

UCCB-23-03-SoD-01 Report of the Subcommittee on Disposition
 Adopted by the Committee on Disposition on March 4, 2023 UCCB-23-03-06

1 **Motion from the Subcommittee on Disposition**

2 March 1, 2023

3
 4 The Subcommittee on Disposition moves:

5 **The United Church of Christ Board, sitting as the General Synod Committee on**
 6 **Disposition, adopts the Report of the Subcommittee on Disposition.**

7
 8 Report of the Subcommittee on Disposition

9 The Subcommittee on Disposition recommends:

10
 11 The United Church of Christ Board, sitting as the General Synod Committee on Disposition,
 12 receives the items of business submitted to the Thirty-Fourth General Synod and recommends
 13 disposition as follows:

14

Designation	Short Title	Full Title	Submitter	Prudential or Witness	SoD Recommendation
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01a</i>	Abortion as Healthcare	Denouncing the Dobbs Decision and Proclaiming Abortion as Healthcare	Delegates	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01b</i>	Boarding Schools	A Resolution Calling for a New Study by our Church on our Relationship with the Indian Boarding Schools and the Boarding Schools in Hawaii	AHEC Assn	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01c</i>	CB & LF	Living into God’s Economy: Celebrating the 170th Anniversary of the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF)	UCCB & CAC & N Plains	Prudential	To a Plenary of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01d</i>	Digital Divide	Closing the Digital Divide: Calling on the United Church of Christ to Seek Digital Justice and Inclusion	Delegates	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01e</i>	Electrification	A Resolution Urging Planning for and Implementing Electrification	Local churches	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01f</i>	Harm Reduction	Faithful Advocacy for Intersectional and	NY Metro Assn	Witness	To a Committee of

UCCB-23-03-SoD-01 Report of the Subcommittee on Disposition

		Transformational Healing in Harm Reduction			the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01g</i>	Guns to Gardens	Affirming Guns to Gardens and Other Gun Violence Prevention Ministries	Denver Metro Assn	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01h</i>	Hawaiian language	A Resolution to Urge All Responsible Entities to Join in Reparations to Fund Christian Hawaiian Language Education Programs to Undo a Century of Extinction. Americanization and Indoctrination Policies Extinguished the Original Christian Hawaiian alphabet.	AHEC Assn	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01i</i>	Ministerial Standing	Affirming Licensed and Commissioned Ministers as Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ	HI	Prudential	Direct to Implementing Bodies
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01j</i>	Plant-Based Living	Encouraging a Plant-based Life	Delegates	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01k</i>	Plastics-FL	Free from Plastic Pollution	FL	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01l</i>	Plastics-NH	Free from Plastic Pollution	NH	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01m</i>	Public schools	A Resolution Supporting Public School Educators, Academic Freedom, and Equity Efforts in Schools	Local churches	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01n</i>	Reparations	A Resolution to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans	CAC and IK	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01o</i>	Solitary Confinement	A Resolution Condemning Prolonged Solitary	Delegates	Witness	To a Committee of

		Confinement as a Form of Torture			the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01p</i>	Affirming Trans / Nonbinary Persons	Actively Affirming the Human Dignity of Transgender and Nonbinary Persons	FL and SEC	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod
<i>UCCB-23-03-SoD-01q</i>	White supremacy	A Resolution Calling on United Church of Christ Local Churches to Witness “A White Supremacy Free Zone” & Confronting White Supremacy	Potomac Assn and CAC	Witness	To a Committee of the General Synod

15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48

---End of Motion---

Background: From Standing Rules of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod Paragraph 12: Procedures for Communicating and Considering Formal Motions

Disposition Options:

- A. Items that are expected to be routine, non-controversial, or dealt with in a special hearing will be reported directly to the plenary session by the Business Committee. This might include, but is not limited to, such items as the budget, amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws, statements of commendation, recognition, and celebration, and certain Resolutions. The Business Committee may place some of these items on a Consent Agenda. The Consent Agenda will be approved by delegates in the opening plenary of the General Synod. Proponents of Resolutions placed on the Consent Agenda will have two minutes to speak to their Resolution before the Consent Agenda is moved. Items may be removed from the Consent Agenda by a majority vote of the General Synod. If a Resolution is removed from the Consent Agenda, it will be assigned to a committee or considered in a plenary session of the General Synod.
- B. Items that are complicated or controversial that require background discussion and study, that merit and need a hearing process, or that have a system-wide impact will be assigned to a committee. The proposer shall supply a resource person to the committee.
- C. Any proposed business item that reiterates or reaffirms previous action shall normally be referred by the General Synod to the body or bodies implementing such action. A referral for implementation is, in itself, a statement that the General Synod is already on record with the intent of the business item and that the policy base for implementation is already in existence.
- D. Items addressing issues addressed by one of the two preceding General Synods shall be referred by the General Synod to implementing bodies.
- E. If a proposed motion differs significantly from previous policy or action of the two preceding General Synods, it shall be assigned to a committee. The burden of proof is on those submitting the proposal to explain how it is different.

49 **Definitions:**

- 50 a) Resolution of Witness: A Resolution of Witness is an expression of the General Synod
51 concerning a moral, ethical or religious matter confronting the Church, the nation, or the
52 world, adopted for the guidance of the Officers, Covenanted, Associated or Affiliated
53 Ministries, or other bodies as defined in Article VI of the Bylaws of the United Church of
54 Christ; the consideration of Local Churches, Associations, Conferences and other bodies
55 related to the United Church of Christ; and for a Christian witness to the world. It
56 represents agreement by at least two-thirds of the delegates voting that the view
57 expressed is based on Christian conviction and is a part of their witness to Jesus Christ.
58 The text of the proposed Resolution The text of the proposed Resolution should be so
59 phrased as not to bring into question the Christian commitment of those who do not
60 agree.
- 61 b) Prudential Resolutions: A Prudential Resolution establishes policy, institutes or revises
62 structure or procedures, authorizes programs, approves directions or requests actions by
63 majority vote.

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

Denouncing the *Dobbs* Decision and Proclaiming Abortion as Healthcare

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by:

Rev. Jess Chancey, UCC Disabilities Ministries
Rev. Courtney Stange-Tregear, Pacific Northwest Conference
Rev. Emma Brewer-Wallin, United Church of Christ Board
Rev. Sheila Harvey, Florida Conference
Rev. David Story, Southern New England Conference
Rev. Hank Fairman, Illinois Conference
Rev. Mike Ford, Florida Conference
Rev. Kayla Bonewell, Kansas-Oklahoma Conference
Kearstin Bailey, United Church of Christ Board
Rev. Alison Buttrick Patton, Southern New England Conference
Rev. Dr. Justin Sabia-Tanis, Minnesota Conference
Rev. Lisa LeSueur, Mental Health Network
Rev. Edwin Perez, Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries

1 **Summary:**

2 Content warning: abortion, sexual violence, miscarriage

3

4 In June 2022, the Supreme Court, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*,
5 overturned the fifty-year precedent of *Roe v. Wade*, which established the right to abortion. This
6 resolution denounces the *Dobbs* decision, affirms abortion as healthcare, and calls upon the
7 various settings of the United Church of Christ to nonviolently resist abortion bans, protect legal
8 abortions where they exist, and accompany people seeking abortion care.

9

10 **Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding**

11 In June 2022, the United States Supreme Court, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*
12 *Organization*, overturned the fifty-year precedent of *Roe v. Wade*, which established the
13 Constitutional right to abortion. With abortion access now limited or entirely restricted in some
14 states, access to abortion care is deeply unequal, privileging those living in abortion-access states
15 or with the financial means to travel to an access state.

16

17 This decision is unjust and is causing suffering among many. We must speak out against this
18 injustice and resist it nonviolently. Content warning: abortion (throughout, specifically lines 41-
19 67; 129-130), sexual violence, (lines 58-67; 165) miscarriage (lines 132-133)

20
21 Justice oriented theology calls for us to place the human narrative of those who suffer oppression
22 as central to our theological claims.

23
24 Shocking stories in the news grab our attention such as children forced to bear children, as in the
25 case of the 16-year-old Florida girl blocked from terminating her pregnancy by a judge's
26 determination that she is "not sufficiently mature" – even though she has the consent of her legal
27 guardian for the procedure to go ahead.¹

28
29 Other stories may not make the headlines but are common. People who can get pregnant are
30 faced with falling deeper into poverty by bearing a child, such as the Texas mother who
31 "panicked" when "she learned she was pregnant in September of last year just as a Texas law
32 banning all abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy took effect."

33
34 "I was so broken. I couldn't fathom that it was happening," said the 30-year-old hairstylist. "I
35 can't afford this child. I am struggling with a child I already have."²

36
37 Such stories reveal the complex social, psychological and economic consequences of the denial
38 of reproductive care that are the context for social justice oriented theological and biblical
39 reflection.

40
41 A groundbreaking study conducted by UC San Francisco reveals the long-term adverse effects of
42 unwanted pregnancy on people's lives. The study found, "These parents were also more likely to
43 raise the child alone, without the support of family members or partners, and were more likely to
44 stay in contact with an abusive partner. In addition, individuals who were not able to access
45 abortion were three times more likely to be unemployed than those who were able to access one.
46 They had four times greater odds of living below the federal poverty line, were more likely to
47 report not being able to afford basic living needs, and were more likely to be enrolled in food
48 assistance or other public safety-net programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy
49 Families." Poverty, food insecurity, ongoing deprivation, and high risk of abuse are the real life
50 consequences of the lack of reproductive healthcare.³

51
52 Proverbs 31:9 teaches us not to be silent in the face of such outrages, but to speak up, speak out
53 and act.

54
55 "Open your mouth, judge righteously,
56 And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy."

57
58 And we know this is the job of those who seek justice and that the refusal to understand the
59 rights of the poor is "wicked" as in Proverbs 29:7:

60
61 "The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor,
62 The wicked do not understand such concern."

63
64 Taking care of those unjustly and violently treated was central to the teaching of Jesus of
65 Nazareth. The parable of the “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:30-37) teaches this in no uncertain
66 terms. We who follow the teachings of Jesus know we must not “pass by on the other side” when
67 those who can get pregnant are so unjustly treated by the denial of needed reproductive care.

68
69 The United Church of Christ has been a consistent voice supporting people who need health care,
70 specifically those who can get pregnant.

71
72 General Synod 27 affirmed support for “universal health care which meets the following criteria:
73 1) it covers all persons; 2) it presents no financial barriers; 3) it provides comprehensive benefits;
74 4) it offers a choice of physicians and other health providers; and 5) it eliminates racial, ethnic
75 and all other disparities for health care.”⁴

76
77 General Synod 29 “affirmed the value and dignity of women in the church and society and called
78 for an end to sexism and the consequences of patriarchy” and called upon the various settings of
79 the church to “[assure] women equal pay, a full range of health care choices and services,
80 including Title X and Planned Parenthood, and [recognize] a woman’s right to make decisions
81 about her own reproductive health.”⁵

82
83 General Synod 30 “reaffirmed its commitment to the full legal protection of the civil rights of all
84 persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.”⁶ While “women” are
85 the group of people typically understood as needing abortion care, cisgender women, nonbinary,
86 genderqueer, & genderfluid people, and transgender men can all be people who might become
87 pregnant.

88
89 General Synod 15 declared the United Church of Christ a Just Peace Church, and General Synod
90 30 reaffirmed that identity. Nonviolent resistance to injustice is one of the ten practices of Just
91 Peace. While Christians often quote Romans 13 to argue that laws should be obeyed, Paul, the
92 author of Romans, defied Roman civil authorities and was arrested for preaching the good news.
93 He witnessed to the guards while he was in jail (Acts 16:16–40). Helping people who can get
94 pregnant access reproductive health care in places where governing authorities have made it
95 illegal is biblically and theologically sound. Resources are available on the UCC Just Peace
96 Website.⁷

97
98 “Indeed, the body does not consist of one member, but of many... The eye cannot say to the
99 hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ ... If one member
100 suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1
101 Corinthians 12:14, 21, 26, NRSVUE). Although not all members of the collective body of the
102 United Church of Christ and the nation are able to be pregnant, when the reproductive freedom
103 and health care access for some parts of the body are limited, the whole body suffers with it, and
104 the whole body is called to respond.

105
106 **Text of the Motion**

107

108 **Whereas** the *Dobbs* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade* and ruled that there is no constitutional
109 right to abortion;

110
111 **Whereas** a majority of Americans support legal abortion in all or most cases;⁸
112

113 **Whereas** anti-abortion laws do not decrease abortion rates but make abortions more dangerous
114 by eliminating access to safe, affordable, and medically-necessary abortions;⁹
115

116 **Whereas** abortion care following miscarriage is severely restricted by abortion bans, threatening
117 the lives of pregnant people in their time of grief;¹⁰
118

119 **Whereas** people of lower socioeconomic status and people of color are more likely to receive
120 abortion care, due to systemic factors including poverty, lack of access to contraception, and
121 distrust of the medical system,¹¹ and whereas anti-abortion laws deepen unequal access to
122 comprehensive reproductive care, with insufficient access mostly affecting rural communities
123 and Black and Brown communities and negative reproductive health outcomes
124 disproportionately affecting people of color;¹²
125

126 **Whereas** General Synod 8 “[called] for the repeal of all legal prohibitions of physician-
127 performed abortions”;¹³ General Synod 12 “[reaffirmed] full freedom of choice for the persons
128 involved in making decisions regarding pregnancy”;¹⁴ General Synod 17 “[deplored] the
129 decision handed down today by the United States Supreme Court severely limiting major
130 provisions of *Roe v. Wade* as undermining the spirit of the constitutional freedom of choice of
131 women of this nation and making freedom of choice essentially a luxury for those who are not
132 economically disadvantaged;”¹⁵
133

134 **Whereas** previous General Synods (12, 13, 16, 18) have paired support for safe and legal
135 abortions with a desire for information and resources about contraception and family planning,
136 and teen abortion rates decline with free access to contraception;¹⁶ and the United Church of
137 Christ has heeded this call through holistic, faithful sexuality education, Our Whole Lives, which
138 helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and
139 behavior;
140

141 **Whereas** Justice Thomas’ concurring opinion in *Dobbs* threatens Constitutional protection for
142 access to contraception, as well as protection for same-sex sexual relations and marriage;¹⁷
143

144 **Whereas** the UCC Medical Benefits Plan covers abortion “per Plan policies and per individual
145 state regulations,”¹⁸ and is now an unequal benefit across states where the UCC Medical Plan has
146 beneficiaries;
147

148 **Therefore be it resolved** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
149 affirms the right of all people to access reproductive healthcare including contraception and
150 abortion and takes the following actions:
151

152 Proclaims that Mary’s informed, joyful choice to bear a child is the first act of Christian
153 discipleship, and that forced birth is an act of sexual violence antithetical to the incarnation and

154 the choice to have and care for children is a sacred decision which should not be forced upon
155 anyone;

156
157 Proclaims that every person seeking an abortion is a beloved child of God, our neighbor, a
158 person we love;

159
160 Denounces the overturn of legal precedent in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*
161 and condemns all laws banning abortion or restricting access to reproductive health services;

162
163 Affirms the morality of resisting by peaceful means, including civil disobedience, any laws
164 banning abortions, and calls upon every setting of the United Church of Christ to use Just Peace
165 practices¹⁹ to confront abortion bans and restrictions on reproductive healthcare;

166
167 Calls upon the National Setting of the United Church of Christ and the Conferences to explore
168 and pursue all avenues for legal challenges to abortion bans;

169
170 Calls upon the United Church of Christ Board to explore creation of a Bail Fund for UCC
171 members arrested for participation in civil disobedience or other acts of Christian witness that
172 promote social, racial, economic, environmental, gender, and reproductive justice;

173
174 Calls upon the Pension Boards to cover travel costs and other out-of-pocket expenses for out-of-
175 network abortions and other reproductive healthcare required by UCC Medical Benefits
176 recipients living in states where abortion is limited or outlawed, and requests a report on this
177 expansion of coverage to General Synod 35;

178
179 Calls upon Local Churches and their members to engage with the Our Whole Lives: Sexuality
180 and Our Faith curriculum to promote holistic sexuality education, including information about
181 contraception, and to support and offer access to contraceptives;

182
183 Calls upon Local Churches, Associations, and Conferences to physically, financially, and
184 spiritually accompany people seeking abortions and other reproductive healthcare, in partnership
185 with local health care agencies and abortion funds.

186
187 **Funding:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with
188 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

189
190 **Implementation:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or
191 other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/08/17/florida-teen-abortion-denied-mature/>

² <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/poor-women-pregnancy-abortion-ban>

³ <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2022/06/423161/ucsf-turnaway-study-shows-impact-abortion-access>

⁴ An Urgent Call for Advocacy in Support of Health Care for All, as in H.R. 676, General Synod 27,
<https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/health-equity.pdf>

⁵ RESISTING ACTIONS SEEKING TO UNDERMINE THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY,
General Synod 29: <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs29-11.pdf>

⁶ REAFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO FULL EQUALITY FOR PERSONS OF ANY SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, OR GENDER EXPRESSION, General Synod 30: [COMMITTEE 9b REAFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO FULL EQUALITY FOR PRSONS OF ANY SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY OR GENDER EXPRESSION \(uccfiles.com\)](#)

⁷ <https://www.ucc.org/just-peace/>

⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/05/06/americas-abortion-quandary/>

⁹ “Women living under the most restrictive abortion laws (i.e., where abortion is prohibited altogether or allowed only to save a woman’s life) have abortions at about the same rate as those living where the procedure is available without restriction as to reason” (p. 8)

“The more restrictive the legal setting, the higher the proportion of abortions that are least safe – ranging from less than 1% in the least-restrictive countries to 31% in the most-restrictive countries... even where abortion is broadly legal, inadequate provision of affordable services can limit access to safe services. In addition, persistent stigma can affect the willingness of providers to offer abortions, and can lead women to prioritize secrecy over safety.” (p. 5)

https://www.gutmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/abortion-worldwide-2017.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/05/10/1097734167/in-texas-abortion-laws-inhibit-care-for-miscarriages>

“One Texas law passed last year lists several medications as abortion-inducing drugs and largely bars their use for abortion after the seventh week of pregnancy. But two of those drugs, misoprostol and mifepristone, are the only drugs recommended in the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists guidelines for treating a patient after an early pregnancy loss.

The other miscarriage treatment is a procedure described as surgical uterine evacuation to remove the pregnancy tissue — the same approach as for an abortion.”

“For some [patients, waiting until the bleeding starts and the pregnancy tissue is naturally released] is too difficult, given the emotions surrounding the pregnancy loss... Instead, the patient may choose medication or a surgical evacuation procedure, which Briggs said may prove necessary to avoid a patient becoming septic if some of the tissue remains in the uterus.”

¹¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3780732/>

¹² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7813444/>

¹³ http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000009&pg_seq=60&search_doc=

¹⁴ http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000013&pg_seq=91&search_doc=

¹⁵ http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000018&pg_seq=54&search_doc=

¹⁶ Colorado’s [teen birth rate fell 54 percent and the teen abortion rate declined 64 percent in the last eight years](#) due to free access to contraception, especially IUD’s.

¹⁷ “in future cases, we should reconsider all of this Court’s substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*.” https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf

¹⁸ https://pbucc.org/images/pbucc/publications/Health/Non-Med_Highlights_2023_102022.pdf

¹⁹ Just Peace Practices:

1. Support non-violent direct action.
2. Take independent initiatives to reduce threat.
3. Use cooperative conflict resolution.
4. Acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice and seek repentance and forgiveness.
5. Advance democracy, human rights, and religious liberty.
6. Foster just and sustainable economic development.
7. Work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system.
8. Strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights.
9. Reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade.
10. Encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations.

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A NEW STUDY BY OUR CHURCH ON OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS AND THE BOARDING
SCHOOLS IN HAWAII**

A Resolution of Witness

**Submitted by the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches
of the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ**

SUMMARY

This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to do a new study on the United Church of Christ's relationship with Indian boarding schools and boarding schools in Hawaii. On May 11, 2022, the Department of the Interior held a press conference to reveal a "Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report."¹ The report showed that between 1819 and 1969, the United States operated or supported 408 boarding schools including 7 schools in Hawaii. Although the Executive Summary mentioned 7 schools in Hawaii, within the report 11 schools are named.²

In the section on Hawai'i, the report reads, "Between 1819 and 1847, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which received Federal support through the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819, sent 12 missionary companies to Hawai'i to promote Calvinism and claimed civilized practices."³ In a June 22, 2021 Memorandum from the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland—a tribal member of the Pueblo of Laguna—to the Assistant Secretaries, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Heads of Bureaus, and Officers, under the subject "Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative" she writes:

"Beginning with the Indian Civilization Act of 1819 and running through the 1960s, the United States enacted laws and implemented policies establishing and supporting Indian boarding schools across the Nation. During that time, the purpose of Indian boarding schools was to culturally assimilate Indigenous children by forcibly relocating them from their families and communities to distant residential facilities where their American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian identities, languages, and beliefs were to be forcibly suppressed."⁴

With this information alleging that the ABCFM received federal funds from the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819 and these funds went toward the schools in Hawai'i listed in the

28 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, questions are raised concerning
29 the purpose of the schools being to culturally assimilate the Native Hawaiian students by
30 forcibly suppressing their identities, languages, and beliefs.

31
32 A study investigating this history between the Federal civilization act of 1819, the ABCFM,
33 and the identity altering education programs upon American Indians, Alaska natives and native
34 Hawaiians needs to be completed.

35
36

37 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

38
39 In the beginning humans were created in the image of God and were called “good”. Thus, all
40 humans were created equal. The call to justice by the prophets is God’s commandment to treat
41 everyone justly by acting righteously.

42
43 God’s moral law, enshrined in the Ten Commandments, is eternal and unchanging. Our Bible is
44 built on it. These laws are God’s stated will, the way God wants his kingdom and his universe to
45 operate. In order for justice to prevail, human laws must mirror God’s law. Justice is to prescribe
46 the right way, to do things in an appropriate way. Moses demonstrated this concept when he said,
47 “You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You
48 shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s.” (Deuteronomy 1:17). Justice has to do with equity
49 in judgment without regard for a person’s status. It is an equitable application of God’s moral
50 law to all people without partiality. (Numbers 15:16). When we do not operate according to
51 biblical standards, we have abandoned God’s moral law, so every man does what is right in his
52 own eyes (Judges 21:25).

53
54 Jesus came to proclaim liberty and freedom to announce God’s justice being satisfied through
55 what he called, “the favorable year of the Lord”, the Old Testament Year of Jubilee. It was when
56 God set society back in order. According to Leviticus 25:8-9, Israel could not have Jubilee until
57 the people first observed the Day of Atonement. They could not have true justice on the human
58 level until they got right with God on the vertical level. Social justice will not be complete until
59 the people in a society, even the Church, get right with God. It is bringing the presence, precepts,
60 and power of God to bear on society, pulling society back in an upright position.

61 62 **HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

63
64 The history of genocide on natives began with the first arrival of missionaries to Turtle Island
65 from England in 1492. Since then 20 million Native Indians have been exterminated through a
66 policy of genocide (American Genocide). The Federal government passed the 1819
67 Civilization Act to “kill the Indian and save the man” with identity altering education programs
68 through the Indian Boarding School System that was created. Shirley E. Buchanan, in her
69 “Indigenous Destinies: Native Hawaiian and Native American Crossroads,” in 2011 wrote,
70 “The ABCFM, funded in part by the federally legislated Civilization Fund of 1819, initiated
71 missionary efforts among the so-called Five Civilized Tribes (particularly, the Cherokee,
72 Choctaw, and Creek) and the Native Hawaiians concurrently in the 1820s.”⁵ With this
73 information alleging that the ABCFM received federal funds from the Indian Civilization Fund
74 Act of 1819 and that these funds went toward the schools in Hawai`i listed in the “Federal

75 Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report,” questions are raised concerning the
76 purpose of the schools to culturally assimilate the Native Hawaiian students by forcibly
77 suppressing their identities, languages, and beliefs. On May 11, 2022, the Department of the
78 Interior held a press conference to reveal a “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative
79 Investigative Report.” The report showed that between 1819 and 1969, the United States
80 operated or supported 408 boarding schools including 7 schools in Hawaii. Although the
81 Executive Summary mentioned 7 schools in Hawaii, within the report 11 schools are named:

- 82 1. Hilo Boarding School
- 83 2. Industrial and Reformatory School (Kawailou)
- 84 3. Industrial and Reformatory School (Keoneula, Kapalama)
- 85 4. Industrial and Reformatory School (Waialeale, Waialua)
- 86 5. Industrial and Reformatory School for Girls (Keoneula, Kapalama)
- 87 6. Industrial and Reformatory School for Girls (Maunawili, Ko`olaupoko)
- 88 7. Industrial and Reformatory School for Girls (Mo`ili`ili, Honolulu)
- 89 8. Kamehameha Schools
- 90 9. Lahainaluna Seminary
- 91 10. Mauna Loa Forestry Camp School
- 92 11. Molokai Forestry Camp School

93 The number discrepancy may be due to changing of the names of the school and/or the location.
94 In the section on Hawai`i, the report reads, “Between 1819 and 1847, the American Board of
95 Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which received Federal support through the
96 Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819, sent 12 missionary companies to Hawai`i to promote
97 Calvinism and claimed civilized practices.”

98
99 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

100
101 **WHEREAS**, an estimated 15 million Native American Indians have been exterminated in what
102 is known today as the United States of America through policies defined as genocide⁶, and
103

104 **WHEREAS**, among the policies of genocide Native American Indians became victims of
105 identity altering education programs, and
106

107 **WHEREAS**, the Civilization Fund Act of 1819’s intention was to introduce to Native
108 Americans “the habits and arts of civilization”⁷ (to force native American Indians to assimilate
109 to White American culture), and
110

111 **WHEREAS**, in the decade following 1869 the Christian denominations began to establish
112 boarding schools with the underlying policy to “kill the Indian and save the man,”⁸ and
113

114 **WHEREAS**, one such boarding school was the Hampton Institute, founded by General Samuel
115 Chapman Armstrong, son of A.B.C.F.M. missionaries to Hawai`i Rev. Richard and Clarissa
116 Chapman Armstrong, which opened its doors to Indian students in 1878; and
117

118 **WHEREAS**, boarding schools were of paramount significance in the attempted cultural
119 genocide of an entire people, and
120

121 **WHEREAS**, the mandatory placement of Indian children in the boarding schools resulted in
122 the loss of hundreds of languages, spiritual beliefs, traditional practices, and the destruction of
123 healthy family life;⁹ and

124
125 **WHEREAS**, in 2003 the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), the American Indian
126 organization that is part of the United Church of Christ, submitted a resolution “American
127 Indian Boarding Schools” that was passed by the General Synod¹⁰ but did not result in
128 reparations, and

129
130 **WHEREAS**, on September 30, 2021, a “Statement Supporting the Establishment of a Truth
131 and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies” was signed by the following
132 church groups¹¹: The Episcopal Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Franciscan
133 Action Network; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Jesuit Conference Office of
134 Justice and Ecology; Office of Race Relations, Christian Reformed Church of North America;
135 The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society,

136
137 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Thirty-fourth General Synod of the United Church
138 of Christ directs the UCC to conduct a thorough survey of its history beginning with the
139 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (A.B.C.F.M.) on its work done both
140 with Native American nations and the Hawaiian Kingdom and evaluate the results of this survey
141 in terms of whether actions need to be taken by the United Church of Christ to make amends of
142 moral, and legal (both under U.S. laws and under international humanitarian laws) violations that
143 have occurred, and requests that the UCC Board ask for the cooperation of the Association of
144 Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) and the Council for American Indian Ministries
145 (CAIM) in so doing.

