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

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

Submitted By the Board of Directors of the United Church of Christ
A Prudential Resolution

SUMMARY

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

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

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

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONAL

In his last prayer with his disciples, Jesus prayed, “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” (John 17:21, NRSV). The desire for unity and visible unity is at the heart and commitment of the ecumenical movement.
The United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ (USA) affirm this biblical understanding of unity which continues to guide the ecumenical commitment and engagement with other churches. The churches continue to seek meaningful ways to attend to the call in the gospel and to overcome the separations that stand in the way of the unity of the church that Jesus prayed for. As Christians there is an imperative to find ways to live in unity and to create visible unity for the life of the Church. This call is the essence of the ecumenical movement which seeks to find unity-in-diversity, creating the space to engage divergences and convergences through on-going dialogue and engagement.

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

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

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

Unity and mission are inseparable. If the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada imagine being sacramentally one and do not engage together in mission, we deceive ourselves. Christ calls us to unite in one mission in and to a suffering and divided world. The church is called to visible oneness as a sign, instrument and foretaste of God's saving reconciliation of all things in Christ. In declaring full communion, these two churches acknowledge that they are partners together in God's mission to and for the whole world.
The mission of the church takes many forms. The church engages in mission through worship, through proclamation of the gospel, and through action. In worship, the church recalls and celebrates the mighty acts of God in creation, redemption, and providence. Thus graciously renewed in faith, hope, and love, its people are sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit to be ambassadors, witnesses, and servants of Christ in the world. In proclamation, the church tells the story by which its own life is defined. As it confesses unambiguously the Christ in whom it lives; the church invites all who will to enter its fellowship of life in Christ. In its action, the church embodies God's justice, peace, and love. As the church reaches out to others, both individually and systemically, it manifests God's reconciling purpose and saving reign in all the earth.

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

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

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

TEXT OF MOTION

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

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ (USA) and the United Church of Canada entered into formal ecumenical partnership in 2013, with action of Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ and action by the General Council of the United Church of Canada, with the commitment to continued ecumenical engagement and interaction to promote common witness;
WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada have common
ecumenical partners, vision of the Church, and commitment to social justice, the inclusion of all
persons, and to a diverse theological expression;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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