for North Vietnam civilians.

2. Believing that the principles of Indochinese initiative, design, and management are provided for through the World Council of Churches' Fund for Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Indochina, we strongly recommend that The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America fulfill its commitment to provide a fair share of this Fund. We urge that the Support Agency immediately formulate plans for raising this support noting that the Task Force on Indochina has recommended to the General Assembly Mission Council that The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America pledge a sum of \$600,000 for the three-year period of the Fund.

III. We recommend that The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America help its constituency understand the reconstruction situation, and alert people to the emerging issues.

1. A revised *Peace Priority Manual* with specific suggestions for civic and church action and response through sessions, presbyteries, and synods is proposed by the Task Force on Indochina under the framework of the United Presbyterian Peace Priority Program.

2. We request the United Presbyterian Washington Office and the Church and Society Unit to continue to study emerging legislative items and report where action is appropriate.

IV. We recommend that The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America adopt a strategy for mission involvement that recognizes the existing circumstances and ecumenical relationships. Emphasis should be placed upon ecumenical participation, particularly through the Christian Conference of Asia, and upon continuation of United Presbyterian policy to establish relationships which do not create a pattern of dependence.

The Children of Indochina

**Adopted by the 185th General Assembly (1973) of
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.**

Whereas our Christian concern is for human life and especially the developing lives of children; and

Whereas the Indochina war has left many children homeless, maimed, fatherless and/or motherless and without acceptance by their country because of their mixed cultural heritage, the majority of whom are of Asian-American origin;

Therefore, we urge the Program Agency to take positive action to deal with the problems relating to the redemption and healing of these children who have been victims of the Indochina war.

We further recommend that the following actions be considered by the Program Agency:

1. To urge the United States Administration to press the Government of South Vietnam for changes in Vietnamese law which would ease adoption of Asian-American children;
2. To urge Congress to pass legislation to ease the legal problems involved in adopting Asian-American children;
3. To provide support for these children in Vietnam.

Vietnamese Political Prisoners— The Responsibility of American Christians

**Policy Statement and Recommendations
Adopted by the 186th General Assembly (1974) of
The United Presbyterian Church U.S.A.**

I was in prison and you came to me.—Matthew 25:36.

The existence of political prisoners in South Vietnam is beyond any reasonable dispute. . . . Further, substantiated accounts of cases of mistreatment and torture of such prisoners have been authoritatively reported.

—From the report of the Committee on Appropriations to the Senate accompanying HR 11771, Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriation Bill, 1974 (Dec. 13, 1973), p. 27.

The record is clear.

Our General Assembly, throughout the tragic years of U.S. involvement in the Indochina War, has addressed the consciences of United Presbyterians and of the nation in unmistakable witness embodied in these statements:

- 1967 "A Declaration of Conscience"
- 1968 "The Vietnam War and Its Lessons"
- 1970 "Not Lightly, But Under Grave Constraint"
- 1971 "The Moral Crisis of the United States in Indochina"
- 1972 "A Message to United Presbyterians"
- 1973 "The Indochina Quagmire"

This year the 186th General Assembly (1974) notes with gratitude the end of U.S. military operations in Vietnam.

However, lest we appear only concerned for the well-being and peace of our own society, let us face the continuing tragedy being enacted in Indochina. Our nation, which has had so vast and so costly an involvement in Indochina in the past through warfare, cannot in clear conscience avoid involvement in building the peace. And peace is not yet at hand.

Every endeavor to ensure the full implementation of the Paris Peace Agreements should be supported. The efforts of our Govern-

ment to secure a greater measure of peace and stability by dialogue and discussion with the North Vietnamese government are significant. Efforts to help repair the ravages of war as called for in the Agreements should not be slackened despite opposition in the Congress.

In January, 1973, C. Willard Heckel, Moderator, and William P. Thompson, Stated Clerk, wrote in "A Letter to the Churches":

The awful arithmetic and special agony of that war has been so long a part of our moral landscape that we may never know how fully it has possessed us or how spiritually callous it has made us. But mercifully, our judgment from God or from history will not be made on the moral confusion of the years of war alone. God and men alike wait to know what America will do *now* and with what spirit. Can we—will we—"build once more on ancestral foundations" of compassion, justice, peace, tolerance, and a decent respect for the opinions of mankind? Or are we too weary and so uneasy that we will remove the memories and the consequences of those terrible years from moral calculation without having sought or learned their meaning, or healed the harm of them? Therein lies the danger in our rejoicing. There is the choice that a troubled and unsure nation must make.