146
147 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that if the A.B.C.F.M. did receive funds from the Indian
148 Civilization Fund Act of 1819, an act of the U.S. government, the survey shall reveal what
149 effects this had upon the mission of the church, and

150
151 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, if the survey reveals clear violations, that the United Church
152 of Christ begin its reparation process by formally apologizing for the harm done to the Native
153 American nations connected to the A.B.C.F.M. and to the Native Hawaiians; and

154
155 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, if the survey reveals violations, that the United Church of
156 Christ Board propose specific steps in the reparation process, and begin the reparation process by
157 formally apologizing for the harm done to the Native American nations connected to the
158 A.B.C.F.M. and to the Native Hawaiians.

159
160 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance
161 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

162
163 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
164 of other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementation body.

¹ https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf.

² Ibid., p. 78.

³ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/secint-memo-esb46-01914-federal-indian-boarding-school-truth-initiative-2021-06-22-final508-1.pdf>. P. 1.

⁵ <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/gf06g7266>, p. 13.

⁶ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 10.

See also, David Michael Smith, "Counting the Dead: Estimating the Loss of Life in the Indigenous Holocaust, 1492-Present, 2017.

⁷ Act of March 3, 1819, Ch. 85, 3 Stat. 516, codified at 25 U.S.C. at 271 (2020).

⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs24minutes.pdf>, p. 41.

⁹ Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 41f.

¹¹ <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Statement%20Supporting%20the%20Establishment%20of%20a%20Truth%20and%20Healing%20Commission.pdf>.

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

Living into God's Economy: Celebrating the 170th Anniversary of the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF)

A Prudential Resolution

Submitted by Central Atlantic Conference, Northern Plains Conference and UCC Board

1 **Summary**

2 This Resolution celebrates that since 1853 the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan
3 Fund has been helping the church live into God's Economy. The resolution commends the many
4 resources and programs of the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund to
5 churches, conferences, and religious institutions for the transformation of communities and
6 congregations toward an abundant life for all.

7
8 **Biblical, Theological, and Historical Background**

9 Economy comes from the root word *oikos*, or "household," which in its fullest sense,
10 encompasses every dimension of family, region, city-state, tribe, land, country, and planet.
11 Therefore, economy (*oikonomia*) literally translated "household rules" has to do with the order
12 and function of everything within these particular household settings. It is from the more
13 universal perspective of *oikonomia* that we consider the idea of *oikonomia tou Theou*, the
14 "Economy of God." The "Economy of God" is not a new idea, or a concept that we create or
15 construct. God's economy is an emergent reality that God has been calling forth since the
16 creation event in Genesis and 'it was good.' In this current pivotal moment, the future will be
17 decided by the extent to which each local church chooses to live out God's Economy, *oikonomia*
18 *tou Theou*, to transform society and create good.¹

19
20 The United Church of Christ Building & Loan Fund is the oldest institution of its kind in the
21 United States, founded in 1853 to support the mission of new and renewing churches. CB&LF
22 helps congregations and institutions in the UCC as well as in other denominations plan, raise,
23 finance, and build transformative projects. For one hundred seventy years, the United Church of
24 Christ Church Building & Loan Fund's vision has been to transform communities by helping
25 churches live into God's Economy. The mission of United Church of Christ Church Building &
26 Loan Fund is as relevant as ever.²

27
28 **Text of Resolution**

29

30 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF), as the first
31 and one of the nation’s premier faith-focused funds has leveraged its nearly two centuries of
32 church real estate financing to advance the moral imperatives of the Gospel; and
33

34 WHEREAS, since CB&LF was founded in 1853, it has provided thousands upon thousands of
35 congregations and other faith-based organizations with real estate financing, operational
36 resources and expertise needed to build stable, thriving communities that live the Gospel
37 mission; and
38

39 WHEREAS, CB&LF continues to advance God’s Economy through innovative uses of buildings
40 and space, inventive church operating models, revenue-generating faith enterprises and the use of
41 impact-driven metrics; and
42

43 WHEREAS, at the close of 2021, CB&LF had eighty active loans to congregations totaling
44 \$47,178,505³; and
45

46 WHEREAS, CB&LF builds the capacity of faith leaders and organizations with resources and
47 training that help promote stabilization, transformation and innovation in churches and
48 communities; and
49

50 WHEREAS, CB&LF is raising up and equipping entrepreneurial leadership for missional
51 community and church connections through the Adese Fellowship program⁴, in partnership with
52 other ministries of the National Setting of the United Church of Christ; and
53

54 WHEREAS, CB&LF was foundational in the creation of the UCC Cornerstone Fund, also the
55 early financial support of Convergence (formerly the Center of Progressive Renewal) and
56 became a primary investor in Just Like Family Home Care⁵, a home healthcare business
57 initiative in collaboration with the United Church of Canada; and
58

59 WHEREAS, CB&LF has advocated for and led the way in investing for impact by becoming in
60 2013, the first financial ministry in the United Church of Christ to adopt an impact investing
61 policy⁶, thereby pledging to invest 100% of its endowment for ministry, mission, environmental,
62 social, or economic justice returns along with financial returns; and
63

64 WHEREAS, CB&LF since 2014 has on behalf of churches for whom it has consulted on capital
65 campaigns gifted almost \$200,000 of its fees to ministries and charitable organizations across the
66 United States including \$77,744 to Our Church’s Wider Mission⁷; and
67

68 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
69 of Christ recognizes with thanksgiving the work and ministry of the United Church of Christ
70 Church Building & Loan Fund throughout the years and today helping the church live into God’s
71 economy.
72

73 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
74 Christ encourages all settings of the UCC to view the Award Winning CB&LF documentary
75 film, “It Takes a Village”⁸ that tells the story of how CB&LF worked with St. Peter’s UCC and

76 its affiliate MOLO Village Community Development Corporation⁹ to build the Village @ West
77 Jefferson, the first new building project in this Louisville community in decades, creating 100
78 local jobs and bringing the first restaurant, credit union, coffee shop, health care institute, and
79 day care facility, community around St. Peter’s UCC in Louisville KY.

80
81 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod commends CB&LF and
82 its financial, educational, and capacity building programs to churches, conferences, and religious
83 institutions for the transformation of communities and congregations toward a just world for all.

84
85 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
86 Christ lauds CB&LF’s goal to raise \$100 Million from investors, financial institutions,
87 philanthropic organizations and others for church real estate development, flexible financing for
88 church operational capacity, seed funding for transformative ministry initiatives and financing
89 for creative spiritual ventures, to help churches and Christian organizations to Plan, Raise,
90 Finance and Build God’s economy¹⁰.

91
92 Funding: The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with
93 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

94
95 Implementation: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other
96 entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ As articulated by Rev. Dr. Patrick Garnet Duggan, Executive Director, CB&LF in **Ground Zero in the Economy of God**, 2013

²²² See mission, history, and program of the Church Building & Loan Fund at CBLFund.org including the video ‘An Introduction to the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund’ at CBLFund.org/about

³ Data comes from CB&LF “2021 Impact Metrics Report”

⁴ The Adese (from the Amharic language meaning to renew, pronounced ah-deh-say) Fellowship is a year-long, ecumenical program that engages participants in self-discovery, theological reflection, and business development as they create enterprises that help their communities follow the way of Jesus and live into God's economy. This groundbreaking fellowship maximizes the business acumen and entrepreneurial capacity of participants to launch scalable and sustainable ventures that counter systemic poverty. CBLFund.org/build

⁵ The Just Like Family Home Care mission is to provide creative, loving, and innovative solutions to private duty home care for our elderly and in-need. The [Just Like Family Home Care Franchise](http://JustLikeFamilyHomeCare.com) has nearly 30 locations across Canada with plans for franchise development in the United States.

⁶ “In recognition that 100% Mission-Focused may lead the Fund to choose from a range of investments, the Fund seeks to invest through advisors, intermediaries and/or investment vehicles that will carry out the Fund’s investment goals and objectives in accordance with this definition of impact investments: investments which have a stated ministry, mission and/or social justice (which includes social justice and/or economic justice) and/or environmental return objective in conjunction with a financial return objective.” Church Building & Loan Fund Investment Policy Statement, October 30, 2013

⁷ Data comes from CB&LF “2021 Impact Metrics Report”

⁸ The CB&LF’s documentary film, "It Takes A Village" won the special Hero Award at the Better Cities Film Festival at the UN-HABITAT's World Urban Forum 11 - cities of the future gathering in Katowice, Poland.

⁹ “MOLO” means “welcome” in Xhosa (a South African dialect); at MOLO Village, where everyone is welcome to add their own contributions since “it takes a village.” MOLO’s vision is to support the growth of healthy, engaged, and productive residents prepared to take their families and their neighborhood on a path to prosperity.

¹⁰ CB&LF Mission Implementation Strategy Plan 2022 – 2024; Strategic Priority 3: Capital Raise & Financing Capacity; Goal 1: Raise up to \$100M for real estate lending, non-real estate financing and operational capacity building to plan, raise, finance and build God’s Economy.

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod. Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**Closing the Digital Divide: Calling on the United Church of Christ
to Seek Digital Justice and Inclusion**

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by

Rev. Kelli Parrish Lucas, Rocky Mountain Conference
Joyce Bathke, United Church of Christ Board
Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey, Florida Conference
Douglas Hearn, PennWest Conference
Rev. Dr. David B. Lindsey, Central Atlantic Conference
Amanda Middleton, Central Atlantic Conference
Amanda Muschett, Penn Northeast Conference
Janet Newett, Penn Northeast Conference
Rev. Laura Oesterle, Penn Northeast Conference
Rev. Lawrence T. Richardson, United Church of Christ Board
Rev. Rebecca Grace Sausser, Penn Northeast Conference
Edd Sewell, Central Atlantic Conference
Rev. Andrea Vassell, Central Atlantic Conference

SUMMARY

1 This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to continue strengthening its longstanding
2 leadership role in the global community in working for digital and communications justice. In
3 the United States and globally, many people do not experience full digital inclusion—that is, they
4 are unable to access electronic communications technology, at an affordable cost, with the digital
5 literacy to use it. Cost, access, and literacy weave together imposing barriers to full civic,
6 economic, and educational inclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for virtual
7 access to employment, education, civic, and religious activities and exacerbated the severe
8 impact of gaps in digital inclusion. Moreover, systematic changes in our public and private lives
9 since the beginning of the pandemic demonstrate that online access will continue to be an ever
10 more prevalent need. This resolution calls for: 1) identifying the digital divide—a failure of digital
11 inclusion—as a justice issue; 2) adopting frameworks for ensuring digital justice in UCC
12 programming; 3) advocating for digital communications systems that are accountable to users
13 and workers, are owned by diverse peoples, offer the highest-quality services to all people at
14 affordable prices, and respect and facilitate the autonomy, privacy, and humanity in all people;
15 and 4) reaffirming and celebrating the UCC's leadership in communications rights and equity
16

17 and the work of United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry in improving digital equity and
18 communications rights for all people.

19

20 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, and HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

21

22 There are times, to be sure, when the Bible speaks directly to a topic, while in the case of digital
23 access, that is simply not the case. The people of ancient Israel and of first century Palestine
24 could not have conceived of the technology that exists in the twenty-first century. However,
25 Jesus' example demonstrated the power of stories and communication to convey messages, set
26 standards for behavior, and provide aspirational vision, and the values and ideals that underlie
27 the issue of equitable digital access are certainly present within the lessons of the Bible.

28

29 At the heart of the issue of digital access is the importance of equity. Far too many in our world
30 lack equitable access to what has become a basic need to thrive in modern society. This lack of
31 equity burdens individuals and harms communities. In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25,
32 beginning with verse 31, Jesus describes the treatment of "the least of these." He describes how
33 people who took care of those who were hungry or thirsty, those who were strangers or without
34 clothes, or those who were sick or imprisoned are blessed, for he says, "Truly I tell you, just as
35 you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." He
36 emphasizes the importance of communication and connection in describing the need to visit
37 people in prison—visits that, today, often occur over electronic communication. During the
38 pandemic, visiting those who were sick—not to mention those in nursing homes and other forms
39 of congregate housing—also required digital access as physical presence was tightly restricted.
40 Jesus describes how those who ignored people in need do not fulfill their sacred obligations, for
41 he says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to
42 me." Jesus offers clear instruction in this passage that we are called to ensure that the basic needs
43 of all are met. In this twenty-first century world, access to the internet has become just such a
44 basic need.

45

46 Further, in a world of haves and have-nots, we witness how current systems and networks use
47 factors including location, socio-economic status, and ability to determine the capacity of an
48 individual or a community to gain appropriate or necessary digital access. These attributes can
49 detrimentally affect people even when they have online access, such as when privacy violations,
50 surveillance, or online algorithms adversely target some people over others. Such systems serve
51 as "stumbling blocks" in the paths of those who are constrained. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter
52 17, beginning with verse 1, Jesus says to his disciples: "Occasions for stumbling are bound to
53 come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were
54 hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little
55 ones to stumble." As in Matthew 25, Jesus's concern in this passage is for those who are
56 marginalized and under-resourced. He is warning of the implications of causing or contributing
57 to their disadvantage.

58

59 Similarly, Leviticus 19:13-14 reminds us, "You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not
60 steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. You shall not
61 revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the
62 Lord." The passage articulates the responsibility of people of faith to advocate for and give

63 support to people who are treated unjustly by society. Taken with the previous passages, it is not
64 enough to avoid placing “stumbling blocks” before others; we also fail to live up to our call as
65 followers of Christ when we do not act to remove such stumbling blocks. This leads us to work
66 for the removal of stumbling blocks placed in the path of those denied appropriate and equitable
67 digital access.

68
69 The United Church of Christ has been a leader in communications justice since 1959, when the
70 Rev. Everett C. Parker founded the Office of Communication, Inc., now known as United
71 Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry. Dr. Parker’s work has long been recognized as one of
72 the UCC’s historic “firsts” and his work to ensure that media represents and serves all people has
73 been recognized and honored by organizations inside and outside the church.¹ Since that time,
74 General Synods of the United Church of Christ have addressed the challenges of evolving
75 technologies and communications systems that foster or further systemic divisions between
76 peoples. Previously adopted resolutions have spoken in support of equity, accountability access,
77 and freedom in the use of communications technologies.² The Twelfth General Synod, meeting
78 in 1979, adopted *Third World Access to Advanced Communications Technologies*, a resolution
79 that called for conducting “a long-term program to assist Third World nations, through their
80 churches, to gain access to the world’s communications systems, to improve their
81 communications capabilities and to use new communications opportunities as they emerge.”³ In
82 1997, the Twenty-first General Synod adopted *Access to the Age of Computer Information*,
83 which named the power of evolving digital communications technology to shape society and
84 create divisions between those with access to new technologies and those without.⁴ The
85 resolution encouraged advocacy for broader access and training; it even urged congregations “to
86 explore use of on-line services to connect youth and adults in building understanding of the
87 diverse world in which we live.”⁵

88
89 This was a prescient naming of the increasing power of digital communications tools to build
90 and expand community. Conversely, the absence of these tools now hinders community
91 development. Communication tools and resources shape communal identity, playing “a critical
92 role in building peace, security and a sense of identity as well as in promoting justice, mutual
93 accountability and transparency.”⁶ This power of digital access to bring together and to divide is
94 accelerating. In August 2022, at the convening of the 11th General Assembly of the World
95 Council of Churches, Acting General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca named the capacity of
96 digital and online communications to strengthen community and collaboration, cautioned against
97 the potential for exclusion, and voiced “the need to uphold a vision of digital justice.”⁷ Such
98 justice depends on the availability, affordability, and accessibility of digital tools and systems,
99 paired with the skills training, safety, and security to access them meaningfully and without fear
100 of biased treatment or persecution.

101
102 Along with building community and fostering social cohesion, digital inclusion is increasingly
103 necessary for participation in the global economy, for education and expansion of opportunity,
104 for accessing health care and housing and faith communities. The impact of exclusion is
105 detrimental to individuals, to families, and to whole communities—and it is a harm not borne
106 evenly across society. As explained by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights,
107 “The lack of access to broadband internet service among communities of color, low-income
108 households, and rural communities means that many vulnerable households are

109 disproportionately excluded from full participation in our society and, thus, raises a critical
110 equity and civil rights concern.”⁸ The lack of quality access is a significant stumbling block for
111 many in the United States and around the world. In 2016, the United Nations underscored the
112 importance of digital justice when it augmented Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of
113 Human Rights by affirming “the importance of applying a comprehensive human rights-based
114 approach in providing and in expanding access to the Internet, and [requesting] all States
115 to make efforts to bridge the many forms of digital divide.”⁹ Access alone is not the goal, though
116 it is an important starting point. Meaningful access—that is, “the possibility for everyone to enjoy
117 a safe, satisfying, enriching, productive, and affordable online experience”—is necessary to
118 ensure all people can equitably utilize the resources of digital connectivity.¹⁰ It is incumbent
119 upon us, as people of faith, to advocate for equitable access to the internet for all who experience
120 stumbling blocks in their access to safe, reliable, quality internet services and to ensure, once
121 they have access to the internet, that they are treated fairly online and have access to the skills
122 and knowledge needed to make full use of those tools.

123
124 While disparities within the United States are closing, the lack of access to and utilization of
125 modern communications technologies continues to harm many people, including people of color,
126 people with disabilities, people living in rural communities and formerly redlined urban
127 neighborhoods, older people, incarcerated people, and people with low incomes. The Department
128 of Commerce recently reported that 82% of White non-Hispanics in the United States used the
129 internet while only 77% of African Americans and Hispanics did; moreover, while 71% of White
130 non-Hispanics used a personal computer or tablet in 2021, only 57% of African Americans and
131 54% of Hispanics did.¹¹ Children fare somewhat better than adults, yet racial disparities persist.¹²
132 In addition, 15% of adults 50 and older do not have access to any type of internet service, with
133 most reporting that the cost of high-speed internet is an issue.¹³ In fact, income is a major reason
134 why many households do not have internet access.¹⁴ Twenty-six percent of families with annual
135 incomes under \$25,000 have no internet service subscriptions; another 13% have only mobile
136 access.¹⁵ The majority of these households report a desire to access the internet if it were
137 affordable.¹⁶ Rural residents are less likely to have access to high-speed internet than urban and
138 suburban residents, with nearly 1 in 4 naming this as a major problem in their community.¹⁷ At
139 the same time, the digital redlining of many urban communities is reinforcing inequalities that
140 were entrenched by the systematic denial of resources in the twentieth century.¹⁸ Access is also
141 strongly impacted by disability, as only 54% of Americans with disabilities used a computer or
142 tablet in 2021, compared with 70% of those not reporting a disability.¹⁹

143
144 The global COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the impact of these inequities as work, school,
145 socializing, worship, shopping, and innumerable other activities moved online.²⁰ During the
146 pandemic, the digital divide reinforced existing educational disparities that impact wealth and
147 future earning potential. The intergenerational transmission of racial wealth inequality likely
148 played out at rapid speed during the pandemic.²¹ Existing stumbling blocks were amplified by
149 the disparate digital access experienced during pandemic-related lockdowns and limitations on
150 schools and businesses. Globally, “an estimated two-thirds of all school children were deprived
151 of essential education services because they had no fixed broadband access at home.”²² The work
152 for digital justice mitigates against future crises, building resilience within communities that are
153 currently excluded.

154

155 There is significant work to be done. Across Africa and within least-developed countries,
156 meaningful connectivity lags much of the rest of the world. While 87% of people in Europe and
157 81% of those across the Americas accessed broadband internet in 2021, that number drops to
158 61% for those in Asia and the Pacific, 33% among people in Africa, and 27% for those living in
159 least-developed countries.²³ Despite the widespread availability of mobile networks globally, a
160 persistent challenge lies in dramatically increasing accessibility so that people can actually get
161 online.²⁴ On an individual level, global data shows that women, people in rural areas, older
162 adults, and those with lower incomes are more likely to experience digital injustice.²⁵
163 Connectivity is also critical for vulnerable persons to maintain relationships and access
164 resources. As just one example, with more than 100 million people forcibly displaced from their
165 homes around the world, meaningful digital connectivity would enable them to stay connected to
166 community, to access information, to receive humanitarian resources, and potentially even to
167 continue earning a living; however, the majority of these people are in developing and least-
168 developed countries where access to such basic support services is restricted if not withheld
169 entirely.²⁶ While digital inclusion is a tool to counter existing global disparities, much work
170 remains in bridging these multiple divides to enable meaningful, life-enriching, and sometimes
171 life-saving, access.

172
173 In developing and historically colonized countries, the lack of accessibility is also a massive
174 stumbling block hindering community development. Under the framework of its 17 Sustainable
175 Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations has advanced “a plan of action for people,
176 planet and prosperity.”²⁷ These ambitious goals, adopted in 2015, aim to eradicate poverty and
177 address the climate crisis, providing a sustainable future for all. Across all goals, there is a strong
178 correlation between progress and the advancement of digital justice. “Of the SDG’s 17 goals and
179 169 targets, not a single one is detached from the implications and potential of digital
180 technology.”²⁸ For this reason, digital inclusion is named as a specific target in Goal 9,
181 Industries, Innovation, and Infrastructure: “Significantly increase access to information and
182 communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet
183 in least developed countries.” The significance of this target cannot be overstated, a point made
184 clear by the International Telecommunication Union at the outset of its comprehensive *Global*
185 *Connectivity Report 2022*: “*Universal and meaningful connectivity* ... has become the new
186 imperative for the 2020-2030 Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development
187 Goals.”²⁹ The power of digital access for building community, combating poverty, growing
188 economies, and improving the quality of life for all people makes meaningful access and digital
189 justice an imperative.

190
191 Taken together, the lack of accessibility, affordability, training, and security create significant
192 stumbling blocks toward achieving digital inclusion, thereby reinforcing systemic barriers
193 against development. Working for digital justice is an extension of the United Church of Christ’s
194 ongoing work for the just inclusion of all God’s people. Highlighting this issue reflects the work
195 of United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry and the recent move toward measuring
196 ministry impacts in line with the SDGs by National Setting ministries and partners, including
197 Church World Service. Embracing this opportunity connects directly to the development and
198 humanitarian ministries of Wider Church Ministries supported through One Great Hour of
199 Sharing and the work of Global Ministries and Global H.O.P.E. Strengthening the call for

200 universal and meaningful digital inclusion grows out of the United Church of Christ’s historic
201 and ongoing justice work and embodies the vision, United in Christ’s love, a just world for all.

202

203 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

204

205

206 **WHEREAS** few areas of life are not impacted by digital access and use and there is a growing
207 correlation between quality digital access and use and increased economic, educational,³⁰
208 health,³¹ labor,³² and social opportunities and mobility;³³ and

209

210 **WHEREAS** thirty percent of school-age children in the United States³⁴ (two-thirds of those
211 whose family income is below the federal poverty level³⁵) and two-thirds of students globally³⁶
212 do not have adequate, reliable internet access at home; and

213

214 **WHEREAS** the COVID pandemic laid bare the injustice of the digital divide, further widening
215 educational,³⁷ economic,³⁸ and opportunities³⁹ gaps⁴⁰ between those who have high quality
216 digital access and those who do not; and

217

218 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has long recognized the unique power of media to give
219 meaningful voice to diverse peoples, cultures, and ideas and in so doing to shape society; and,

220

221 **WHEREAS** the ability to use new and evolving technologies is essential for strengthening
222 relationships and building peaceful communities, and especially for the hearing, centering, and
223 amplifying of voices of those on the margins;⁴¹ and

224

225 **WHEREAS** disparities in digital access reflect gender,⁴² race,⁴³ geographic,⁴⁴ ability,⁴⁵ and
226 economic⁴⁶ privilege, systemically entrenching existing⁴⁷ inequalities⁴⁸ in the United States; and,

227

228 **WHEREAS** this divide is similarly⁴⁹ experienced⁵⁰ globally,⁵¹ further exacerbating⁵²
229 inequalities⁵³ especially for previously colonized nations while also impeding⁵⁴ progress toward
230 global commitments to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals; and,

231

232 **WHEREAS** the work of justice and ministry in the church is critically tied to sustainable
233 development,⁵⁵ intersecting with the broad work of the global Sustainable Development Goals⁵⁶
234 and with specific actions including eliminating poverty, embracing sustainability, and
235 empowering others for progress; and,

236

237 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has consistently and repeatedly taken a stand for justice
238 for all God’s children including for racial, social, disability, economic, and digital justice;

239

240 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
241 Church of Christ identifies the globally widening digital divide and lack of digital inclusion as a
242 justice issue, and invites all settings of the United Church of Christ to do likewise while working
243 with, among other organizations, United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry, raising
244 awareness among constituents, and joining faith-based and other coalitions pressing for digital
245 justice including through increased affordability, accessibility, training, and support; and

246
247 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
248 Christ encourages the National Setting, Conferences, and Associations to develop digital-
249 inclusion activities and policies with attention to advocacy, access to internet-enabled devices,
250 skills training, digital programming support, and online content designed to enable and promote
251 self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration; and

252
253 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
254 Christ encourages the National Setting, Conferences, and Associations to support rural
255 congregations, and other congregations challenged by the current lack of digital infrastructure, in
256 assessing local internet availability and affordability, networking them for collaborative action;
257 and,

258
259 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
260 Christ urges all settings of the United Church of Christ to advocate for digital justice and
261 affordable, quality digital access for all, especially those who are left out or held back by
262 systemic inequalities within the United States and around the world.

263 **FUNDING**

264 The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the
265 overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

266 **IMPLEMENTATION**

267 The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within
268 the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

271

¹ See, e.g., “Many join in remembering Dr. Parker’s life.” *UCC Media Justice* (Sept. 22, 2015), <https://web.archive.org/web/20151024003641/http://uccmediajustice.org/>; Larkman, Connie. “Celebrating the legacy of Everett Parker on his 100th birthday.” *UCC News* (Jan 4, 2013), <https://www.ucc.org/celebrating-the-legacy-of-the/>; McFadden, Robert D. “Everett C. Parker, Who Won Landmark Fight Over Media Race Bias, Dies at 102.” *New York Times* (Sept. 18, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/19/us/everett-parker-obituary.html>.

² See “Minutes of the Ninth General Synod.” United Church of Christ, June 1973, pp. 49-50 (resolution, *Freedom of the Press and the Right of the People to Know*); and “Minutes of the Twentieth General Synod.” United Church of Christ, June-July 1995, pp. 32-33 (resolution, *Global Communication for Justice*).

³ “Minutes of the Twelfth General Synod.” United Church of Christ, June 1979, p. 61 (resolution, *Third World Access to Advanced Communications Technologies*).

⁴ “Minutes of the Twenty-First General Synod.” United Church of Christ, July 1997, pp. 61-2 (resolution, *Access to the Age of Computer Information*).

⁵ “Minutes of the Twenty-First General Synod,” p. 62.

⁶ “Communication for All: Sharing WACC’s Principles.” *The World Association for Christian Communication*, September 2019, <https://new.waccglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Communication-for-All.pdf>.

⁷ “Report of the Acting General Secretary to the WCC 11th Assembly.” *World Council of Churches*, 31 Aug. 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/A02-Report-of-the-Acting%20General-Secretary-ENG.pdf>.

⁸ The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. “Re: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination.” *The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*. 16 May 2022, <https://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/discrimination/Leadership%20Conference%20Digital%20Discrimination%20Comments%20final%205-16-22.pdf>.

⁹ “Action by the United Nations Human Rights Council.” United Nations Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, 27 June 2016 (A/HRC/32/L.20), https://www.article19.org/data/files/Internet_Statement_Adopted.pdf.

¹⁰ *Global Connectivity Report 2022*. International Telecommunication Union, 2022, p. vi.; see also chapter 2, “The journey to universal and meaningful connectivity.”

¹¹ Goldberg, Rafi. “New NTIA Data Show Enduring Barriers to Closing the Digital Divide, Achieving Digital Equity.” National Telecommunications and Information Administration (11 May 2022), <https://www.ntia.doc.gov/blog/2022/new-ntia-data-show-enduring-barriers-closing-digital-divide-achieving-digital-equity>.

¹² “Fast Facts: Access to the Internet.” National Center for Education Statistics (2019 data from the American Community Survey), <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=46>.

