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

The Disparity of Rights of Adoptees
To Access Birth Certificates for Adults

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the Connecticut Conference

SUMMARY

Some states do not allow adult adoptees access to their birth certificates. Consequently adult adoptees in those states are deprived of knowledge of their human story including ethnic ancestry, and genetic information which can affect certain health care decisions. This resolution both raises awareness of the issue and invites delegates from the applicable states to become informed advocates for adult adoptees in their states.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

Adult adoptees are our neighbors, and in some states face systemic discriminatory policies with regard to access to their own histories. Whenever we work to ensure equality among citizens, we both obey the commandment of Jesus to “love one another” and stand in the best of the tradition of the United Church of Christ.

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS justice, compassion and care are at the very heart of the life and ministry of Jesus, extended to all without distinction; and

WHEREAS our Biblical tradition proclaims this inclusiveness through the voice of the Apostle Paul: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 3:28, NRSV); and

WHEREAS national and conference settings of the United Church of Christ have repeatedly addressed situations and structures of exclusion and injustice, encouraging equal justice, equal civil rights, and equal standing before the law for all people, as a matter of moral witness; and

WHEREAS adoptees unable to access their original birth certificates may be unable to gain fuller knowledge of their medical histories and genetic information in order to make decisions about their health care throughout their lives, including care needed to save their lives; and
WHEREAS adoptees unable to access their original birth certificates may be unable to gain fuller knowledge of their ancestry and ethnicity, denying them a basic part of their human story and identity; and

WHEREAS the laws of some states make distinctions in the rights between adopted and non-adopted persons with regards to access to original birth information, (AK, KS, ME, NH, OR, & AL grant adoptees full access, RI, TN,414(414,413),(887,424) & IL grant access with minimal restrictions) therefore adoptees are not treated equally under the law; and

WHEREAS we affirm that providing for the physical, psychological, and emotional welfare of all persons, adoptees and non-adoptees without distinction, is the moral obligation of a just and compassionate society;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates of the 31st General Synod of the United Church of Christ, identify the difference in rights of adult adoptees as a human and civil rights issue; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we, the delegates of the 31st General Synod of the United Church of Christ pledge to carry this resolution to our respective congregations and Conferences so that where applicable, congregation members may become informed and engaged advocates for the rights of all persons to their original birth certificate.

FUNDING

Funding for the implementation of the resolution with 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.