

## **TITLE: "NEHEMIAH'S LIFE: A CALL FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON VIOLENCE IN AMERICA"**

*PASSED BY THE DELEGATES OF THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE UCC ANNUAL CELEBRATION  
ON JUNE 9, 2018*

### **BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL FOUNDINGS:**

The heart of God is goodness and love. God's love for humankind is expressed in part by God's inestimable gift of free will to each person while creating us in God's image (Genesis 1:26). In response to God's love, we are commanded to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as our self. (Mark 12:30-31) In civil society we are often placed in stressful and contested relationships with other persons, yet we are commanded still to work to normalize relationships with our fellow persons as best we can in love, so as to be able to come to God in prayer with a pure heart (1 John 4:21) and (1 John 4:20). We are cautioned against doing violence toward one another because the heart of our creator is love and we are admonished to imitate the motive of the creator and to love one another forever. Today in America, violence manifests itself in many forms, including, but not limited to systemic and structural violence sanctioned by the state such as racism, police crimes, and economic disparities as well as interpersonal violence such as domestic and sexual abuse and community harm. We are admonished, as far as possible, to identify and address these issues without establishing laws and policies which serve to increase incarceration. We are admonished, as far as it is possible, to live peaceably with one another (Romans 12:18).

### **HISTORICAL FOUNDINGS:**

America has historically committed itself to free will for its citizens under the protection of law. Our country fought a war to end human slavery, and our government has passed civil rights laws to equalize the legal rights of its citizens. Yet with all, full social justice has eluded our population and acts of violence in America have reached epidemic proportions. Retaliatory violence is the product of societal injustice, lack of real opportunity and emotional isolation. For example, nearly every person in the Chicago, IL. area has been affected by violence at one time or another. This trend of civilian violence is duplicated in almost every major city in the country and costs America substantial loss of life every year among all segments of our population.

The United Church of Christ, rooted in its ancient witness to God's love, chooses to take a stand against violence in America and to call for public hearings in the United States Congress on the subject of the causes of violence in America. These hearings are intended to call attention to the root causes of the rise of civilian violence in America and to suggest policy changes to alleviate.

### **Text of Motion**

WHEREAS, the heart of God is goodness and love. God's love for humankind is expressed in part by God's inestimable gift of free will to each person while creating us in God's image (Genesis 1:26). In response to God's love, we are commanded to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as our self. (Mark 12:30-31)

WHEREAS, in civil society we are often placed in stressful and contested relationships with other persons, yet we are commanded still to work to normalize relationships with our fellow persons as best we can in love, so as to be able to come to God in prayer with a pure heart. (1 John 4:20-21)

WHEREAS, we are cautioned against doing violence toward one another because the heart of our creator is love and we are admonished to imitate the motive of the creator and to love one another forever. We are admonished, as far as it is possible, to live peaceably with one another (Romans 12:18).

WHEREAS, America has historically committed itself to free will for its citizens under the protection of law. Our country fought a war to end human slavery, and our government has passed civil rights laws to equalize the legal rights of its citizens. Yet with all, full social justice has eluded our population and acts of violence in America have reached epidemic proportions.

WHEREAS, retaliatory violence is the product of societal injustice, lack of real opportunity and emotional isolation. For example, nearly every person in the Chicago, IL. area has been affected by violence at one time or another. This trend of civilian violence is duplicated in almost every major city in the country and costs America substantial loss of life every year among all segments of our population.

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ is one of the most diverse Christian denominations in the United States; and that the U.C.C. connects caring and acting, gratitude and giving, peace and justice, service and advocacy in a life of prayer and justice, whose motto is "That they may all be one."

WHEREAS within the Chicago Metropolitan Assn. UCC, the Justice & Witness Ministry Team seeks to sustain a collective voice of social witness, and encourages the study, proclamation and living of justice and peace in the church and in the world by sponsoring a continuous effort of public action and witness.

WHEREAS violence manifests itself in many forms, including, but not limited to systemic and structural violence sanctioned by the state such as racism, police crimes, and economic disparities as well as interpersonal violence such as domestic and sexual abuse and community harm. We are admonished, as far as possible, to identify and address these issues without establishing laws and policies which serve to increase incarceration.

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ, rooted in its ancient witness to God's love, chooses to take a stand against violence in America;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the Illinois Conference UCC requests the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ to call upon the Congress of the United States to conduct formal hearings to discover systemic and proximate causes of civilian violence in America, and to receive testimony as to changes in American society that may be undertaken to alleviate the effects of violence on the American people.

**Submitted by:** the Chicago Metropolitan Association; Co-Sponsors- Cluster 4 and the Justice & Witness Ministry Team of the Chicago Metropolitan Association; Co-Sponsors - the Fox Valley Association and the Fox Valley Justice & Witness Team