¹³ “AARP Urges Older Americans Struggling to Access and Afford High-Speed Internet to Enroll in New Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.” AARP, 12 May 2021, <https://press.aarp.org/2021-5-12-AARP-Urges-Older-Americans-Struggling-to-Access-and-Afford-High-Speed-Internet-to-Enroll-in-New-Emergency-Broadband-Benefit-Program>.

¹⁴ Brown, Wilmon. “The Digital Divide.” *Learning in the Digital Age*, edited by Tataleni I. Asino, Oklahoma State University Libraries, chapter 9, <https://open.library.okstate.edu/learninginthedigitalage/chapter/the-digital-divide/>.

¹⁵ “AARP Urges Older Americans Struggling to Access and Afford High-Speed Internet to Enroll in New Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.”

¹⁶ Cao, Michelle and Rafi Goldberg. “Switched Off: Why Are One in Five U.S. Households Not Online?” National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 5 October 2022, <https://www.ntia.doc.gov/blog/2022/switched-why-are-one-five-us-households-not-online>.

¹⁷ Vogels, Emily A. “Some digital divides persist between rural, urban and suburban America.” Pew Research Center, 19 Aug 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/19/some-digital-divides-persist-between-rural-urban-and-suburban-america/>.

¹⁸ Tibken, Shara. “The broadband gap’s dirty secret: Redlining still exists in digital form.” CNET, 28 June 2021, <https://www.cnet.com/home/internet/features/the-broadband-gaps-dirty-secret-redlining-still-exists-in-digital-form/>.

¹⁹ Goldberg, Rafi.

²⁰ Lake, Robin and Travis Pillow. “The Alarming State of the American Student in 2022.” *Brookings*, Brookings, 2 Nov. 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2022/11/01/the-alarming-state-of-the-american-student-in-2022/>; “Survey Report: COVID-19 and Our Congregations.” Center for Analytics, Research & Development & Data, United Church of Christ, December 2020, <https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UCC-COVID-19-Survey-Report-December-2020.pdf>; Nortey, Justin. “More Houses of Worship Are Returning to Normal Operations, but in-Person Attendance Is Unchanged since Fall.” *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 26 Aug. 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/22/more-houses-of-worship-are-returning-to-normal-operations-but-in-person-attendance-is-unchanged-since-fall>; Morgan, Blake. “50 Statistics Showing the Lasting Impact of COVID-19 on Consumers.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 10 Dec. 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2020/10/19/50-statistics-showing-the-lasting-impact-of-covid-19-on-consumers/?sh=10d057be261f>.

²¹ Francis, Dania V. and Christian E. Weller. “Economic Inequality, the Digital Divide, and Remote Learning During COVID-19.” *The Review of Black Political Economy*, vol 49, no. 1, March 2022, pp. 41-60, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8914302/>.

²² *Global Connectivity Report 2022*, p. 2; using data from *How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic*. UNICEF and International Telecommunication Union, UNICEF, New York, 2020, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-and-young-people-internet-access-at-home-during-covid19/>.

²³ *Global Connectivity Report 2022*, pp. 33-34.

²⁴ “Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.” United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/infrastructure-industrialization/>.

²⁵ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>; see also *Global Connectivity Report 2022*, pp. 23-26.

²⁶ *Global Connectivity Report 2022*, p. 5.

²⁷ “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” United Nations, General Assembly Resolution adopted 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/291/89/PDF/N1529189.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁸ *The Age of Digital Interdependence: Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation*. United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf>; see also *Global Connectivity Report 2022*, pp. 6-9 (table 1.1).

²⁹ *Global Connectivity Report 2022*, p. xv. Emphasis theirs.

³⁰ Joseph, Patrick and Irene Lew. “Disconnected: The Digital Divide & Disrupted Schooling in NYC.” Community Service Society, 1 Sept. 2022, <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/disconnected-the-digital-divide-disrupted-schooling-in-nyc>.

³¹ Holpuch, Amanda. “US’s digital divide ‘is going to kill people’ as Covid-19 exposes inequalities.” *The Guardian*, 13 April 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/13/coronavirus-covid-19-exposes-cracks-us-digital-divide>.

³² Townsend, Phela. “Disconnected: How the Digital Divide Harms Workers and What We Can Do about It.” *The Century Foundation*, 22 Oct. 2020, <https://tcf.org/content/report/disconnected-digital-divide-harms-workers-can/>.

³³ See, e.g., Sanders, C. K. and Edward Scanlon. “The Digital Divide Is a Human Rights Issue: Advancing Social Inclusion Through Social Work Advocacy.” *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2021, pp. 130-143, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7973804/>; “The Lewis Latimer Plan for Digital Equity and Inclusion.” National Urban League, 21 April 2021, https://nul.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/NUL%20LL%20DEIA%20041421%20Latimer%20Plan_vFINAL_1136AM.pdf; “The Benefits of Broadband Expansion to America’s Economy, Education, and Health: A Policy Brief.” Common Sense Kids Action, 2015, https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/featured-content/files/benefits_of_broadband_expansion_to_americas_economy_education_and_health-cska-2015_1.pdf.

³⁴ Chandra, S., et al. “Closing the K–12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning.” Common Sense Media (San Francisco, CA) and Boston Consulting Group (Boston, MA), 2020, https://8ce82b94a8c4fdc3ea6d-b1d233e3bc3cb10858bea65ff05e18f2.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/9c/0b/62d34d674c979876e9b13be353df/common-sense-media-report-final-6-26-7.38am_WEB.pdf

³⁵ Katz, Vikki, and Victoria Rideout. “Learning at Home While under-Connected.” *New America*, Rutgers University, 24 June 2021, <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/learning-at-home-while-underconnected/key-findings/>.

³⁶ “How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic.” United Nations Children’s Fund and International Telecommunication Union, UNICEF, New York, 2020. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-and-young-people-internet-access-at-home-during-covid19/>.

-
- ³⁷ Dorn, E. et al. “Covid-19 and education: An emerging K-shaped recovery.” McKinsey & Company, December 2021, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-an-emerging-k-shaped-recovery>; “The Lewis Latimer Plan for Digital Equity and Inclusion.” National Urban League, 21 April 2021, https://nul.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/NUL%20LL%20DEIA%20041421%20Latimer%20Plan_vFINAL_1136AM.pdf.
- ³⁸ Francis, Dania V., and Christian E. Weller. “Economic Inequality, the Digital Divide, and Remote Learning During COVID-19.” *The Review of Black Political Economy*, vol. 49, no. 1, March 2022, pp. 41-60, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8914302/>.
- ³⁹ Reardon, M. “The digital divide has left millions of schoolkids behind.” CNET, 5 May 2021. <https://www.cnet.com/home/internet/the-digital-divide-has-left-millions-of-school-kids-behind/>.
- ⁴⁰ “Overview.” World Bank, 11 Oct. 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/overview>.
- ⁴¹ *Expanding Shrinking Communication Spaces*. Lee, Philip and Lorenzo Vargas, eds, Southbound, 2020.
- ⁴² Fogel, Rebecca. “The Digital Divide: Gender and technology in an unequal world.” *Urban@UW*, University of Washington, 6 Nov. 2020. <https://urban.uw.edu/news/the-digital-divide-gender-and-technology-in-an-unequal-world/>.
- ⁴³ Chakravorti, Bhaskar. “How to Close the Digital Divide in the U.S.” *Harvard Business Review*, 20 July 2021, <https://hbr.org/2021/07/how-to-close-the-digital-divide-in-the-u-s>.
- ⁴⁴ Vogels, Emily A.
- ⁴⁵ Perrin, Andrew, and Sara Atske. “How Can We Ensure That More People with Disabilities Have Access to Digital Devices?” *World Economic Forum*, 16 Sept. 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/09/disability-barrier-to-digital-device-ownership>.
- ⁴⁶ Townsend, Phela.
- ⁴⁷ Ferraro, Nicole. “Study highlights impact of ‘digital redlining.’” *Light Reading*, 25 Aug. 2022. <https://www.lightreading.com/digital-divide/study-highlights-impact-of-digital-redlining/d/d-id/779933>.
- ⁴⁸ Le, Vinhcent and Gissela Moya. “On the Wrong Side of the Digital Divide.” *Greenlighting Institute*, 2 June 2020, <https://greenlining.org/publications/online-resources/2020/on-the-wrong-side-of-the-digital-divide/>.
- ⁴⁹ “With Almost Half of World's Population Still Offline, Digital Divide Risks Becoming 'New Face of Inequality', Deputy Secretary-General Warns General Assembly.” United Nations, Office of Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations Press, 27 Apr. 2021, <https://press.un.org/en/2021/dsgsm1579.doc.htm>.
- ⁵⁰ “Digital Skills Critical for Jobs and Social Inclusion.” *UNESCO.org*, UNESCO, 21 Apr. 2022, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/digital-skills-critical-jobs-and-social-inclusion>.
- ⁵¹ “How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
- ⁵² O’Sullivan, Katriona, et al. “A Just Digital Framework to Ensure Equitable Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.” *Nature Communications*, vol. 12, article no. 6345, 3 Nov. 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-26217-8>.
- ⁵³ *The Age of Digital Interdependence: Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation*. See especially chapter 2, “Leaving No One Behind.”
- ⁵⁴ Sheppard, Bede. “‘Years Don’t Wait for Them.’” *Human Rights Watch*, 17 May 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/05/17/years-dont-wait-them/increased-inequalities-childrens-right-education-due-covid>.
- ⁵⁵ “Towards a Sustainable Future.” United Church of Christ, 1 Apr. 2021, <https://www.ucc.org/event/towards-a-sustainable-future/>.
- ⁵⁶ See, for example, “Worship Resources.” One Great Hour of Sharing, United Church of Christ, 2018, https://www.ucc.org/oghs_february_4/ and https://www.ucc.org/oghs_march_4/.

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

A RESOLUTION URGING PLANNING FOR AND IMPLEMENTING ELECTRIFICATION

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by Mayflower United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, Minnesota; United Church of Christ in New Brighton, New Brighton, Minnesota; Robbinsdale Parkway United Church of Christ, Robbinsdale, Minnesota; St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ, St. Paul, Minnesota; St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Saint Paul, Minnesota; Macalester Plymouth United Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota; First United Church of Christ, Northfield, Minnesota; First Congregational United Church of Christ, Grand Marais, Minnesota; First Congregational Church of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota; First Congregational Church, UCC, La Crosse, Wisconsin; Union Congregational United Church of Christ, Saint Louis Park, St. Louis Park, Minnesota

1 **Summary:** This resolution calls on United Church of Christ congregations and individuals to
2 actively plan for and promote electrifying space heating and cooling equipment, appliances, and
3 machines when old ones fail or become outdated as one of the ways to protect God's earth and
4 its people from climate change emissions, and to become role models for just and equitable
5 electrification for individual members and the broader community.
6

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

7
8

9 When we fully ground ourselves in God's word, we understand that this is God's earth that
10 scientists are talking about when they warn about climate change—God's earth that could be
11 catastrophically impacted by the climate change we are causing.
12

13 Genesis tells the origin story, and we know the story well: God separating light from dark within
14 the formless void through calling forth all manner of vegetation, fish, birds, and other animals,
15 and on to the creation of humankind. At each step God stepped back, reviewed what God had
16 created and assessed it as good.
17

18 Some have said that the creation of humanity in God's image with a commission to rule over the
19 animal kingdom carries a license for ecological irresponsibility. But the Bible portrays humanity
20 not as the owner of nature but as its steward, strictly accountable to its true owner. Leviticus 25:
21 23-24 makes the point clearly. In God's words, "the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the

22 land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you
23 shall provide for the redemption of the land.”

24
25 Some have said that redemption referred only to a claim from prior owners. But in its discussion
26 of sabbatical years and the every-fifty-year jubilee year, Leviticus makes it clear that the jubilee
27 year is the year in which the land is redeemable by God, the true owner. The phrase, “you are
28 but aliens and tenants” emphasizes the transitory nature of human land ownership. We humans
29 occupy the earth only for our lifetime. God remains. God’s word as set out in Leviticus leaves no
30 doubt about what is required of a steward, to care for God’s land while in our temporary tenancy.

31
32 The gospels of Mathew, Mark, and Luke each tell us a story using almost identical words about a
33 lawyer or scribe who was questioning Jesus. The lawyer asked “which commandment is the first
34 of all?” Jesus uncharacteristically did not answer with a parable, but directly, “you shall love the
35 Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all
36 your strength” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”—loving God with all our heart,
37 soul, mind and strength is taking care of the animals and plants and other living things that God
38 created and called good, and doing so with ALL of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

39
40 God calls on each of us and all of us together in community to act prophetically, to be role
41 models, to be the Moses of our time in the care of creation.

42
43 In a major 2018 report the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that we must
44 reduce carbon emissions 50% by 2030 in order to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate
45 change.¹ This is a widely accepted benchmark. ²And it is a huge lift.

46
47 Around 40% of the United States’ emissions causing climate change come from residences and
48 the vehicles we drive.³ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that 13% of U.S.
49 greenhouse gas emissions come from businesses and homes, and arise primarily from burning
50 fossil fuels.⁴

51
52 Structural change is now creating a path forward. Electricity is getting cleaner with the addition
53 of very inexpensive wind- and solar-generated electricity. And electricity will continue to get
54 even cleaner as expensive coal-fired electric generation is retired.⁵ The Inflation Reduction Act
55 strongly supports clean electricity with significant funding.⁶

56
57 But that structural change is not enough. We must use the cleaner electricity. Our actions matter.
58 Switching everything possible in our lives to be powered by electricity will go a long way toward
59 lowering our emissions and reducing the impact of climate change.⁷

60
61 Electrifying everything for congregations and individuals means replacing any heating and
62 cooling equipment, appliances, and machines in our churches, homes and garages that currently
63 burn fossil fuels. And it might also mean installing new electric devices, like solar panels and
64 home storage batteries. This doesn’t have to be done all at once. Congregations and individuals
65 can make plans to replace fossil fuel heating and cooling equipment, appliances and machines
66 when they become outdated or fail, or replace outdated or failing electric heating and cooling

67 equipment, electric appliances and electric machines with the new far more efficient electric
68 ones.

69
70 Modern heating and cooling equipment, appliances and devices are so much more efficient they
71 will immediately have lower total carbon emissions than burning fossil fuel directly.⁸ Plus, as the
72 electric grid switches to renewable sources, emissions will continue to drop.

73
74 Protecting God’s earth also protects God’s people. Natural gas, a fossil fuel, burned inside a
75 church or residence has more pollutants than just carbon dioxide. Burning natural gas also emits
76 nitric oxide (NOx), sulfur oxides (SOx), particulate matter (PM), and formaldehyde (CH2O).⁹

77
78 Multiple peer-reviewed studies tell us that when natural gas is burned without proper ventilation,
79 gas cooking can generate levels of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide inside homes that
80 exceed federal and state standards for air quality.¹⁰

81
82 EPA recently concluded that long-term exposure to Nitrogen dioxide is linked to the onset of
83 asthma in children.¹¹ Asthma is a leading cause of children missing school.¹²

84
85 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

86
87 WHEREAS the major 2018 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change told us
88 that we must reduce carbon emissions 50% by 2030 in order to avoid the most catastrophic
89 effects of climate change, a widely accepted benchmark;¹³ and

90
91 WHEREAS when we fully ground ourselves in God’s word, we understand that this is God’s
92 earth that scientists are talking about, and the Twenty-Sixth General Synod has recognized that
93 the earth belongs to God;¹⁴ and

94
95 WHEREAS God’s earth could be catastrophically impacted by the climate change we are
96 causing and the Twenty-Sixth General Synod has recognized that the earth is affected by climate
97 change;¹⁵ and

98
99 WHEREAS protecting God’s creation also protects all God’s people by reducing air pollutants
100 and sickness;¹⁶ and

101
102 WHEREAS, because air pollutants from burning fossil fuels are especially harmful for children,
103 the elderly, rural and under-resourced communities, and people of color¹⁷ protection measures
104 must be just and equitably available; and

105
106 WHEREAS God’s word as set out in Genesis, Leviticus, Mark, Mathew, and Luke leave no
107 doubt about what is required of a steward, to care for God’s land while in our temporary tenancy;
108 and

109
110 WHEREAS about 40% of the United States’ emissions causing climate change come from the
111 places we live and the vehicles we drive and those emissions are increasing¹⁸ and

112

113 WHEREAS our electricity is getting cleaner with the addition of very inexpensive wind- and
114 solar-generated electricity and electricity will continue to get even cleaner as expensive coal-
115 fired electric generation is retired¹⁹; and

116
117 WHEREAS the Inflation Reduction Act strongly supports clean electricity with significant
118 funding and strongly supports and funds electrification, storage, and solar for low and middle
119 income people,²⁰ and

120
121 WHEREAS God calls on each of us and all of us together in community to act prophetically, to
122 be role models, to be the Moses of our time, and

123
124 WHEREAS our church communities can lead the way to protect God’s earth and its people by
125 electrifying and helping our members and neighbors electrify;

126
127 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that, as one of the ways to protect God’s earth and
128 its people from climate changing emissions, the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages United
129 Church of Christ congregations to actively plan for and promote electrifying fossil-fueled space
130 heating and cooling equipment, appliances and machines when old ones fail or become outdated
131 or replacing outdated or failing electric space heating and cooling equipment, appliances and
132 machines with new far more efficient electric ones, and to become role models for electrification
133 for individual members and the broader community; and

134
135 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod urges United Church of
136 Christ congregations to actively promote electrification as one of the ways to protect God’s earth
137 and its people and, with environmental justice in mind, help our members and neighbors
138 electrify; and

139
140 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod requests Conferences and
141 Associations of the United Church of Christ to gather and distribute information and guidance
142 for their local congregations and individual members necessary and helpful to implement
143 electrification, thereby becoming role models for the broader community.

144
145 **FUNDING:** Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with
146 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

147
148 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
149 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.”
September 20, 2019.

² FACT SHEET: President Biden Sets 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target Aimed at
Creating Good-Paying Union Jobs and Securing U.S. Leadership on Clean Energy Technologies. April
22, 2021.

³ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 2.; Fresh Energy. “Buildings
for a healthy future.” December 2021.

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁵ Fresh Energy. “Our accomplishments of 2021 and what we are looking forward to in 2022: Further changes to coal plant operations secured & Otter Tail Power begins to exit coal and increase renewables.” January 24, 2022.

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/13/upshot/whats-in-the-democrats-climate-health-bill.html?name=styl-n-domestic-policy-bill>

⁷ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg, Rewiring America, page 2.; Fresh Energy. “Buildings for a healthy future.” December 16, 2021.

⁸ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 4.

⁹ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, page 6; Fresh Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

¹⁰ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, pages 6 & 7; Fresh Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

¹¹ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, pages 7 & 8, 4, 2021; “Clean energy brief: natural gas in Minnesota,” prepared by Melissa R. Parton on behalf of Fresh Energy, February 2020.

¹² Children’s Minnesota, “Managing asthma for students.”

¹³ Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.” September 20, 2019. https://exponentialroadmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ExponentialRoadmap_1.5.1_216x279_08_AW_Download_Singles_Small.pdf

¹⁴ <https://uccfiles.com/pdf/gs26minutes.pdf>, pages 15-16

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, pages 6 & 7; Fresh Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

¹⁷ Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.” September 20, 2019.

¹⁸ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 2.; Fresh Energy. “Buildings for a healthy future.” December 2021.

¹⁹ Fresh Energy. “Our accomplishments of 2021 and what we are looking forward to in 2022: Further changes to coal plant operations secured & Otter Tail Power begins to exit coal and increase renewables.” January 24, 2022.

²⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/13/upshot/whats-in-the-democrats-climate-health-bill.html?name=styl-n-domestic-policy-bill~>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod. Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

FAITHFUL ADVOCACY FOR INTERSECTIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL HEALING IN HARM REDUCTION

A RESOLUTION OF WITNESS

Submitted by the Metropolitan Association of the New York Conference

1 **Summary**

2
3 According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in a one-year period ending
4 in April 2021, over 100,000 beloved people died from an entirely preventable cause of death,
5 accidental drug overdose.¹ The national response to the overdose crisis has been largely shaped
6 by the criminalization and dehumanization of people who use drugs, disproportionately
7 impacting Black, Brown, and Indigenous people.² In the enduring spirit of Nixon's "all-out
8 offensive against public enemy number one (illegal drugs),"³ the war on people who use drugs
9 has decimated families⁴, incarcerated millions of mostly Black and Brown people and the
10 communities they live in⁵, enabled the spread of infectious diseases such as HCV and HIV,⁶ and
11 failed to prevent problematic substance use or make evidence-based treatment for substance use
12 disorder more widely accessible.⁷

13
14 There is a more loving and just way, and that way is Harm Reduction. Harm Reduction has been
15 proven to save lives,⁸ heal communities, and is positively transforming social narratives and
16 policies on drugs and the people that use them. Harm Reduction finds its roots in the creativity
17 and wisdom of people with lived and living experience of substance use.⁹ Harm reduction is
18 understood as a set of practices for minimizing drug related harm, a person-centered philosophy
19 for addressing substance use across the spectrum, as well as a movement for social justice which
20 recognizes the multitude of social determinants that impact a person's relationship with
21 substance use and their vulnerability to drug related harm.¹⁰

22
23 **Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding**

24
25 Our Christian faith is rooted in communications of God's messages of love, justice, and
26 liberation for God's people. This calling is woven throughout the Bible, from the prophetic
27 voices in the first Testament, in the poetry of the Psalmists, and into the New Testament
28 teachings. We therefore take seriously these biblical calls "to act justly, to love mercy, and to
29 walk humbly with your God," (Micah 6:8), "let justice roll down like water and righteousness

30 like an ever-flowing stream,” (Amos 5:24), and Isaiah’s command to “to loose the bonds of
31 injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?”
32 (Isaiah 58:6).

33
34 Theologies of justice and liberation necessarily address the structural violence and systemic
35 barriers to flourishing as well as the weaponization and misuses of power that exploit people’s
36 human rights and dignity. In this way, justice and liberation are inextricably tied to systems of
37 power and seek to not only tend to the harms caused, but also to repair the root beds of harm and
38 inequity.

39
40 Our Christian faith calls us to follow Jesus’ teachings and the examples of Jesus’ ministry, which
41 express; that love is the ultimate power, that compassion and healing are foundational to his
42 ministry, that people who were marginalized and suffering are centered, and that called people of
43 faith to restore relationships, build the beloved community, and take action to actuate justice.
44 These calls and commandments are woven throughout the ministry of Jesus and reflected in the
45 Gospel message, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have
46 loved you, you also should love one another, “(John 13:34), “for just as the body is one and has
47 many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with
48 Christ. For in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or
49 free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:12), and “owe no one
50 anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
51 (Romans 13:8)

52
53 Understanding the theologies of love and justice as communicated in these scriptures, a few
54 truths are apparent. In the community of the Beloved, there can be no liberation for any people
55 unless there is liberation for all people, and that this justice and liberation is an expression of
56 God’s love for creation. Love and compassion are the ultimate authorities, and that any law that
57 stands in violation of these principles are neither biblical nor of God. And lastly, that the highest
58 aspiration of humankind is to love God, and love neighbor, as God first loved us.

59
60 This love and justice in action and as embodied by God is mirrored in the philosophy and praxis
61 of Harm Reduction. Harm reduction is an invitation into relationship, to connection, into
62 community. For people who use drugs and the people who love those who use them, this
63 connection, this inclusion, this invitation shaped by compassion and loving regard for the
64 fullness of one another’s humanity is the embodiment of harm reduction. It is the expression of
65 radical welcome, the welcoming of all stories and paths; it calls people by name and attends to
66 and cherishes the particularities. It is a hospitality that seeks people out, meets them where they
67 are at and invites them into loving community. Harm reduction makes sacred space which invites
68 people, all people, especially people who find themselves at the many margins, people who are
69 creatively, desperately, intently, and faithfully struggling to find ways to carry their burdens. It
70 makes space for people to tell their stories, be their stories, and to tell and be their whole stories,
71 to show up with their whole selves. It foregrounds the wisdom and leadership of people with
72 lived and living experience of substance use, ensures that more people have an opportunity to see
73 reflections of themselves in all our communities and sacred places, see themselves reflected in
74 this divine whole we call community. Harm reduction is love that stands in awe at the burdens
75 that people carry, rather than with judgment at how they get through.

76

77 Harm Reduction is defined by Harm Reduction International as “[referring] to policies, programs
78 and practices that aim to minimize negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug
79 use, drug policies and drug laws. Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights. It
80 focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion,
81 discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support.

82 Harm reduction encompasses a range of health and social services and practices that apply to
83 illicit and licit drugs. These include, but are not limited to, drug consumption rooms, needle and
84 syringe programs, non-abstinence-based housing and employment initiatives, drug checking,
85 overdose prevention and reversal, psychosocial support, and the provision of information on
86 safer drug use. Approaches such as these are cost-effective, evidence-based and have a positive
87 impact on individual and community health.¹¹

88

89 Over the past 40+ years, in the United States, harm reduction has grown from a fringe social
90 justice movement to the mainstream public health and social and racial justice movement that it
91 is today. The quantitative and qualitative evidence base for harm reduction has grown
92 substantially during this time, as has its popularity among care providers, policy makers, and
93 other public health and government officials. In 2021, the Biden Administration identified Harm
94 Reduction as a federal drug policy priority,¹² and federal agencies including the Substance Abuse
95 and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and
96 the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) co-hosted the first-ever
97 federal harm reduction summit and designated the first-ever dedicated federal funding
98 specifically for Harm Reduction as part of the American Recovery Act.^{13 14}

99

100 The United Church of Christ has long been part of this struggle. From the local church to
101 General Synod, from International Overdose Awareness Day and World AIDS Day observances
102 to overdose prevention trainings, safer injection kit assembly parties, condom and naloxone
103 distribution events, there have been and continue to be significant responses from a variety of
104 settings in the UCC. A number of General Synod resolutions have elevated the need for a
105 compassionate and more just response to substance use, and health equity for people who use
106 drugs including: “Compassionate Response to Substance Abuse” ; Calling for Comprehensive
107 HIV Prevention in Church and Community; On Recognizing Opioid Addiction as a Health
108 Epidemic, Ensuring Access to Treatment and Pharmaceutical Corporate Responsibility”;
109 “Dismantling the New Jim Crow”; “Reclaiming the Churches Ministry of Health and Healing”;
110 and, “Racism as a Public Health Issue.”

111

112 However, the scale of these responses has not yet reached a level equal to the need, nor does it
113 employ a harm reduction lens, promote the understanding that drug related harm is not an
114 individual, moral issue but a community justice issue, nor do they address the root causes of
115 substance use related harm and the dehumanization of people who use drugs. Additionally,
116 understandings about substance use and its drivers of harm have shifted as more resources and
117 research have been focused on the issue. Finally, a growing evidence base on substance use
118 disorder and its treatment suggests many of our understandings about substance use (cultural and
119 scientific) are considerably out of date.

120

121 The message of our faith is clear when it comes to justice and love for our most marginalized
122 neighbors, responses to societal ills rooted in compassion and community not punishment or
123 isolation, awareness, and education not stigma, and focused on preventing the harms of
124 substance use and other social injustice not just treating the symptoms. This Resolution is calling
125 the church to be both prophetic and pastoral in its response to the crises of racialized drug policy,
126 accidental overdose, and other harms of the war on people who use drugs. This Resolution is
127 calling the church to the gospel of Harm Reduction.