In this regard, Americans may not ignore the complicity of the United States in the flagrant denial of human rights still occurring in South Vietnam involving the disposition of political prisoners. Article 8(c) of the January 1973 Peace Agreements stipulates that "the question of the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam will be resolved by the two South Vietnamese parties on the basis of the principles of Article 21(b) of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam of July 20, 1954. . . . The two South Vietnamese parties will do their utmost to resolve this question within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect." The 1973 Paris Agreements specify the civilian personnel or internees to be returned as persons who "have in any way contributed to the political and armed struggle between the two parties" and have been arrested and imprisoned for this reason. Unfortunately the Paris Agreements define "civilian personnel" in such a way as to exclude those South Vietnamese prisoners who are "third force" or "neutralists." Hence the effect of the agreements is to protect guerrilla fighters but to leave ordinary citizens without legal protection. The net result, according to the Senate report, is that there are 40,000 to 60,000 political prisoners in South Vietnam.

Many political prisoners in South Vietnam have no interest in exchange. They dislike Thieu but do not support Hanoi. Documentary evidence indicates that arrests, torture, and detention without

trial are commonplace. Circumvention of the intent of the Paris Agreement articles is also accomplished by the expedient of convicting political prisoners under "common criminal" law provisions, such as failure to carry an I.D. card.

The United States bears a grave responsibility with respect to this situation for three substantial reasons. First, it is one of the signatories of the Paris Peace Agreement and, therefore, duty bound to seek its full implementation. The United States is also bound, as are all parties, to the Geneva Convention of 1949 on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Failure to oppose violations of the human rights of political prisoners is a failure of moral and treaty commitment. Second, the vast involvement of the United States in Vietnam over the past decade, including the massive support for the Thieu government, has been a material factor in bringing about the present conditions. Third, the United States, by providing aid that supports the extensive police surveillance system responsible for these violations of human rights, actually aids and abets this injustice.

Some examples that are illustrative of this allegation are the following:

1. On June 27, 1973, Senator James Abourezk testifying before the Foreign Relations Committee revealed that a U.S. Embassy report entitled "Enquiry on USAID/CORDS Support of Government of Vietnam Civilian Prison System" reported \$400,000 was spent for the construction of new isolation cells on Con Son island to replace the infamous "Tiger Cages" (the new cells are two square feet smaller than the old). Funds for construction for the new cells were generated by the Food for Peace Program.¹

2. The U.S. Embassy in Saigon and Assistant Secretary of State Marshall Wright reported American expenditures, 1967-73, for Police and Public Safety Related Programs:

From American Aid Chapter (AAC) and Assistance-in-Kind (AIK)	\$ 6,500,000 ²
From Commodity Support	2,455,550 ²
From Agency for International Development (AID)	97,374,000 ³
From Department of Defense	59,600,000 ³
Total	<u>\$165,929,550</u>

The State Department said, "There are political prisoners in South Vietnamese jails and incidents of abuse and mistreatment do occur."⁴

3. Matthew J. Harvey, director of the Office of Legislative Affairs of the Agency for International Development, wrote to U.S. Con-

gressman Lee H. Hamilton on June 12, 1973, that \$9.3 million of the fiscal year 1974 budget is a request for Department of Defense money "for the National Police to replace worn out equipment." ⁵

4. The Senate Appropriations Committee in December 1973 acknowledged that at least \$12,413,000 was proposed for fiscal 1974 as assistance to the South Vietnamese National Police to be funded through the auspices of the Agency for International Development. The Committee also expressed its belief that it was "not in the best interests of the Agency for International Development or any agency of government to be identified with the police system of South Vietnam." ⁶

We recognize that other parties in the Vietnam conflict have committed acts of barbarism on prisoners and we encourage these parties to accept the recommendations herein contained that are applicable, such as items 3a, 3b, 3c, 4, and 5 in the recommendations.

