

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST BOARD  
REPORT ON RESOLUTION: DENOUNCING THE *DOBBS* DECISION AND  
PROCLAIMING ABORTION AS HEALTHCARE  
BAIL FUND TASK FORCE**

During a plenary of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held in Indianapolis, Indiana between June 30 and July 4, 2023, the delegates approved a Resolution of Witness titled “Denouncing the *Dobbs* Decision and Proclaiming Abortion as Healthcare.” The full text of the Resolution can be found here: <https://uccresolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Abortion-as-Healthcare-Plenary-Final.pdf>

This Resolution included, in part, specific work for the United Church of Christ Board. Namely, the UCCB was directed “to explore creation of a Bail Fund, as necessary, for UCC members arrested for participation in civil disobedience or other acts of non-violent Christian witness that promote social, racial, economic, environmental, gender, and reproductive justice; the UCC Board shall report on their progress of this exploration by General Synod 35.”

In response to this direction, UCCB Chair Julia Gaughan gathered Courtney Dobbins, Rev. Kearstin Bailey, and Rev. Derrick Elliott into a Bail Fund Task Force, staffed by NMUCC General Counsel Heather Kimmel to explore the creation of a Bail Fund. In connection with this work, Kimmel identified Zaria Davis, who presently works for CHHSM, as a UCC-affiliated expert. Davis has extensive experience working with Bail Funds and educating others about the history of the pretrial system in the United States. Davis graciously agreed to meet with the Task Force, shared her expertise, and offered additional resources, which the Task Force has used in crafting this report.

Across the United States, there is no singular policy regarding the pretrial process. Each state has different regulations regarding bail and/or bonds for release from jail pending trial. Within each state, different jurisdictions also have different processes and policies. The differences can be drastic. For example, Illinois has eliminated the cash bail system, so there is no need for a Bail Fund in Illinois. In some jurisdictions, individual people must appear to post bail and personally vouch for the person for whom bail has been posted. Other jurisdictions require all bonding to be done through licensed bondsmen. The sheer number of jurisdictions plus these jurisdictional differences would make a UCC-specific Bail Fund cumbersome to administer without even getting to determinations about how and when the funds could be accessed. Moreover, numerous jurisdictions already have existing Bail Funds, so much so that a coalition exists for these Bail Funds to share knowledge and support. Thus, rather than directing the creation of a new Bail Fund specific to the UCC, it makes more sense to help connect various UCC members and settings to existing Bail Funds in their locality so that we can support and work alongside the existing Bail Fund organizations.

Community Justice Exchange (<https://www.communityjusticeexchange.org/>) can help connect UCC members and settings with existing Bail Funds through its National Bail Fund Network (<https://www.communityjusticeexchange.org/en/nbfn-directory>). This is a great starting place for any UCC person, church, or setting to connect into the existing work that supports those who have been arrested in connection with justice-seeking protests through Bail Funds. Should a

particular jurisdiction need a new Bail Fund (perhaps one has not yet been created in that jurisdiction), the Climate Defense Project has put together a Bail Fund Guide, available at <https://climatedefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Bail-Fund-Guide-.pdf>. This Guide includes important questions to consider when exploring Bail Fund creation and additional resources for people creating Bail Funds.

A webinar with Zaria Davis is set to be scheduled for the late summer/early fall of 2025.

In light of not only the *Dobbs* decision but the overall social-political state of the United States, this Task Force believes connecting into existing Bail Fund work is more important than ever. The best way the UCCB can support anyone - not just UCC members but also our friends, neighbors, and partners engaged in justice work - in accessing Bail Funds is by allying with the National Bail Fund Network and the Community Justice Exchange as described herein.