128
129 **Text of the Resolution**

130
131 **WHEREAS** more than 932,000 people have died since 1999 from a drug overdose, and during
132 2021, more than 108,000 overdose deaths were recorded in the United States, an increase of 15%
133 from the almost 94,000 overdose deaths during 2020.¹⁵¹⁶

134
135 **WHEREAS** increases in drug overdose deaths are disproportionately affecting Black and
136 Indigenous people in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and
137 Prevention, fatal overdoses increased by 44% among Black people in 2020 compared with the
138 year prior and rises in fatal drug overdose among American Indian and Alaska Native people —
139 together saw a 39% increase over the previous year.¹⁷

140
141 **WHEREAS** U.S. drug policy drives the number of drug overdoses and overdose fatalities with
142 the promotion of policy which centers the criminalization of people who use drugs, is rooted in
143 racism, punishment, and harsh enforcement measures which fuel social marginalization, health
144 inequities and crises, and mass incarceration.¹⁸ More people are sent to prison in the United
145 States for nonviolent drug offenses than for crimes of violence, and Black men are sent to state
146 prison on drug charges at 13 times the rate of white men.¹⁹

147
148 **WHEREAS** structural barriers to compassionate, evidence-based, non-coercive, and culturally
149 responsive care and treatment for substance use related health concerns, and substance use
150 disorder, such as stigma, lack of services which address substance use across the spectrum, lack
151 of healing centered engagement, lack of culturally sensitive services, and limitations imposed on
152 prescribers/medical providers, means that many people who use drugs fall beyond the continuum
153 of care.²⁰

154
155 **WHEREAS** the stigmatization of people with lived and living experience of substance use and
156 overdose fosters isolation, disconnection, and reinforces the narrative of substance use as a
157 moral, sinful, individual issue rather than the complex, collective, psycho-social-spiritual-health
158 issue that it is.²¹

159
160 **WHEREAS** pregnant and parenting people with lived experience of substance use face barriers
161 to care, including threats of family separation, criminalization of substance use, and lack of
162 access to culturally responsive, full-spectrum reproductive and other health care.²²

163
164 **WHEREAS** migrant communities experience a significant burden of harm from the war on
165 people who use drugs, including profiling based on race, intrusive government surveillance, anti-
166 immigrant violence, and elevated rates of detention and deportation, for low-level, non-violent

167 drug related offenses. According to Human Rights Watch, deportations of non-citizens who had
168 been convicted of drug possession increased 43 percent during a five-year period.²³

169
170 **WHEREAS** congregations and diverse settings of the United Church of Christ have been invited
171 to adopt Just World Covenants to strengthen their engagement in building justice through their
172 “ministry, mission, and witness” such as W.I.S.E (Welcoming Inclusive Supportive Engaged),²⁴
173 Open and Affirming,²⁵ and Immigrant Welcoming,²⁶ among others.

174
175 **AND WHEREAS** adopting a covenant to become a harm reduction engaged congregation or
176 community is a way of demonstrating commitment to live out the Gospel as expressed in the
177 values of Harm Reduction and to bring about healing and justice for communities impacted by
178 drug overdose and the war on people who use drugs, especially in communities of color.

179
180 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that The Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
181 Church of Christ encourages United Church of Christ congregations to adopt covenants which
182 commit to harm reduction values and practices and build communities of compassionate care,
183 hospitality, and advocacy in partnership with people with lived experience of substance use and
184 overdose, and their loved ones.

185
186 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
187 Christ encourages congregations, associations, and conferences to work to eradicate drug-related
188 stigma, dehumanization of people with lived and living experience of substance use and
189 overdose, educate themselves on harm reduction and intersectional justice issues impacting
190 people who use drugs and people who have experienced an overdose.

191
192 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
193 Christ encourages advocacy by all settings of the church for broader and more just access to
194 harm reduction services and programming including syringe access programs, overdose
195 prevention programs, expanded naloxone access and distribution, overdose prevention centers,
196 access to evidence-based drug treatment, healing centered engagement, access to medication for
197 opioid and other substance use disorders, as well as funding to support these harm reduction
198 services.

199
200 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
201 Christ requests that the United Church of Christ Board establish an annual Harm Reduction
202 Justice Sunday to be observed on the third Sunday of August, in advance of International
203 Overdose Awareness Day - August 31st.

204
205 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
206 Christ calls upon the United Church of Christ Board to compile a list of materials, resources, and
207 policies concerning substance use to be made available to all settings to help in their
208 development and adoption of harm reduction policies.

209
210 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that The Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
211 Christ encourages activism and advocacy by all settings of the church for the development and
212 adoption of harm reduction policies grounded in science, compassion, health, and human rights.

213 This policy advocacy should include leadership of people with lived experience of substance use
214 and overdose, and with all persons most vulnerable to structural violence including Black,
215 Indigenous, and people of color, LGBTQAI+ people, people who are not citizens, people
216 experiencing poverty and people who are houseless, people who are incarcerated and with other
217 criminal legal system involvement, people living in rural areas, people who are pregnant,
218 women, and young people.

219
220 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance
221 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

222
223 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
224 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2022/202205.htm

² <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/IdentifyingtheRootCauses-ofDrugOverdoseHealthInequities.pdf>

³

<https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2016/06/26404/#:~:text=At%20a%20press%20conference%20on,%E2%80%9Cwar%20on%20drugs%E2%80%9D%20began>

⁴ <https://www.movementforfamilypower.org/ground-zero>

⁵

https://www.unodc.org/documents/ungass2016/Contributions/Civil/DrugPolicyAlliance/DPA_Fact_Sheet_Drug_War_Mass_Incarceration_and_Race_June2015.pdf

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/pwid/opioid-use.html>

⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/11/30/drugs-punitive-laws-policies-and-policing-practices-and-hiv/aids>

⁸ <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/harm-reduction#:~:text=Harm%20reduction%20plays%20a%20significant,diseases%20such%20as%20HIV%20FHCV>.

⁹ <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

¹⁰ <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

¹¹ <https://hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction/>

¹² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/04/21/fact-sheet-white-house-releases-2022-national-drug-control-strategy-that-outlines-comprehensive-path-forward-to-address-addiction-and-the-overdose-epidemic/>

¹³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/briefing-room/2021/12/16/readout-white-house-hhs-host-national-harm-reduction-summit/>

¹⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/briefing-room/2022/03/28/president-biden-calls-for-increased-funding-to-address-addiction-and-the-overdose-epidemic/>

¹⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/index.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/index.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/s0719-overdose-rates-vs.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.vera.org/publications/overdose-deaths-and-jail-incarceration/national-trends-and-racial-disparities>

¹⁹ <https://www.vera.org/publications/overdose-deaths-and-jail-incarceration/national-trends-and-racial-disparities>

²⁰ <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/harm-reduction#:~:text=Harm%20Reduction's%20Place%20in%20and,%2C%20overdose%2C%20and%20substance%20misuse>.

²¹ <https://nida.nih.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2020/04/addressing-stigma-surrounds-addiction>

²² <https://www.perinatalharmreduction.org/>

²³ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/16/price-too-high/us-families-torn-apart-deportations-drug-offenses>

²⁴ <https://www.mhn-ucc.org/becoming-wise/>

²⁵ <https://openandaffirming.org/>

²⁶ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/Becoming-an-immigrant-welcoming-congregation-updated-Nov-1-2012.pdf>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod. Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

AFFIRMING GUNS TO GARDENS AND OTHER GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION MINISTRIES

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the Metro Denver Association of the Rocky Mountain Conference

1 **SUMMARY**

2
3 This resolution calls on the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ to
4 support churches and all other settings of the United Church of Christ in engaging in meaningful
5 action to address the scourge of gun violence in our country. Each church and setting is called to
6 pursue a course of action that best fits their skills, capabilities, and understanding. Actions that
7 seek to end gun violence include but are not limited to organizing Guns to Garden events,
8 organizing events promoting safe storage of firearms, participating in raising awareness and
9 fostering education concerning gun violence, advocating for legislative action concerning gun
10 control, and broader mental health services.
11

12
13 **BIBICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

14
15 From January through September of 2022 our nation has experienced 32,958 deaths due to gun
16 violence. Of these deaths, over 17,000 were suicides, and 1,190 have been unintentional or
17 accidental deaths. To date there have been 501 mass shootings in schools, houses of worship,
18 grocery stores, and workplaces among others, and over 4500 children and youth were injured or
19 killed due to gun violence.¹
20

21 We read in many places in the Biblical text a call to peace and to dismantle the systems and
22 constructs that lead to violence.
23

24 Isaiah 2:2-4

25 They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not
26 take up sword against nation; they will train for war no more. Everyone will sit under their own
27 vine and fig tree. No one shall make them afraid.
28

29 Psalm 46:1-3; 8-10

30 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though
31 the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters
32 roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Come, behold the works of the
33 Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the
34 earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. 'Be still, and
35 know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.'

36

37 Matthew 5:9

38 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

39

40 John 14:27

41 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not
42 let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

43

44 Romans 12: 14-21

45 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice,
46 weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate
47 with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take
48 thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live
49 peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it
50 is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry,
51 feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap
52 burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

53

54 For far too long, our nation has been torn apart by gun violence. As people of peace, we cannot
55 accept gun violence as the norm. We cannot conform to this painful pattern of violence. As
56 people of faith, we can no longer be satisfied with being "just another stat." And though it may
57 be easy to be overwhelmed with the complexity and scope of gun violence prevention, we
58 MUST do something - anything. Peace-making action is required urgently and there is no time to
59 be afraid.

60

61 Our thinking and action as they relate to gun violence need to be transformed. It is nothing less
62 than a moral and spiritual imperative that our public policy reflect a commitment to lessening the
63 toll that gun violence takes in communities throughout our country.

64

65 We are aware that there is a lack of education and understanding about how and where to
66 surrender unwanted guns in our society. While there are organizations that will help you sell or
67 donate your gun, if one wishes to take the gun out of circulation and use, those organizations are
68 much more difficult to find. Churches can be a place where tools of destruction and violence can
69 be turned in safely. Partnering with organizations like RawTools (Rawtools.org) that has
70 established practices, protocols, and expertise is a viable and streamlined way to begin.

71

72 For those who own guns and have them in their homes, churches can also have a gun violence
73 prevention ministry offering gun locks and gun safes for safe storage and handling of these
74 firearms. This prevents accidental deaths.

75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
102
103
104
105
106
107
108
109
110
111
112
113
114
115
116
117
118
119

Guns to Gardens provides a practical, pastoral, and prophetic ministry:

- *Practical:* With more than 400 million guns in private hands, and in many communities no easy way to safely dispose of the ones that are unwanted, Guns to Gardens is a practical service that churches can provide, and it reduces the number of unwanted guns in our communities, without returning them to the gun market where they could do future harm. Examples: a grandfather who has hunting guns from years past and now has grandchildren visiting in the home; a family to whom the police returned a gun after it was used in a suicide or crime by their loved one; a household with someone who has a serious physical illness, depression, or who is going through a crisis, such as unemployment or divorce; an older person who has enjoyed owning guns but no longer feels that they can safely operate or handle them; a family with serious conflict or domestic violence. Providing gun locks and safes also decreases the likelihood of misuse of a firearm, accidental death or to be used in a spur of the moment decision to end one's life.
- *Pastoral:* Guns hold memories, some good and some painful. The church is an appropriate host to accompany a gun donor while their gun is dismantled. They may appreciate a moment of prayer or silence, or simply someone to share their story with. The church is the place of pastoral healing. To provide gun locks and safes is a pastoral way to keep homes and children safe when firearms are present.
- *Prophetic:* For citizens to voluntarily rid their homes and communities of unwanted guns is to turn upside down the gun industry myth that we are safer with “guns everywhere.” For the church to facilitate this process is to show that God stands on the side of saving lives and preventing gun violence. By turning guns into garden tools, we demonstrate the biblical vision that God creates us to live in gardens, not battlefields. And, in the absence of action by our government to prevent gun violence, we take direct action to inspire elected officials to find their courage to also act to save lives.

The epidemic of gun violence is out of control in the United States. Our faith in a loving and just God calls us to be leaders in justice movements. Ending gun violence is a justice movement. Thoughts and prayers are wonderful AND we are called to act. Being involved in Guns to Gardens and other gun violence prevention ministries is a way to turn our thoughts and prayers into action. Going hand in hand with this is continued action to call our federal government to enact legislation on gun control and safety as well as better access and funding for mental health programs available to all.

Further information about Guns to Gardens can be found in the endnotes.²

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS there is an absence of federal action on gun control and safety; and

WHEREAS we are called to co-create with the Holy Spirit the kingdom of God in this world – a kingdom of peace and justice and care; and

120 **WHEREAS** there is an opportunity for individual congregations, associations and conferences
121 to provide practical, pastoral and prophetic ministry related to preventing gun violence;

122 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
123 of Christ declares that the time has come for us all – congregations, associations, conferences,
124 and members – to actively promote peace and engage in efforts to end gun violence;
125

126 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
127 Christ implores all United Church of Christ congregations, associations and conferences to pray
128 for peace and for an end to these horrific acts of violence, and to let our prayers move us to
129 meaningful action;
130

131 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we give thanks, pray for, and commend the congregations
132 and organizations that have participated in the Guns to Gardens project as a way to responsibly
133 dispose of unwanted firearms, turning them into garden tools rather than returning them to the
134 gun market;
135

136 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
137 Christ calls on congregations, associations, and conferences in the United Church of Christ to
138 learn about the Guns to Gardens project and prayerfully consider if it is a ministry to which they
139 are called as part of our witness to prevent gun violence, save lives, and provide healing for a
140 nation traumatized by violence;
141

142 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
143 Christ calls on congregations, associations, and conferences in the United Church of Christ to
144 prayerfully consider joining the Guns to Garden movement³, and to host safe surrender events
145 for unwanted guns to be dismantled according to rules of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
146 Firearms, and Explosives;
147

148 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
149 Christ calls on congregations, associations, and conferences in the United Church of Christ to
150 prayerfully consider hosting events to give away gun safes and locks to promote safe storage of
151 firearms in the home to prevent unauthorized use and accidental use; and
152

153 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
154 Christ asks Justice and Local Church Ministries to compile materials from existing gun violence
155 prevention ministries to assist UCC congregations with guidance in offering gun violence
156 prevention ministries.
157

158 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance
159 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.
160

161 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
162 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.
163
164

¹ Gun Violence Archive <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org>

² The copyright for “Guns to Gardens” is held by New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence. They have given free use of this title to Congregations and other church bodies. The founding organization for the Guns to Gardens movement is Rawtools, a ministry based in Colorado and led by Michael Martin, a former Mennonite pastor-turned-blacksmith. RAWtools provides logistical support and safe training on how to use a chop saw. Their national network of blacksmiths forges leftover gun parts into garden tools. Website – Rawtools.org

For further information about Guns to Gardens: Watch the UCC Thursdays for the Soul Video - Shared Learning from Gun Violence Ministries - <https://youtu.be/Nmklnzilc4k>

³ The copyright for “Guns to Gardens” is held by New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence. They have given free use of this title to Congregations and other church bodies. The founding organization for the Guns to Gardens movement is Rawtools, a ministry based in Colorado and led by Michael Martin, a former Mennonite pastor-turned-blacksmith. RAWtools provides logistical support and safe training on how to use a chop saw. Their national network of blacksmiths forges leftover gun parts into garden tools. Website – Rawtools.org

For further information about Guns to Gardens: Watch the UCC Thursdays for the Soul Video - Shared Learning from Gun Violence Ministries - <https://youtu.be/Nmklnzilc4k>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod. Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

A RESOLUTION TO URGE ALL RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES TO JOIN IN REPARATIONS TO FUND CHRISTIAN HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO UNDO A CENTURY OF EXTINCTION. AMERICANIZATION AND INDOCTRINATION POLICIES EXTINGUISHED THE ORIGINAL CHRISTIAN HAWAIIAN ALPHABET.

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the
Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches of the United Church of Christ

1 **SUMMARY**

2

3 This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ and its conferences to collaborate with
4 the Federal government, local organizations and protestant entities to fund the Association
5 of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches Christian Hawaiian language revitalization program
6 (adult education, preschool programs). In 1819 the Federal Government funded the
7 civilization act that funded boarding schools which initiated acts of cultural genocide on
8 Hawaiians and American Indians. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign
9 Missions missionaries assisted to translate and develop the first Christian Hawaiian
10 language Bible. The Kamehameha Schools was one of eleven boarding schools listed in the
11 May 2022 Department of Interior investigative report that implemented policies of cultural
12 genocide on Hawaiian children. The spoken Christian Hawaiian language has been extinct
13 for centuries. Two hundred years later the AHEC would like to undo the atrocities that
14 were committed by Kamehameha Schools and others by providing Christian Hawaiian
15 language luakini¹ education programs.

16

17 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

18 "In the beginning humans were created in the image of god and were called "good". Thus, all
19 humans were created equal. The call to justice by the prophets is God's commandment to
20 treat everyone justly by acting righteously.

21

22 God's moral law, enshrined in the Ten Commandments, is eternal and unchanging. Our bible
23 is built on it. These laws are God's stated will, the way he wants his kingdom and his
24 universe to operate. In order, for justice to prevail, human laws must mirror God's law.
25 Justice is to prescribe the right way, to do things in an appropriate way. Moses demonstrated
26 this concept when he said, "You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the
27 small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's." (Deuteronomy

28 1:17) Justice has to do with equity in judgment without regard for a person’s status. It is an
29 equitable application of God’s moral law to all people without partiality. (Numbers 15:16)
30 When we do not operate according to biblical standards, we have abandoned God’s moral
31 law, so every man does what is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

32

33 Jesus came to proclaim liberty and freedom to announce God’s justice being satisfied through
34 what he called, “the favorable year of the Lord”, Old Testament Year of Jubilee. It was when
35 God set society back in order. According to Leviticus 25:8-9, Israel could not have Jubilee
36 until the people first observed the Day of Atonement. They could not have true justice on the
37 human level until they got right with God on the vertical level. Social justice will not be
38 complete until the people in a society, even the Church, get right with God. It is bringing the
39 presence, precepts, and power of God to bear on society, pulling society back in an upright
40 position.”

41

42 **HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

43

44 The history of cultural genocide upon Hawaiian children through formal policies of
45 Americanization indoctrination programs began from the 1819 Civilization act according to
46 the Department of Interior Investigative Report of May 2022. “As the U.S. Senate has
47 recognized, funds from the 1819 Civilization Fund “were apportioned among those societies
48 and individuals—usually missionary organizations—that had been prominent in the effort to
49 ‘civilize’ the Indians.”² The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission
50 missionaries arrived in Hawaii in 1820. The sons and grandsons of these missionaries
51 implemented Americanization polices that enforced strict rules and corporal punishment to
52 extinguish all semblance of native Hawaiian identity in Hawaiian children. “The Federal
53 Indian boarding school system deployed systematic militarized and identity-alteration
54 methodologies to attempt to assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian
55 children through education, including but not limited to the following: (1) renaming Indian
56 children from Indian to English names; (2) cutting hair of Indian children; (3) discouraging or
57 preventing the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages,
58 religions, and cultural practices; and (4) organizing Indian and Native Hawaiian children into
59 units to perform military drills.”³ “Federal Indian boarding school rules were often enforced
60 through punishment, including corporal punishment such as solitary confinement; flogging;
61 withholding food; whipping; slapping; and cuffing. The Federal Indian boarding school
62 system at times made older Indian children punish younger Indian children.”⁴ Senior cadets at
63 Kamehameha Schools enforced corporal punishment on incoming Hawaiian students well
64 into the 1990’s. More importantly The first principal of Kamehameha Schools, Reverend
65 William Oleson, banned the Hawaiian language in Kamehameha classrooms and playing
66 fields.⁵ He also drafted and signed the Bayonet constitution in 1887 which led to White
67 Supremacist control of the Hawaiian Kingdom. On January 16, 1893, US ambassador
68 Stevens and the USS Boston marines invaded the Hawaiian Kingdom initiating a State of
69 War.⁶ In 1896, the all white ruling oligarchy Republic of Hawaii created Act 57 that banned
70 speaking Christian Hawaiian language at all public schools.⁷ These combined actions
71 eventually extinguished the spoken Christian Hawaiian language that Princess Pauahi learned
72 growing up as a Christian. The first alphabet of the Christian Hawaiian language printed in
73 the first book separated the Hawaiian alphabet into Hawaiian letters and “The following are
74 used in spelling foreign words:” Gg ge, Ff fe, Se si, Yy yi.⁸ The revitalization of Hawaiian
75 language that began in the 1980’s only recognized 13 letters in the Hawaiian alphabet. This
76 resolution supports the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches’ initiative to revitalize
77 the Christian Hawaiian language that Princess Pauahi learned.

78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
102
103
104
105
106
107
108
109
110
111
112
113
114
115
116
117
118
119
120
121
122
123
124
125
126
127

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS the US congress passed the 1819 Civilization Act⁹ which funded missionary organizations to civilize natives in Hawaii, America, Alaska and

WHEREAS in 1820 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived in the Sandwich Islands¹⁰, and

WHEREAS in 1823 Luakini Maunakea ma Kalapana was the first church built on the East side of Hawaii island¹¹, and

WHEREAS December 19, 1831, Princess Pauahi was born an heir of the Kamehameha family¹², and

WHEREAS the process to translate and print the first Hawaiian Bible titled “Palapala Hemolele” began in 1822 - 1839 and was published in two parts 1832 Buke I (Old Testament and 1839 Buke II (New Testament)¹³ and

WHEREAS the all white officers of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association board was created in 1854¹⁴, and

WHEREAS in 1863 Rufus Anderson Secretary of the ABCFM recommended to the all white board members to transfer control of the church in the Hawaiian Kingdom to Hawaiians which the churches officers did not do continuing their control today¹⁵, and

WHEREAS on October 16, 1884 Princess Pauahi passed leaving a legacy through her will to educate Hawaiian children in the Christian Hawaiian language¹⁶, and

WHEREAS on November 4, 1887 the founding ceremony blessed the opening of the Kamehameha schools for boys¹⁷, and

WHEREAS Reverend William Oleson the first principal for the Kamehameha Schools banned the Christian Hawaiian language from being spoken on the Kamehameha Schools campus¹⁸, and

WHEREAS in 1887 White church officers of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association and Reverend William Oleson forced King Kalakaua to sign a new constitution¹⁹, and

WHEREAS in 1893 White church officers of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association collaborated with U.S. minister Stevens to overthrow the Hawaiian Kingdom²⁰, and

WHEREAS in 1895 the Republic of Hawaii implemented Act 57 which banned Christian Hawaiian language from being spoken in public schools²¹, and

WHEREAS in 1906 the Department of Public Instruction implemented policies of Americanization in Public schools to Americanize all the children²², and

WHEREAS in 1916 the Congress passed the National Defense Act that funded the identity altering JROTC program at Kamehameha schools²³, and

128
129 **WHEREAS** all of these actions and more combined to extinguish the Christian Hawaiian
130 language of twenty-one letters from 1822²⁴, and

131
132 **WHEREAS** in the 1980's revitalization of Hawaiian language only thirteen letters were
133 recognized as being Hawaiian letters;

134
135 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
136 Church of Christ recognizes the first Christian Hawaiian language alphabet of twenty-one
137 letters which was created by Hawaiian Chiefs and ABCFM missionaries that was printed in
138 1822 as relevant and valuable and calls on all other settings of the United Church of Christ to
139 do the same; and

140
141 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
142 of Christ encourages all settings of the Church to increase awareness of the indoctrination
143 Americanization policies enforced in the Hawaiian Kingdom that led to extinguishing the
144 spoken Christian Hawaiian language as part of a larger project of cultural genocide; and

145
146 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
147 of Christ encourages all settings of the Church to support the Association of Hawaiian
148 Evangelical Churches' initiative to solicit funding from all settings of the church to revitalize
149 the Christian Hawaiian language through luakini²⁵ education programs from preschool
150 through adulthood.

151
152 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance
153 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

154
155 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate
156 ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the
157 implementing body.

¹ [https://wehewehe.org/gsd12.85/cgi-bin/hdict?a=q&r=1&hs=1&m=-1&o=-1&qto=4&e=p-11000-00--off-0hdict--00-1----0-10-0---0---0direct-10-ED--4--textpukuieibert%252ctextmamaka-----0-11--11-haw-Zz-1---Zz-1-home---00-3-1-00-0--4---0-0-11-00-0utfZz-8-](https://wehewehe.org/gsd12.85/cgi-bin/hdict?a=q&r=1&hs=1&m=-1&o=-1&qto=4&e=p-11000-00--off-0hdict--00-1----0-10-0---0---0direct-10-ED--4--textpukuieibert%252ctextmamaka-----0-11--11-haw-Zz-1---Zz-1-home---00-3-1-00-0--4---0-0-11-00-0utfZz-8-00&q=luakini&fqv=textpukuieibert%252ctextmamaka&af=1&fqf=ED#hero-bottom-banner)

² DOI Report page 7

https://drive.google.com/file/d/18ZMs7zIQF0hm3wsuSLX_igLJXAdyZ6ka/view

³ DOI Report page 7

https://drive.google.com/file/d/18ZMs7zIQF0hm3wsuSLX_igLJXAdyZ6ka/view

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/18ZMs7zIQF0hm3wsuSLX_igLJXAdyZ6ka/view

⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/18ZMs7zIQF0hm3wsuSLX_igLJXAdyZ6ka/view

⁶ https://drive.google.com/file/d/18ZMs7zIQF0hm3wsuSLX_igLJXAdyZ6ka/view

⁷ <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/HawaiianEducation/Pages/History-of-the-Hawaiian-Education-program.aspx#:~:text=After%20the%20overthrow%20of%20the,for%20the%20next%20four%20generations.>

⁸ <https://historichawaii.org/2022/08/25/the-first-printing-a-written-hawaiian-language/>

⁹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/18ZMs7zIQF0hm3wsuSLX_igLJXAdyZ6ka/view

¹⁰ <https://www.congregationallibrary.org/finding-aids/ABCFMOverview>

¹¹ [https://www.papakilodatabase.com/pdnupepa/?a=d&d=KLHA18750826-](https://www.papakilodatabase.com/pdnupepa/?a=d&d=KLHA18750826-01.2.12&srpos=1&anchor=sectionleveltabtranslationarea&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN%7ctxNU%7ctxTR%7ctxTI-%22Luakini+Maunakea%22-----#sectionleveltabtranslationarea)

[01.2.12&srpos=1&anchor=sectionleveltabtranslationarea&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN%7ctxNU%7ctxTR%7ctxTI-%22Luakini+Maunakea%22-----#sectionleveltabtranslationarea](https://www.papakilodatabase.com/pdnupepa/?a=d&d=KLHA18750826-01.2.12&srpos=1&anchor=sectionleveltabtranslationarea&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN%7ctxNU%7ctxTR%7ctxTI-%22Luakini+Maunakea%22-----#sectionleveltabtranslationarea)

-
- ¹²https://www.ksbe.edu/about_us/about_pauahi/#:~:text=Pauahi%20P%C4%81k%C4%AB%20was%20born%20on,under%20his%20rule%20in%201810
- ¹³ <https://historichawaii.org/2022/08/25/the-first-printing-a-written-hawaiian-language/>
- ¹⁴ <https://ahicchurch.weebly.com/>
- ¹⁵<https://hawaiiankingdom.org/blog/dr-ron-williams-second-of-four-part-series-united-church-of-christ-ho%ca%bbeu%ca%bbeu-hou-sons-of-the-mission-and-the-shaping-of-a-new-mission-1863-1888/>
- ¹⁶https://www.ksbe.edu/about_us/about_pauahi/#:~:text=Pauahi%20P%C4%81k%C4%AB%20was%20born%20on,under%20his%20rule%20in%201810.
- ¹⁷https://www.ksbe.edu/about_us/about_pauahi/#:~:text=Pauahi%20P%C4%81k%C4%AB%20was%20born%20on,under%20his%20rule%20in%201810
- ¹⁸<https://kaiwakiloumoku.ksbe.edu/article/essays-supression-of-hawaiian-culture-at-kamehameha-schools#:~:text=This%20was%20in%20the%20late,at%20Kaiwi'ula%20was%20relentless>.
- ¹⁹<https://hawaiiankingdom.org/blog/dr-ron-williams-third-of-four-part-series-united-church-of-christ-poe-karitiano-oiaio/>
- ²⁰<https://hawaiiankingdom.org/blog/dr-ron-williams-third-of-four-part-series-united-church-of-christ-poe-karitiano-oiaio/>
- ²¹https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2022/bills/HB2284_.HTM#:~:text=Act%2057%20declared%20an%20English,Session%20Laws%20of%20Hawaii%201986.
- ²² <https://hawaiiankingdom.org/blog/addressing-americanization-by-the-hawaiian-council-of-regency/>
- ²³ <https://blogs.ksbe.edu/archives/collections-2/r-o-t-c-j-r-o-t-c-and-military-training-collection/>
- ²⁴ <https://historichawaii.org/2022/08/25/the-first-printing-a-written-hawaiian-language/>
- ²⁵<https://wehewehe.org/gsd12.85/cgi-bin/hdict?a=q&r=1&hs=1&m=-1&o=-1&qto=4&e=p-11000-00--off-0hdict--00-1----0-10-0---0---0direct-10-ED-4--textpukuieibert%252ctextmamaka-----0-11--11-haw-Zz-1---Zz-1-home---00-3-1-00-0--4----0-0-11-00-0utfZz-8-00&q=luakini&fqv=textpukuieibert%252ctextmamaka&af=1&fqf=ED#hero-bottom-banner>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Director’s Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**Affirming Licensed and Commissioned Ministers
as Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ**

A Prudential Resolution

Submitted by the Hawai’i Conference, United Church of Christ

1 **SUMMARY**

2
3 This resolution seeks to affirm both Licensed Ministry and Commissioned Ministry as
4 Authorized Ministries of the United Church of Christ in accordance with the current Constitution
5 and Bylaws of the UCC¹ and to direct the Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization of
6 Local Church Ministries (a Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ) to amend the
7 *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 to
8 include recommended processes and procedures for authorizing these forms of ministry.
9

10 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL RATIONAL**

11
12 In the letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle writes: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the
13 same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of
14 activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the
15 manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... Now you are the body of Christ and
16 individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets,
17 third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of
18 leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all
19 work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But
20 strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.”²
21

22 Similarly, the Apostle writes to the church in Rome: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and
23 sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to
24 God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by
25 the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and
26 acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of
27 yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according
28 to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body, we have many members, and
29 not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and

30 individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace
31 given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the
32 exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in
33 cheerfulness.”³

34
35 Under the heading “Theology of Ministry and Ordination” in *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to*
36 *Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018, we read:

37
38 “the United Church of Christ believes that God calls every Christian to be a servant of
39 God, a minister, living and serving in Christ’s name. This call is celebrated
40 sacramentally in baptism as persons are claimed for Christ by the Holy Spirit and the
41 Church; all who are baptized spend the rest of their lives responding to God’s call and
42 claim. The particulars of each person’s call and ministry vary with time, place, talents,
43 experience, personal situation and responsibilities, and, importantly, the needs of the
44 world. Ministry is lived in every aspect of one’s life as God’s love is shown in word and
45 deed.