However, the issue of the treatment of prisoners comes down to a question for the conscience of the church and the nation. Even if the United States were not supporting the prison system of its ally in South Vietnam, we would still have a moral obligation to insist that South Vietnam act humanely toward its political prisoners. Since the U.S. Government is directly involved, unless we seek by every means possible to persuade the South Vietnam government to change its policy we become an accomplice in barbarism. Certainly no person who claims to follow Christ should support for one moment cruel and monstrous treatment of other human beings. War and its accompanying behavior is always brutal and degrading. The church through the ages has tried to reduce the horrors and suffering caused by war and should continue to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of this state of affairs, believing in the intrinsic and eternal worth of every human being, and for the following reasons, the 186th General Assembly (1974) calls upon United Presbyterians to test their conscience and to act appropriately:

Because Christ has identified himself with all prisoners; and

Because at least 40,000 to 60,000 political prisoners are believed imprisoned by the government of South Vietnam; and

Because at least \$12,413,000 has been requested by the U.S. Administration for the maintenance of the South Vietnam police and prison system in fiscal 1974; and

Because of additional U.S. support of the South Vietnamese gov-

ernment—in the form of direct aid, advisory services, and indirect aid (such as the return to the Vietnamese government of payment received for food supplied through the Food for Peace Program); and

Because there is overwhelming evidence of torture, lack of medical care, inhumane and brutal prison conditions, the imprisoning of persons for long periods without charges being filed against them and without trials to determine their guilt or innocence; and

Because there are alleged violations of the Paris Peace Agreements of January 1973 regarding the release of political prisoners; and

Because, despite years of General Assembly statements of grave concerns for the people and conflict in Vietnam, many United Presbyterians now seem persuaded that the war is over and that our nation's responsibility for reconciliation and peace has been fulfilled; and

Because the continuing expression of concern and aid for the people of Vietnam by the churches in the United States should support Vietnamese efforts to achieve justice, liberation, and human fulfillment;

The 186th General Assembly (1974)

1. Notes that Section 112 (the Hatfield Amendment) of the Foreign Assistance Act, public law 93,240, states: "None of the funds appropriated or made available pursuant to this act, and no local currencies generated as a result of assistance furnished under this act may be used for the support of police, or prison construction and administration within South Vietnam, for training, including computer training, of South Vietnamese with respect to police, criminal, or prison matters."

2. Urges the attachment of Section 112 to the Department of Defense Authorization bill.

3. Further urges that Congress eliminate all U.S. aid to South Vietnam unless the International Committee of the Red Cross is allowed to make full inspection of South Vietnam including:

a. Freedom to go throughout the prisons, interviewing the prisoners at random;

b. Freedom to talk with the prisoners in private, out of the presence of prison authorities, using independent interpreters selected by the Red Cross; and

c. The opportunity to pay repeated visits to the prisons on a regular basis.

4. Urges the United States to make immediate and strong diplomatic representations to the Government of the Republic of Viet-

nam in behalf of humane and just treatment of all civilian detainees for political reasons. Specifically the United States should firmly counsel the Thieu government:

a. To reclassify its political prisoners and rectify the rolls in a just and proper manner so that all categories reflect accurately the nature and definition of charges;

b. To invite a full inspection of prison facilities under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross;

c. To provide orderly due process for the release of those prisoners not covered by the repatriation and return provisions in the prisoner protocol of the cease-fire agreement.

5. Urges the U.S. Government to make strong diplomatic representations to the governments of Vietnam to join in the formation of a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord—as required by the peace agreement—and to specify that all U.S. aid be transferred to the new government formed by such a council.

6. Commends the Director of Church World Service for protesting to the State Department the use of PL 480 Food for Peace Funds for nonhumanitarian purposes in Vietnam.

7. Notes that adjustments have been made to shift United Presbyterian Church support from unilateral U.S. Christian Service operations in Vietnam through Vietnam Christian Service to increased support through World Council of Churches channels of Asian Christian Service, and further note the commitment of the United Presbyterian Church to a broad-based ecumenical coalition for Christian witness and service in Indochina through the World Council of Churches' Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina and the commitment of the United Presbyterian Church to raise \$600,000 (\$200,000 for each of three years) beginning in 1974 in support of that fund.

