

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.

3 **Affirming and Supporting the Authorized Ministries of Under-represented Clergy in Local**  
4 **Congregations: A Call for Greater Representation and Economic Justice**

5 **A Prudential Resolution**

6 **Submitted by the Central Atlantic Conference**

7 **Summary:**

8 In employing biblical-theological reasoning and taking into account the various barriers that have  
9 been erected against the ministries of under-represented groups (Pacific Islanders and Asian  
10 Americans, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinx, Indigenous People/Native Americans, the  
11 LGBTQ community, persons with disabilities, and women), this resolution calls upon various  
12 settings of the United Church of Christ (UCC) to establish priorities, strategies, and goals  
13 regarding the pastoral search and call process that both affirm these ministries and seek to  
14 increase their representation in the pulpits of local congregations in the UCC. The resolution also  
15 calls for the crafting of strategies to ensure fair and equitable compensation packages for all  
16 authorized ministers but especially for clergy members from under-represented groups. In so  
17 doing, the resolution makes certain calls upon: the candidates for the called positions of UCC  
18 congregations; the congregations of the UCC; the search committees of the UCC congregations;  
19 those responsible for the administration and oversight of the Conferences' search and call  
20 processes; the Church and Ministry Committees of the Associations of the Conferences; the  
21 Associations of the Conferences; the UCC's Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization  
22 team (MESA); the Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD); the Boards of Directors of  
23 the Conferences; and the UCC's national Board of Directors.

24 **Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding:**

25 The Bible affirms that God cares for and values all humankind because all persons are created in  
26 God's own image (Genesis 1:27a). It likewise affirms that differences such as race or gender are  
27 of no consequence (Gal. 3:28) because we are all to be one in Christ (John 17:20-23; 1 Cor.  
28 12:12). We also recognize that Jesus repeatedly went out of his way to acknowledge, affirm, and  
29 hold up as examples persons on the margins, persons often excluded, regarded with contempt,  
30 and ignored by society. And we read in Paul's letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12:4-11) and  
31 Ephesians (Eph. 4:11-13) encouragement to recognize, celebrate, and exercise the wide variety  
32 of gifts of all God's people.

33 In attending carefully and conscientiously to the witness of scripture, the United Church of  
34 Christ is a denomination that has welcomed, affirmed, and encouraged all manner of diversity  
35 among its members and in its beliefs from its very beginnings. At its First General Synod (1957),

36 the newly formed denomination adopted the goal of establishing “institutional policies  
37 throughout the UCC so that all elements of its structure demonstrate the commitment to racial  
38 justice and the humanization of man [sic]” as well as the objective of urging “churches and  
39 members, church-related institutions, Conferences, Instrumentalities and the Executive Council  
40 to . . . practice racial pluralism” and to “elect boards of directors and employ staff so that Blacks,  
41 American Indians, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other racial minorities will be represented in  
42 such numbers and manner as to assure effective participation in policy and program.” Later, at its  
43 Nineteenth General Synod (1993), a resolution was adopted which called for the UCC “in all its  
44 settings” to become a truly multiracial and multicultural church.

45 In 2003, at its Twenty-third General Synod, in acknowledgement of continuing “practices of  
46 exclusion” in congregations that “comfortably” remained largely racially segregated, a resolution  
47 was passed calling for a “renewed battle against racism.” Likewise, since 1985, various  
48 resolutions have been adopted affirming gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people and their  
49 ministries in the UCC. Congregations have also been urged to call as clergy “persons with  
50 disabilities” in resolutions put forward at General Synods in 1977, 1985, 1995, and 1999.

51 On the other hand, we also recognize and acknowledge that we are often held back from fully  
52 exercising our diverse God-given gifts by the sin/bondage/heritage of white, male, heterosexual,  
53 cisgender, and/or able-bodied privilege and the implicit bias which results from its manifestation  
54 and employment. Such (often unspoken) privilege prevents us from seeing how we both as lay  
55 members of congregations and as pastors who guide and lead those congregations often cling to  
56 a norm, standard, and ideal that is oppressive and unjust. While none of the traits or marks of  
57 privilege may be named explicitly in a church’s stated desiderata of a pastor, they are all too  
58 often part of the unstated expectations, or implicit bias, of its authorized ministerial search  
59 processes. It is this phenomenon that this resolution is attempting to overturn and transform by  
60 offering specific strategies and goals regarding the search and call process for pastors – strategies  
61 and goals that will allow all congregations to enjoy the diverse gifts and teachings of a greater  
62 variety of individuals and bring a new level of awareness and intention to the denomination’s  
63 stated principle and goal of becoming a multiracial and multicultural church.

