The Business Committee of the Thirty-first General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent directly to the United Church of Christ Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST SETTINGS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FEDERAL CREDIT UNIONS

A Prudential Resolution

Submitted by: Chesapeake Association (Central Atlantic Conference)

Summary: In employing biblical-theological reasoning, building upon certain General Synod resolutions, and taking into account the basic socio-economic realities and structural financial institutions of our communities, this Resolution calls upon the various settings of the United Church of Christ conscientiously to explore establishing relationships with community development federal credit unions.

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding:

The United Church of Christ is a denomination of the poor and rich, the employed and unemployed. It is a church of people with large financial endowments as well as people who are left without food two days before payday. It is a church of people carrying platinum credit cards and people who use check cashing services at corner convenience stores. It is a church of widows who give their last two copper coins to their place of worship, yet also of people who just as quietly give fortunes. It strives to be a Body of Christ in which “all may be one” (John 17:21). It is a church that heeds St. Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians, “Those who do not share their bread with the needy are unworthy to receive the Lord’s Supper themselves” (1 Cor. 11:17-22). In developing financial relationships with community development federal credit unions (CDCUs), the various settings of the United Church of Christ will share the bread of their collective labor and the fruit of their monetary resources with communities intentionally served by CDCUs and therefore those most in need of financial resources. In so doing, UCC settings will join the financial results of their work with direct community development and empowerment actions in areas plagued by economic poverty, illiteracy, and injustice.

Jesus decry the stumbling blocks in our world (Matthew 18:7). Our banking institutions have largely become stumbling blocks to good living for our poorest citizens. Many traditional banks are unlikely to have the time or the mission to want to work with people in struggling financial situations. This leaves our poorest neighbors facing prohibitively expensive alternative financial means to meet their daily needs. As the writer James Baldwin noted, “Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor.” The cost of living is most difficult for those who are in areas of food and financial “deserts” in the middle of urban cities, abandoned by all mechanisms of commerce, where services as basic as check cashing and bill paying come with exorbitant costs that quickly eat away low-income paychecks. Payday lenders extract usurious fees. The few who use banking services often fall prey to banking fees.
that serve as barriers, including low-balance fees, service fees, check cashing fees, as well as to 
loans that either are unavailable because of credit history or come with dangerously high fees.

A federally chartered and government-insured CDCU is an opportunity to redeem these 
economic injustices and reveal “the kingdom of heaven among us” (Luke 17:21). A CDCU 
positions itself in communities that are most distressed, bringing needed services to those who 
can most benefit from them. Similar to banks, CDCUs make their income from providing loan 
services. Unlike banks, however, CDCUs operate at a low overhead so that they can intentionally 
provide fair and reasonable loan services, including mortgages, small-amount loans, and 
automobile loans, to low income households and to people with poor credit histories. By 
designating as a “community development” credit union, they focus on developing communities 
through financially empowering households, including those that have never benefited from 
banking services, through the provision of fair and reasonable financial services as well as 
educational products that help households take control of their financial future. CDCUs are 
dedicated to improving communities through financial empowerment and education.

UCC settings can help CDCUs achieve their goals. Instead of money becoming an idol and a 
means unto itself (Matthew 6:24), UCC assets held by CDCUs can be used to create 
relationships that heal the injustices and bridge the divides money historically has helped create. 
UCC settings using CDCU financial services ensure that financial resources are invested locally. 
No CDCU assets go toward the maintenance of systemic inequality in risky global stock market 
speculation (a practice that characterizes many of our leading banks), nor are assets invested in 
morally and ethically questionable companies and practices. The assets of a credit union can only 
be reinvested through direct loans to its members. Furthermore, UCC business accounts benefit 
CDCUs because the CDCUs provide banking and loan services to an organization that has a 
reasonably sound financial basis and has established goodwill in the community. Members of 
UCC congregations who use CDCU financial services can also further the mission of their 
CDCUs through the use of their services and, through volunteering with their CDCUs, may help 
expand that mission. Indeed, unlike banks, many CDCUs rely on volunteer efforts to assist in 
expanding their mission to their communities.