8. Endorses the National Council of Churches Governing Board actions (March 1, 1973) that the U.S. Christian response to the needs of Indochina should

- “place generous funds at the disposal of Indochinese persons and organizations for indigenous determination of the use of the resources available”;
- “seek expression through multilateral channels”;
- “may best be made through genuinely interdenominational channels and in cooperation with such interreligious and other agencies as may be pursuing the same objectives”;
- and that
- “We (NCC) believe the most promising channel for ecumenical assistance to Indochina is the World Council of

Churches' Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation and we urge strong support of this Fund."

9. Reaffirms the action of the 185th General Assembly (1973) to pledge a sum of \$600,000 for the three-year period 1974-76 to the World Council of Churches' Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina.

10. Endorses the recommendation of the former United Presbyterian Task Force on Indochina to the National Council of Churches' Division of Overseas Ministries Executive Committee with regard to relief, rehabilitation, and development concerns that they "move to phase out unilateral U.S. operations in Vietnam."

11. Requests that our representatives urge Church World Service to develop and carry out a schedule that will achieve indigenous control of Vietnam Christian Service operations.

To implement this report, the 186th General Assembly (1974)

1. *Recommends* that the Stated Clerk, in consultation with appropriate staff of the Program Agency:

a. Communicate the General Assembly policy and recommendations regarding political prisoners of the governments of Vietnam to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Attorney General, the Director for the Agency for International Development, key members of Congress, and directors of federal agencies.

b. Provide copies of this background paper, policy statement, and recommendations along with other resources to every congregation and middle judicatory.

2. Commends this report for study and action in judicatories and congregations.

3. Urges all United Presbyterians to establish local church study-action task groups and to join in supporting similar ecumenical groups to study the facts regarding political prisoners and to promote their humane treatment.

NOTES

1. Cited in Don Luce, "Deceiving the American People" (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1973), p. 3.

2. Letter of Ray A. Meyer, Second Secretary, U.S. Embassy, Saigon, to Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 119 (June 4, 1973), p. S10207.

3. Letter of Marshall Wright to Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 119 (Sept. 11, 1973), pp. S16300-02.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Cited in Luce.

6. "Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriation Bill, 1974," Senate Report 93-620 (Dec. 13, 1973), p. 28.

**THE REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

Rev. John S. McMullen, Chairman, presented the report of the Standing Committee on Church and Society.

The Assembly recessed with prayer being voiced by Rev. ^{John S.} Robert J. McMullen.

**SEVENTH DAY
WEDNESDAY**

June 14, 1967, 8:30 A.M.

The Assembly met at 8:30 and engaged in a service of worship led by Rev. David A. Laverty.

The Minutes of Tuesday were read and approved.

LIMITATION OF DEBATE

The Assembly ordered that the Standing Rules regarding time of debate be suspended and that the Assembly set a thirty minutes limit on the debate on any one particular subject with a limit of five minutes for each speaker.

The Assembly resumed consideration of the Report of the Standing Committee on Church and Society. The report was adopted, as amended, and is as follows:

**THE REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

The following were referred to this Committee by the General Assembly:

- I. Minutes of the Council on Church and Society.
- II. Report of the Council on Church and Society with its recommendations.
- III. Overtures 61-66, 71, 78.
- IV. Resolution No. 8.

We Recommend:

- I. That the minutes of the Council on Church and Society be approved.
- II. That the report of the Council on Church and Society be acted upon in the following ways:
 1. That the 107th General Assembly receive as information the paper, GOD'S WORK IN OUR RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD, print it in the Minutes (see Appendix, page 211) and commend it to the churches for study.
 2. That the 107th General Assembly adopt the statement, REPENTING OF DISCRIMINATION IN OUR INSTITUTIONAL LIFE (see Appendix, page 214).
 3. That the 107th General Assembly receive the Message of the Geneva Conference (see Appendix, page 215) and transmit it to the churches for study and appropriate action, with the following explanatory introduction.

