

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

**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**
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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,”
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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/1WUnhr2RceKtr5-7OxJu1erTczkdgZ78_/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/1WUnhr2RceKtr5-7OxJu1erTczkdgZ78_/edit#slide=id.p1