

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

**FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP OF OUR WHOLE LIVES AND ADVOCACY FOR
COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN FAITH COMMUNITIES
THROUGH INTERFAITH COLLABORATION**

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by:

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1 **SUMMARY**

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3 The United Church of Christ has a 50+ year history studying sexuality, surveying the needs of
4 congregations, and developing resources to provide faith-based comprehensive sexuality
5 education within our local churches. Over the last 25 years, this work has been done in
6 partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Association through the Our Whole Lives ministries.
7 This resolution lifts up the need to continue the United Church of Christ's faithful stewardship of
8 the Our Whole Lives ministry¹, which provides training and resources to embrace the diversity
9 of God's creation, a framework to view bodies and relationships as sacred, and information about
10 bodies and relationships as helpful, not harmful.

11
12 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

13
14 *Proverbs 22:6* tells us *Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.*
15 [*NRSVUE*], and helps us understand that teaching our children to perceive themselves without
16 shame is one way to be closer to God and what God wants for each of us; and

17
18 In *Genesis 1:27* scripture tells us that *God created humans[a] in their image, in the image of*
19 *God they created them;* and in *Genesis 1:31* *God saw everything that they had made, and indeed,*
20 *it was very good;* and

21

22 We are called to “love your neighbor as yourself” in *Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Mark*
23 *12:31, Luke 10:27, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14 and James 2:8.*

24
25 We hereby proclaim the beautiful diversity of God’s creation and state that we are commended
26 care of that creation.

27 In addition, the United Church of Christ has a 50-year commitment to understanding human
28 sexuality as evidenced by but not limited to:

- 29
- 30 ● In 1973, General Synod 10 asked the Executive Council “to commission a study
31 concerning the dynamics of human sexuality” (75-GS-65, Minutes, 1975, p.68.)²
- 32 ● In 1991, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries (UCBHM) and the Unitarian
33 Universalist Association (UUA) convened a Sexuality Education Task Force “to create a
34 vision for a positive and comprehensive life-span sexuality education program.”
35 Throughout its work, the Sexuality Education Task Force was guided by these words
36 from its philosophy statement: “We come together as representatives of two
37 denominations to create a vision for a positive and comprehensive lifespan sexuality
38 education program... a safe environment within which people can come to understand
39 and respond to the challenges facing them as sexual beings.”³
- 40 ● In 1995, A new UCBHM-UUA Sexuality Education Task Force was formed to develop
41 new materials which eventually come to be identified as Our Whole Lives, a
42 comprehensive, inclusive, lifespan sexuality education curriculum.⁴
- 43

44 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

45
46 **WHEREAS** The American Civil Liberties Union tracked 510 bills (2023 legislative session⁵)
47 and 574 bills (2024 legislative session⁶) that restrict rights to medical care and/or education about
48 bodies and gender. While not all these bills will become law, limited rights and reduced
49 education can harm people (especially women and LGBTQIA+ people); and

50
51 **WHEREAS** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus+
52 (LGBTQIA+) young people are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual
53 orientation or gender identity but rather are placed at higher risk because of how they are
54 mistreated, stigmatized in society, and live with a significantly higher rate of risk for physical
55 harm and discrimination⁷, demonstrating how shame and stigma can be fatal; and

56
57 **WHEREAS** abstinence-only sex education lacks medically accurate information and often
58 includes misinformation, both of which increase the rates of unintended pregnancy and
59 potentially life-threatening infections;⁸ and

60
61 **WHEREAS** General Synod 15 called upon United Church of Christ congregations to declare
62 themselves open and affirming by encouraging congregations to adopt a policy of non-
63 discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and to adopt a Covenant of Openness
64 and Affirmation of persons of lesbian, gay and bisexual orientation;⁹ and

65

66 **WHEREAS** General Synods (12, 13, 16, 18) have paired support for safe and legal abortions
67 with a desire for information and resources about contraception and family planning, and teen
68 abortion rates decline with free access to contraception;¹⁰ and
69

70 **WHEREAS** General Synod 34 called upon Local Churches and their members to engage with
71 the Our Whole Lives: Sexuality and Our Faith curriculum to promote holistic sexuality
72 education, including information and education about contraception, and to support and offer
73 access to contraceptives;¹¹ and
74

75 **WHEREAS** 2025 marks 25 years of partnership of the United Church of Christ with the
76 Unitarian Universalist Association in the publication of Our Whole Lives resources¹², which
77 have expanded to include seven levels of comprehensive and inclusive curriculum, serving
78 everyone from young children to older adults, and which include a commitment to medically
79 accurate information, and inclusion of the diversity of human sexuality;
80

81 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church
82 of Christ affirms that doing God’s work in the world includes providing life-affirming lifespan
83 sexuality education that is developmentally appropriate and scientifically accurate, with an
84 understanding that information about human sexuality is helpful, not harmful, and
85 calls upon all settings of the church, including local congregations, Associations, Conferences,
86 and the Council of Conference Ministers to:
87

- 88 • Celebrate 25 years of Our Whole Lives as comprehensive, inclusive, faith-based, life-
89 affirming sexuality education by renewing our commitment to provide continually
90 updated, accurate curriculum and resources;
91
- 92 • Work to eradicate stigma and dehumanization of people related to their gender, gender
93 expression, orientation, or sexual history.
94
- 95 • Educate themselves and others about how Our Whole Lives and Sexuality and Our Faith
96 are tools for celebrating the sacred embodiment of people of all ages, and how they
97 engage with the intersectional justice issues of reproductive justice, Lesbian, Gay,
98 Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus+ (LGBTQIA+) lived
99 experience, racial inequality, and sexual violence.
100
- 101 • Participate in an annual observance of Our Whole Lives, on the first Sunday in May as
102 part of Sex Ed for All Month¹³, or any date or dates deemed appropriate, honoring within
103 their worship and education the Our Whole Lives values of self-worth, sexual health,
104 responsibility, and justice and inclusivity as ways we love ourselves and our neighbors;
105 and
106
- 107 • Proclaim that this work is ongoing. As scripture says in Galatians 6:9 *So let us not grow*
108 *weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.* If we
109 do not give up, we can continue to build a world where there is no shame about our
110 bodies and relationships, and where we are in one human community together.
111

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

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115 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
116 and other entities of the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ <https://www.ucc.org/our-whole-lives/>

² *Human Sexuality: A Preliminary Study*. edited by United Church Board of Homeland Ministries, New York, United Church Press, 1977, p. 234.

³ Hanson, Ann, editor. *Human Sexuality Education and Justice: A Selected Chronology of Relevant Actions and Events*. 2012, p. 2. Accessed 29 Aug. 2024.

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2023>

⁶ <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2024>

⁷ Trevor Project

⁸ Abstinence-only education and teen pregnancy rates: why we need comprehensive sex education in the U.S - PubMed (nih.gov) and Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Programs: Harmful and Ineffective | Guttmacher Institute)

⁹ RESOLUTION CALLING ON UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONS TO DECLARE THEMSELVES OPEN AND AFFIRMING

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Abortion-as-Healthcare-Plenary-Final.pdf (uccresolutions.org)

<https://sexeducationcollaborative.org/sex-ed-all-month>

¹² <https://www.uccresources.com/products/our-whole-lives-owl-curriculum>

¹³ <https://sexeducationcollaborative.org/sex-ed-all-month>