

T E S T I M O N Y

of

HOWARD E. SPRAGG

Executive Vice President  
United Church Board for Homeland Ministries  
New York, New York

For presentation to the Commission on Wartime Relocation & Internment  
of Civilian, Roosevelt Hotel, New York City, November 23, 1981

My name is Howard Spragg. I am an ordained clergyman of the United Church of Christ. Presently I am the chief executive officer of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries -- the major national instrumentality of the United Church of Christ.

From 1943 through 1948 I served as pastor of the South Congregational Church in Chicago. Our church was located on the southside in a deteriorating area of the city. During those years approximately 150 relocated Japanese-Americans were members and friends of the congregation. They participated fully in the congregational life, being active as officers, staff, members of church school, church clubs, choirs, etc. In addition, our facilities were the meeting place for the first Issei congregation established in the city.

In the midst of some short-lived initial fear and distrust in the general population, I and several other pastors protested the whole dismal, racist action of the federal government in uprooting these people from their homes, and their subsequent internment. We were dismayed by the mass evacuation, by the deprivation of the civil rights of this minority of American citizenry. We were distressed by the pain and agony of their internment. I was angered by the whole, senseless disaster, the more so since several veterans of the famous 442nd Regiment were members of my church. I was ashamed of my country.

And after 40 years of this nation's suppressed guilt over this travesty, I am amazed and ashamed that the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was set up to discover if, if an injustice was indeed done to these loyal U.S. citizens.

The denomination with which I was affiliated in the 1940's was known as the Congregational-Christian Churches. At its national meeting in 1942 and again in 1944 it adopted a pronouncement regarding the relocation. In 1957 this denomination united with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ. The General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church at its meeting in 1942 and 1944 likewise adopted concerned pronouncements (see attached).

# # #

Attached: Minutes of the General Council of the Congregational  
Christian Church of the U.S., 1942 (p.39); 1944 (p.53)  
Minutes of the General Synod of the Evangelical & Reformed  
Church, Fifth Meeting, 1942 (p.274); Sixth Meeting, 1944  
(p.264)



Evangelical & Reformed Historical Society

MJCO  
A

1944

GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES  
of the United States

Minutes

1944

287 FOURTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK



## MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

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fellowship to make every effort to free themselves from all indebtedness during the coming biennium and wherever conditions warrant to raise funds now for such post-war development in building and program as each congregation may need; and be it further

RESOLVED: That we commend the Church Extension Division of the Board of Home Mission for its activity in this direction and urge it to continue to give aggressive leadership and aid to the churches in the fulfillment of this program."

II. "BE IT RESOLVED: That the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches, aware that the disruption of home life and national economy inevitable in the conduct of war, has left large areas of the European continent in a state of actual starvation, urges the American churches to remember that without effective governmental action the plight of these innocent people is helpless and hopeless. We, therefore, urge the people of our churches to keep this issue as a priority before the Congress and the President of the United States by individual and group action. Needed food which is now available, should be moved to the proper places with all possible speed. While we recognize the many difficulties in the way of adequate action, we do not believe them to be unsurmountable. Before it is too late for so many, the prayer of Christ for each to receive this day his daily bread, must be a primary concern of any society which hopes for a world order or confesses the worth of people."

III. "WHEREAS: All people of Japanese ancestry, including 70,000 American citizens, have been evacuated from the West Coast, and the majority of them are still held in relocation centers; and

WHEREAS: This situation embarrasses our relations with our Asiatic allies and with other Asiatic peoples, and also raises serious questions among other minority groups among us

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED:

1. That we are grateful for the facilities extended by the officials of the War Relocation Authority to the various national Christian agencies which are cooperating with the religious and social activities of the Christian groups in the Relocation Centers:

2. That we approve the decision of the Farm Security Administration to make loans to citizens of Japanese ancestry on the same basis as to other citizens; and express the hope that similar funds can be provided for alien evacuees who are found to be loyal to this country, in order that they may resume normal life and make a much needed contribution to national production instead of being a continued expense to the public treasury;

3. That we approve the Army's resumption of Selective Service for the Nisei (American citizens of Japanese ancestry) as for other citizens.

4. That we approve the granting by the Army of permits to Nisei service men to visit the West Coast on furlough, and urge that, in view of the announced passing of danger of any major invasion of the coast, similar rights gradually be given to other evacuees found to be loyal to this country.

5. That we are opposed to the proposal to deport law-abiding persons of any nationality, whether citizens or aliens, except as they may be found by legal process to be hostile to the United States, or as they themselves may desire deportation.

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## MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

6. That we assure the President, the War Department, the Department of Justice, and the Department of the Interior of the readiness of our constituents to give cordial support to such policies looking toward restoration of constitutional rights and liberties to the Japanese evacuees as may be deemed consonant with national security.