46
47 The particular ministry of reconciling all God’s children with one another, with creation,
48 and with God, was given to God’s people in scripture: ‘All this is from God, who
49 reconciled us...through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in
50 Christ God was reconciling the world to Godself, not counting their trespasses against
51 them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us’ (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). This
52 ministry is claimed daily by the United Church of Christ as it is called to love God,
53 neighbor, and self, and to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God
54 (Matthew 22:36-50 and Micah 6:8). Christians are members of the Body of Christ, the
55 Church, under the sole headship of Jesus Christ. This is a living body (1 Corinthians 12),
56 called, formed and sent into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. Loving and
57 serving God, the Church has multiple purposes:

- 58 • embodying and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to all;
- 59 • nurturing and empowering the gathered Church through worship and
60 sacraments, fellowship and mutual care, education and spiritual
61 formation;
- 62 • acting in the world through deeds of justice and loving kindness.”⁴

63
64 In defining ordination, the *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United*
65 *Church of Christ* © 2018 states:

66
67 “the Church acknowledges that its members have many diverse ministries in the world
68 and in the Church. It also recognizes a specific need for representative servant leaders
69 ‘to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ’
70 (Ephesians 4:12). The United Church of Christ, along with the Church Universal
71 through the ages and throughout the world, affirms God’s call to some individuals to be
72 such leaders who help the Church to be what God intends it to be. These persons are set
73 apart through prayer and the laying on of hands in the rite of ordination.

74
75 In ordination, the individual makes a lifetime commitment to God in Jesus Christ and to

76 the Church, relying on the Holy Spirit. As Ordained Ministers enter the apostolic
77 ministry, they continue the witness of Christ’s followers from New Testament times.
78 They receive authority from the Triune God to serve in Jesus’ name. Ordained Ministers
79 have particular responsibilities for the proclamation and practice of the Christian faith
80 and for the life of the Church itself.”⁵

81
82 God calls some to serve for a season in a particular ministry to address the needs of the church.
83 In those cases, the United Church of Christ has authorized individuals to serve as Licensed
84 Ministers and Commissioned Ministers without requiring ordination.⁶ Those faithful ministers
85 have often served small congregations and offered specialized ministry in various settings. Those
86 Licensed and Commissioned Ministers have shared their gifts and proclaimed the gospel through
87 faithful and loving service. Some have pursued ordination. Associations’ and Conferences’
88 Licensed and Commissioned Ministers have been authorized to serve for a ‘season’ as
89 Ecclesiastes states: ‘For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven’
90 (Ecclesiastes 31 NRSV). Affirming those ministries, gifts, and seasons with authorization is
91 consistent with the belief that all ministry flows from the gift of the Spirit in Baptism.”⁷

92
93 Based on the covenantal polity of the United Church of Christ, local Associations have
94 authorized Licensed Ministers and Commissioned Ministers. The Constitution and Bylaws of the
95 United Church of Christ have not been amended, and the Ministerial Excellence, Support and
96 Authorization Team of Local Church Ministries (a Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of
97 Christ) has set before the United Church of Christ the challenge of considering lay ministry as a
98 process leading to ordained ministry. *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in
99 the United Church of Christ* © 2018 includes no guidance or processes for those Associations
100 wanting to continue Licensed Ministry and Commissioned Ministry as they have been practiced.
101 Some Local Churches, Associations, and Conferences have found it necessary to affirm Licensed
102 and Commissioned Ministers as valued “authorized” ministers while calling for amending
103 *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 to
104 guide Associations in the process of authorizing Licensed and Commissioned Ministers. While
105 this *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018
106 is subtitled “A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ,” it does not
107 provide processes and procedures many Associations have relied on in previous editions of the
108 Manual on Ministry.

109
110 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

111
112 **WHEREAS** the Constitution (Article VI) and Bylaws (Preamble and Article I) of the United
113 Church of Christ recognize three forms of authorized ministers—licensed, commissioned, and
114 ordained,⁸

115
116 **AND WHEREAS** those forms of authorized ministry affirm the United Church of Christ’s belief
117 that all are called to minister,⁹

118
119 **AND WHEREAS** Local Churches, Associations, and Conferences have been faithfully served
120 by Licensed Ministers and Commissioned Ministers,

121

122 **AND WHEREAS** many have affirmed the importance of maintaining both Licensed Ministry
123 and Commissioned Ministry, as authorized ministries of the United Church of Christ,
124

125 **AND WHEREAS** the Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization Team of Local Church
126 Ministries (a Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ) endeavored to set before the
127 United Church of Christ a common understanding of ordination in the *Manual on Ministry: A*
128 *Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 and their common
129 understanding requires the affirmation of Associations and Conferences whose practices
130 regarding authorized ministry may differ in regards to licensed ministry and/or commission
131 ministry,
132

133 **AND WHEREAS** the Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization Team of Local Church
134 Ministries, A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ in *Manual on Ministry: A*
135 *Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 set forth an understanding
136 of ordination and provided a path to move through lay ministry to ordained ministry,
137

138 **AND WHEREAS** the *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United*
139 *Church of Christ* © 2018 does not include processes and procedures for either licensed ministers
140 or commissioned ministers to gain standing as authorized ministry,
141

142 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
143 Christ directs Local Church Ministries to amend *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing*
144 *Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 so that it provides recommended processes and
145 procedures for both licensed ministry and commission ministry as authorized ministries for those
146 Associations that want to maintain and support those forms of authorized ministry; and
147

148 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the United Church of Christ Board communicate this
149 action to all Conferences, Association, and Local Churches.
150

151 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance
152 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.
153

154 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
155 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ Constitution and Bylaws of the UCC. Available at: https://www.ucc.org/ucc_constitution_and_bylaws/

² 1 Corinthians 12:7-31, NRSV. Available at:
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+12%3A7-31&version=NRSVA>

³ Romans 12:1–8 NRSV. Available at:
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A1%E2%80%938&version=NRSVA>

⁴ “Theology of Ministry and Ordination” in *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018, pp. 7-8.

⁵ *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018, p. 8.

⁶ Constitution of the UC, Article VI. Available at: https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/UCC_Constitution.pdf
and Bylaws Preamble and Article I. Available at: https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/UCC_Bylaws.pdf

⁷ *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018, p. 7.

⁸ Constitution and Bylaws of the UCC. Available at: https://www.ucc.org/ucc_constitution_and_bylaws/

⁹ *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018, p 7.

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod. Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors’ Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

ENCOURAGING A PLANT-BASED LIFE

A RESOLUTION OF WITNESS

SUBMITTED BY

- Rev. Rachel Johannan Bahr (Michigan Conference)
- Abbie Goerg (Michigan Conference)
- Vicki Golobic (Rocky Mountain Conference)
- Vita Green (Michigan Conference)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Greenwood (Michigan Conference)
- Rev. Patty Higgins (Michigan Conference)
- Rev. Liz Larrivee (Michigan Conference)
- Angie Law (Rocky Mountain Conference)
- Rev. Sal Sapienza (Michigan Conference)
- Chris Sternberg (Southwest Conference)
- Rev. Lilly Tinker-Fortel (Michigan Conference)
- Rev. Danielle Veenstra (Michigan Conference)
- Rev. Karen Winkel (Rocky Mountain Conference)
- Lisa Young (Michigan Conference)

SUMMARY

Animal consumption damages the earth, fosters violence in families, exploits workers, poisons neighbors, diseases our bodies, misuses land and water. The effects of animal consumption are worse for People of Color and Communities of Color; the work to raise and process animals for consumption is exploitative of the labor of immigrants, people in poverty, and People of Color.

Yet our faith begs us to live in harmony, in covenant with the earth and one another.

This resolution asks the Church to take steps toward understanding, advocating, and in ways within its purview implementing, plant-based consumption.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

The United Church of Christ has stated its commitment to the earth and its animals, immigrants, laborers, people living in poverty, and all who eat from its tables. We are an anti-racist church, a labor- and immigrant-supporting church, an economic and environmental justice church. ^{1 2 3 4 5 6}

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17

18 In the creation stories of Genesis, we read that we are to exercise dominion— care for the well-
19 being of earth and animals. “*As the image of God, human beings should relate to the non-human*
20 *as God relates to them.... God as a giver provides vegetation to human beings and animals to*
21 *sustain their lives. (W)e discover that human beings were intended to be vegetarians.*”²⁷ Further,
22 we learn that God created animals as companions for the human and instructed them all to eat the
23 garden’s luscious vegetation. Eden was vegan.

24
25 Isaiah’s vision of the new creation implies a plant-based diet: cows and bears grazing, lions eat-
26 ing straw. The story of Ruth and others describes our call to care for laborers. Daniel’s response
27 to his undesirable assignment to the Court of Nebuchadnezzar was to forego meat in favor of
28 vegetables and water as an act of resistance, a dietary means of disrupting empire.

29
30 Jesus broke Sabbath laws to protect and care for animals, and taught regularly of economic jus-
31 tice.²⁸ And he said that we should treat others the way we want to be treated. Wrote one Black
32 pastor: “*While humankind may have been granted dominion over animals, I don’t believe we*
33 *were also given the right to be cruel, brutal, heartless.... Animals are part of creation, just as hu-*
34 *mans. Treating them so callously is symptomatic of a general disregard for anything our culture*
35 *defines as inferior and expendable.*”²⁹

36
37 Surely we face challenges which the biblical writers could not conceive. Minimally, we must
38 concede that the biblical writers could not have imagined our inhumane animal industry – the
39 Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and concomitant slaughterhouses.

40
41 Spiritually, theologically, biblically, the animal industry is a source of dis-ease. Faith requires in
42 all things we seek to build equitable community, to be repairers of the breach and restorers of
43 streets to live in. We are called to mend the world.

44 45 **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

46 Animal agriculture is related to racial, immigrant, environmental, labor and economic injustice,
47 and health care disparities. It has been called “a leading cause of everything,”³⁰ including pan-
48 demics: “*The majority of all human infectious diseases and pandemics have originated through*
49 *the cross-species transmission of microorganisms from animals to humans,*” including COVID-
50 19, HIV, SARS, ebola, swine flu, the 1918 flu, mad cow, hepatitis E.³¹

51
52 Large-scale animal agriculture has pushed the Earth beyond capacity. Use of land and water is
53 out of balance as we grow food for animals instead of people. We are draining wetlands, clearing
54 rainforests, pouring CO² and methane into the atmosphere. Growing animals in confined opera-
55 tions requires high doses of antibiotics, which make their way to land and waterways, contrib-
56 uting to strains of bacteria resistant to known antibiotics. “*Without meat and dairy consumption,*
57 *global farmland use could be reduced by more than 75% – an area equivalent to the U.S., China,*
58 *the European Union and Australia combined – and still feed the world.... Since livestock produc-*
59 *tion is the single largest contributor of emissions around the globe (more than planes, trains and*
60 *cars combined), removing it from our food system could allow the planet to regenerate.*”³²

61
62 Animal agriculture affects labor, immigrant, racism and economic justice, “People of color, im-

63 migrants, and people in relatively low-income families are disproportionately employed in meat-
64 packing plants,” and experience high rates of physical and psychological disorder and death.
65 Workers are exploited by the industry, “denied health care, exposed to hazardous chemicals, and
66 required to operate dangerous machinery.... commonly sustain severe injuries and suffer from
67 respiratory illnesses and infections by antibiotic-resistant bacteria.... Work at factory farms and
68 slaughterhouses often ... leads to domestic violence, social withdrawal, anxiety, drug and alco-
69 hol abuse, and PTSD.”^{33 34 35}

70

71 Animal consumption is linked to obesity, impotence, cancer and type-2 diabetes,³⁶ kidney and
72 heart disease, stroke, high cholesterol, digestive disorders, lower life expectancy.³⁷ Cancers af-
73 fecting women are more prevalent among non-vegans.³⁸ (The most-often named concern is lack
74 of B12 in a plant-based diet, but nutritionists assure this is exaggerated.³⁹) The disparate harm to
75 People of Color in all areas of health is well-documented. As many as 90 percent of People of
76 Color are lactose intolerant. Hence among new vegans, People of Color outpace white vegans,
77 and the NAACP is working to legislate plant-based diets in schools and prisons.⁴⁰

78

79 Further, CAFOs destroy communities, and are more likely to be located in poor communities and
80 Communities of Color. Animal waste causes harm to vulnerable populations by damaging air,
81 water and land: 2,500 dairy cows produce the same annual waste as a city the size of Tampa;
82 ⁴¹these operations lower life expectancy of people in neighboring communities.⁴²

83

84 Finally, farming animals is bad for animals: more than 70 billion slaughtered yearly, by barbaric
85 and inhumane methods^{43 44} raised in cages too small for natural movement, never touching dirt
86 or seeing daylight; inseminated against their will, forced to bear offspring they will not be al-
87 lowed to raise; fattened for maximum profit and slaughtered young. Chickens debeaked, piglets’
88 testicles and tails cut off without anesthesia by untrained laborers; male chicks ground up alive.
89 Days-old male calves sent to veal farms for slaughter. Cows pushed into reproduction as soon as
90 they are physically capable; when their bodies are worn out from yearly calving; they are sent to
91 slaughter.⁴⁵

92

93 Animal consumption is unnecessary, unhealthy, and unjust.

94

95 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

96

97 **WHEREAS** Jesus devoted his life to manifesting a world honoring all creation, tending to the
98 well-being of all creatures, and attuned to the life coursing through the earth itself; and

99

100 **WHEREAS** our most often and fondly quoted scriptures call us to be caring stewards of crea-
101 tion, but creation is dying on our watch; and

102

103 **WHEREAS** consumption of animals has been linked to almost every serious threat facing crea-
104 tion, including climate crisis, poor physical and mental health in people, environmental degrada-
105 tion, loss of biodiversity, food injustice, economic and labor injustice, the water crisis, colonial-
106 ism and resulting wars; and causes trauma and immense physical and psychological pain for sen-
107 tient beings bred in abominable conditions for exploitative purposes; and People of Color and
108 people living in poverty bear the brunt of animal agriculture's harmful effects on humans;^{46 47 48}

109 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 and

110

111 **WHEREAS** there is no function of animal agriculture that cannot be served by plant- or syn-
112 thetic-based replacements, including fortified plant-based milks and cereals;⁶⁵ and

113

114 **WHEREAS** animal-based products would not be affordable or widely available if not for gov-
115 ernment subsidies;⁶⁶ and

116

117 **WHEREAS** UCC General Minister and President John Dorhauer called the UCC in 2017 to the
118 mission emphasis of “The Three Great Loves” and invited every setting of the UCC to make a
119 commitment to “discover ways in which you can engage the members of your faith community
120 in mission that ... honors the call to be good stewards of God's creation;”⁶⁷ and

121

122 **WHEREAS** General Synods have passed dozens of resolutions decrying environmental degra-
123 dation, racism, worker exploitation, world hunger and our responsibility to feed the planet, and
124 has adopted measures related to global migration, noting that food and water are often at its root,
125 each time urging UCC members to adopt new behaviors to lessen the impact or reverse the
126 causes of economic, environmental, climate and immigration injustice; to become an anti-racist
127 church, a labor- and immigrant-supporting church, an economic and environmental justice
128 church,^{68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93}

129

130 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty Fourth General Synod of the United Church
131 of Christ

132

1. **endorses** movement toward a plant-based diet as a means of mending the world;

133

2. **requests** appropriate ministries provide resources and opportunities for education;

134

3. **encourages** congregations and affiliated ministries to begin to take steps toward reduction
135 in animal consumption;

136

4. **requests** the United Church Board to add November as World Vegan Month to the yearly
137 calendar of observances;

138

5. **encourages** that, in any meeting of the Church and its boards, bodies and committees,
139 meals and snacks provided are plant-based; and

140

6. **calls upon Congress, the White House and state legislators:** 1) to redirect farm subsi-
141 dies to plant-based agriculture; 2) provide resources to help animal farmers and ranchers
142 transition to plant crops and markets; and 3) ban factory farming of animals.

143

144 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance
145 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

146

147 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
148 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

149 NOTES

¹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/AFFIRMING-GOVERNMENT-S-ROLE-TO-PROTECT-THE-COMMON-GOOD.pdf>

² <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/accra-confession.pdf>

³ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/economic-justice.pdf>

-
- ⁴ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/ANOTHER-WORLD-IS-POSSIBLE.pdf>
- ⁵ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALLING-FOR-A-MORE-JUST-HUMANE-DIRECTION-FOR-ECONOMIC-GLOBALIZATION.pdf>
- ⁶ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALLING-THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-TO-BE-AN-ANTI-RACIST-CHURCH.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALLING-UPON-THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-TO-INITIATE-A-JUBILEE-FOR-JUSTICE-FOR-THE-RURAL-UNITED-STATES.pdf>
- ⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Christian-Faith-Economic-Life-and-Justice.pdf>
- ⁹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/climate-change-final.pdf>
- ¹⁰ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/A-FAITHFUL-RESPONSE-CALLING-FOR-A-MORE-JUST-HUMANE-DIRECTION-FOR-ECONOMIC-GLOBALIZATION-AND-PLAN-OF-ACTION.pdf>
- ¹¹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/The-Family-Farm-1985.pdf>
- ¹² <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/FOR-THE-COMMON-GOOD.pdf>
- ¹³ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/FOR-THE-COMMON-GOOD.pdf>
- ¹⁴ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Resolution-on-Mindful-and-Faithful-Eating.pdf>
- ¹⁵ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs29-2.pdf>
- ¹⁶ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Pron-on-Justice-and-Internat-Dev.pdf>
- ¹⁷ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/RACIAL-JUSTICE-Seeking-Liberation.pdf>
- ¹⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Racial-and-Economic-Justice-Statement-1975.pdf>
- ¹⁹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/REDISTRIBUTING-TAX-REBATES-TO-THE-POOR.pdf>
- ²⁰ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/tar-creek-superfund-final.pdf>
- ²¹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Report-and-Issue-Statement-on-World-Hunger.pdf>
- ²² <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Resolution-on-Mindful-and-Faithful-Eating.pdf>
- ²³ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs29-6.pdf>
- ²⁴ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/global-food-crisis.pdf>
- ²⁵ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/TO-EXPLORE-THE-IMPLICATIONS-OF-OUR-DIETARY-CHOICES.pdf>
- ²⁶ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-THIRTY-YEARS-OF-FAITHFUL-ACCOMPANIMENT-WITH-FARM-WORKERS.pdf>
- ²⁷ Fretheim, Terence. *New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 1, p 346.
- ²⁸ See especially: Obery Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted*. Doubleday, 2006, and Walter Brueggemann, *Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy*. Fortress Press, 2018.
- ²⁹ *Thinking and Eating at the Same Time*. Sistah Vegan: black female vegans speak on food, identity, health and society. A. Breeze Harper, ed. 2010.
- ³⁰ Michigan Journal of Environmental and Administrative Law. [t.ly/6zzg](https://www.mjela.org/2018/06/20/6zzg).
- ³¹ US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, [t.ly/1ALb](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/) and [t.ly/KF5U](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/).
- ³² [t.ly/Tc3U](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/)
- ³³ US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, [t.ly/1ALb](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/) and [t.ly/KF5U](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/).
- ³⁴ [t.ly/Z5FW](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/); [t.ly/nBNi](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/).
- ³⁵ [t.ly/sz8I](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/)
- ³⁶ [t.ly/u8LS](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/)
- ³⁷ animalaid.org.uk, citing various health and medical related sources.
- ³⁸ [t.ly/bw12](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/)
- ³⁹ [t.ly/PLvp](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/). See also [t.ly/Iptr](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/); [t.ly/q6a4](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/); [t.ly/3bVr](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30000000/).
- ⁴⁰ Resolutions ratified by the NAACP National Board of Directors at its October 2019 Board of Directors Meeting, p 55. [t.ly/vGqI](https://www.naacp.org/2019/10/24/naacp-national-board-of-directors-meeting-2019/).
- ⁴¹ See EPA report at [t.ly/_OzF](https://www.epa.gov/2019/10/24/naacp-national-board-of-directors-meeting-2019/)

⁴² Dr. H. Kim Lyerly, at t.ly/fJm6; See also t.ly/g2bI.

⁴³ t.ly/4AkH

⁴⁴ <https://www.fao.org/3/t0279e/T0279E04.htm>

⁴⁵ t.ly/rt83, t.ly/1CMK, t.ly/a4H2

⁴⁶ t.ly/Tc3U

⁴⁷ US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, t.ly/lALb and t.ly/KF5U.

⁴⁸ Center for Economic Policy and Research, t.ly/pUFE

⁴⁹ t.ly/sz8I

⁵⁰ t.ly/b22W

⁵¹ t.ly/u8LS

⁵² t.ly/bwl2

⁵³ t.ly/PLvp. See also t.ly/lptr; t.ly/q6a4; t.ly/3bVr.

⁵⁴ Resolutions ratified by the NAACP National Board of Directors at its October 2019 Board of Directors Meeting, p 55. t.ly/vGqI.

⁵⁵ Boston Children's Hospital. t.ly/ysP9

⁵⁶ Dr. H. Kim Lyerly, at t.ly/fJm6; See also t.ly/g2bI.

⁵⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7256495/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2015/11/changing-climate-changing-diets-pathways-lower-meat-consumption>

⁵⁹ <https://tenderly.medium.com/the-exploitation-of-factory-farms-doesnt-stop-at-animals-f40243c44a03>

⁶⁰ "Emissions of Greenhouse Gases in the United States." U.S. Energy Information Administration. March 31, 2011. Cited by cowspiracy.com/facts.

⁶¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/a0701e/a0701e04.pdf>

⁶² <https://www.fao.org/3/a0701e/a0701e05.pdf>

⁶³ <https://www.fao.org/3/a0701e/a0701e07.pdf>

⁶⁴ <https://mercyforanimals.org/blog/tyson-foods-averages-one-human-amputee-per/>

⁶⁵ t.ly/qdhm

⁶⁶ <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/removing-meat-subsidy-our-cognitive-dissonance-around-animal-agriculture#5>

⁶⁷ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/GS31-Minutes-Final.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/AFFIRMING-GOVERNMENT-S-ROLE-TO-PROTECT-THE-COMMON-GOOD.pdf>

⁶⁹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/accra-confession.pdf>

⁷⁰ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/economic-justice.pdf>

⁷¹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/ANOTHER-WORLD-IS-POSSIBLE.pdf>

⁷² <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALLING-FOR-A-MORE-JUST-HUMANE-DIRECTION-FOR-ECONOMIC-GLOBALIZATION.pdf>

⁷³ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALLING-THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-TO-BE-AN-ANTI-RACIST-CHURCH.pdf>

⁷⁴ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALLING-UPON-THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-TO-INITIATE-A-JUBILEE-FOR-JUSTICE-FOR-THE-RURAL-UNITED-STATES.pdf>

⁷⁵ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Christian-Faith-Economic-Life-and-Justice.pdf>

⁷⁶ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/climate-change-final.pdf>

⁷⁷ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/A-FAITHFUL-RESPONSE-CALLING-FOR-A-MORE-JUST-HUMANE-DIRECTION-FOR-ECONOMIC-GLOBALIZATION-AND-PLAN-OF-ACTION.pdf>

⁷⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/The-Family-Farm-1985.pdf>

⁷⁹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/FOR-THE-COMMON-GOOD.pdf>

⁸⁰ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/FOR-THE-COMMON-GOOD.pdf>

⁸¹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Resolution-on-Mindful-and-Faithful-Eating.pdf>

-
- ⁸² <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs29-2.pdf>
- ⁸³ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Pron-on-Justice-and-Internat-Dev.pdf>
- ⁸⁴ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/RACIAL-JUSTICE-Seeking-Liberation.pdf>
- ⁸⁵ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Racial-and-Economic-Justice-Statement-1975.pdf>
- ⁸⁶ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/REDISTRIBUTING-TAX-REBATES-TO-THE-POOR.pdf>
- ⁸⁷ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/tar-creek-superfund-final.pdf>
- ⁸⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Report-and-Issue-Statement-on-World-Hunger.pdf>
- ⁸⁹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Resolution-on-Mindful-and-Faithful-Eating.pdf>
- ⁹⁰ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs29-6.pdf>
- ⁹¹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/global-food-crisis.pdf>
- ⁹² <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/TO-EXPLORE-THE-IMPLICATIONS-OF-OUR-DIETARY-CHOICES.pdf>
- ⁹³ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-THIRTY-YEARS-OF-FAITHFUL-ACCOMPANIMENT-WITH-FARM-WORKERS.pdf>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Director's Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**Free from Plastic Pollution
Resolution of Witness**

Submitted by the Florida Conference

1 **SUMMARY**

2 Plastic pollution has become one of the most pressing environmental issues in the 21st century.
3 The increased production of disposable plastic products and the failure of manufacturers to
4 recycle plastic bottles and single use plastics is overwhelming the waste management and the
5 disposal of plastics into landfills or improper disposal. In developing nations with less efficient
6 waste disposal systems, they are disposed and are breaking down and polluting the environment.
7 Plastics pollution has escalated and have become ubiquitous in the soil, water, and the food
8 system. It impacts the health of human and more than human life. It is time that United Church
9 of Christ join environmental organizations, faith communities, and other concerned groups to
10 take action to reduce the plastic pandemic that impacts and threatens life and God's creation

11
12 **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE**

13 Two scriptures can be read together as a biblical tool kit to understand the plastic pandemic.
14 The first is Psalm 24:1, which declares, "The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world
15 and all who live in it." The Earth is Lord's, and the Earth is a sacred common good for all life.
16 The Psalm declares that the Earth remains a gift from the Creator to be shared with humanity and
17 the extended biotic community. Our biblical heritage claims that Spirit is present in and cares for
18 all creation and that the Earth's land and other goods are to be respected and used by all biokind.
19 The Earth is both a home, for it is a sacrament for responsible and respectful use.