Introduction

A World Conference on Church and Society, sponsored by the World Council of Churches, was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in July, 1966. Over 400 delegates from 70 nations, two-thirds of whom were laymen, explored together for two weeks the Conference theme, "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time." The participants then issued a Conference Message for study, consideration and comment by the member communions in preparation for the next meeting of the General Assembly of the World Council to be held in 1968.

The 107th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States received the Message of the World Conference on Church and Society and ordered that the Message be transmitted to the churches for study and appropriate action, with the understanding that in so doing the Assembly is not encouraging civil disobedience. Detailed Reports of the conference are available from the World Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y. 10027.

4. That in response to Recommendation No. 4 of the Council on Church and Society regarding "An Appeal to the Churches Concerning Vietnam" of the National Council of Churches of the U.S.A. (see Appendix, page 217), attention is directed to the recommendation regarding this "Appeal" in recommendation IV of this report.

III. Overtures:

1. To overtures 61 (Cherokee), 62 (Florida), 63 (Louisiana), and 66 (Session of First Church, Baton Rouge, La.) all seeking further General Assembly action on its previous actions concerning civil disobedience, we recommend that these overtures be answered in the *negative* as the statements of the 105th and 106th General Assembly on civil disobedience, when considered in their entirety, constitute an adequate expression of a position regarding Christian respect for law consistent with the Biblical witness and Reformed theology. (See pages 45, 46.)
2. To overture 64 (St. Andrew), we recommend:
 - (a) That the portion of the overture requesting that the General Assembly "express its disapproval of those who go beyond the bounds of civil disobedience as defined in the 1965 statement: 'the open, non-violent and conscientious refusal to obey a law or laws, as a means of appeal to a higher law, combined with the willing acceptance of the penalty.' (p. 160, Minutes of the 105th General Assembly)", be answered in the *affirmative*, in that such disapproval is implicit in the statement on civil disobedience of both the 105th and 106th General Assemblies.
 - (b) That the second portion of the overture, asking the General Assembly "to develop ways and means of working towards . . . reconciliation" be answered as follows: The General Assembly affirms its conviction that divine human reconciliation is the primary responsibility of the whole church and the fundamental purpose of all General Assembly programs.
3. To overture 65 (see page 45) (South Texas), we recommend: That this overture be answered by reference to the action of the General Assembly upon the report of the Permanent Judicial Commission (See Appendix, page 242), and report of Standing Committee on Judicial Business, page 128, Item G.
4. We further recommend: That in the light of apparent continued misunderstanding of the General Assembly's position on the subject of civil disobedience, reflected in various overtures coming to the Assembly, we urge that all courts of the Church engage in a careful study of the statements on this matter by the 105th and 106th General Assemblies.
5. To overture 71 (see page 48) (Florida), we recommend: That the General Assembly concur with the Presbytery of Florida in its belief that our church must always work to strengthen Bible teaching and preaching in the Church, to emphasize the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Apostle's Creed; to reinforce the Church's emphasis on its purity, peace and mission of redeeming men through Jesus Christ; but that in the judgment of the General Assembly Christian Witness and obedience in the field of "civil and political issues" is part of the mission of the church.
6. To overture 78 (see page 48) (Columbia), we recommend: That this overture be answered in the *affirmative*, with the understanding that the intent of the overture is to instruct the Council on Church and Society to implement the request for strengthening the Church's ministry to prisoners.

IV. The General Assembly received and referred to the Standing Committee on Church and Society Resolution No. 8, signed by the following commissioners: Donald W. Shriver, Jr., of Granville; T. Hartley Hall, IV, of N. E. Texas; John M. Handley of Mecklenburg; William R. Sengel of Potomac; Jack East, Jr., of Washburn; Norman L. Grover of Montgomery, and Thomas A. Spragens of Transylvania. The Resolution is as follows:

Along with fellow Americans and fellow Christians around the world, we are deeply perplexed and anguished by the tragic war in Vietnam. As Americans, we love our country, cherish its traditions, and generally support its causes. Yet as Christians, above everything we love the Lord of all nations. In our baptism we have accepted from Him membership in a kingdom whose gates open to all men. Our loyalty to Him thus demands the continual scrutiny of all our lesser loyalties. Our membership in His worldwide kingdom is thus a discipline to and a disturber of our patriotism.