64 **The Text of the Resolution:**

65 WHEREAS, “God created humankind in God’s image,” so that we human beings have been  
66 gifted to become co-creators with the divine and are thus ultimately responsible for what we are  
67 to make of our own lives together (Genesis 1:27a [NRSV]);

68 WHEREAS, our life together means that “we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and  
69 individually we are members one of another,” so that we are called by God to create a beloved  
70 community of mutuality whereby each person can be the benefactor and beneficiary of all  
71 persons and therefore can realize his or her full humanity (Romans 12:5 [NRSV]);

72 WHEREAS, we acknowledge and confess that it is not right to disregard this call and thereby  
73 prevent all God's children from becoming fully who they are created to be;

74 WHEREAS, as God's children we know that we must do more to love others as we do ourselves  
75 and must acknowledge that God has given us the beauty and magnificence of the full spectrum of  
76 race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, degree of ableness, and gender identity and expression in our  
77 world and that this spectrum must be more fully represented in the pulpits of our churches;

78 WHEREAS, we acknowledge and confess that in our fractured world racism, ethnocentrism,  
79 sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and cisgender bias have vitiated our attempts to form the beloved  
80 community and are therefore an affront to God as well as to our oneness in Jesus Christ, in which  
81 there is to be "no longer Jew or Greek . . . slave or free . . . male and female" (Galatians 3:28a  
82 [NRSV]);

83 WHEREAS, we are called accordingly to denounce institutional structures that separate God's  
84 people based upon differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, degree of ableness,  
85 and gender identity and expression;

86 WHEREAS, we are further called to dismantle institutional structures and shadow ministries that  
87 – by intention or effect – construct or perpetuate systems and processes that objectify, exclude,  
88 and divide persons, as well as those that establish and propagate prejudices or maintain the status  
89 quo, including "pulpit requirements" that result in the installation of pastors and leaders who  
90 most closely resemble the congregations whom they serve and thereby prevent those same  
91 congregations from enjoying the gift of diversity;

92 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ at its Eleventh General Synod (1977), its Thirteenth  
93 General Synod (1981), its Fifteenth General Synod (1985), and its Twentieth General Synod  
94 (1995) urged all settings to employ "persons with disabilities," including clergy, and at its  
95 Twenty-Second General Synod (1999) adopted a resolution entitled "The Calling of Clergy with  
96 Disabilities";

97 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ at its Fifteenth General Synod (1985) adopted a  
98 resolution "Calling on UCC Congregations to Declare Themselves Open and Affirming" and at  
99 its Eighteenth General Synod (1991) adopted a resolution "Affirming Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual  
100 Persons and their Ministries";

101 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ at its Nineteenth General Synod (1993) adopted a  
102 resolution which called upon the UCC in all its settings to become a truly multiracial and  
103 multicultural church;

104 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ at its Twenty-Fourth General Synod (2003) adopted a  
105 resolution entitled "Affirming the Participation and Ministry of Transgender Peoples within the  
106 UCC and Supporting their Civil and Human Rights," which, *inter alia*, encourages all UCC

107 congregations “to welcome transgender people into membership, ministry, and full  
108 participation”;

109 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ at its Twenty-Second General Synod (1999) adopted,  
110 as part of a resolution entitled “Fair and Just Compensation,” a report to the Twenty-First  
111 General Synod that called for the same “attention and vigilance . . . to the fair and just treatment  
112 of persons called and employed by various settings of the UCC” as the denomination  
113 demonstrates “in the workplaces of society”;

114 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ at its Twenty-Second General Synod (1999) adopted a  
115 resolution entitled “Pastoral Compensation” that called for an immediate review of compensation  
116 plans for clergy serving Native American congregations and for recommendations to be made to  
117 the Twenty-Third General Synod “to correct the existing disparities in compensation for clergy  
118 serving American Indian congregations”;

119 WHEREAS, the historic social justice advocacy of the UCC – as witnessed by the  
120 aforementioned resolutions – has sought to manifest itself in multiple ways to create truly  
121 emancipative change that is inspired by the biblical writings, the prophets, the teachings and life  
122 of Jesus, the historic cloud of witnesses to the Christian faith, and the leaders of transformational  
123 movements for universal peace, justice, and equality, and that is enacted in the light of God’s  
124 unbounded love for all creation;

125 WHEREAS, UCC theology and polity permit its different ministries to witness and advocate in  
126 ways that are faithful to the Christian gospel, fitting to their unique gifts, and functional in their  
127 particular contexts;

128 WHEREAS, diversity in ministry is a good and a blessing, and just as it has been facilitated by  
129 the establishment of clear and attainable pathways to ordination for members of under-  
130 represented groups, so also it must be encouraged by the enactment of pro-active policies  
131 designed by congregational search committees to engage such individuals in the congregational  
132 search process;

133 WHEREAS, the generally low percentages of clergy from under-represented groups in the  
134 denomination’s solo and senior pastorates<sup>1</sup> indicate there is still much work to be done in  
135 realizing a truly representative, just, and inclusive ordained ministry in our churches;

136 WHEREAS, the collection, tracking, reporting, and analysis of data regarding the composition  
137 and compensation of, as well as the complexion of candidacy pools for, authorized ministerial  
138 positions in local churches have been incomplete and/or inconsistent;

139 WHEREAS, there are no current means to certify that there is fair application of compensation  
140 guidelines; and

141 WHEREAS, experience has taught us that clergy from under-represented groups are often paid  
142 less than their counterparts in comparable ministerial settings, resulting in congregational-  
143 serving UCC clergy from under-represented groups often having less in their pension funds for  
144 retirement than those counterparts;