7. That we urge our churches and individual members, in every way possible, to seek earnestly to create local sentiment favorable to loyal evacuees and their integration into normal community life."



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1942

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43. VOTED: To adopt the following resolution:

Be it Resolved:—That the Congregational Christian churches solemnly recommit themselves to the eradication of favoritism among God's children, in our country, when for too long we have neglected and often forgotten such significant groups as the rural dwellers of our mountain highlands, cotton fields, barren plains, and the folk of our city slums; and where caste has placed its blighting hand upon Mexicans, Indians, Negroes, Japanese, Chinese and other racial minorities.

And Further, that our churches and people rededicate themselves to the proposition that all of these children of America, without reference to class, race, or creed, shall have the unrestricted privilege of attaining the full rights of citizenship with its corresponding responsibility, opportunity, and human dignity; and by their deeds purge themselves of a chief national sin and remove the mockery of empty words: thus our nation will be able to join with clean hands other nations in the creation of a truly Christian world order—the only guarantee of an enduring peace.

Rev. Truman B. Douglass of Missouri introduced a resolution on the Evacuation of the Japanese and National Policy which was seconded by Dr. Galen M. Fisher of California. It was

44. VOTED: To adopt the resolution as follows:

A Resolution on the Evacuation of the Japanese and National Policy

Christian conscience and the long-range interests of our nation alike require the facing of the deeper implications of the emergency mass evacuation from our West Coast of some 70,000 American citizens along with 40,000 resident Japanese. Every time a majority deprives a minority of its civil rights it undermines its own liberties, and the unity and world-wide influence of the nation.

Be it, therefore, resolved:

1. That while national security justified the evacuation of Japanese residing in vital military areas on the West Coast, we deplore the fact that all persons with any Japanese blood, citizens as well as aliens, were as a group subjected to evacuation without hearings or other means of determining loyalty.
2. That we commend the conscientious efforts of the military authorities to make the evacuation process humane, and to improve the living conditions in the temporary Assembly Centers.
3. That we express our appreciation to the government authorities for the facilities provided from the first in all the Centers for the maintenance of worship and religious instruction.
4. That we commend the liberal policies adopted by the War Relocation Authority for the more permanent Centers under its control, and express the earnest hope that these policies will be executed in such a way as to impress the evacuees themselves and the public at large with the fact that the evacuees are entitled to the respect due all law-abiding citizens and resident aliens. We especially commend to the attention of the War Relocation Authority the prestige given

by the Army in Hawaii to the labor corps consisting of citizens of Japanese lineage and bearing the patriotic title of Varsity Victory Volunteers.

5. That we condemn all attempts to disenfranchise citizens because of their Japanese ancestry, as being contrary to sound public policy.

6. That we deeply regret that continuance of the original liberal policy of the Army, which encouraged the voluntary evacuation and inland dispersal of the Japanese residents from Military Area No. 1, became impossible in face of widespread public hostility in inland states against Japanese settlers. We therefore urge our members and ministers to strive to create in their communities a public tolerance and friendliness which will make it safe for the government authorities to release Japanese, especially the citizens among them, so that scattered settlement and free participation by them in food production and other services of national usefulness may be resumed.

7. That we decry the agitation to debar all evacuees from returning after the war to their former homes as being contrary to those principles of justice and freedom for which the nation stands. We look to our churches, especially on the West Coast, to lead in creating a public sentiment favorable to their return.

8. That we urge our church leaders and the college administrative officials and members to stimulate colleges and universities in inland areas to extend a welcome to Japanese-American citizens who have been forced to interrupt their studies in West Coast institutions and who may be properly certified by the War Relocation Authority.

9. That we send fraternal greetings to the Japanese churches of our order whose members are now worshipping in Assembly and Relocation Centers.

10. That we pledge our support to the Congregational Christian Committee for Work with Japanese Evacuees, which is financed by the Committee for War Victims and Services and is under the administration of the Council for Social Action, and direct it to send copies of these resolutions to the President, to the Governors of the States, and to Members of the Congress.



THE FIFTH MEETING  
of the  
**GENERAL SYNOD**  
of the  
**EVANGELICAL AND  
REFORMED CHURCH**

Philippus Church  
Race and McMicken

Salem Church  
Sycamore and Orchard Streets  
and  
Netherland Plaza Hotel

CINCINNATI, OHIO

June 24 to July 1, 1942

or be satisfied with past accomplishments, but must go forward, and this in co-operation with other denominations.