In sum, our partnership with a community development credit union is not an act of charity: it is 
a tangible way to redeem systemic economic injustice, making it a prophetic act of community 
empowerment.

Partnership with a CDCU is also a natural progression of UCC General Synod resolutions:

- Putting Our Money Where Our Values Are: Evaluating Church Financial 
  Relationships, GS XXVIII, 2011. A resolution submitted by the Central Atlantic Conference, it 
calls on all settings of the UCC to examine faithfully the activities of financial institutions with 
whom they have relationships.

- Ministering to Those Struggling and Suffering in The Troubled Economy: A 
  Resolution of Witness, GS XXVII, 2009. A resolution submitted by the Michigan Conference at 
the height of the recent economic crisis, it calls upon UCC settings to seek ways to create just 
economic initiatives for the poor and suffering.

- A Faithful Response: Calling for a More Just, Humane Direction for Economic 
  Globalization, GS XXIV, 2003. “Christian faith asserts that the purpose of all economic activity
is not an ever-expanding economy and the greater availability of goods and services. Rather, our
faith points us toward a different end: wholeness for all God’s creation, including the people,
animals, plants, and the environment in which God intends for all to flourish. In this value
system, basic material resources—sufficient and nutritious food to eat, safe water to drink,
adequate housing, and access to education and health care—contribute fundamentally to
wholeness and must be the primary goal of economic activity. Moreover, faith compels a system
of governance where all have voice and respect, physical safety, economic security, and the
ability to contribute to society through dignified and honored work. Our faith champions these
goals of economic development.”

-**Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice**, GS XVIII Pronouncement, 1989. This
resolution affirms "that the struggle to achieve economic justice for all of God’s people is an
imperative of the Christian faith, a confession that we have done too little to correct the
economic injustices of our nation and the world … [and] a statement of our commitment to
transform the structures of church and society by working for economic justice.”

**The Text of the Resolution:**

WHEREAS, God has called us to seek justice, care for the poor, and love our neighbor;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has demonstrated a historic arc toward the creation of
institutions that alleviate the causes of economic injustice;

WHEREAS, local churches and ministries of the United Church of Christ, including the
Chesapeake Association, have identified an interest in their own churches, ministries, and
communities for the services of a community development credit union;

WHEREAS, UCC churches, Associations, Conferences, and ministries that have identified an
economic justice need in the communities which they serve, such as the need for financial
services to the historically underbanked or unbanked, as well as to victims of extortionate
alternative financial-service industry models such as payday lenders, and other areas, are
encouraged either to become member institutions of a federally chartered community
development credit union, thus ensuring that their financial assets are being used to help address
economic justice issues, or to expand their already existing connections with community
development credit unions to further credit union economic justice initiatives;

WHEREAS, the current working relationship between the Chesapeake Association and a
community development credit union serves as an example that can inspire and be used by UCC
settings in communities nationwide;

WHEREAS, recognizing that UCC members, staff, and clergy are sometimes called by the
Spirit to different locations and could benefit from a nationwide network of community
development credit unions with already-established relationships with UCC settings that connect
them to financial services rooted in their new community as well as share similar justice-minded
values; and
WHEREAS, ecumenical partners have expressed an interest in joining in this effort;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thirty-First General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

CALLS for each setting of the United Church of Christ to explore establishing a relationship with a federally chartered community development credit union that faithfully seeks to serve those not only in our churches but also in areas of most urgent economic need in our communities;

URGES all settings of the United Church of Christ to participate in the promotion and expansion of community development credit unions that develop financial relationships with settings in the United Church of Christ; and

ASKS the national setting of the United Church of Christ to explore a community development credit union relationship that can serve UCC settings nationwide that would otherwise have no access to a community development credit union.

Funding:

The 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.

---

1 James Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem” in Esquire (July 1960); republished in Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son (1961)