Furthermore, we believe that He is the Lord of all our history. Therefore we are confident that He is at work in even the terrifying complexity of international politics in our time. As men, we do not pretend to understand world affairs or the works of God comprehensively; but as Christians, we believe that God works to bring forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation to the nations. As Christians we ask ourselves what responsibility God means for us to bear in His universal work.

When we struggle with this fundamental Christian question in relation to the Vietnam conflict, numerous other questions press upon us. Some of these we can avoid answering in

the name of ignorance; others we must at least try to answer, lest we be rightly accused of faithlessness. Precisely because we are Christians first and Americans second, we wrestle with these questions; and as a General Assembly we invite the members of our churches to wrestle with us. We direct these questions to ourselves and to the churches rather than to our government. We confess that such questions have not always found sober attention in our ranks. Until they do merit such attention in our eyes, we shall inevitably bear a poor testimony to the political leaders of the world:

1. What purpose does God have for our nation's enemies? If they too are under His rule, what benefit is He conferring upon America in its enemies' resistance to its power? As Christians, have we clearly affirmed our nation's need of restraint by other nations, as well as others' need of restraint by us?

2. How much are we obligated to learn in this matter from the opinions of our fellow churchmen in other parts of the world? What restraint on our patriotism is God imposing upon us through our brethren in the body of Christ, especially those in Asia, Africa, and South America who are increasingly critical of American policy in Vietnam?

3. What does the Lord require us to learn in the increasing urgency of dissent on this issue in the ranks of the young, who bear much of the cost of war, and in the ranks of our fellow American churchmen, who have tried to consider the war from a Christian perspective? What does He also require us to learn from our own frustration in trying to understand this war, from the viewpoint of our Lord?

4. As His disciples, called on to live by the law of love, have we been saddened by the violence of American arms as much as by the violence of our enemies? Are we as much in agony for the death of one Vietnamese child as for the death of an American child? Have we too quickly resigned ourselves to inhumane acts because our enemy also commits them?

5. As real as the sacrifices of our nation have been in this war, are we in danger of thinking that in time of war the magnitude of sacrifice is a guarantee of justice? Are we spiritually prepared to help our nation on any occasion to admit that the cost of some victories can nullify victory itself?

6. Since one respected tradition of Christian ethics views war as sometimes just, are we not obligated by this tradition to test every war at all times, inquiring about its justice? What are the limits to justified destruction in war? Have we as Christians asked with concreteness what those limits are? At what point must any government draw back from inflicting damage upon its enemies, even at the price of its own defeat in war? As Christians, from what evils must we yearn to protect our country more than the evil of defeat in war?

7. Finally, we ask ourselves if we are still committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as good news to the Communist as well as the capitalist, the revolutionary as well as the conservative, the stranger as well as the friend? Are we truly reconciled to One who is not the enemy of our enemies, since he is not even the enemy of his own enemies? Have we rightly exercised our imagination to think that our nation's opponents are our Lord's beloved? If we are deficient in such imagination, have we prayed earnestly for this spiritual gift?

These questions we address to ourselves, conscious that Christians must ask about such things with fear and trembling. We trust God's Spirit to enable us to answer with the integrity of good and faithful disciples.

The Committee has given careful study to this Resolution and has made numerous revisions. We recommend that the General Assembly affirm its loyalty to the government in the current conflict and adopt the following paper in response to the Resolution above and direct that it be distributed widely in the Church for study and appropriate action.

VIETNAM: SOME QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

As Americans, we love our country, cherish its traditions, and endeavor to support its causes. Yet as Christians, above everything we love the Lord of all nations. In our baptism we have accepted from Him membership in a kingdom whose gates open to all men. Our loyalty to Him thus demands the continual scrutiny of all our lesser loyalties. Our membership in His worldwide kingdom is thus a discipline to and a disturber of our patriotism. Therefore along with fellow Americans and fellow Christians around the world, we are deeply perplexed and anguished by the tragic war in Vietnam.