2. *Treatment of Aliens.* The enforced indiscriminate internment of Japanese aliens and of American citizens of Japanese descent is extremely disturbing to the conscience of the Christians of America. The hostility evidenced by some groups to aliens loyal to the United States is contrary to the Christian Spirit and to the ideals of our country. The obligation to protect the rights and interests of aliens and of American citizens of Japanese descent rests upon all. The obligation rests upon Christian people to give vital expression to Christian fellowship and compassion in our attitudes towards, and actions affecting, aliens. Particularly to be commended are such projects as provision for the enrollment of students in our church-related colleges and settlement of families in communities when proper conditions obtain. The Church, through its pastors, should call upon its members to maintain and exemplify a sober Christian spirit in these days when evil passions are so easily aroused.

We recommend that the General Synod respectfully petition the United States Government to reconsider the action of the evacuation of American citizens of Japanese descent, and ask that they be given individual hearings according to their constitutional rights as citizens.

3. In answer to the overtures of synods concerning the liquor traffic the General Synod adopts the following statement:

In this day of conservation of national resources it is certainly incumbent upon the members of our churches to use their utmost influence against the liquor traffic, thus seeking to conserve food, rubber and other essential materials, as well as man power, and to preserve civilized decency. General Synod denounces the liquor traffic in its various phases of operation as a curse and a blight upon our American communities. Congregations and individual members are urged to co-operate with established temperance organizations and other groups and agencies, denominational or otherwise, dedicated to the cause of sobriety.

4. *Objectives for Christian Social Action.* The General Synod, with the commendation of the Commission on Christian Social Action, adopts the statement of objectives for Christian Social Action, pages 164-168 of the Blue Book, with changes indicated below, as the mind of the Church, and requests the Commission on Christian Social Action to give wide publicity throughout the church to the statement.

*Changes:* 1) On page 165, Item 2, strike out the words "rather than the pursuit of the common good," and place an asterisk after the word "profit" to indicate a foot-note which reads, "Jerome Davis in *Capitalism and Its Culture* defines profit as 'whatever remains after all expenses have been paid, including insurance, salary to management, and interest on investment. In other words, profit is the variable surplus of what the consumer pays over the producer's cost after the fixed charges have been met.'" (Minutes of General Synod of 1940, page 256, lines 13-17.)

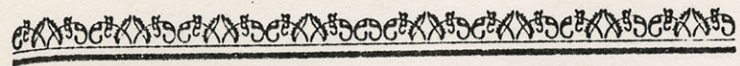
2) On page 165, item 5, delete the words "sanction or."

3) On page 165, section A, item 3, near the bottom of the page, strike out the words "profit-motivated" and "thereby."

4) On page 166, section B, item 1, near the top of the page, delete the word "profit-motivated" and insert the word "the" for "profit-motivated."

5) On page 168, section II, item 7 (b), transfer the words "wealthy and" from the last line to the second last line of the item, inserting them between the words "strong" and "nation," so that 7 (b) will read, "for the development of a more just and international order; a more equal acceptance of responsibility by the strong and wealthy nations; and a sharing of privileges with less developed nations."

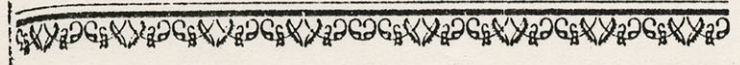




*The Sixth Meeting*  
of the  
**GENERAL SYNOD**  
of the  
*Evangelical and*  
*Reformed Church*



**Trinity First Church**  
32 West Market Street  
**YORK, PENNSYLVANIA**  
**June 21 to 28, 1944**



**Preamble**

Since the Gospel of Jesus Christ was given to the world to redeem the world, the implications of this Gospel must be brought to bear upon all the spheres of life. We confess with shame that the Church has not always given full expression to our Christian faith in the affairs of our common life. The General Synod therefore recognizes that some of these spheres of life where the spirit of Jesus must be felt in a greater measure in our present day are as follows:

1. *Race Relations.* The General Synod feels a heavy responsibility to call the attention of the Church to the heightening of racial tensions throughout our land and the whole world. We are convinced that the issue of our treatment of other races and minorities is basic to the working out of a peaceful world and a Christian brotherhood. When men who are normally called children of God are deprived of being respected as mere human beings on the basis of accident of birth, our whole Christian gospel is threatened. The General Synod condemns as unchristian the anti-Semitic and anti-Negro feeling so prevalent today.

The General Synod condemns as anti-Christian all activities and attitudes that engender distrust, suspicion, and exploitation among the races of the world and the minority groups in our own land. We affirm that it is the privilege of the Christian Church before any other group to take the leadership in breaking down the barriers existing. The Church deplores the malicious whisperings and the overt discriminations against our brothers and urges its congregations to combat these evils through such means as the use of Goodwill Sunday, education and discussion of materials on this subject, and tangible cooperation with all local groups working on this problem.

