

1 The Executive Council recommends this resolution be sent to a committee of the General Synod

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3 **RESTRUCTURING OF CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES**
4 Submitted by the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ

5
6 A Prudential Resolution

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8 **SUMMARY**

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10 This resolution invites all settings of the United Church of Christ to engage in a broad and
11 purposeful dialogue about how to realign Conferences, and calls upon the Executive Council or
12 its successor body to return to the Thirtieth General Synod with a proposal for realignment.

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14 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

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16 The Church is birthed for mission. For the sake of its missional calling, the United Church of
17 Christ must look carefully and seriously at how many of our assets and resources are being
18 expended at the judicatory level. We are called upon to discern to what extent there is an
19 appropriate balance between meeting the needs of the world, for whose sake the mission is
20 undertaken, and meeting the administrative/oversight needs of the church. The wise stewardship
21 of our collective missional resources mandates at the very least a thorough examination of
22 whether or not the work required by our judicatory offices can be done more efficiently, and this
23 would include a possible restructuring of current Conference boundaries.

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25 **BACKGROUND**

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27 In recent years, and with very few exceptions, Conferences have been experiencing significant
28 reductions in their budgets and pledges from local churches. Continual cuts to staff and programs
29 have left some of those Conferences struggling to maintain a viable ministry to support the
30 mission of their local churches, to continue the work of the oversight of the United Church's
31 ministries, and to successfully nurture our churches through times of conflict and transition.
32 Emerging technologies, creative ways of sharing staff and resources, and a repurposing of
33 middle judicatory offices have the potential to save the denomination critical resources. It is hard
34 to imagine this happening without at least the possibility of restructuring Conference boundaries.
35 The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ gives General Synod the authority
36 to establish Conference Boundaries. It may be time for the church to think more creatively about
37 how to establish those boundaries. Alignment should be based less on the accident of geography,
38 and more intentionally on how to better serve the collective needs of our local churches and the
39 mission they engage in.

42 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

43
44 Whereas it is the constitutional responsibility of General Synod to set the boundaries of
45 Conference;

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47 and whereas the denomination has restructured twice since forming in 1957, both times reducing
48 the size of and expense to run the denomination for the sake of its missional calling but the
49 number and purpose of Conferences has since gone largely unexamined;

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51 and whereas there are serious questions about the viability of maintaining the cost of 38 middle
52 judicatory offices;

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54 and whereas it is the responsibility of the church in every age to wisely steward the missional
55 assets with which it has been entrusted;

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57 and whereas there is wide consensus among denominational leaders that more efficient
58 bureaucracies can be created by sharing various duties, responsibilities, and tasks across
59 Conference and National boundaries that currently exist;

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61 Therefore be it resolved:

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63 that the delegates of the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ call upon
64 the Executive Council or its successor body in the next biennium to develop a viable proposal for
65 restructuring Conference boundaries, and to bring that proposal to the next Synod;

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67 that no recommendation come to Synod without prior communication and dialogue with, and full
68 awareness of the governing boards of any Conferences that would be affected by the proposal;

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70 that the delegates to this General Synod invite all current Conferences, their member churches,
71 their Boards of Directors, and their staffs to participate in broad discussions about ways in which
72 their mission might be better served by partnering with, or proposing new Conference alignments
73 with, neighboring Conferences and encourage them to offer their own suggestions to the
74 Executive Council or its successor body about possible realignment of their boundaries.

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76 **FUNDING**

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

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81 **IMPLEMENTATION**

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