

The following resolution was approved by the delegates at a plenary of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held in Indianapolis June 30-July 4, 2023.

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

A Resolution of Witness

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ was founded by denominations with education as a central aspect of our identities and has always been a firm advocate for education, with the Church having had a hand in the founding of many colleges and universities, including many Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which grew from the hundreds of schools founded by the American Missionary Association after the Civil War;ⁱ and

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has been committed to being an Open and Affirming, Anti-Racist, Environmental Justice, Just Peace denomination;ⁱⁱ and

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

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has claimed to be a thinking church as well as a feeling and believing church;^v and

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

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has demonstrated its commitment to addressing the sins of violence and oppression experienced by women, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, people of religious minorities, immigrants, refugees, Native American/Indigenous people, Black people, Latinx people, Asian people, and all others who have suffered oppression in this country;^{ix, x, xi, xii, xiii} and

WHEREAS students benefit greatly from the study of literature and art that addresses the full range of being human;^{xiv} and

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

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40 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United
41 Church of Christ declares that it is vital for every person, of every race, skin color, culture,
42 religion, language status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, income, and/or family
43 background to be given an opportunity to see themselves and their neighbors represented, to
44 access truthful information, and to learn from our past; so students are better equipped to
45 advocate for, and to reach, their full potential as critical thinkers in school environments that
46 continually strive for equity in all aspects of schooling, from academics and curriculum to extra-
47 curricular activities and school culture;^{xvi}

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49 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
50 Christ affirms support of our public education systems and educators, as well as academic
51 freedom, and the right of educators to make decisions that are in the best interest of ALL
52 students, consistent with peer-reviewed research and best practice;

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

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60 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
61 Christ stands against efforts to inflame the public with hateful rhetoric toward educators; to
62 censor or ban what is taught in public school classrooms; to censor or ban books and media in
63 school libraries; to deny the histories of oppression experienced by marginalized groups; to deny
64 racism, sexism, heterosexism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, ableism, and other forms of prejudice,
65 bias, and hate; and to impose burdensome disclosure mandates related to classroom lessons,
66 assignments, and activities;

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68 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of
69 Christ encourages all settings of the Church to use this resolution for the development of talking
70 points for presentation in public arenas where such matters are being dealt with, including state
71 legislatures, local school boards, parent-teacher associations, ministerial associations, community
72 groups, and the like.

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

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

ⁱ United Church of Christ: *History*: <https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/history/>

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- ⁱⁱ 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/
- ⁱⁱⁱ 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/
- ^{iv} United Church of Christ in New Brighton: *Our Values and Beliefs*: <https://uccnb.org/who-we-are/our-values-and-beliefs>
- ^v 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/
- ^{vi} United Church of Christ: *White Privilege: Let's Talk – A Resource for Transformational Dialogue*: <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>
- ^{vii} United Church of Christ: *Sacred Conversations to End Racism*: <https://www.ucc.org/sacred-conversations-to-end-racism/>
- ^{viii} 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/>
- ^{ix} 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>
- ^x 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/
- ^{xi} 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/
- ^{xii} 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/
- ^{xiii} 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/
- ^{xiv} 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>
- ^{xv} 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>
- ^{xvi} Bloomberg, L.D. (2022). Teachers College Press Blog. *Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy: Empowering Responsive and Reflective Educators*: <https://www.tcpres.com/blog/culturally-inclusive-pedagogy-empowering-responsive-reflective-educators>