



July 7, 2005

Rev. John H. Thomas
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ
700 Prospect Avenue East
Cleveland, OH 44115-1100

Dear John:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

The Pension Boards affirms covenantal understandings among the settings of the United Church of Christ. Upon receipt of "*Proposed Substitute Resolution Concerning Use Of Economic Leverage In Promoting Peace In The Middle East*", we will carefully consider its language and respond as we are able within the constraints of our fiduciary responsibilities. We assume that there will be thorough review of the process leading to the action taken by parliamentary experts to determine if this is a legal resolution.

For your information, I have been contacted by a substantial number of committee members that are dissatisfied with the process. None were invited to participate in the after hours discussion that led to the substitute motion. All believe that they worked prayerfully and tirelessly to craft a resolution that combined and captured the spirit and intent of the three resolutions presented to them for consideration. All parties, including Wider Church staff, had ample opportunity to contribute to the discussion. After lengthy debate until 11:30 pm, the resolution was approved unanimously by the committee. More than one committee member has stated to me "*Why did the UCC spend more than \$1,000.00 to bring me to Atlanta and totally disregard my efforts.*"

During Plenary discussion of the second substitute resolution, the Committee Chair responded "*There were some that were dissatisfied with the Committee resolution and wrote their own.*" This was the case during the Committee meeting when no more than five minutes into the discussion, and before any debate, a Wider Church representative read language for a completely new resolution as an alternative to the three resolutions approved for business.

On a personal note, I am dismayed that neither I nor Don Hart were invited to participate in the after hours discussion.

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Further, we were never informed of the recommended substitution in advance of the debate until we received a copy of the motion from a volunteer minutes before it was presented to Synod. This is all the more disturbing to me because a Collegium member was present during the after hours discussion. As you know, Pension Boards and United Church Foundation staff have been fully transparent during the last several months in meetings and conference calls chaired by you regarding educational materials and SRI/CSR activities. It is ironic that as the not clearly defined group was gathering to prepare a substitute motion, Don Hart and I were in a meeting with the Pension Boards' Trustees present at Synod to build support for the resolution crafted in committee, even though we did not agree with substantial portions of the text.

Finally, the point of this letter has little to do with the above matters - it has everything to do with the precedent setting implications of voted actions, integrity of process and trust. What will the process be next week, next month or next Synod when an important matter with similar complexities must be considered for action?

Our members are protected by court directives that are very clear on the roll and responsibilities of a fiduciary. I am thankful for the "*polity wisdom*" of past church leaders that understood and appreciated the necessity of discrete decision making oversight. The Pension Boards will adhere to a strict interpretation of our fiduciary responsibility, governance and UCC polity.

Faithfully,

Michael A. Downs

CC: Collegium - United Church of Christ
Board of Trustees - Pension Boards - UCC
Conference Ministers - UCC
Norman W. Jackson - Moderator
Donald G. Hart - United Church Foundation