

1 The Board of Directors recommends this resolution be sent directly to a Plenary Session of the
2 General Synod.

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4 **RESOLUTION ON FULL COMMUNION RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN**
5 **THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**

6
7 **Submitted By the Board of Directors of the United Church of Christ**
8 **A Prudential Resolution**

9
10 **SUMMARY**

11
12 The United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ (USA) share a rich and similar
13 history as “united and uniting” churches in North America. While the two churches share
14 common heritage and values, opportunities for shared common witness could be explored in
15 context of a mutual desire to be Church together. The Thirtieth General Synod in Long Beach,
16 CA established an ecumenical partnership between the United Church of Christ (USA) and the
17 United Church of Canada. By doing so, the United Church of Christ acknowledged the history
18 of common witness, of shared commitment at global ecumenical tables and of staff collaboration
19 in ministry and mission. The Thirtieth General Synod also stipulated that the United Church of
20 Christ (USA) work collaboratively with the United Church of Canada to prepare a full
21 communion agreement.

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23 The United Church of Christ (USA) currently has three full communion agreements, each of
24 which is an expression of visible unity, while exhibiting unique elements that define the
25 relationship between the partners. This full communion agreement with the United Church of
26 Canada comes after a year of study and engagement by representatives of both churches, charged
27 with returning to General Council 2015 and General Synod 2015 a common document. The
28 group of twelve (six from each church), determined that the churches while similarly engaged,
29 could learn from each other in ways that would enhance the ministry in each setting.

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31 This resolution is a beginning that invites the United Church of Canada and the United Church of
32 Christ to explore and give vision to living in full communion in the twenty-first century and
33 beyond. This is a vision of oneness in Christ.

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35 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONAL**

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37 In his last prayer with his disciples, Jesus prayed, “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are
38 in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent
39 me” (John 17:21, NRSV). The desire for unity and visible unity is at the heart and commitment
40 of the ecumenical movement.

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42 The United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ (USA) affirm this biblical
43 understanding of unity which continues to guide the ecumenical commitment and engagement
44 with other churches. The churches continue to seek meaningful ways to attend to the call in the
45 gospel and to overcome the separations that stand in the way of the unity of the church that Jesus
46 prayed for. As Christians there is an imperative to find ways to live in unity and to create visible
47 unity for the life of the Church. This call is the essence of the ecumenical movement which
48 seeks to find unity-in-diversity, creating the space to engage divergences and convergences
49 through on-going dialogue and engagement.

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51 Both churches were created by organic union and live into being “united and uniting” churches.
52 The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925, united through the merger of the Methodist
53 Church of Canada, two-thirds of the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the Congregational
54 Church. In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren joined. Formed in 1957, the United Church
55 of Christ (USA) brought together the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational
56 Christian Churches, both of which were products of earlier mergers. The moment of organic
57 union was not to be experienced as an end, but as a beginning, opening to a realm of possibilities
58 to receive the oneness Jesus prayed for.

59
60 The recognition of the United Church of Canada as an ecumenical partner in 2013 and
61 establishment of a joint partnership committee by the Thirtieth General Synod of the United
62 Church of Christ (USA) and the General Council of the United Church of Canada followed two
63 intentional meetings of the leadership of both communions. The joint partnership committee was
64 charged to explore the possibility for full communion between the United Church of Canada and
65 the United Church of Christ (USA), and to bring to the General Synod and the General Council
66 in 2015 a full communion agreement.

67
68 The two churches envision full communion as a dynamic and growing relationship that is more
69 than just accepting one another as we now are. It is a mutual commitment to grow together
70 toward a vision of the church that enriches our theological traditions, enhances service and
71 mission, and deepens worship. The United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ
72 (USA) will find diverse expressions of what it means to live in full communion in Christ as we
73 experience life together.

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75 Unity and mission are inseparable. If the United Church of Christ and the United Church of
76 Canada imagine being sacramentally one and do not engage together in mission, we deceive
77 ourselves. Christ calls us to unite in one mission in and to a suffering and divided world. The
78 church is called to visible oneness as a sign, instrument and foretaste of God's saving
79 reconciliation of all things in Christ. In declaring full communion, these two churches
80 acknowledge that they are partners together in God's mission to and for the whole world.

