

*God is still speaking,*  
**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **United Church of Christ to address racism, Middle East conflict, LGBTQ equality at General Synod 2015 in Cleveland**

**Cleveland (June 8, 2015)** – Timely social issues such as racism, the Middle East conflict, and LGBTQ equality will be the focus of nearly 4,000 progressive Christians gathering in Ohio at the end of the month. The United Church of Christ, the mainline denomination of nearly 1 million members headquartered in Cleveland, will host General Synod 2015 June 26-30 at the Cleveland Convention Center.

**General Synod 2015 at a Glance:**

**LGBTQ Equality:**

As the country waits for the U.S. Supreme Court decision expected in June that could lead to a national ruling on the issue of marriage equality, the UCC is celebrating its 10th anniversary of becoming the first mainline denomination to affirm marriage rights for all people. If the Court affirms marriage equality, the marriages of five couples on the UCC national staff who were married in other states will be recognized in their home state of Ohio.

- General Synod and the SCOTUS decision coincide with the Cleveland Pride Parade, which will see participation from hundreds of General Synod attendees.
- 2015 also marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UCC's Open and Affirming Movement, where all settings of the denomination were invited to fully welcome all LGBTQ people in the life of the church.

**Racial Justice:**

The issue of racism has surfaced in communities around the country, with public protests surrounding the deaths of black men at the hands of police in Ferguson, New York, Baltimore and Cleveland. The UCC will address the issue once again through resolutions and public witness calling for fairness of all people, regardless of their skin color.

- UCC Justice and Witness Ministries will host a prayer service and public witness at the Cleveland Convention Center in honor and memory of Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old boy who was shot and killed by a Cleveland Police Officer on Nov. 22, 2014.
- A resolution, up for a vote, calls for the change of the Washington Redskins NFL team name, as well as a boycott of all team games and merchandise.
- A group supporting a petition drive to end racism in Major League Baseball will gather at the offices of the Cleveland Indians, calling on the team to change its name and “Chief Wahoo” logo.

#### **Israel/Palestine:**

The UCC believes that the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is one of the most enduring conflicts of our time, and remains deeply concerned about the violence perpetuated through acts of terror and by the Occupation. As a next step in the UCC’s involvement with peace in the Middle East, General Synod delegates will vote on resolutions pertaining to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

- Two resolutions call for divestment from U.S. companies that profit off the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and for a boycott of products produced by Israeli companies in the settlements there; a study of the Kairos Palestine document; and advocacy related to U.S. military aid.
- Another resolution calls on the UCC to recognize the actions of Israel against the Palestinians in the West Bank and around Gaza as acts of apartheid. (However, the resolution does not call for Israel to be labeled as an apartheid state.)

#### **Other Business:**

- The ninth general minister and president of the UCC will be elected on Monday, June 29. The candidate, the Rev. John C. Dorhauer, will give a speech outlining his vision for the denomination's future on Friday, June 26.
- The Youth and Young Adults @ General Synod 2015 program will have a special focus on service and action in the city. Participants will share an outdoor meal with members of Cleveland’s homeless community on Saturday, June 27, and will write letters on their empty meal bags to Ohio's congressional representatives sharing their concerns about hunger and homelessness.
- A community-wide worship service on Sunday, June 28, will draw an estimated 4,000 people to the Cleveland Convention Center.

#### **Media Availability:**

**News conferences will be held on Monday and Tuesday after business sessions. Advisories to come.** UCC executives and clergy will be available to speak to the media at that time.

To arrange an interview or media opportunity, contact Emily Schappacher at 216.736.2177 (office – available here until Monday, June 22), 216.571.8967 (cell), or [schappachere@ucc.org](mailto:schappachere@ucc.org).

***To register for General Synod, visit <http://www.generalsynod.org/press>. Please note that all working members of the press are required to preregister for General Synod and must have their press credentials with them at all times. There will be a designated area for press in the Plenary Hall, and reporters are requested to attend news conferences for information/questions on high-profile issues.***

**About the United Church of Christ:**

The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination with nearly 1 million members and more than 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American.

The UCC and its members are tireless advocates for social issues such as immigration reform, racial equality, LGBT rights, marriage equality, environmental protection and economic justice.