

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Fifth General Synod recommends this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

RESOLUTION ON FULL COMMUNION RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND IGLESIA EVANGÉLICA UNIDA DE PUERTO RICO

A Prudential Resolution

Submitted by the United Church of Christ Board

SUMMARY

The United Church of Christ and Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico share a rich and storied history as “united and uniting” churches and of being one church. IEUPR became a part of the UCC in 1961 as the Puerto Rico Conference of the UCC. IEUPR separated from the UCC in 2006. While the two churches share common history, heritage and values, opportunities for shared common witness can be lived together further in context of a common desire to be Church together. General Synod 32 in Milwaukee, WI established an ecumenical partnership between the United Church of Christ and Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico following intentional engagement to reconcile the separation of the two churches. That General Synod also requested that the two churches work toward the closest possible relationship while remaining independent churches. Following on that process, this resolution establishes and formalizes a full communion relationship between the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

In the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus offers a prayer for his disciples as he approaches the end of his ministry. In this prayer, Jesus prays for the unity of his followers:

“I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:20-23)

In this passage, and the call to unity therein, the United Church of Christ found its motivating call to union. And today, after almost 70 years, these words continue to motivate the UCC’s pursuit of greater unity in the Body of Christ.

“...there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

In the years since the 1957 union that brought the United Church of Christ into being, the UCC has established full communion agreements with several sister denominations and continues to

38 seek out new avenues for formal relationships with other partners. This work is grounded in the
39 ideal of oneness found in Scripture. Further, the relationships between denominations, each one
40 gifted by God with unique charisms and distinct perspectives, moves us toward a more complete
41 expression of Church.

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43 *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body,*
44 *though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized*
45 *into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one*
46 *Spirit... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all*
47 *rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 26)*

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49 Ecumenism remains at the heart of the United Church of Christ. The relationships we establish
50 and share with our ecumenical partners around the globe are life-giving for our denomination, as
51 they allow us to more deeply live into our call to seek unity in the Body of Christ.

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53 The World Council of Churches’ Faith and Order Commission meeting in Bangalore, India, in
54 1978 offered the following vision of full communion agreements:

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56 They will then recognize each other’s ministries; they will share the bread and the cup of
57 their Lord; they will acknowledge each other as belonging to the body of Christ in all
58 places and at all times; they will proclaim together the Gospel to the world; they will
59 serve the needs of humankind in mutual trust and dedication; and for these ends they will
60 plan and take decisions together in assemblies constituted by authorized representatives
61 wherever this is required.¹

62
63 “Full Communion” has been identified historically by five marks:

- 64 • common confession of Christ
- 65 • mutual recognition of members
- 66 • common celebration of the Lord’s Supper/Holy Communion
- 67 • mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministries
- 68 • common commitment to mission.²

69
70 In 1961, the member churches of the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico voted to join the
71 United Church of Christ. This established IEUPR as the Puerto Rico Conference, a designation
72 that it maintained until 2006, when IEUPR voted to disaffiliate with the United Church of Christ
73 and once again become an autonomous United and Uniting denomination. The relationship
74 between the United Church of Christ and IEUPR remained active, as expressed through the work
75 of Global H.O.P.E. and Global Ministries. In 2019, the General Synod of the United Church of
76 Christ adopted a resolution which initiated an ecumenical relationship with IEUPR, seeking to
77 establish the closest possible relationship between the denominations.³

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79 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

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81 **WHEREAS** the Thirty-Second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted a
82 resolution calling for the pursuit of the “closest possible relationship” with the Iglesia Evangelica
83 Unida de Puerto Rico⁴; and

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85 **WHEREAS** the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico, having been constituted through the
86 union of the Congregational Church, the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and the Christian
87 Church in 1931, was a united and uniting church before the formation of the UCC and was
88 another stream which joined the United Church of Christ at its inception⁵; and

89
90 **WHEREAS** the decision of the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico in 2006 to separate
91 from the United Church of Christ and return to being an independent denomination, an action
92 that was received by the General Synod in 2007⁶, did not end the vital relationship and familial
93 bond between the two communions nor alter the UCC's recognition of IEUPR as a partner
94 church; and

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96 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico share
97 a deep commitment to mission and ministry with collaboration and mutuality to seek a just world
98 for all; and

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100 **WHEREAS** the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico and the United Church of Christ,
101 recognizing the complicated history of colonialization, have committed to engage in active
102 decolonialization as part of this partnership;

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104 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church
105 of Christ, meeting in Kansas City, MO (11-15 July 2025), with the encouragement of the
106 leadership of the General Assembly of the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico, makes the
107 following declarations:

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109 The Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ celebrates before God
110 that the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico is an authentic, faithful part of the one,
111 universal body of Christ.

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113 The Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ declares and celebrates
114 that a relationship of full communion now exists between the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de
115 Puerto Rico and the United Church of Christ, meaning that both churches pursue with
116 intention ways of expressing the unity of the Church. This includes a mutual commitment
117 to recognizing that ordained ministers of each partner church are truly ministers of word
118 and sacrament and to seeking ways of manifesting the common mission of witness and
119 service.

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121 The Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ commits itself to work,
122 with God's help and together with its partner churches, to effect greater unity in the whole
123 church of Jesus Christ.

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125 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of
126 Christ encourages all settings of the Church to study the biblical, theological, and practical
127 implications of full communion with the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico.

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129 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of
130 Christ commends the collaborative efforts of the General Minister and President of the United
131 Church of Christ working with the Pastor General of the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto
132 Rico as they continue forging the closest possible relationship which honors the shared history
133 and kinship of the two communions and lives into new possibilities beyond full communion.
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135 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the full communion partnership between the United Church
136 of Christ and the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico commence with the signing of the
137 common agreement by their respective Heads of Communion at a joint service of celebration
138 following ratification of this agreement at the Assembly of the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de
139 Puerto Rico that will include opportunities for local congregations and conferences across the
140 two denominations to celebrate in meaningful ways.

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142 **FUNDING**

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144 Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
145 mandates of the affected ministries and the funds available.
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147 **IMPLEMENTATION**

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

¹ [Sharing in One Hope. Reports and Documents from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission, August 1978, Bangalore, India, WCC : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

² [ManualonMinistry-2018.pdf](#) (pg. 36)

³ <https://uccresolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Comm.-02a-IEUPR-FINAL-Post-Plenary.pdf>

⁴ <https://uccresolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Comm.-02a-IEUPR-FINAL-Post-Plenary.pdf>

⁵ <https://uccresolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/61-GS-20.pdf>

⁶ <https://uccresolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/07-GS-24.pdf>