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

147 1) UCC congregations to carry out search processes for their authorized ministers, as well as to  
148 examine and – if need be – amend or emend their personnel policies, in ways that heed the Holy  
149 Spirit’s call for inclusiveness and justice;

150 2) UCC congregations to heed that call not only by eliminating explicit and implicit policies and  
151 procedures that exclude candidates to authorized ministerial positions on the basis of race,  
152 ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity and expression, but also –  
153 and perhaps more importantly – by implementing policies and procedures, including statements  
154 in their church profiles, that welcome and include the widest diversity of candidates possible;

155 3) UCC congregations, through open dialogue and discussion, to seek to identify and eliminate  
156 barriers to authorized ministry that are based upon institutional bias;

157 4) the search committees of UCC congregations to interview persons from under-represented  
158 groups for all their authorized ministerial positions;

159 5) each authorized ministerial search committee of a UCC congregation to certify to those  
160 responsible for the administration and oversight of its Conference’s search and call process that  
161 there is diversity of race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or degree of ableness to the extent that  
162 such can be and is known in the candidacy pool beginning at the first interview stage, and also to  
163 certify that a diversity of candidates has been or will be interviewed for the authorized  
164 ministerial position, and that, where there is a lack of such diversity, each authorized ministerial  
165 search committee of a UCC congregation will work with those responsible for the administration  
166 and oversight of its Conference’s search and call process to identify such candidates;

167 6) the candidates for authorized ministry in a local church to be in contact with their  
168 Conference’s office, as well as those responsible for the administration and oversight of that  
169 Conference’s search and call process to assist such candidates as they prepare for the search  
170 interview process;

171 7) UCC congregations to commit to comparable compensation and promotion of its authorized  
172 ministers who have similar qualifications and responsibilities, regardless of their race, ethnicity,  
173 sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, or degree of ableness, and to be  
174 assisted in this endeavor by attending and adhering closely to their Conference’s compensation  
175 guidelines;

176 8) the many UCC Conference and Association committees on ministry, the UCC's Ministerial  
177 Excellence, Support and Authorization Team (MESA), and those responsible for the  
178 administration and oversight of the Conferences' search and call processes to develop strategies  
179 to ensure fair and equitable compensation packages and to explore ways in which local  
180 congregations can certify that their compensation package(s) are meeting certain minimum  
181 standards, including those related to benefits and pensions;

182 9) the Boards of Directors of the Conferences, in consultation with the Associations of the  
183 Conferences, to continue to acknowledge, examine, and help address the economic challenges  
184 facing authorized ministers in the UCC;

185 10) those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call  
186 process to encourage the inclusion of members of under-represented groups in their Conference's  
187 local church authorized ministerial searches, and to specify a means to provide leadership,  
188 guidance, and training, including inclusion strategies and practices, to their local church search  
189 committees in order that they may seriously consider and call diverse authorized ministerial  
190 leadership;

191 11) those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call  
192 process to identify a means to collect and disseminate annual demographic data related to all  
193 local church authorized ministers in their Conference beginning no later than 2018;

194 12) those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call  
195 process to develop and implement a strategic plan, based upon the initial demographic data  
196 collected, that sets out specific diversity goals and objectives as a means of informing and  
197 alerting the congregations of their Conference about best practices in creating opportunities and  
198 meeting expectations for greater inclusion, comparable compensation, and equitable promotion  
199 of individuals from under-represented groups with respect to local church authorized ministerial  
200 positions;

201 13) those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call  
202 process to deliver to their Board of Directors copies of the aforementioned strategic plans within  
203 six (6) months of the collection of the initial demographic data;

204 14) the Associations of a Conference to assist in encouraging and supporting the progress of their  
205 local congregations in reaching these specified diversity goals and objectives and the Board of  
206 Directors of each Conference to certify to its apposite Conference Annual Meeting the status of  
207 that progress;

208 15) the UCC's Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) and the UCC's Ministerial  
209 Excellence, Support and Authorization team (MESA) to develop a strategic plan to collect  
210 (through, among other means, requests for annual reports/reviews of clergy employment and  
211 compensation) data by race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and degree

212 of ableness, such data to include composition at the assistant, associate, senior, and solo pastor  
213 levels, comparative compensation, and representation in selection pools – all in order to track  
214 and measure the realization of a truly representative, just, and inclusive ordained ministry in our  
215 churches; and

216 16) the Board of Directors of the UCC to send a copy of this resolution to the UCC’s Center for  
217 Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) and to the UCC’s Ministerial Excellence, Support and  
218 Authorization team (MESA).

219 **Funding:**

220 The funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the  
221 overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

222 **Implementation:**

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

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<sup>i</sup> This is illustrated by the fact that active female ordained ministers account for over two-thirds [70.3%] of the denomination’s associate and assistant pastors but only one-third of its solo and senior pastors. *The United Church of Christ: A Statistical Profile – with reflection/discussion questions for church leaders (Fall 2015)*, Research from the UCC Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD), p.19.