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

ON RECOGNIZING AND STUDYING GUN VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries

SUMMARY

This resolution urges the recognition of gun violence as a public health emergency and calls on the Congress of the United States to lift its gun-research restrictions on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). By allowing research on the increasing prevalence of gun violence and death, the CDC can make recommendations regarding gun safety, training and storage methods. These recommendations will then lead to a reduction in gun deaths, especially for the marginalized population.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

“Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’” (John 18:37-38). As followers of a truth-seeking, truth speaking Christ, we have a responsibility to search for informed, reasoned and rational solutions to the problems that plague our nation and world. People of faith and goodwill cannot willingly avoid the best possible solutions when it comes to protecting ourselves and our neighbors from the horrendous rates of gun violence.

TEXT OF THE MOTION

Whereas, in 1996 at the urging of the National Rifle Association, the Congress of the United States has prevented federal money from being spent on researching gun violence and has actively restricted the nation’s principal public health agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from looking into why the United States has five times the rate of gun deaths per year than most European countries; and

Whereas, in October 2015 a group of 110 U.S. Representatives, led by U.S. Rep. David Price (D-N.C.), called on House of Representatives leaders “to reject short-sighted and unnecessary riders that freeze gun violence research,” and that the United States response to the increasing gun-violence, while debated, “should be informed by sound scientific evidence;” and

Whereas, in June 2016 the American Medical Association adopted a position that the United States is facing a ‘public health crisis in gun violence’ that requires a comprehensive public
health response and solution and will actively lobby Congress to overturn the restrictions on the
CDC; and

Whereas, the CDC has successfully led on research related to many non-medical public health
emergencies — such as automobile safety, safeguards related to children’s toys, and tobacco
education — that has resulted in significantly reduced rates of senseless death and injury; and
Whereas, the United Church of Christ as reaffirmed many times its longstanding commitments to
both social justice and public health,

Therefore be it resolved, that the Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of Christ
urges the recognition of gun violence as a public health emergency with gun deaths expected to
reach 15,000 by the end of 2016;

Be it further resolved that the Thirty First General Synod encourages the Congress of the United
States to reinstate federal funding for scientific research of gun violence by the Centers for
Disease Control and Prevention and to openly debate methods to improve gun safety, training
and storage to reduce gun deaths;

Be it finally resolved that the Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges
members and other settings of the United Church of Christ to actively speak out against
restrictive legislation that seeks to silence or stifle the scientific and medical community from
providing sound methods to save and improve the lives of all of God’s people.

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.