81
82 The mission of the church takes many forms. The church engages in mission through worship,
83 through proclamation of the gospel, and through action. In worship, the church recalls and
84 celebrates the mighty acts of God in creation, redemption, and providence. Thus graciously
85 renewed in faith, hope, and love, its people are sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit to be
86 ambassadors, witnesses, and servants of Christ in the world. In proclamation, the church tells the
87 story by which its own life is defined. As it confesses unambiguously the Christ in whom it lives;
88 the church invites all who will to enter its fellowship of life in Christ. In its action, the church
89 embodies God's justice, peace, and love. As the church reaches out to others, both individually
90 and systemically, it manifests God's reconciling purpose and saving reign in all the earth.

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92 In partnership, the United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ (USA) fully claim
93 the mission and make deliberate commitment to engage in mission together, wherever and
94 whenever possible.

95
96 **MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

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98 The Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ (USA) will request that the United
99 Church Ecumenical Partnership Committee, working with the Office of the General Minister and
100 President provide opportunities for full participation in this full communion agreement.

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102 **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**

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104 The Thirtieth General Synod will request that appropriate by-laws changes be brought back to
105 the Thirty-first General Synod for approval along with a report stipulating implementation
106 strategies for engaging in ministry and mission together.

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108 **TEXT OF MOTION**

109
110 WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ unites Christ's followers in a single community of faith
111 and compels us to make our unity visible so "that the world may believe..." John 17:21, cf. Eph.
112 4:4-6, 1 Cor. 12:12-26);

113
114 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ (USA) and the United Church of Canada entered into
115 formal ecumenical partnership in 2013, with action of Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United
116 Church of Christ and action by the General Council of the United Church of Canada, with the
117 commitment to continued ecumenical engagement and interaction to promote common witness;

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119 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada have common
120 ecumenical partners, vision of the Church, and commitment to social justice, the inclusion of all
121 persons, and to a diverse theological expression;

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123 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Christ in our local churches,
124 Conferences, and in national and international settings are witnessing significant signs of the
125 movement of the Holy Spirit toward unity;

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127 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada entered into a year of
128 common discernment to seek God's will and direction for ways to live as the one body of Christ;

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130 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ,
131 meeting in Cleveland, Ohio (26-30 June 2015) and the 42nd General Council of the United
132 Church of Canada meeting in Corner Brook, Newfoundland (8-15 August 2015) make the
133 following mutual declarations:

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135 A. The Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ acknowledges and celebrates
136 before God that the United Church of Canada is an authentic, faithful part of the one,
137 universal body of Christ.

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139 B. The Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ declares and celebrates that a
140 relationship of full communion now exists between the United Church of Canada and the
141 United Church of Christ (USA), by which we mean that both churches will pursue with
142 intention ways of expressing the unity of the Church. This includes mutual commitment
143 to recognizing ordained ministers of each partner church are truly ministers of word and
144 sacrament, and ways of manifesting the common mission of witness and service.

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146 C. The Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ (USA) commits itself to
147 work, with God's help and together with its partner churches, to effect greater unity in the
148 whole church of Jesus Christ.

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150 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
151 (USA) encourages study of biblical, theological, and practical implications of full communion
152 with the United Church of Canada and authorizes the General Minister and President to work
153 collaboratively with the General Secretary of the United Church of Canada to appoint members
154 of a United Church Partnership Committee to give guidance to this process.

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156 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a United Church Partnership Committee be established to
157 give leadership to living into the possibilities of this full communion relationship through shared
158 mission and ministry.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod receive the final report of the joint full communion working group, including the possibilities presented for common life and witness together.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the full communion partnership between the United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ commence with the signing of the common agreement by the two Heads of Communion at a joint service of celebration that will include opportunities for local congregations and conferences across the two churches to celebrate in meaningful ways.

FUNDING

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

IMPLEMENTATION

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