The General Synod accepts as its own the statement of the Department of Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America submitted to the Executive Committee of the Council on March 21, 1944:

"Discrimination in employment because of race, creed or national origin is one of the great moral issues before our nation today. The right of a worker to be employed and paid solely on the basis of his character and ability is so clear, just and Christian that it should be protected in law. This right should be safeguarded by appropriate legislative and administrative provisions."

The General Synod joins the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in urging our government to establish permanent procedures for securing the objectives which have been sought by the Committee on Fair Employment Practice.

The General Synod states that the prejudices of our citizenry against the American citizens of Japanese descent have seriously undermined the preaching of the gospel and the respect for our democratic institutions. We would commend the fearlessness of our own mission boards and the War Relocation Authority of the Federal government in attempting to allay these prejudices and in assisting to assimilate these people in our communities on a friendly and Christian basis. The General Synod urges the pastors and congregations in communities where these prejudices are still rife, to boldly befriend those against whom these prejudices are directed and help them to find a place in their fellowship. The General Synod especially notes with deep regret that while the ban against people of Chinese ancestry has been lifted, our Exclusion Act still exists with respect to other Asiatic groups. The General Synod affirms that it is definitely unchristian to draw distinctions between human beings on the basis of racial background. It therefore urges the repeal of the Asiatic Exclusion Act. Copies of this action shall be sent to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the chairmen of the Foreign Relations Committees of the House and the Senate. Our members as Christian citizens, are asked to support this action by writing to their senators and congressmen.



MY NAME IS HOWARD SPRAGG. I AM AN ORDAINED CLERGYMAN OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST. PRESENTLY I AM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE UNITED CHURCH BOARD FOR HOMELAND MINISTRIES--THE MAJOR NATIONAL INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

FROM 1943 THROUGH 1948 I SERVED AS PASTOR OF THE SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN CHICAGO. OUR CHURCH WAS LOCATED ON THE SOUTHSIDE IN A DETERIORATING AREA OF THE CITY. DURING THOSE YEARS APPROXIMATELY 150 RELOCATED JAPANESE-AMERICANS WERE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE CONGREGATION. THEY PARTICIPATED FULLY IN THE CONGREGATIONAL LIFE, BEING ACTIVE AS OFFICERS, STAFF, MEMBERS OF CHURCH SCHOOL, CHURCH CLUBS, CHOIRS, ETC. IN ADDITION, OUR FACILITIES WERE THE MEETING PLACE FOR THE FIRST ISSEI CONGREGATION ESTABLISHED IN THE CITY.

IN THE MIDST OF SOME SHORT-LIVED INITIAL FEAR AND DISTRUST IN THE GENERAL POPULATION, I AND SEVERAL OTHER PASTORS PROTESTED THE WHOLE DISMAL, RACIST ACTION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN UP-ROOTING THESE PEOPLE FROM THEIR HOMES, AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT INTERNMENT. WE WERE DISMAYED BY THE MASS EVACUATION, BY THE DEPRIVATION OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF THIS MINORITY OF AMERICAN CITIZENRY. WE WERE DISTRESSED BY THE PAIN AND AGONY OF THEIR INTERNMENT. I WAS ANGERED BY THE WHOLE, SENSELESS DISASTER, THE MORE SO SINCE SEVERAL VETERANS OF THE FAMOUS 442ND REGIMENT WERE MEMBERS OF MY CHURCH. I WAS ASHAMED OF MY COUNTRY.

AND AFTER 40 YEARS OF THIS NATION'S SUPPRESSED GUILT OVER THIS TRAVESTY, I AM AMAZED AND ASHAMED THAT THE COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS WAS SET UP TO DISCOVER IF, IF AN INJUSTICE WAS INDEED DONE TO THESE LOYAL U.S. CITIZENS.



THE DENOMINATION WITH WHICH I WAS AFFILIATED IN THE 1940'S WAS KNOWN AS THE CONGREGATIONAL-CHRISTIAN CHURCHES. AT ITS NATIONAL MEETINGS IN 1942 AND AGAIN IN 1944 IT ADOPTED A PRONOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE RELOCATION. IN 1957 THIS DENOMINATION UNITED WITH THE EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCH TO FORM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST. THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCH AT ITS MEETING IN 1942 AND 1944 LIKEWISE ADOPTED CONCERNED PRONOUNCEMENTS (SEE ATTACHED).



NY Times - Ken Briggs or Charles Ausha - 556-1388

AP - George Cornell - 621-6070

RNS - Gerald Renner - MU 8-7094

Time Magazine - Richard Ostling - 586-1212

World of Religion, CBS News - Radio - 975-3615  
Peter Wells

National Black Network - Joe Brown - 586-0610

Black Audio Network - Jay Levy - 686-6850