The Business Committee of the Thirty-first General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent directly to a previously established implementing body.

CALLING FOR PARTICIPATION WITH THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA THROUGH INCLUSIVE SCOUTING PROGRAMS

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by
First Congregational Church, Guilford, Connecticut, Connecticut Conference
First Plymouth Congregational Church, Englewood, Colorado, Rocky Mountain Conf.
First United Church of Oak Park, Oak Park, Illinois, Illinois Conference
Irvine United Congregational Church, Irvine, California, California-Nevada So. Conf.
Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Carlsbad, California, California-Nevada So. Conf.
United Church of Broomfield, Broomfield, Colorado, Rocky Mountain Conf.
United Church of Christ Petaluma, Petaluma, California, California-Nevada So. Conf.

SUMMARY
This resolution acknowledges the membership policy changes of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) enacted in 2013 and 2015, ending decades of discrimination against gay or bisexual youth and adult leaders and professional staff. This resolution reaffirms the work of the 24th General Synod to end discrimination through the resolution “The United Church of Christ and the Boy Scouts of America” and further calls for BSA to welcome all youth and adults without discriminating based on belief, faith, creed, race, ability, gender, gender identity, sex, or sexual orientation by the BSA. In the same way it urges the National Council of the BSA to strengthen its inclusive welcome to all youth members and adult leaders. The resolution calls on the United Church of Christ (UCC) through its members, authorized ministers, congregations, associations, conferences, national and other settings to support inclusive scouting programs, utilizing the UCC Scouting Working Group and other organizations that promote inclusive scouting.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE
The United Church of Christ and the Boy Scouts of America have a history of working together to shape our youth into mature and dedicated citizens. James West, the first Chief Scout Executive, was a long-time member and Christian Education Superintendent of the Mount Pleasant Congregational Church of Washington, D.C., which continues today as Westmoreland Congregational UCC, an Open and Affirming Congregation of the UCC.

Among BSA faith-based chartered partners, the UCC is the 7th largest supporter of BSA programs. UCC congregations serve more than 35,000 youth and their families in approximately
1100 units. Troop 3, chartered by the New England Congregational Church of Aurora, Illinois, is one such unit we welcome and support in our congregations. The New England Congregational Church, an Open and Affirming congregation of the UCC, has chartered Troop 3 continuously for 106 years, since the founding of BSA. The UCC affirms that the principles taught in the Scout Oath and Law are important values guiding the physical, emotional, and psychological development of youth, and are important in developing young people as servant leaders.

Biblical text that speaks to the importance of welcoming and inclusive scouting units include Jesus’ prayer, "That they may all be one." (John 17:21). Paul wrote, “The body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ….Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27). These texts speak to God’s love for all people.

The theological principle that has served as a foundation for the UCC’s extravagant welcome and inclusive ministries is found in the pronouncement adopted by the 10th General Synod in 1975, “Civil Liberties without Discrimination” which stated, “as a child of God, every person is endowed with worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside.” For years the BSA violated that principle and remained resolute in their policies of exclusion. Many in the United Church of Christ chose to step back from participation, including the national setting. However the policy changes of 2013 and 2015, while they could have gone further, have nevertheless opened the door for inclusive scouting.

The Open and Affirming movement of the UCC has taught us to live the theological principle of graceful engagement. It is consistent with a historical motto that finds resonance throughout the church and which creates the space for diversity, "In essentials–unity, in nonessentials–diversity, in all things–charity." Welcoming and inclusive scouting units embody these values, which so resonate with the core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love and justice….Even so, love and unity in the midst of our diversity are our greatest assets. Jesus’ prayer, “that they may all be one” (John 17:21) offers the guiding vision of the UCC and invites us to celebrate the gifts and graces of all God’s children.”

**TEXT OF THE MOTION**

WHEREAS, Jesus’ prayer, “that they may all be one” (John 17:21) offers the guiding vision of the United Church of Christ and invites us to celebrate the gifts and graces of all God’s children; and
WHEREAS, Paul wrote, “The body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ....Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27); and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith declares, “[God] calls us into [God’s] church ...to be [God’s] servant in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world.

WHEREAS, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has consistently called all settings of the church to be multiracial, multicultural, open and affirming, and accessible to all, proclaiming a gospel that welcomes all and affirms all; and

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America has offered generations of youth and adults opportunities to build friendships and foster mentoring relationships, develop leadership skills, and embody values that encourage a reverence for the earth and service on behalf of others; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ, through its members and local churches, have participated in the Boy Scouts of America at the local, regional, and national levels since its founding as members of units, by chartering and leading local units, by serving in volunteer positions, and by leading as professional Scouters; and

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America changed its membership policies in May, 2013, and July, 2015, by votes of its membership and executive board, ending their ban against youth and adult participation in Scouting based on sexual orientation and allowing religious chartering organizations the autonomy to set membership policies for adult leaders according to the organization’s values; and

WHEREAS, ending policies of discrimination is an important step to ending discrimination, yet ongoing work is required to create a culture of inclusion; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and Boy Scouts of America in October, 2015 renewed their relationship through execution of a Memorandum of Understanding.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that we, the delegates to the Thirty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ reaffirm our belief that discrimination against anyone based on belief, faith, creed, race, ability, gender, gender identity, sex, or sexual orientation is contrary to our understanding of the teachings of Christ; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we reaffirm the work of the members of the United Church of Christ in their efforts to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the
Boy Scouts of America with the resolution “The United Church of Christ and The Boy Scouts of America” approved by the 24th General Synod; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we direct the Collegium and encourage other settings of the church to urge the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America to strengthen its inclusive welcome to all youth and adults as members or leaders, respectively, regardless of belief, faith, creed, race, ability, gender, gender identity, sex, or sexual orientation; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call on the members of the United Church of Christ, local churches, Associations, Conferences, National, and other settings of the United Church of Christ to engage with inclusive scouting programs, and to actively support and promote non-discrimination in Scouting, and to develop and promote inclusive Scouting programs; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage the engagement of local churches of the United Church of Christ to utilize the expertise, assistance and resources available from the UCC Scouting Working Group and inclusive scouting associations, such as Scouts for Equality, for developing and strengthening inclusive Scouting programs; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call for the development of resources to assist congregations and other settings of the United Church of Christ to charter new and strengthen existing inclusive scouting units and urge conferences, associations and other settings of the United Church of Christ to make these resources available to their members, including through their various meetings, gatherings, and communications; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call on local churches to use inclusive Scouting programs as outreach to youth within the local church, as well as, their community; and

LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, that we invite authorized ministers and other qualified members within the United Church of Christ to provide leadership for inclusive scouting programs including chaplaincy in local, council or national scouting settings; and

**FUNDING**

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

**IMPLEMENTATION**

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