Furthermore, we believe that He is the Lord of all our history. Therefore we are confident that He is at work in even the terrifying complexity of international politics in our time. As men, we do not pretend to understand world affairs or the works of God comprehensively; but as Christians, we believe that God works to bring forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation to the nations. As Christians we ask ourselves what responsibility God means for us to bear in His universal work.

When we struggle with this fundamental Christian question in relation to the Vietnam conflict, numerous other questions press upon us. Some of these we can avoid answering in the name of ignorance; others we must at least try to answer, lest we be rightly accused of faithlessness. Precisely because we are Christians first and Americans second, we wrestle with these questions; and as a General Assembly we invite the members of our churches to wrestle with us. We direct these questions to ourselves and to the churches rather than to our government. We confess that such questions have not always found sober attention in our ranks. Until they do merit such attention in our eyes, we shall inevitably bear a poor testimony to the political leaders of the world:

1. What purpose does God have for our nation and its enemies? What are the peculiar responsibilities of a powerful nation for a weak one? For another powerful one? What benefits is God conferring upon our nation's enemies through America? Upon America through its enemies? Does our nation need restraining by other nations as much as others need restraining by us?

2. How much are we obligated to learn in this matter from the sharp differences of opinions of our fellow churchmen? What is God telling us through those Christian brethren at home and abroad who are critical of American policy in Vietnam? What is He telling us through our very frustration in trying to understand this war from a Christian perspective?

3. As His disciples, called to live by the law of love, to what extent are we saddened by the violence of this war? Are we as much in agony for the death of one Vietnamese as for the death of one American? Should we ever resign ourselves to inhumane acts by any participant in a war? Is it ever Christian to support the lesser of two evils?

4. As sacrifices mount on both sides of this war, how can we resist the danger of believing that magnitude of sacrifice is a guarantee of justice on either side? What responsibilities does a nation have for its own sons in conflict? For its enemies' sons? Are we spiritually prepared to help our nation on any occasion to admit that the cost of a victory can nullify victory itself?

5. Since one tradition of Christian ethics views war as sometimes just, how should we test this war and inquire about its justice? Are there any limits to justified destruction in war? If so, what are those limits? Should a government ever draw back from inflicting damage upon its enemies at the possible price of military defeat? Is there a worse evil than defeat?

6. Are we seeking and evaluating without prejudice all available facts about this war? In light of east-west tensions, how does the conflict in Vietnam relate to the efforts of nations to avoid global war? What are the dangers to peace of American withdrawal from Vietnam? Of American presence there? What kinds of decisions can Christians make when they do not have access to all the facts about this war?

7. Finally, we ask ourselves if we are truly committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as good news to the communist as well as to the capitalist, to the revolutionary as well as the conservative, to the stranger as well as the friend? Are we truly reconciled to the One who is not the enemy of our enemies since he is not even the enemy of his own enemies? Have we exercised our imagination enough to think of our nation's opponents as our Lord's beloved? If we lack such imagination, are we praying earnestly for this spiritual gift?

These questions we address to ourselves, conscious that Christians must ask about such things with fear and trembling. We trust God's Spirit to enable us to answer with the integrity of good and faithful disciples.

We further recommend that to assist churches and individual Christians seeking answers to these questions the Council on Church and Society be directed to transmit to each church for study the "Appeal to the Churches Concerning Vietnam", adopted by the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of the U. S. A., and the paper "Issues in the Debate on the War in Vietnam", by George A. Chauncey of the Division of Church and Society; and that individual churches seek and utilize other appropriate materials in the study of this matter, and the letters of any of our service chaplains which may be available through the Board of Church Extension and/or Presbytery Committees responsible for service chaplains.

The following members of the Committee registered their dissent to Recommendations II, 2 and 3; III, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; IV: James M. Breyspraak, Memphis; W. E. Petris, St. Johns; and Lynwood T. Stephenson, Granville.

H. Lacy Daniel, Birmingham, registered his dissent to Recommendations II, 2; III, 1, 5. Roy W. Robinson, Mecklenburg, registered his dissent to Recommendation IV.

V. That the General Assembly express deep concern over the unrest and recent conflict in the Middle East, an area which contains much that is sacred to Christian Jew and Moslem alike,