20
21 The second scripture depicts the consequences that occur when God is sidelined from the notion
22 of the Earth belonging to the Lord. The Earth is desacralized; it becomes a possession and a
23 commodity.

24
25 The second scripture is Isaiah 24; 3-6, "The Earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly
26 despoiled ... The Earth dries, withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish
27 together with the Earth. The Earth lies polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed
28 laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the Earth,
29 and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore, the inhabitants of the Earth dwindled, and few
30 people are left."

31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75

The prophets in Hebrew scriptures envisioned a causal relation between the violation of Earth boundaries and the subsequent destructive consequences. In Jeremiah 4:23-26, the poet understands such consequences as a de-creation or unfolding of creation. Human sinfulness unravels the poetic Genesis account of creation (1:1-2:6)

Bill McKibben, environmentalist and co-founder of 350.org, describes this causal relation of transgression and consequence as “de-creation.”

We are engaged in the swift and systematic de-creation of the planet we were born into... we have even more rapidly destroyed its inventory of life...n our time, the morally transcendent question is whether we will stop the decreation before it goes further; whether we will take the difficult steps to preserve God’s creation as intact integral as for as is still possible.”¹

Political arrogance and corporate greed have precipitated a global plastics crisis with almost no regulation, and whose consequences have deeply impacted human and non-human animal health, and the environment. Plastics pollute the Earth and degrade into microplastics spreading into the atmosphere, land, and ocean on a massive scale.

ETHICAL RATIONALE

Eco-theologian Sallie McFague claims principles how humanity may live responsibly, sustainably, and justly with the household of the Earth. She gives their planetary household rules: 1) Take your share, 2) Clean up after yourself, 3) Keep the house in good repair for future occupants.² These rules form a critique of current destructive economies and rules for economies of life.

Our production of plastics violates all three principles. According to the United Nations Environmental Programme, “Around the world, one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased every minute, while 5 trillion single-use plastic bags are used worldwide every year. In total, half of all plastic produced is designed to be used only once — and then thrown away... Today, we produce 300 million tons of plastic waste each year. That is nearly the equivalent to the weight of the entire human population.”³

Plastics are made from harmful petrochemical ingredients that impact the health and well-being of biological life and planetary ecosystems. The durability of plastics means they resist degradation for hundreds of years. Plastics do breakdown into microplastics that enter our land and water ecosystems. Animals, birds, fish, and humans consume microplastics.⁴ Human and non-human life have digested large amounts of microplastics.⁵ The average person eats 70,000 microplastics each year which works out to about 100 bits of microplastics over the course of just one meal, according to a study published in Environmental Pollution. Consumed microplastics adversely threaten the health and well-being of humanity and non-human animal and fish life.

76 A report by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in partnership with the World Economics Forum
77 found that if plastic pollution continues at this rate, that the amount of plastic in the ocean will
78 contain more plastic than fish by 2050

79
80 Currently, only 9% of all plastic waste produced is recycled. About 12% is incinerated, while the
81 rest — 79% — has accumulated in landfills, dumps, the ecosystems, and oceans of the planet.

82
83 At the writing of this resolution some of the worst plastic bottle polluters, the American
84 Beverage Association has launched a new initiative, Every Bottle Back, a campaign of the
85 leading beverage companies, which they hope will lead to more recycling of plastic bottles to
86 reduce our plastic footprint.⁶ Every minute 1 million bottled plastic bottles are purchased
87 globally.⁷ Unfortunately, these beverage companies are putting the responsibility back on the
88 consumers. This campaign has not ⁸worked in the past.

89
90 Our rivers carry plastic waste from land to the seas and oceans, and they become major
91 distributors of plastic pollution. In the Middle of the Pacific Ocean, there is a floating island of
92 plastic waste, covering nearly 800,000 square miles. ⁹

93
94 In a Nairobi Report (March 2021), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and
95 environmental justice non-governmental organization, Azul¹⁰. The report calls for the
96 recognition of communities affected by plastic waste and their inclusion in local decision
97 making.¹¹ Plastic pollution disproportionately affects marginalized communities and
98 communities living in close proximity to plastic production and waste sites, constituting an
99 environmental injustice. It details cases of environmental injustice – from deforestation and
100 displacement of Indigenous Peoples to make way for oil extraction and the contamination of
101 potable water by fracking fluids and waste water in the US and Sudan, to health problems among
102 predominantly African American communities living near oil refineries in the US’s Gulf of
103 Mexico, and the occupational hazards of about two million waste pickers in India, among many
104 others.

105
106 “Environmental justice means educating those on the frontlines of plastic pollution about its
107 risks, including them in decisions about its production, use, and disposal, and ensuring their
108 access to a credible judicial system,” said UNEP Executive Director, Inger Andersen. The UCC
109 has a long history of environmental justice and concern for the inequities of poor peoples of
110 color harmed by petrochemical production facilities

111
112 Plastic waste threatens the livelihoods¹² of those who depend on marine resources for work. It
113 leads to health issues¹³ for people who consume seafood infested with toxic microplastics. Plastic
114 pollution has threatened us with biodiversity loss.

115
116 We have a plastic pandemic rapidly growing, polluting the environment and impacting life. It is
117 time to work against further proliferation.

118
119 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

120
121 **WHEREAS** the scriptures hold us responsible for the way we co-live and use God’s creation,

122
123
124
125
126
127
128
129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141
142
143
144
145
146
147
148
149
150
151
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
160
161
162
163
164
165
166
167

WHEREAS United Church of Christ General Synods have passed environmental resolutions The Earth is the Lord’s¹⁴ (2017), The Use of Plastic Foam¹⁵ (2019), and The Rights of Nature¹⁶ (2021).

WHEREAS the United Nations has called upon global faith communities to work against plastic pollution,¹⁷

WHEREAS plastic pollution is an environmental justice and concern of the UCC,¹⁸

WHEREAS current attempts, locally, nationally, and internationally to manage plastic pollution are woefully inadequate

WHEREAS environmental justice on plastics impacts disproportionately upon poor and vulnerable peoples of color and must be addressed from production to waste.¹⁹.

WHEREAS plastics are made from harmful petrochemicals that impact the health and well-being of biological life and planetary ecosystems; their production of toxic petrochemical harm disproportionately the poor living in close proximity.²⁰

WHEREAS plastics resist degrading for hundreds of years, and they break down into microplastic beads, and animals, birds, fish, and humans consume microplastics.²¹

WHEREAS local cleanups of plastic litter have limited impact, as there is no place for collected plastic.²²

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod speaks truth to the public square against plastic pollution of the planet

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all settings of the Church to determine the best pathway forward for strategies and actions to mitigate plastic pollution, using as examples the following.

Resources for congregational participation in addressing plastic pollution include:

- The Story of Plastics, (95 minute documentary)²³
- Sierra Club Solutions to Plastic Pandemic²⁴
- Plastic Toolkit of the ten towns of New Hampshire.²⁵
- Concrete suggestions from: National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF): Join the Fight for Reducing Plastic Pollution²⁶,
- To hold accountable the worst corporate polluters: Break Free Plastics: resources, articles, lists the worst corporate polluters and suggestions for actions.²⁷

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages the Conference Associations, Congregations, and other settings of the United Church of Christ to reduce the use of single-use plastics and packaging.

- 168 Actions for congregational participation in addressing plastic pollution include:
- 169 • Encouraging all settings of the Church to commit to change from the throwaway and
 - 170 disposable culture to reusable and compostable products.
 - 171 • Preaching on ecological sustainability principles articulated by Sallie McFague²⁸ on
 - 172 responsible use of ecological resources and the sustainable goal of mitigating single-use
 - 173 plastics.
 - 174 • Changing our consumptive practices: moving to recyclable or compostable solutions.
 - 175 Committing to reducing the use of plastics or looking for recyclable alternatives.²⁹
 - 176 • Preaching on ecological sustainability principles on responsible use of ecological
 - 177 resources and the sustainable goal of mitigating single-use plastics.
 - 178 • Educating on the importance of mitigation of single-use plastics and plastic straws as
 - 179 well as plastic bottles at our churches, their events, and gatherings. Replacing these with
 - 180 recyclable alternatives such as disposable and bio-degradable substitutes.
 - 181 • Educating our folks to the toxicity of microplastics to the health of our environment, to
 - 182 our own health, and the health of non-human life.
 - 183 • Advocating for solutions on plastics and support local and state bans or fees on single use
 - 184 plastics.
 - 185 • Advocating for solutions on plastics whether through mitigation efforts and campaigns to
 - 186 support local and state bans on all single use plastics.
 - 187 • Raising awareness of plastic pollution and the dangers to human, non-human life,
 - 188 ecosystems, and the planet.
 - 189 • Actively supporting H.R.2238 — 117th Congress (2021-2022), Free From Plastics
 - 190 Pollution Bills³⁰ in Congress³¹ and the Senate Bill S.984 — 117th Congress (2021-2022)
 - 191 Break Free Plastics Act, or similar bills.³²
 - 192 • Urging the support of the US for the UN Global Conference on “End Plastic Pollution,
 - 193 February 2022.”³³
 - 194 • Organizing a Zero Waste Event; Support Restaurants that choose to use reusable
 - 195 containers; support grocery stores that use reusable bags; lobby for ban in single-use
 - 196 plastics in your community.³⁴
 - 197 • Participating in public cleanup of river banks, parks, and beaches³⁵,
 - 198 • Installing fountains for water bottles in church campuses, wherever possible.

199

200 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all settings to

201 speak truth to the public square against plastic pollution of the planet.

202

203 **Funding:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution be made in accordance with

204 overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

205

206 **Implementation:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate miniseries or other

207 entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ Bill McKibben, “Climate Change and the Unraveling of Creation,,” The Christian Century, December 9, 8, 1999, 1196-97.

² Sallie McFague, A New Climate for Theology, God, the World, and Global Warming, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008, 53.

³ <https://www.unep.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/>

⁴ 7 Foods that Contain Microplastics and How to Avoid them,
<https://www.everythingbagsinc.com/blog/foods-containing-microplastics/>

⁵ Microplastics exposure can cause toxicity through oxidative stress, inflammatory lesions, and increased uptake or translocation. Several studies have demonstrated the potentiality of metabolic disturbances, neurotoxicity, and increased cancer. Plastic Health Summit 2021: One Health,
<https://www.plastichealthcoalition.org/>, Brian Quinn, “Effects of Microplastics on Human Health,”
[PowerPoint Presentation \(nwwac.org\)](#)

⁶ Every Bottle Back, <https://cedarspringswater.ca/blog/eco-friendly-alternatives-disposable-plastic-water-bottles/>

⁷ Drowning in Plastics, <https://graphics.reuters.com/ENVIRONMENT-PLASTIC/0100B275155/index.html#:~:text=Around%20the%20world%2C%20almost%201,bottles%20are%20purchased%20every%20minute.>

⁸ Azul <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/>

⁹ Reckoning with the US Role in the Global Ocean Plastic Waste, The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Health, Dember 2021.
file:///C:/Users/revdr/OneDrive/Desktop/Plastics/Ocean_Plastic_Waste_Highlights_2021%20(1).pdf

¹⁰ Azul <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/>

¹¹ <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/neglected-environmental-justice-impacts-marine-litter-and-plastic-pollution>

¹² <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9229en/ca9229en.pdf>
131313

¹⁴ https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/unitedchurchofchrist/pages/9126/attachments/original/1499204117/UCC_Synod_2017_Climate_Resolution_-_FINAL_as_passed.pdf?1499204117

¹⁵ [GS32-Minutes.pdf \(uccfiles.com\)](#) page 48

¹⁶ [Approved_UCCB-21-10-04-Minutes33rdGeneralSynod_10.15.2021w-App.pdf](#) page 42

¹⁷ UN Calls Upon Faith Communities to work against Plastic Pollution, Crux, February 22, 2022, [U.N. wants faith groups to help work against plastic pollution | Crux \(cruxnow.com\)](#)

¹⁸ Both the Florida UCC Conference and the New Hampshire UCC Conferences have passed resolutions at the 2022 Annual Gatherings.

¹⁹ Picking Up Litter: Pointless or Powerful Tool in he battle of plastic pollution? UN Environmental Programme, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/picking-litter-pointless-exercise-or-powerful-tool-battle-beat-plastic-Programme>

²⁰ ‘Do Plaastics Make Us Sick?’ “ Plastics Health Colaition, <https://www.plastichealthcoalition.org/>

²¹ The environmental impacts of plastics and micro-plastics use, waste and pollution: EU and national measures, Study Requestd by the PETI Committte, European Parliament,
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658279/IPOL_STU\(2020\)658279_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658279/IPOL_STU(2020)658279_EN.pdf)

²³ <https://www.storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-plastic-documentary-film/how-to-watch/>

²⁴ <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/zero-waste/story-of-plastic>

²⁵ <https://www.10towns.org/resources/plastic-pollution-book-list>

²⁶ <https://www.neefusa.org/nature/water/join-fight-reduce-plastic-pollution>

²⁷ <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/>

²⁸ Sallie McFague, A New Climate for Theology, God, the World, and Global Warming, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008

²⁹ See Yes Magazine The Solving of the Plastics Issue, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/solving-plastic> Also see eco-friendly alternatives, [Eco-Friendly Alternatives for Disposable Plastic Water Bottles | Cedar Springs Blog \(cedarspringswater.ca\)](#)

³¹ Listen <https://media-na.readspeaker.com/cache/231abadb0e1b135a4e0b13ae492f28c1/BillSummary-117-house-bill-2238.mp3>

³² [https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20\(03%2F25%2F2021\)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20forth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20(03%2F25%2F2021)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20forth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials).

³³ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112972>

³⁴ Organize a Zero Waste event in yYour Community, Gren Peace, <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaign/toolkit-plastic-free-future/organise-a-zero-waste-event/>

³⁵ See Green Peace, <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaign/toolkit-plastic-free-future/>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Director's Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**Free from Plastic Pollution
Resolution of Witness**

Submitted by the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ.

1 **SUMMARY**

2 ¹Plastic pollution has become one of the most pressing environmental issues in the 21st century.
3 The increased production of disposable plastic products and the failure of manufacturers to
4 recycle plastic bottles and single use plastics is overwhelming the waste management and the
5 disposal of plastics into landfills or improper disposal. In developing nations with less efficient
6 waste disposal systems, they are disposed and are breaking down and polluting the environment.
7 Plastics pollution has escalated and have become ubiquitous in the soil, water, and the food
8 system. It impacts the health of human and more than human life. It is time that United Church
9 of Christ join environmental organizations, faith communities, and other concerned groups to
10 take action to reduce the plastic pandemic that impacts and threatens life and God's creation

11
12 **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE**

13
14 Two scriptures can be read together as a biblical tool kit to understand the plastic pandemic.

15
16 The first is Psalm 24:1, which declares, "The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world
17 and all who live in it." It states that the Earth is the Lord's, and the Earth is a sacred common
18 good for all life. The Earth remains a gift from the Creator to be shared in common by humanity
19 and the extended biotic community. Our biblical heritage claims that the Spirit is present in and
20 cares for all creation and that the Earth's land and other goods are to be respected and used by all
21 biokind.

22
23 The second scripture depicts the consequences that ensue when God is sidelined from the notion
24 that the Earth belongs to the Lord. The Earth is desacralized; it becomes a possession and a
25 commodity. Isaiah 24; 3-6, "The Earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled ... The
26 Earth dries, withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the
27 Earth. The Earth lies polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed laws, violated the
28 statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the Earth, and its
29 inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore, the inhabitants of the Earth dwindled, and few people
30 are left."
31

32 The prophets in Hebrew scriptures envisioned a causal relation between the violation of Earth
33 boundaries and the subsequent destructive consequences. In Jeremiah 4:23-26, the poet
34 understands such consequences as a de-creation or unfolding of creation.

35
36 Bill McKibben, environmentalist and co-founder of 350.org, describes this causal relation of
37 transgression and consequence as “de-creation.”

38
39 We are engaged in the swift and systematic de-creation of the planet we were born into...
40 we have even more rapidly destroyed its inventory of life...In our time, the morally
41 transcendent question is whether we will stop the de-creation before it goes further;
42 whether we will take the difficult steps to preserve God’s creation intact as far as is still
43 possible.”²

44
45 Political arrogance and corporate greed have precipitated a global plastics crisis with almost no
46 regulation, and whose consequences have deeply impacted human and non-human health as well
47 as the environment. Plastics pollute the Earth and degrade into microplastics, spreading into the
48 atmosphere, land and ocean on a massive scale.

49 50 **ETHICAL RATIONALE**

51
52 Eco-theologian Sallie McFague tells how humanity may live responsibly, sustainably, and justly
53 with the household of the Earth. She gives these planetary household rules: 1) Take your share,
54 2) Clean up after yourself, 3) Keep the house in good repair for future occupants.³

55
56 Our production of plastics violates all three principles. According to the United Nations
57 Environmental Program, “Around the world, one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased
58 every minute, while 5 trillion single-use plastic bags are used worldwide every year. In total, half
59 of all plastic produced is designed to be used only once — and then thrown away.... Today, we
60 produce 300 million tons of plastic waste each year. That is nearly the equivalent to the weight of
61 the entire human population.”⁴

62
63 Plastics are made from harmful petrochemical ingredients that impact the health and well-being
64 of biological life and planetary ecosystems. The durability of plastics means they resist
65 degradation for hundreds of years. Plastics eventually break down into microplastics that enter
66 our land and water ecosystems. They are consumed by animals, birds and fish, and they in turn
67 are consumed by humans.⁵ Human and non-human life have digested large amounts of
68 microplastics.⁶

69
70 Currently, only 9% of all plastic waste is recycled. About 12% is incinerated, while the rest —
71 79% — accumulates in landfills, dumps, oceans and the ecosystems of the planet. The American
72 Beverage Association has launched a new initiative called “Every Bottle Back”, a campaign of
73 the leading beverage companies which they hope will lead to more recycling of plastic bottles to
74 reduce our plastic footprint.⁷ Every minute 1 million bottled plastic bottles are purchased
75 globally but only a small number are recycled.⁸ Unfortunately, these beverage companies are
76 putting the responsibility back on the consumers. This campaign has not worked in the past.

77

78 Our rivers carry plastic waste from land to the seas and oceans, and they become major
79 distributors of plastic pollution. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean there is a floating island of
80 plastic waste, covering nearly 800,000 square miles.⁹ It is estimated that by 2050 there will be
81 more plastic than fish in the oceans.

82
83 We have a plastic pandemic which is rapidly growing, polluting the environment and impacting
84 life. It is time to work against further proliferation.

85

86 **TEST OF THE RESOLUTION**

87 **WHEREAS** the scriptures hold us responsible for the way we co-live and use God’s creation,
88 the Earth, and

89

90 **WHEREAS** United Church of Christ General Synods have passed environmental resolutions
91 The Earth is the Lord’s¹⁰ (2017), The Use of Plastic Foam¹¹ (2019), and The Rights of Nature¹²
92 (2021), and

93

94 **WHEREAS** the United Nations has called upon global faith communities to work against plastic
95 pollution,¹³ and

96

97 **WHEREAS** local cleanups of plastic litter have limited impact and recycling is not effective for
98 most plastic items,¹⁴

99

100 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
101 Church of Christ is called to speak truth to power against plastic de-creation and pollution, even
102 when it is inconvenient or difficult, and

103

104 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all
105 settings of the United Church of Christ to reduce the use of single-use plastics and packaging
106 within their churches and church-related gatherings,

107

108 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages our all
109 settings to commit to changing from a disposable culture to a reusable, sustainable one,

110

111 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages education
112 within our congregations and in our communities to advocate for alternatives to single use
113 plastics, whether through mitigation efforts and campaigns or by supporting local and state bans
114 on single use plastics,

115

116 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod acknowledges that
117 accommodations in expectations need to be made for certain impacted groups such as those who
118 are disabled or unhoused.

119

120 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod supports the “Break
121 Free From Plastic Pollution Act” in Congress (H.R.2238 in the House and S.984 in the Senate¹⁵),

122

123 Funding: The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with
124 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

125
126 Implementation: The officers of the church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other
127 entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ This resolution was inspired the United Methodist Conference “Plastic And Foam Free Florida Resolution” 2019.

² Bill McKibben, “Climate Change and the Unraveling of Creation,” The Christian Century, December 9, 8, 1999, 1196-97.

³ Sallie McFague, A New Climate fir Theology, God, the World, and Global Warming, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008, 53.

⁴ <https://www.unep.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/>

⁵ 7 Foods that Contain Microplastics and How to Avoid them,

<https://www.everythingbagsinc.com/blog/foods-containing-microplastics/>

⁶ Microplastics exposure can cause toxicity through oxidative stress, inflammatory lesions, and increased uptake or translocation. Several studies have demonstrated the potentiality of metabolic disturbances, neurotoxicity, and increased cancer. Plastic Health Summit 2021: One Health,

<https://www.plastichealthcoalition.org/>, Brian Quinn, “Effects of Microplastics on Human Health, “
[PowerPoint Presentation \(nwwac.org\)](#)

⁷ Every Bottle Back, <https://cedarspringswater.ca/blog/eco-friendly-alternatives-disposable-plastic-water-bottles/>

⁸ Drowning in Plastics, <https://graphics.reuters.com/ENVIRONMENT-PLASTIC/0100B275155/index.html#:~:text=Around%20the%20world%2C%20almost%201,bottles%20are%20purchased%20every%20minute.>

⁹ Reckoning with the US Role in the Global Ocean Plastic Waste, The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Health, Dember 2021.

[file:///C:/Users/revdr/OneDrive/Desktop/Plastics/Ocean_Plastic_Waste_Highlights_2021%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/revdr/OneDrive/Desktop/Plastics/Ocean_Plastic_Waste_Highlights_2021%20(1).pdf)

¹⁰ https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/unitedchurchofchrist/pages/9126/attachments/original/1499204117/UCC_Synod_2017_Climate_Resolution_-_FINAL_as_passed.pdf?1499204117

¹¹ GS32-Minutes.pdf (uccfiles.com) page 48

¹² Approved_UCCB-21-10-04-Minutes33rdGeneralSynod_10.15.2021w-App.pdf page 42

¹³ UN Calls Upon Faith Communities to work against Plastic Pollution, Crux, February 22, 2022, [U.N. wants faith groups to help work against plastic pollution | Crux \(cruxnow.com\)](https://www.cruxnow.com/un-calls-upon-faith-communities-to-work-against-plastic-pollution/)

¹⁴ “More Recycling Won’t Solve the Plastics Pollution,” Scientific American, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/more-recycling-wont-solve-plastic-pollution/>

¹⁵ [https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20\(03%2F25%2F2021\)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20fo rth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20(03%2F25%2F2021)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20fo rth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials.)

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS, ACADEMIC FREEDOM, AND EQUITY EFFORTS IN SCHOOLS

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the United Church of Christ in New Brighton, Minnesota, along with the following additional congregations: Mayflower United Church of Christ (Minneapolis, MN), Robbinsdale-Parkway United Church of Christ (Robbinsdale, MN), First Congregational United Church of Christ, Alexandria,, MN) First Congregational United Church of Christ, Anoka, MN), First Congregational Church of Minnesota United Church of Christ (Minneapolis, MN), St. Paul's United Church of Christ (St. Paul, MN), St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ (St. Paul, MN), and Living Table United Church of Christ (Minneapolis, MN)

1 **SUMMARY**

2
3 This resolution is intended to voice support of public-school educators, academic freedom, and
4 equity efforts in schools at a time when public education is threatened through attempts to
5 control curriculum, ban books and media, and restrict strategies to ensure the advancement of
6 equity.^{i, ii, iii, iv} The intent of this resolution is to raise awareness and provide members of the
7 United Church of Christ with information that can be used for the development of talking points
8 about these issues.

9
10 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

11
12 The roots of liberal education's emphasis on academic freedom and integrity are in the
13 Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries when reason and critical thinking were championed
14 over dogma and intolerance. It was during this time when education began to be viewed as a
15 means of liberating the mind and empowering citizens with knowledge. Indeed, the separation of
16 church and state has its origins in the Enlightenment. Yet the necessity of keeping the affairs of
17 the state separate from the influence of the church does not go against Biblical teachings.
18 Scripture itself understands faithful following of Adonai to be grounded in reason as well as
19 tradition. The central confession of Judaism that Jesus deemed the greatest commandment tells
20 us to love God with all our mind as well as all our heart, strength, and being (Deuteronomy 6:4-
21 5; Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 22:36-40; Luke 10:27). In ancient Israelite understanding, the heart
22 was the locus of thought and will. Further, in the Wisdom tradition, an entire stream of teaching
23 is derived, not from revelation or tradition, but from learned observation. Wisdom theology has

24 frequently been the basis for including scientific, sociological, and philosophical studies in
25 ethical reflection. Certainly, the Bible does not support challenges to reason, such as the
26 tendency to pit religious truth against scientific investigation – as in the condemnation of Galileo
27 or the creation vs. evolution debates. Proverbs, which promotes the idea that there is a divinely
28 created order that humans are to discern, also reflects a tremendous respect for sages/teachers.
29 The Spirit moves in surprising ways, demonstrating that God’s truth is to be found outside
30 established religious channels as well as within them.

31
32 If we are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our
33 neighbor as ourself (Leviticus 19:18), then we must ensure that our education system supports
34 and lifts up every child. To love with all one’s mind and strength surely involves rigorous,
35 critical study – the opposite of banning books and media or proscribing curriculum. Moreover,
36 loving neighbor as self is incompatible with censorship and curricular control in two ways. First,
37 and most importantly, the topics that are forbidden most often deal with the experiences of
38 neighbors who have racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, or gender identities that differ from those
39 seeking the bans. Excluding the experience of any of our neighbors is the opposite of loving
40 them. And lest we think of “neighbor” in too narrow a sense, Jesus has given us the story of the
41 Samaritan to show us who is our neighbor. Samaritans were despised by Jews in much the same
42 way Black or LGBTQ+ people are despised by many of those who seek to control curriculum,
43 prohibit the teaching of critical race theory, or urge “don’t say ‘gay’” laws. Secondly, but
44 relatedly, we are able to love our wildly diverse, culturally differing neighbors only when we
45 know something about them, and that requires reading and studying from a broad range of
46 sources. Moreover, as the Joint Public Education Task Force of the American Missionary
47 Association and the Commission for Racial Justice noted in 2001, Jesus asks us to welcome
48 children, honor them, and not place stumbling blocks before them (Mark 9:37, 42).^v An
49 education system that makes students feel unwelcome, discriminates against them for who they
50 are, or limits their access to knowledge about their own history and culture is systematically
51 placing stumbling blocks in the way of God’s children.

