

1 The Business Committee of the Thirty-first General Synod has recommended this proposed
2 resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.
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5 **Bring Down the Wall in the Caribbean**

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7 **A Resolution of Witness**

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9 **Submitted by the Southern Conference**

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11 **SUMMARY**

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13 This resolution raises an awareness of the injustice and hardship the US embargo of Cuba
14 inflicts on the Cuban people. It also asks that UCC members advocate for US administrative
15 action and congressional legislation to secure full normalization between the US and Cuba as
16 soon as possible.
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18 **BACKGROUND**

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20 On some medieval maps, the phrase “Here be dragons” was written just beyond the
21 boundary of known exploration. For nearly six decades this image has applied to U.S. citizens’
22 perceptions of Cuba.

23 Our incomprehension and enmity have developed because of: a partial trade embargo
24 against Cuba announced by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1960; the rupture in diplomatic
25 relations in 1961, vividly symbolized by the shuttering of the U.S. and Cuban embassies in
26 Havana and Washington, respectively; the imposition in 1962 of a total trade embargo by
27 President John F. Kennedy; the passage by Congress and signing into law by President Bill
28 Clinton of the Helms-Burton Act of 1998, the reversal of which requires both congressional and
29 presidential agreement in a new law; all of which together have resulted in the effective
30 blockading of information about our nearest overseas neighbor and constitute the last remaining
31 vestige of the Cold War.¹

32 Clearly the time has come, indeed has long since passed, to tear down our own “Berlin
33 Wall” in the Caribbean.

34 Thankfully, over the past year and a half, the dismantling of that barrier between the
35 United States and Cuba has begun. Evidences of this thaw in bilateral relations include the joint
36 announcements of 17 December 2014, made concurrently by Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl
37 Castro, of the restoration of full diplomatic relations; the removal of Cuba from the U.S.
38 Department of State’s list of “state sponsors of terrorism” on 29 May 2015; and the
39 subsequent executive actions on the part of both governments to ease trade and travel
40 restrictions.
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42 **BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING**

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44 Such transforming initiatives are especially encouraging for those of us formed by a biblical
45 vision. Jesus’ mandate to love enemies is more than sentiment. It included feeding them (Prov.
46 25:21; Rom. 12:20). Jesus went so far as to say that worship, the act of adoration, is dependent

47 on the initiative of reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24). Indeed, the Apostle Paul considered the
48 ministry of reconciliation to be at the heart of our calling (2 Cor. 5:18).

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50 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

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52 WHEREAS, United Church of Christ (UCC) General Synods have previously urged this
53 diplomatic renewal with resolutions in the General Synods of 1979 and 1993, and the General
54 Council action of 1983; and

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56 WHEREAS, on 10 March of this year UCC General Minister and President Rev. Dr. John C.
57 Dorhauer co-signed a letter to President Barack Obama, with other Christian and Jewish leaders
58 in the U.S., expressing support for the president's historic trip to Cuba in March 2016, for the
59 reopening of the U.S. embassy in Havana, and for President Obama's executive actions easing
60 some of the travel and trade restrictions; and

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62 WHEREAS, respected international human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and
63 Amnesty International have long opposed the U.S. embargo of Cuba;

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65 WHEREAS, every year since 1992 the United Nations General Assembly has overwhelmingly
66 condemned the U.S. embargo of Cuba; and

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68 WHEREAS, recent polling indicates that 73 percent of all U.S. citizens (including 59 percent of
69 Republicans) favor ending the embargo;² and

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71 WHEREAS, 53 percent of Cuban Americans, traditionally the Cuban government's most fervent
72 critics, now favor ending the embargo, with only 31 percent wanting it continued;³ and

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74 WHEREAS, the governments of the United States and Cuba have resumed formal diplomatic
75 relations; President Obama has become the first sitting U.S. chief executive to visit Cuba in more
76 than 80 years, and has used his constitutionally authorized executive prerogative to ease some
77 trade and travel restrictions; and

78

79 WHEREAS, members of congregations belonging to the United Church of Christ in recent years
80 have initiated people-to-people connections between Christians here and in Cuba, resuming a
81 legacy of border crossings led by Rev. Theodore Braun, a longtime UCC pastor who beginning
82 in 1979 led 40 delegations of Christians from the U.S. for meetings with their sisters and brothers
83 in Cuba;

84

85 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the delegates to Thirty First General Synod of the
86 United Church of Christ give thanks to God for the progress made over the past year and a half
87 by the governments of Cuba and the United States toward the normalizing of diplomatic and
88 economic relations, and particularly applaud President Obama's initiative from the U.S. side in
89 giving high priority to the same; and

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91 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the delegates applaud the initiatives of UCC congregations
92 and others in developing friendships across the divide separating our countries, encourage

93 additional delegations from our churches to visit Cuba, and to invite and host Cuban clergy and
94 lay leaders to visit us, thereby strengthening our ties as sisters and brothers in Christ and
95 mutually encouraging one another to pursue the consensus of public opinion in both countries
96 needed to implement new political policies; and
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98 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the delegates encourage every setting of the United Church
99 of Christ to give priority attention to the history of Cuba, of U.S.-Cuba relations, and the life of
100 churches in Cuba; and
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102 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the delegates will continue to advocate for further U.S.
103 administrative actions and congressional legislation in order to secure the full normalization of
104 relations between our two countries, including the consideration and passage of current bills H.R.
105 664, The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act; H.R. 3238, The Cuba Trade Act of 2015; and H.R.
106 3687, The Cuba Agricultural Exports Act of 2015, and their companion bills in the U.S. Senate;
107 and
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109 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of
110 Christ heartily supports honest and respectful negotiation between our governments to restore
111 mutual dignity and to resolve political differences; and
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113 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of Christ
114 urges Christians in the U.S. to attend to the testimony of our Cuban brothers and sisters. Due to
115 political circumstances, for three generations the churches in Cuba have learned to live without
116 access to social privilege, a status we have long assumed, compromising our understanding of
117 the kind of authority granted under the Spirit's direction. "Not by might, nor by power, but by
118 my Spirit, says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). We stand in need of being evangelized anew.
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120 **FUNDING**

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

125 The Collegium of Officers, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the
126 United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.
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¹ For a summary history of U.S.-Cuban relations see
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba%E2%80%93United_States_relations.

² Growing Public Support for U.S. Ties With Cuba – And an End to the Trade Embargo,” Pew
Research Center, 21 July 2015 <http://www.people-press.org/2015/07/21/growing-public-support-for-u-s-ties-with-cuba-and-an-end-to-the-trade-embargo/>.

³ Bendixen & Amandi poll for the Miami Herald, 17 December 2015
<http://www.miamiherald.com/latest-news/article50333010.ece/binary/Read%20the%20full%20survey>.