52
53 Within the United Church of Christ, commitment to and support for public schools has a long
54 history. Indeed, our Puritan forebears passed laws requiring communities to establish schools and
55 to teach reading and writing; such laws formed the basis of the American public school system.^{vi}
56 ^{vii} In recent years, the church has repeatedly affirmed the importance of policies that support all
57 children, as well as affirming the importance of public schools and equity efforts therein. In
58 1987, the Sixteenth General Synod called upon the United Church of Christ “to intensify its
59 long-standing commitment to economic and social justice through support of specific policies
60 which help, empower, and sustain all children, particularly those children most in need.”^{viii} In
61 1991, the Eighteenth General Synod supported equalized funding for schools and a quality
62 education for every child, declaring that “Christians are required to transform the institutions of
63 our society so that they provide what rightly belongs to all people and no longer deny access for
64 some”; the synod called upon the United Church of Christ “to work with secular and ecumenical
65 agencies to protect and strengthen public education as a bulwark of democracy and as a way into
66 full participation in our society for all children.”^{ix} Finally, General Synod Twenty-Three in 2001
67 called upon the United Church of Christ to support and advocate for public schools, declaring
68 such advocacy “one of the foremost civil rights issues in the twenty-first century.”^x

69

70 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

71
72 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ was founded by denominations with education as a
73 central aspect of our identities and has always been a firm advocate for education, with the
74 Church having had a hand in the founding of many colleges and universities, including Harvard,
75 Oberlin, Carleton, Doane, and others, as well as many Historically Black Colleges and
76 Universities, which grew from the hundreds of schools founded by the American Missionary
77 Association after the Civil War;^{xi} and

78
79 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has been committed to being an Open and Affirming,
80 Anti-Racist, Environmental Justice, Just Peace denomination;^{xii} and

81
82 **WHEREAS** we in the United Church of Christ believe there is “ever more truth and light to be
83 brought forward” from our scriptures, as well as from our world and our people;^{xiii, xiv} and

84
85 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has claimed to be a thinking church as well as a feeling
86 and believing church;^{xv} and

87
88 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has demonstrated its commitment to learning about the
89 sins and legacies of slavery, segregation, Jim Crow laws, immigration quotas, internment camps,
90 boarding schools, anti-miscegenation laws, sodomy laws, discriminatory housing policies,
91 discriminatory healthcare policies, and other practices that have contributed to ongoing
92 disparities of resources and opportunities for oppressed peoples, without fearing the discomfort
93 that can accompany such learning;^{xvi, xvii, xviii} and

94
95 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has demonstrated its commitment to addressing the
96 sins of violence and oppression experienced by women, LGBTQ+ people, people with
97 disabilities, people of religious minorities, immigrants, refugees, Native American/Indigenous
98 people, Black people, Latinx people, Asian people, and all others who have suffered oppression
99 in this country;^{xix, xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii} and

100
101 **WHEREAS** students benefit greatly from the study of literature and art that addresses the full
102 range of being human;^{xxiv} and

103
104 **WHEREAS** proposals to ban discussions of sexual orientation and gender identity in schools
105 send a profoundly negative message of non-acceptance to students whose romantic attraction
106 does not conform to heteronormative assumptions, and to students who may be experiencing
107 gender dysphoria or who have already realized that their real gender does not match that which
108 was assigned at birth and by socialization;^{xxv}

109
110 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
111 Church of Christ declares that it is vital for every person, of every race, skin color, culture,
112 religion, language status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, income, or family background to be
113 given an opportunity to learn about who they are and where they came from; and that students
114 are better equipped to reach their full potential as critical thinkers in school environments that

115 continually strive for equity in all aspects of schooling, from academics and curriculum to extra-
116 curricular activities and school culture;^{xxvi}

117
118 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
119 Christ affirms support of our public education systems and public-school educators, as well as
120 academic freedom, and the right of educators to make decisions that are in the best interest of
121 ALL students, consistent with research and best practice;

122
123 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
124 Church of Christ declares that on-going thoughtful evaluation of teaching methodology and
125 content is a necessary part of strengthening our public schools, but harassment of teachers,
126 administrators, and school board members is harmful to them, to the schools and educational
127 systems they represent, and, most especially, to the students they serve.

128
129 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
130 Christ stands against efforts to inflame the public with hateful rhetoric against educators; censor
131 what is taught in public school classrooms; censor books and media in school libraries; deny the
132 histories of oppression experienced by marginalized groups; deny racism, sexism, heterosexism,
133 xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of prejudice, bias, and hate; and impose burdensome
134 disclosure mandates related to classroom lessons, assignments, and activities;

135
136 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
137 Christ encourages all settings of the Church as well as lay members to use this resolution for the
138 development of talking points for presentation in public arenas where such matters are being
139 dealt with, including state legislatures, local school boards, parent-teacher associations,
140 ministerial associations, community groups, and the like.

141
142 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance
143 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

144
145 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
146 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

ⁱ PEN America (2022). *Educational Gag Orders: Legislative Restrictions on the Freedom to Read, Learn, and Teach*: https://dataspace.princeton.edu/bitstream/88435/dsp01f4752k89d/1/PEN_EducationalGagOrders_01-18-22-compressed.pdf

ⁱⁱ Borter, G., Ax, J. & Tanfani, J. (2022). Reuters Investigates: *School Boards Get Death Threats Amid Rage Over Race, Gender, Mask Policies*: <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-education-threats/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Meckler, L. (2022). The Washington Post: *Across the Country, Educational Equity Was in Vogue. Then it Wasn't*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/06/08/school-board-equity-critical-race-theory/>

^{iv} Education Minnesota, Minnesota Administrators for Special Education, Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Association of School Business Officials, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, Minnesota School Boards Association. (2021, September 13). *Public school leaders pledge to support and expand education equity programs intended to make schools more safe, welcoming and effective for all students* [Press Release]: <https://mnmsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/EquityJointStatement-9-13-2021.pdf>

-
- ^v United Church of Christ (2001). *Separate and Unequal: Final Report of the Joint Public Education Task Force of the American Missionary Association and the Commission for Racial Justice*: http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/5785/Separate-and-Unequal.pdf?1418430074
- ^{vi} Ibid.
- ^{vii} Carleton, D. (2009). *Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647*. The First Amendment Encyclopedia: <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1032/old-deluder-satan-act-of-1647>
- ^{viii} United Church of Christ: *Resolution For the Common Good*, GS 25: http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/1572/Resolution-for-the-Common-Good.pdf?1418425054
- ^{ix} Ibid.
- ^x Ibid.
- ^{xi} United Church of Christ: *History*: <https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/history/>
- ^{xii} United Church of Christ: *We are People of Extravagant Welcome*: https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/general-synod/general-synod-resolutions-regarding-environmental-justice/vitality/vitality_boost-your-vitality/vitality_what-matters/vitality_what-matters_we-are-people-of-extravagant/
- ^{xiii} United Church of Christ: *We Listen for a Still-speaking God*: https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/general-synod/general-synod-resolutions-regarding-environmental-justice/vitality/vitality_boost-your-vitality/vitality_what-matters/vitality_what-matters_we-listen-for-a/
- ^{xiv} United Church of Christ in New Brighton: *Our Values and Beliefs*: <https://uccnb.org/who-we-are/our-values-and-beliefs>
- ^{xv} United Church of Christ: *Not Mutually Exclusive*: https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/general-synod/general-synod-resolutions-regarding-environmental-justice/not-mutually-exclusive_index/
- ^{xvi} United Church of Christ: *White Privilege: Let's Talk – A Resource for Transformational Dialogue*: <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>
- ^{xvii} United Church of Christ: *Sacred Conversations to End Racism*: <https://www.ucc.org/sacred-conversations-to-end-racism/>
- ^{xviii} United Church of Christ: *Our Whole Lives*: <https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/health-and-wholeness-advocacy-ministries/our-whole-lives/>
- ^{xix} United Church of Christ: *A Summary of General Synod Actions 1957-1999*: <https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/summary-of-gs-actions-1957-1999.pdf>
- ^{xx} United Church of Christ: *United Church of Christ Called to be an Anti-Racist Church, Adopted 2003 General Synod Multiracial/Multicultural Addendum to 1993 Pronouncement and Proposal for Action*: https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/faithful-action-ministries/racial-justice/justice_racism_anti-racist-church/
- ^{xxi} United Church of Christ: *Social Policy Statements on LGBT Concerns*: https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/health-and-wholeness-advocacy-ministries/lgbtq-ministries/lgbt_statements/
- ^{xxii} United Church of Christ: *Doctrine of Discovery*: https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/faithful-action-ministries/racial-justice/justice_racism_doctrine-of-discovery/
- ^{xxiii} United Church of Christ: *General Synod Resolution Calls the church to More Disability Justice*: https://www.ucc.org/general_synod_resolution_calls_the_church_to_more_disability_justice/
- ^{xxiv} Gay, G. (2003). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *The Importance of Multicultural Education*: <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-importance-of-multicultural-education>
- ^{xxv} Parris, D., Fulks, E. & Kelley, C. (2021). Child Trends: *Anti-LGBTQ Policy Proposals Can Harm Youth Mental Health*: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/anti-lgbtq-policy-proposals-can-harm-youth-mental-health>
- ^{xxvi} Bloomberg, L.D. (2022). Teachers College Press Blog. *Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy: Empowering Responsive and Reflective Educators*: <https://www.tcpress.com/blog/culturally-inclusive-pedagogy-empowering-responsive-reflective-educators>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Director’s Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

A Resolution to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the Indiana-Kentucky Conference and the Central Atlantic Conference

1 **SUMMARY**

2
3 This Resolution calls on the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ to
4 publicly proclaim its support of the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for
5 African Americans Act, or like-legislation that establishes a body to study and design
6 Reparations proposals for African Americans. This Resolution also urges partnership between
7 UCC settings where appropriate to organize education, discussion, and direct-action
8 opportunities to further a ministry of Reparatory Justice and Reparations.
9

10 **BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

11
12 Reparations are central in the Bible to correct wrongdoing, including themes of compensation,
13 restitution, and *teshuvah*, or “return.”
14

15 The Jewish notion of return is not merely an attitude of confession or admission, but *teshuvah*
16 calls on the perpetrator of a wrong to make sincere corrections in behavior to seek forgiveness.
17 This theme of return and restitution is a theme throughout the Bible.
18

19 The narrative of the Hebrew people enslaved in Egypt and liberated by a just God working
20 through God’s called liberators, Moses and his brother Aaron, is a foundational story that the
21 Hebrew people recognize in their most holy rituals and customs, including Passover and the
22 weekly sacred time of sabbath. The liberated people are promised not only freedom from
23 enslavement but also the promise of a land to call their own. Beyond the promise of a future
24 homeland, **Exodus 12:35-36** reports that the Hebrew people were granted material items (gold,
25 silver, and clothing) by their former Egyptian enslavers after God showed favor toward the
26 Hebrew people in the eyes of the Egyptians.
27

28 Continuing the story of liberation and return, **Exodus 21-22** expands God’s way of justice and
29 makes clear the laws of restitution for wrongdoing and articulates the rules for treatment and
30 liberation of an enslaved person. We may disagree in the modern context with these behavior

31 codes toward enslaved persons, but the principle of full restitution is clear. In related instruction,
32 **Deuteronomy 15:12-15** furthers these commands with the rule to “Provide for [the former
33 enslaved person] liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress, thus
34 giving to [them] some of the bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you”
35 (NRSVUE).

36
37 **Leviticus 5** describes the compensation that must be made for wrongdoing in the form of
38 offering and atonement through sacrifice. **Ezekiel 33:15–16** demands that a perpetrator of wrong
39 must return what they have taken, and **Ezra 6:1-12** places the demands of return in context of
40 King Cyrus’s reversal of the Babylonian diaspora and demands: “Moreover, let the gold and
41 silver vessels of the house of God that Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and
42 brought to Babylon be restored and brought back to the temple in Jerusalem” (**Ezra 6:5**
43 NRSVUE).

44
45 **Leviticus 25** describes the sabbatical year, occurring every seven years and the Jubilee year,
46 occurring in the 50th year, after each 7 times 7 years, when debts are forgiven, and land is
47 returned to its ancestral owner. This edict is mentioned in the Christian scriptures, appearing in
48 **Luke 4:19**, “the year of the Lord’s favor.”

49
50 **Luke 19:8** continues the Hebrew tradition of restitution and return through the story of
51 Zacchaeus who reports, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I
52 have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (NRSVUE).

53
54 We take these expressions of sacrifice, compensation, restitution, and return to serve as a
55 Biblical foundation for the principle of Reparations.

56 57 **THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING**

58
59 In each instance of repair demonstrated in the section, Biblical Grounding, freedom from
60 enslavement is not adequate to achieve God’s call to restitution and repair. Meaningful
61 compensation and genuine change of behavior are required to satisfy God’s call to justice.

62
63 The ministry of the one we follow, Jesus the Christ, speaking in the tradition of the prophets of
64 Israel that was his tradition, called his followers to a project of political transformation against
65 empire and toward restorative justice, including the forgiveness of debts and equitable
66 distribution of resources, as it was in the prayer he taught his followers, “On Earth as it is in
67 Heaven.”

68
69 We find the call to reparations to be inextricably linked to our theology of a just God and God’s
70 son, Jesus the Christ, who offers the world a coming of God’s realm where, to paraphrase Paul,
71 all things may become new (**2 Corinthians 5:17**), but this new creation is only available through
72 reconciliation. We must reconcile ourselves to each other before we reconcile ourselves to God.

73 74 **HISTORICAL ROOTS AND CURRENT ENGAGEMENT**

75

76 The institution of slavery is internationally recognized as a crime for which there is no statute of
77 limitations (Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court July 1, 2002),¹ and the
78 enslavement of Africans fueled the prosperity of our young nation, allowing its economy to reap
79 the benefits of unpaid labor of untold value.² Together, these realities call us toward the work of
80 restitution, reparatory justice, and reparations.

81
82 We submit that reparations is a process to remember, repair, restore, make amends for wrongs,
83 reconcile, and can never be singularly reducible to monetary terms; is an historical reckoning
84 involving acknowledgment that an offense against humanity was committed and the victims have
85 not received justice. This Resolution and its support of the Commission to Study and Develop
86 Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act is intended to urge study of this vitally
87 important issue, and accordingly, will refine the definition of reparations and propose solutions.

88
89 Resisting racism, supporting truth telling and reconciliation, and advancing racial justice shares a
90 long history of examination and call to action in the United Church of Christ. The UCC affirms
91 in its bylaws (Section 261) that the Church in all its expressions is encouraged to speak
92 prophetically on matters of justice, power, and public policy; to confront expressions of injustice
93 and alienation in the Church and in society.³

94
95 An early statement of support for advancing racial justice from the United Church of Christ was
96 issued in 1991 in the form of a Pastoral Letter, *Pastoral Letter on Racism and the Role of the*
97 *Church*. Reporting on this letter, the *Washington Post* noted, “The statement on racism is the
98 third pastoral issued in 30 years by the United Church of Christ.”⁴ That letter stated, “We
99 emphatically reject the notion that racism, particularly in the form of institutionalized
100 discrimination, is a problem that no longer requires our utmost attention.”⁵

101
102 One decade following the 1991 Pastoral Letter, at the 23rd General Synod of the United Church
103 of Christ (2001), the Church meaningfully engaged in a ministry of Reparatory Justice and
104 Reparations, signaled by the adoption of the Resolution, “A Call for Study on Reparations for
105 Slavery.”⁶ An outcome of this work was presented at the 24th General Synod of the United
106 Church of Christ (2003), including the study and discussion guide, “*Reparations: A Process for*
107 *Repairing the Breach*.”⁷

108
109 Yet despite this resource, little wider church engagement was achieved. Again, in 2008, in
110 support of Sacred Conversations to End Racism, the UCC Collegium issued *The Pastoral Letter*
111 *on Racism* that articulated “the challenges and opportunities of a Sacred Conversation at this
112 time in our nation’s history and the life of our church.”⁸ This letter affirmed, “As members of the
113 United Church of Christ, we have a rich history of spirited resistance to racism that can serve as
114 both a resource and an inspiration for this sacred work.”⁹

115
116 Meanwhile on the national stage, the late Rep. Conyers Jr. (D MI-13) introduced to the 115th
117 Congress of the United States (2017-2018), the *Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for*
118 *African Americans Act*, a bill to study and create proposals for Reparations that incorporated the
119 latest legal and societal discussions concerning the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and focused on
120 reparations remedies.¹⁰

121

122 In the wake of Rep. Conyers passing, Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (D TX-18) introduced
123 into the first session of the 117th Congress (2021-2022), the *Commission to Study Reparation*
124 *Proposals for African Americans Act*.¹¹ The stated purpose of this Act is to address the
125 fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the United States and the
126 13 American colonies between 1619 and 1865, and to establish a commission to study and
127 consider a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery, its
128 subsequent *de jure* and *de facto* racial and economic discrimination against African Americans,
129 and the lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society, to make
130 recommendations to the Congress of the United States on appropriate remedies, and for other
131 purposes.¹²

132
133 The UCC expressed its support for this Act. In April 2021, an article prepared by the United
134 Church of Christ supported the Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African
135 Americans Act, “UCC Leaders Laud Historic Legislation on Reparations, Heading to House
136 Vote.”¹³

137
138 In Spring 2022, the Reparatory Justice and Reparations ministry of the United Church of Christ
139 launched a new interactive educational web-based platform with resources, with webinars and
140 toolkits for the ongoing work leading to strategies with recommendations implementing a long-
141 term reparations plan within the United Church of Christ.¹⁴

142
143 The current United Church of Christ National Setting campaign, *Join the Movement*, reports,
144 “The Christian church began as a movement towards a just world through the teachings of Jesus.
145 As followers of Jesus, we believe it is our mandate to work for and seek justice, love, and
146 compassion, as we join with and become our own Spirit-led movements toward racial justice.”¹⁵

147
148 This is a *Kairos* moment in the life of the Church, and we urge the wider church to join the
149 movement toward Reparatory Justice and Reparations.

150
151 Considering its genesis with the 1991 *Pastoral Letter*, the third Letter of its kind after the
152 forming of the UCC, then to the 23rd and 24th General Synods, where first a Reparations
153 Resolution was adopted and a Reparations study guide presented, respectively (2001; 2003); the
154 further call for truth and reconciliation through a *Pastoral Letter* in support of Sacred
155 Conversations (2008); support of the *Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals*
156 *for African Americans Act* (2021); and most recently, the Join the Movement Capital Campaign
157 (2022), we are persuaded of the urgency of this moment to join the work of generations in the
158 long struggle of racial justice, including Reparatory Justice and Reparations. In joining this
159 struggle, we align ourselves with the language, direction, and call of the United Church of Christ
160 on this issue for more than three decades.

161
162 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

163
164 WHEREAS the institution of slavery is internationally recognized as a crime for which there is
165 no statute of limitations.¹⁶

166

167 WHEREAS the enslavement of Africans fueled the prosperity of our young nation, allowing its
168 economy to reap the benefits of unpaid labor of untold value.¹⁷

169
170 WHEREAS the ministry of the One we follow, Jesus, speaking in the tradition of the prophets of
171 Israel that was his tradition, called his followers to a project of political transformation to a God-
172 centered society, including forgiveness of debts and equitable distribution of resources.

173
174 WHEREAS we fervently strive to enact the prayer Jesus taught his followers, “On Earth as it is
175 in Heaven.”

176
177 WHEREAS the United Church of Christ affirms in its bylaws (Justice and Witness Ministries
178 section 268) that the Church in all its expressions is encouraged to speak prophetically on
179 matters of justice, power, and public policy; to confront expressions of injustice and alienation in
180 the Church and in society.

181
182 WHEREAS in 1991, the United Church of Christ issued the *Pastoral Letter on Racism and the*
183 *Role of the Church*¹⁸ that called the Church to advance issues of racial justice.

184
185 WHEREAS at the 23rd General Synod of the United Church of Christ (2001), the Synod adopted
186 the Resolution, “A Call for Study on Reparations for Slavery.”¹⁹

187
188 WHEREAS at the 24th General Synod of the United Church of Christ (2003), Executive
189 Minister Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson presented the study and discussion guide, *Reparations: A*
190 *Process for Repairing the Breach*.²⁰

191
192 WHEREAS in 2008, the UCC Collegium issued *The Pastoral Letter on Racism* that articulated
193 “the challenges and opportunities of a Sacred Conversation at this time in our nation’s history
194 and the life of our church.”²¹

195
196 WHEREAS the late Rep. Conyers Jr. (D MI-13) introduced to the 115th Congress of the United
197 States (2017-2018), the Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act.²²

198
199 WHEREAS in the wake of Rep. Conyers passing, Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (D TX-18)
200 introduced into the first session of the 117th Congress (2021-2022), the Commission to Study
201 Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act²³.

202
203 WHEREAS in April 2021, United Church of Christ leaders supported the Commission to Study
204 Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, publishing, “UCC Leaders Laud Historic
205 Legislation on Reparations, Heading to House Vote²⁴.”

206
207 WHEREAS in 2022, the United Church of Christ launched the *Join the Movement*²⁵ campaign that
208 stated, in part, “As followers of Jesus, we believe it is our mandate to work for and seek justice,
209 love, and compassion, as we join with and become our own Spirit-led movements toward racial
210 justice.”

211

212 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
213 Christ publicly proclaims its support of the *Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for*
214 *African Americans Act* and like-legislation that mirrors Section 3 of the Commission to Study
215 Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act “Establishment and Duties” (a) Establishment:
216 There is established the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African
217 Americans.

218
219 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
220 Christ encourages all settings of the United Church of Christ to study the *Commission to Study*
221 *Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act* and like legislation that mirrors Section 3 of the
222 *Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act* “Establishment and
223 Duties (a) Establishment: There is established the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation
224 Proposals for African Americans”.

225
226 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
227 Christ requests that the United Church of Christ Board support ongoing commitments to further a
228 ministry of Reparatory Justice and Reparations.

229
230 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
231 Christ requests that the United Church of Christ Board form a Reparations Legislative Task
232 Force, with partnership of the United Church of Christ Washington DC Office and the
233 Reparatory Justice and Reparations Ministry of the United Church of Christ National setting,
234 including an open call to all settings of the UCC for participation, to monitor and communicate
235 legislative actions for A Call for the Study of Reparations for African Americans Act and to
236 design and develop an advocacy toolkit made available for all settings of the UCC to ask
237 members of Congress to take-up the Act for floor debate and ultimately to pass the Call for the
238 Study of Reparations for African Americans Act.

239 240 **FUNDING**

241 The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the
242 overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

243 244 **IMPLEMENTATION**

245 The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within
246 the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>

² <https://naacp.org/resources/reparations-unpaid-labor-rendered-enslaved-persons-african-descent-0>

³ http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/1093/Bylaws.pdf?1418424538

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1991/01/12/church-of-christ-urges-action-against-racism/fdd1e153-3a74-44ba-9e24-f67db81aa66f/>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALL-FOR-STUDY-ON-REPARATIONS-FOR-SLAVERY.pdf>

⁷

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/552a993ce4b0c842cdb585ad/t/627d92037f6d991914a0528a/1652396549042/Reparations+A+Process+for+Repairing+the+Breach.pdf>

⁸ https://www.ucc.org/sacred-conversation_sacred-conversation-resources/

-
- ⁹ http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/388/Pastoral-Letter-on-Racism-NEW-small.pdf?1418423752
- ¹⁰ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/40>
- ¹¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40/titles>
- ¹² <https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/hr40/BILLS-117hr40ih.pdf>
- ¹³ <https://www.ucc.org/ucc-leaders-laud-historic-legislation-on-reparations-heading-to-house-vote/>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.ucc.org/repairing-the-breach/>
- ¹⁵ <https://jointhemovementucc.org/>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>
- ¹⁷ <https://naacp.org/resources/reparations-unpaid-labor-rendered-enslaved-persons-african-descent-0>
- ¹⁸ http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/388/Pastoral-Letter-on-Racism-NEW-small.pdf?1418423752
- ¹⁹ <http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALL-FOR-STUDY-ON-REPARATIONS-FOR-SLAVERY.pdf>
- ²⁰ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/552a993ce4b0c842cdb585ad/t/627d92037f6d991914a0528a/1652396549042/Reparations+A+Process+for+Repairing+the+Breach.pdf>
- ²¹ http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/388/Pastoral-Letter-on-Racism-NEW-small.pdf?1418423752
- ²² <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/40>
- ²³ [https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20House%20\(01%2F04%2F2021\)&text=This%20bill%20establishes%20the%20Commission,present%20and%20recommend%20appropriate%20remedies.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20House%20(01%2F04%2F2021)&text=This%20bill%20establishes%20the%20Commission,present%20and%20recommend%20appropriate%20remedies.)
- ²⁴ <https://www.ucc.org/ucc-leaders-laud-historic-legislation-on-reparations-heading-to-house-vote/>
- ²⁵ <https://jointhemovementucc.org/>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod. Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING PROLONGED SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
AS A FORM OF TORTURE**

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by **Rev. David Lindsey**, Central Atlantic Conference; with the concurrence of synod delegates: **Amanda Middleton**, Central Atlantic Conference; **Rev. Tricia Sheffield**, Central Atlantic Conference; **Rev. Patti Hoyt**, Penn NE Conference; **Jeannie Hobson**, Northern California Nevada Conference; **Karen E. Routt**, Northern California Nevada Conference; **Cathy Gauthier**, Northern California Nevada Conference; **Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey**, Florida Conference; **Rev. Brad S. Lutz**, Florida Conference; **Rev. Michael Ford**, Florida Conference; **Rev. Kelli Parrish Lucas**, Rocky Mountain Conference; **Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola**, Maine Conference; **Rev. Alexis Fuller-Wright**, Maine Conference; **Rev. Dakota Roberts**, Indiana-Kentucky Conference; **Rev. Emma Loane**, Indiana-Kentucky Conference; **Belinda Lentz**, Heartland Conference; **Rev. Dr. Kathryn L. Helleman**, Heartland Conference.

1 **SUMMARY**
2

3 This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to condemn prolonged solitary
4 confinement as a form of torture. The resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to: 1)
5 demand that governments globally end any use of prolonged solitary confinement in their
6 prisons, jails, and detention centers, whether publicly run or contracted with private
7 companies; and 2) raise our voices with human rights groups, survivors of the torture of
8 prolonged isolation, and their loved ones, to replace the practice with humane, rehabilitative
9 alternatives rooted in community and racial justice.
10

11 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**
12

13 Recalling the words of Jesus that when we visit those in prison, we are visiting him (Matthew
14 25:36), and the call to "Remember those in prison, as though you were in prison with them;
15 those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured" (Hebrews 13:3),
16 those enduring the torture of prolonged solitary confinement in carceral settings globally must
17 be remembered as members of the body of Christ.
18

19 In addition, the United Church of Christ has affirmed previously that in the outset of the
20 creation stories, God declared that all that was made was good. Included in the goodness of

21 creation was the creation of persons in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The *Imago Dei* is
22 present across many traditions which note that the equality of humankind rests on the
23 theological premise that all people reflect the Divine. The sin of torture and denial of
24 community those in prolonged solitary confinement endure are antithetical to the *Imago Dei*.

25 26 **HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

27
28 The U.S. incarcerates proportionately more of its people than any other nation globally as a
29 result of mandatory sentencing, lack of mental health treatment, systemic economic injustice,
30 and racial and religious profiling, among other factors. Two out of every five people
31 incarcerated in prisons and jails in the U.S. have a diagnosed mental illness.¹ Recent studies
32 show that people of color are over-represented in solitary confinement compared to the prison
33 population in general and they receive longer terms in solitary confinement than white people
34 for the same disciplinary infractions.² Further, racially discriminatory statutes have
35 dramatically increased the number of immigrants in federal detention.

36
37 At any given time, there are more than 75,000 people in solitary confinement in prisons in the
38 United States alone, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.³ Even more people are held
39 in isolation in U.S. immigration detention centers and juvenile facilities. Solitary confinement
40 causes immense suffering and devastating mental, physical, and emotional harm. In the United
41 States, in federal custody, as in state and local jurisdictions across the country, solitary
42 confinement is disproportionately⁴ imposed on Black people, Latinx people, Native people,
43 and other people of color, as well as transgender and gender non-conforming people, people
44 with mental health needs, and young people.

45
46 In isolated confinement, people are typically held for 22 to 24 hours a day in small cells the
47 size of a parking space, alone or with another person, with a toilet, sink, and no natural light.
48 Many are confined in these conditions for months, years, and even decades. This practice
49 remains largely unregulated in the United States despite significant documentation of its
50 harms.⁵ Research consistently demonstrates that the psychological effects, particularly among
51 the most vulnerable including youth, the elderly, pregnant women, LGBTIQ people, and
52 people with mental illness, are devastating. Even those who enter solitary confinement without
53 pre-existing mental illness experience hallucinations, psychological deterioration, and have
54 increased rates of self-mutilation and suicide.⁶

55
56 The impacts of incarceration and isolated confinement extend far beyond the individuals
57 subjected to such conditions. For impoverished people and families in the U.S., the impact of
58 the incarceration of a loved one is particularly devastating. Solitary confinement further
59 exacerbates poverty in the families and communities of the estimated 500,000 people who are
60 released from U.S. prisons and jails each year (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics).

61
62 In addition to barriers to employment and public assistance, very little is done to prepare those
63 who have been in solitary confinement to transition back to families and employment and to
64 repair the devastation of prolonged isolation to the mind, body, and spirit. Denied access to
65 supportive services while incarcerated due to the isolation of solitary confinement, these
66 people often leave prison with little more than a list of mental health facilities. Jobless and

67 with little support to address the trauma and torture they have endured, many return to prison.

68
69 A group of leading criminologists coordinated by the American Academy of Arts and
70 Sciences, as well as other scholars, have documented a prison to poverty pipeline linked to the
71 widespread use of prisons and jails in the U.S. According to the Pew Charitable Trust, a
72 formerly incarcerated person’s earning potential is reduced by forty percent.⁷ The family
73 impact of contact with the U.S. prison system is one of the largest contributors to poverty,
74 hunger, and success for children of those who are incarcerated.

75

76 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

77

78 **WHEREAS** the Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted a
79 “Pronouncement on Human Rights” that denounced torture of any kind and affirmed that the
80 “relationship of God to creation gives all human beings their in-alienable human right.” And
81 further stated that “rights must be not only declared and codified, but also must be cared for,
82 nurtured and embodied in covenant relationships between persons, groups, nations and between
83 human beings and nature”⁸, and

84

85 **WHEREAS** solitary confinement is defined by the United Nations in its Standard Minimum
86 Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, as revised in 2015, also known as “The Nelson Mandela
87 Rules,” as the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human
88 contact, in excess of 15 days)⁹, and

89

90 **WHEREAS** long-term isolation has been shown to offer no rehabilitative benefit, but its
91 destructive psychological effects are well-documented,¹⁰ amounting to torture under
92 international law¹¹, and

93

94 **WHEREAS** solitary confinement as a form of torture violates the U.N. Convention Against
95 Torture,¹² the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,¹³ and the
96 U.N. International Convention on Civil and Political Rights¹⁴, and

97

98 **WHEREAS** the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ called for the
99 dismantling of discriminatory systems of mass incarceration in the United States, a system that
100 has resulted in the proliferation of prolonged solitary confinement nationwide, making the U.S.
101 a global outlier in its use of incarceration and the systematic torture of prolonged solitary
102 confinement¹⁵, and

103

104 **WHEREAS** the carceral system in the U.S. is built on racism¹⁶ and cannot be reformed, we
105 seek ways to reduce harm to those currently incarcerated as we work toward alternatives to
106 incarceration.

107

108 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
109 Church of Christ recognizes prolonged solitary confinement as a form of torture.

110

111 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
112 of Christ condemns the use of prolonged solitary confinement by the United States and any

113 government in the world, including national, state, local, and military jurisdictions,
114 immigration detention centers, and private prisons and calls on our government to explore and
115 implement alternatives to isolated confinement.

116

117 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
118 of Christ calls on all members of the United Church of Christ to demand that their government
119 ends any use of prolonged solitary confinement in prisons, jails, and detention centers, whether
120 publicly run or contracted with private companies.

121

122 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that as Christians we are called to amplify the voices of the
123 oppressed, including the voices and leadership of the formerly incarcerated who return to
124 society with an intimate knowledge of prison policies and offer first-hand knowledge of the
125 harm caused by prolonged solitary confinement.

126

127 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
128 Church of Christ invites all settings to work with other faiths and human rights groups,
129 including the National Religious Campaign Against Torture¹⁷, among others, to condemn
130 the torture of prolonged solitary confinement and work towards its abolition in the United
131 States and around the world.

132

133 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in
134 accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

135

136 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
137 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ <https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Improving-Health/Mental-Health-Treatment-While-Incarcerated>

² <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/race-solitary-confinement/509456/>

³ <https://solitarywatch.org/2022/06/16/long-awaited-prison-census-shows-more-than-75000-people-in-solitary-confinement/>

⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/archives/dag/file/815551/download>

⁵ https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1362&context=law_journal_law_policy

⁶ <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/12-6-19HaneyTestimony.pdf>

⁷ https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2010/collateralcosts1.pdf.pdf

⁸ <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/THE%20%20PRONOUNCEMENT-ON-HUMAN-RIGHTS-GS12.pdf>

⁹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/443/41/PDF/N1544341.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁰ https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1362&context=law_journal_law_policy

¹¹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/443/41/PDF/N1544341.pdf?OpenElement>

¹² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/443/41/PDF/N1544341.pdf?OpenElement>

¹³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

¹⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

¹⁵ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/GS30-DISMANTLING-DISCRIMINATORY-SYSTEMS-OF-MASS-INCARCERATION.pdf>

¹⁶ https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2022/10/07-14-2022_CERD-Shadow-Report-Draft_with-endnotes.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.nrcat.org/>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod. Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**ACTIVELY AFFIRMING THE HUMAN DIGNITY
OF TRANSGENDER AND NONBINARY PERSONS**

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the Florida Conference and Southeast Conference ¹

1 **SUMMARY**

2

3 For several decades, political and theological conversations related to LGBTQ+ issues have
4 centered around same-sex relationships for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Even as those
5 conversations have led to significant gains for human and civil rights for LGBTQ+ people, the
6 volume of faith resources dedicated to LGBTQ+ advocacy often have excluded reflection on the
7 unique considerations related to gender identity. Some people have suggested that taking the
8 Bible seriously requires people of faith to stand in opposition to the existence, health, and
9 humanity of transgender and non-binary people. Consequently, gender-expansive people of all
10 demographics and Christian traditions have been made to feel that they must choose between
11 their faith and living a whole, healthy, and authentic life.

12

13 The United Church of Christ has staked its claim to be a diverse community of believers and
14 belief. It is our diversity that creates our strength. This diversity calls us to a radical welcome
15 and to widen the table of welcome to our transgender and non-binary siblings.

16

17 Transgender and non-binary people already are actively preaching, teaching, leading, pastoring,
18 and offering their time, talent, treasure, and a variety of gifts for ministry and service in the
19 United Church of Christ. The question is not if a person can be transgender, or non-binary, and
20 Christian, but how might we as a Christian denomination advocate for and empower those whom
21 God is already working through to enrich the whole life of the body of Christ.

22

23 **PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS**

24

25 This resolution builds on the (only) two previous resolutions of witness that support people from
26 the transgender and non-binary communities: 2003's resolution "Affirming the Participation and
27 Ministry of Transgender People within the United Church of Christ and Supporting their Civil
28 and Human Rights" and 2011's resolution "Supporting International Human Rights Related to
29 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity." The sharp rise in legislative assaults on the dignity and

30 human rights of people who are transgender and non-binary in our country right now calls for an
31 additional and even stronger response from those who affirm the dignity and rights of people
32 from transgender and non-binary communities.²
33

34

35 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL RATIONALE**

36

37 Foundational to our Christian faith is the belief that human beings are created in God’s image
38 (Genesis 1:26) and, thus, are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). At our baptisms,
39 God claims us in love and tells us God is well-pleased with us (Mark 1:11). All other tenets of
40 our faith grow out of a commitment to acknowledging and affirming the dignity of every human
41 being.

42

43 Our Scriptures specifically affirm the dignity of people who are gender nonconforming,
44 sometimes referred to as “eunuchs.” In Isaiah, God gives to eunuchs who are faithful to God’s
45 covenant the profound gift of a name, never to be cut off (Is. 56:4-5). In the New Testament,
46 Philip is sent by God to teach and baptize an Ethiopian eunuch. Now, someone who had been
47 denied entrance to the Temple has received complete acceptance (Acts 8:26-40).

48

49 Finally, Paul’s words to the Galatians that in Christ there is no longer male or female
50 demonstrates that God’s love and acceptance transcends human constructs of gender (Galatians
51 3:28).

52

53 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

54

55 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has staked its claim to be an open and affirming
56 denomination³ and has worked hard to maintain a radical welcome to the LGBTQ+ community
57 in many of our churches⁴; and

58

59 **WHEREAS** the human dignity and human rights of transgender and non-binary people are
60 being threatened in at least 30 states through legislation that denies access to life-saving health
61 care, participation in sports, and utilization of gender appropriate bathrooms⁵; and

62

63 **WHEREAS** gender dysphoria is a serious medical condition that, if left untreated, can result in
64 severe anxiety and depression, self-harm, and suicidality⁶; and

65

66 **WHEREAS** when appropriately treated, gender dysphoria is easily managed by following
67 appropriate treatment protocols to affirm their gender identity and alleviate distress⁷; and

68

69 **WHEREAS** compassionate parents and medical teams are, in some states, being legally
70 punished for offering, providing, and extending life-saving healthcare to trans and nonbinary
71 youth and adults⁸; and

72

73 **WHEREAS** decisions about gender-affirming medical care must be made between a provider,
74 patient, and the patient’s parents or guardians⁹; and

75

76 **WHEREAS** trans and nonbinary youth and adults face a higher rate of death by suicide than
77 their peers and are more vulnerable to violence and death, specifically and disproportionately
78 transgender women of color¹⁰; and
79

80 **WHEREAS** a Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) survey shows that more
81 than 80% of “gender expansive” students have been harassed and a third feel unsafe in
82 classrooms¹¹; and
83

84 **WHEREAS** research shows that it can be extremely harmful for a transgender person to be
85 excluded from a sports team consistent with their gender identity;¹² and
86

87 **WHEREAS** in a country where transgender people have no federal protections while they face
88 massive discrimination and attacks, civil rights must be spelled out and protected¹³; and
89

90 **WHEREAS** public discourse perpetuating the myth of the gender binary causes great harm
91 when used as the rationale for discrimination and punitive legislation;¹⁴ and
92

93 **WHEREAS** efforts of allies sometimes fail to provide the support intended for our transgender
94 and non-binary siblings, including UCC Open and Affirming congregations¹⁵;
95

96 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
97 of Christ reaffirm the historic commitment of this church to recognize and affirm that every
98 human being is created in the image of God and is due respect for their human dignity; and
99

100 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
101 Christ proclaim and affirm people of transgender and non-binary experience are beloved by God
102 and are among the neighbors Jesus commanded his followers to love and treat with worth and
103 dignity; and
104

105 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
106 Christ encourages all settings to promote full equality at every level of law that protects the
107 rights of transgender and gender non-conforming persons; and
108

109 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
110 Christ re-affirm our commitment to lift up our religious text and stand in solidarity with
111 transgender and gender non-conforming persons against the harm done, often through the use of
112 religious language, and;
113

114 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
115 Christ calls on the United Church of Christ in all of its settings to create educational curricula
116 and informational opportunities to learn how to affirm and inform congregations, communities,
117 policy-makers and activists to develop gender-affirming space and inclusion in all aspects of the
118 United Church of Christ.
119

120 **FUNDING:** The funding the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with
121 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

122
123
124

IMPLEMENTATION: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities with the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ Significant contributions to this resolution came from Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ, located in Dallas, TX and part of the South Central Conference.

² <http://synod.uccpages.org/archive.html>

³ United Church of Christ. *Resolution: Calling on United Church of Christ Congregations to Declare themselves Open and Affirming*, adopted by the Fifteenth General Synod, United Church of Christ, Ames, Iowa, June 28-July 2, 1985.

⁴ United Church of Christ. *Resolution: Affirming the Participation and Ministry of Transgender People Within the United Church of Christ and Supporting Their Civil and Human Rights*, adopted by the Twenty-Fourth General Synod, United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN, July 11-15, 2003.

⁵ United Church of Christ Transgender/Nonbinary Strategy Team. *Transgender and Nonbinary Dignity and Rights Under Attack: Talking Points for Faith Leaders*, p. 3. <https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Transgender-Talking-Points-for-Faith-Leaders.pdf>.

⁶ ACLU. *Hecox V Little – Adkins Declaration*, p. 5 <https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/hecox-v-little-adkins-declaration>.

⁷ ACLU. *Hecox V Little – Adkins Declaration*, p. 6, <https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/hecox-v-little-adkins-declaration>.

⁸ American College of Physicians. *Attacks on Gender-Affirming and Transgender Health Care*, November 11, 2022, <https://www.acponline.org/advocacy/state-health-policy/attacks-on-gender-affirming-and-transgender-health-care>, and:

ACLU. *Four Myths About Trans Athletes, Debunked*, <https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbtq-rights/four-myths-about-trans-athletes-debunked>.

⁹ United Church of Christ Transgender/Nonbinary Strategy Team. *Transgender and Nonbinary Dignity and Rights Under Attack: Talking Points for Faith Leaders*, p. 3. <https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Transgender-Talking-Points-for-Faith-Leaders.pdf>.

¹⁰ HRC. *Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community in 2021*, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/fatal-violence-against-the-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-community-in-2021>, and

HRC. *Human Rights Campaign Foundation Marks Ten Years of Tracking Violence Against Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People, Recording 32 Fatalities in 2022*, <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/human-rights-campaign-foundation-marks-ten-years-of-tracking-violence-against-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-people-recording-32-fatalities-in-2022>, and;

The Trevor Project, *Facts About LGBTQ Youth Suicide*, <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/facts-about-lgbtq-youth-suicide/>.

¹¹ Movement Advancement Project and GLSEN. *Separation and Stigma: Transgender Youth & School Facilities*, April 2017. <http://lgbtmap.org/transgender-youth-school>.

¹² ACLU. *Four Myths About Trans Athletes, Debunked*, <https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbtq-rights/four-myths-about-trans-athletes-debunked>

¹³ United Church of Christ Transgender/Nonbinary Strategy Team. *Transgender and Nonbinary Dignity and Rights Under Attack: Talking Points for Faith Leaders*, p. 3. <https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Transgender-Talking-Points-for-Faith-Leaders.pdf>

¹⁴ Intomore. *Anti-LGBTQ Activist Admits Bathroom Predator Myth Was ‘Concocted’ As Cover for Transphobic Hate*, Dawn Ennis, Intomore.com, Dec. 4, 2018

¹⁵ PFLAG. *Guide to Being a Trans Ally*, <https://openandaffirming.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/PFLAG-Guide-to-Being-a-Trans-Ally.pdf>, and;

HRC. *What Does the Bible Say About Transgender People*, Austen Hartke, Myles Markham, produced by the HRC Foundation, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/what-does-the-bible-say-about-transgender-people>

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President prior to the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-fourth General Synod.

Receipt and release of this resolution for pre-Synod consideration by delegates and other interested parties should not be considered an indication it will come before the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Board of Directors' Subcommittee on Disposition and its staff, before consideration by the full Board of Directors in March 2023. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the General Synod Standing Rules (see Standing Rules 12-14). The Board of Directors will decide in March whether this resolution meets those requirements and make a determination as to its disposition.

**CALLING ON UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST LOCAL CHURCHES TO WITNESS
“A WHITE SUPREMACY FREE ZONE” & CONFRONTING WHITE SUPREMACY**

A Resolution of Witness

**Submitted by the Potomac Association of the Central Atlantic Conference
and the Central Atlantic Conference**

1 **SUMMARY**

2
3 This resolution calls on local churches of the United Church of Christ of predominantly
4 European descent and UCC local churches in general to declare themselves, their communities
5 and settings as “A White Supremacy Free Zone,” and to publicly express that “We are
6 confronting white supremacy” through declaration, intentional study and action. Calls upon local
7 churches to use "Journey Towards Confronting White Supremacy and Creating a White
8 Supremacy Free Zone Local Congregation: an Intentional Study and Action Guide to challenge
9 Racism and White Supremacy"¹ as a program for implementation.

10
11
12 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL & ETHICAL RATIONALE**

13
14 Leviticus 19.4 says, “Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the Lord your
15 God.” We exist in a world where there is idol worship. An idol is an object made into something
16 of extreme devotion; a person or thing that is declared sacred or holy; a representation of an
17 object or person as something with perceived powers; a false god; something that great reverence
18 is placed upon and is the object of worship. Many things that surround us are idols.

19
20 White supremacy is a form of idolatry. Being white does not possess any inherent superiority
21 other than the superiority that is bestowed upon the concept by force, violence, laws, myths,
22 institutions and ethos. Being white has no power other than the powers maintained through brute
23 force, the establishment of laws and traditions that maintain institutions, and the accepted
24 narratives used to advance and affirm so-called superiority.

25
26 Jesus teaches his followers, in the wise words of old, to “*you shall love the Lord your God with*
27 *all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your*
28 *neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27).*” We are taught to strip away the things that hinder us in

29 relating to one another with respect, regard and sacred love. We are taught to rid ourselves of the
30 idols created by human beings for the purposes of control and power. Racism and white
31 supremacy are some of those idols constructed for the purposes of power and greed.

32
33 In this historic moment we are faced with the idols of white idolatry, racism, hatred, and greed.
34 Hatred has been nurtured and fostered in these last few years to such a degree that if we thought
35 we were rendering it to a relic of the past we were sorrowfully mistaken. White idolatry has been
36 elevated to levels of such a grave danger, and its worshippers have been aggressively engaged in
37 a crusade to raise up the idols. It is apparent that something must be done differently to challenge
38 white idolatry. We need to witness and take action that will challenge the resurgence and
39 comfort of the idolizing of whiteness.

40
41 “Black Lives Matter” has become a mantra attempting to stir awake the white community and
42 invite non-Black allies to stand in solidarity with the struggles of Blackness. But, despite the
43 declaration that “Black Lives Matter,” the atrocities of white Idolatry, racial profiling, and extra-
44 judicial killings continue. Black Lives Matter banners have been ripped down and vandalized at
45 white houses of worship, and white idolatrous groups have attacked Black houses of worship for
46 bearing the banners. These acts make it apparent that to declare “Black Lives Matter” is not
47 enough!

48
49 Expressions of solidarity and witness are good, but whites in all their liberal and progressive
50 ideology and theology have not effectively challenged the infrastructure or comfort of white
51 idolatry. It is important that if white idolatry is to be challenged, given that it is a white problem,
52 whites must put some skin in the game and take on a different kind of commitment and
53 posture. Though it is important for non-Black allies to express solidarity, it is more important
54 that white communities and houses of worship challenge the white community, and white
55 enclaves with expressions that will bring discomfort, cause local churches and people to truly
56 grapple with whiteness and white idolatry by declaring in banners and other public expressions
57 in communities where whites live and worship that this is “A White Supremacy Free Zone.”

58
59 When you think about where United Church of Christ local churches exist, it is generally in
60 white neighborhoods – suburban, urban and rural – and those white enclaves where the bulk of
61 UCC congregations exist have a tokenistic color mix at best. Therefore, for the white community
62 and white congregations to begin the deconstruction of white idolatry it must be forced into the
63 discussion, making well-meaning white institutions and people to grapple with their own
64 communities and the aid and comfort offered to white idolatry. To raise the issue, and to make
65 the issue not about Blacks but about whites is how white idolatry/supremacy is challenged and
66 stands any chance of being deconstructed.

67
68 *“Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord’s followers. So he*
69 *went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking*
70 *for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to*
71 *bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. As he was approaching*
72 *Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the*
73 *ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?”*
74 *“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.”* (Acts 9:1-5, New Living Translation)

75
76 It is time for the White Church to experience its own Damascus Road Story – to have an “Aha!”
77 moment that transforms our local churches and denomination away from unjust and unholy
78 political, economic, and social structures that degrade people of color as inferior and are
79 supported by European-centered theology.² The history of the United States and the UCC must
80 be examined and owned by our congregations so that we can address the past and current
81 practices of racism that go against the scriptures we claim to follow.

82
83 Where is the United Church of Christ, visibly and boldly? The local church, as the basic unit of
84 the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the heart of UCC Conferences, must do more and must
85 engage in prophetic witness and action for our collective future. Very often our local churches
86 operate in a get along to get along mentality. Local churches may deploy conservative and less
87 embracing kinds of ideologies and perspectives, but often will not openly challenge those
88 expressions that keep racism and white supremacy alive.

89
90 It is not enough to accept and quietly exist in the midst of an unwelcoming, racially hostile
91 environment that seethes with fascist politics, policies and public expressions. This is in fact to
92 side with those forces no matter how liberal or progressive a faith community might think of
93 itself. We must lead and stand united with those impacted by injustice and make good trouble in
94 local communities for justice.

95
96 **REFLECTIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION**
97

98 All UCC churches are invited to begin or continue the journey to confront White Supremacy
99 with the program "Journey Towards Confronting White Supremacy and Creating a White
100 Supremacy Free Zone Local Congregation: an Intentional Study and Action Guide to challenge
101 Racism and White Supremacy." The program uses as a base the “Stages of Change” model. The
102 model operates on the assumption that people do not change behaviors quickly and decisively.
103 Change in habitual behavior occurs through a cyclical process. This includes changes in implicit
104 and hidden bias as well as overt and covert behaviors.

105
106 The stages include opportunities to reflect upon Racism, Whiteness and White
107 Privilege/Supremacy/Responsibility for Racism, and to engage in both declarative and Anti-
108 racist Action and Change.³ Congregations identify where in the cycle they should begin with the
109 ultimate goal to move along the journey to the Action Stage. Within each stage, conversations
110 have four points of focus: the individual; the local church; the church as institution; the
111 community and world. The goal at each stage is a statement of commitment – a covenant to
112 move to the next stage- and intentional discussion about areas within an individual’s control and
113 how individuals might affect those areas. What might be an individual’s and the church’s next
114 best step on the journey?

115
116 Local churches wishing to seek and implement change must be prepared to share or release
117 control of actions, governing models, worship styles, leadership, and theology that maintains and
118 centers Whiteness.⁴ We do this by engaging, listening, and speaking the truth in love, especially
119 as we form deep connections with other congregations in the UCC. Note also the program

120 process includes support and study for BIPOC members and local churches to live into new
121 relationships as colleagues and congregations work through the change processes.

122
123 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

124
125 **WHEREAS**, Exodus 20:3 admonishes us to “. . . *have no other gods before me,*” and

126
127 **WHEREAS**, Jesus in the Gospel of Luke chapter four teaches us, “It is written, ‘Worship the
128 Lord your God, and serve only him,’” and

129
130 **WHEREAS**, as people of faith, rooted in the gospel of justice, we are admonished to tear down
131 the idols that keep us from the simple but true worship of God,⁵ and

132
133 **WHEREAS**, God created humankind in God’s image and likeness, people are image bearers,
134 sharing equal status as human beings. God did not create race, racism, superior groups of
135 humans, and hierarchical and hegemonic social structures⁶, and

136
137 **WHEREAS**, the Nineteenth General Synod, 1993, passed a Statement of Christian Conviction of
138 the Proposed Pronouncement Calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and
139 Multicultural Church.⁷ The call to be a multiracial and multicultural church is an
140 acknowledgement that racial justice is the inclusiveness of all humans and never excludes
141 anyone based on skin color, culture or ethnic origin, and

142
143 **WHEREAS**, the Twenty-Fifth General Synod, 2003, addressed white supremacy through calling
144 on the United Church of Christ Called to be an Anti-Racist Church⁸, and

145
146 **WHEREAS**, the Thirty-First General Synod, 2017, Affirming and Supporting the Authorized
147 Ministries of Under-Represented Clergy in Local Congregations: A Call for Greater
148 Representation and Economic Justice⁹, and

149
150 **WHEREAS**, the Thirty-First General Synod, 2017, addressing white supremacy through calling
151 On Establishing Procedures for Cultural Diversity Training for Authorized Ministers¹⁰, and

152
153 **WHEREAS**, for a local church to declare their communities and settings as “A White
154 Supremacist Free Zone” is to take away the quiet existence of racism and white idolatry and
155 forces the issue into the communities in which UCC houses of worship exist, and

156
157 **WHEREAS**, for a local church to publicly express that “We are confronting white supremacy,”
158 forces the discussion and action to end white supremacy, and

159
160 **WHEREAS**, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but the spirit of power, of courage and
161 resolution, to meet difficulties and dangers; the spirit of love which will carry us through
162 opposition.” 2 Timothy 1:7, and

163
164 **WHEREAS**, it is time for the White Church to experience its own Damascus Road Story – to
165 have an “Aha!” moment that transforms our local congregations and denomination away from

166 unjust and unholy political, economic, and social structures that degrade people of color as
167 inferior and are supported by European-centered theology,¹¹ and

168
169 **WHEREAS**, the Damascus Road Story requires a journey of confronting White Supremacy
170 through questions, discussion, study of White Privilege, White Supremacy and Systemic Racism,
171 and then planning for and moving to action to become anti-racist and disrupt racism now, and

172
173 **WHEREAS**, the UCC continues to advocate for the dismantling of racism through education,
174 study, policy and action, and

175
176 **WHEREAS**, the Potomac Association of the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church
177 of Christ, supporters of the resolution, have developed a plan for its implementation and calls on
178 UCC local churches to begin the journey of Confronting White Supremacy and becoming a
179 White Supremacy Free Zone, and

180
181 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church
182 of Christ calls on UCC local churches of predominantly European descent, and UCC local
183 churches in general, to embark on an intentional journey to become through demonstration, and
184 declare themselves, their communities and settings as “A White Supremacy Free Zone,”

185
186 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
187 Church of Christ calls for action through the implementation of ¹²“Journey Towards Confronting
188 White Supremacy and Creating a White Supremacy Free Zone Local Congregation: an
189 Intentional Study and Action Guide to challenge Racism and White Supremacy,”

190
191 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
192 Church of Christ encourages all local churches to participate in the implementation of this
193 resolution, starting wherever they are,

194
195 **AND BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
196 Church of Christ calls on UCC local churches of predominantly European descent, and UCC
197 local churches in general, to publicly express “We are confronting white supremacy.”

198
199 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance
200 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

201
202 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
203 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1WUnhr2RceKtr5-7OxJulerTczkdgZ78_/edit#slide=id.p1

² Ibrahim Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, Chapters 1-6, 2016

³ Mapping Inequality: <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=5/39.1/-94.58>; *Race: The Power of An Illusion*, Part III, *The House We Live in*, video, California Newsreel/PBS, 2003; White Privilege Curriculum, UCC, Part three, *The Cash Value of Whiteness*, <http://privilege.uccpages.org>

⁴ Kelly Connelly, Bryan Clover, Josh Riddick, *Wait – Is This Racist? A Guide to Becoming an Anti-Racist Church*, 2022

⁵ *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Rev. Howard Thurman, 1949

⁶ NYTimes, *1619 Project*, 2022 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>

⁷ Resolution “Statement of Christian Conviction of the Proposed Pronouncement Calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church”. Adopted by the 1993 General Synod. https://www.ucc.org/justice_multiracial-multicultural/justice_multiracial-multicultural_pronouncement/

⁸ United Church of Christ Called to be an Anti-Racist Church. Adopted by the 2003 General Synod as Multiracial/Multicultural Addendum to the 1993 Pronouncement & Proposal for Action. https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/faithful-action-ministries/racial-justice/justice_racism_anti-racist-church/

⁹ Resolution Affirming & Supporting the Authorized Ministries of Under-Represented Clergy in Local Congregations: A Call for Greater Representation & Economic Justice. A Prudential Resolution, Adopted by the Thirty-first General Synod, July 3, 2017, Baltimore, Maryland. https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2017_AFFIRMING_SUPPORTING_AUTHORIZED_MINISTRIES_OF_UNDER_REP_CLERGY_IN_LOCAL_CONGREGATIONS.pdf

¹⁰Resolution On Establishing Procedures for Cultural Diversity. Adopted by the Thirty-first General Synod, July 3, 2017, Baltimore, Maryland

¹¹ Robert Jones, Phd, *White Too Long*, 2020

¹² <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1WUnhr2RceKtr5-7OxJulerTczkdgZ78/edit#slide=id.p1>