

1 **Ministering to Those Struggling and Suffering in The Troubled Economy**

2 A Resolution of Witness

3 **APPROVED**

4 Submitted By the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ,
5 at the Michigan Conference UCC, Annual Meeting June 20, 2009

6
7 Summary

8
9 Our Christian faith compels on us to be good neighbors to those in need. Today, especially in
10 response to the problems issuing from the national and global recession, the church is called on
11 to reach out to those who have been adversely affected in the troubled economy. As the 27th
12 General Synod of the United Church of Christ convenes in Grand Rapids, Michigan in June of
13 2009, the Michigan Conference of the U.C.C. calls on the General Synod to be in prayer with all
14 those who are suffering in these times, and in particular in recognition of the fact that the people
15 of Michigan are among those who have been most severely affected by the crisis. Furthermore,
16 this resolution asks the 27th General Synod to call on the national bodies of the U.C.C. and its
17 Conferences, Associations and local churches to envision, encourage, support and strengthen
18 outreach ministries that serve those in distress due to issues such as unemployment, bankruptcy,
19 dislocation, hunger, illness, and financial problems.

20
21 Biblical and Theological Foundation

22
23 As people of the Book, Christians have always understood that concern for the well-being of
24 others is fundamental to the nature of God and the moral character to be nourished in God's
25 people. Biblical examples can be found in every saga of salvation history. It was God who
26 testified to Moses, "I have observed the misery of my people... Indeed, I know their sufferings
27 and I have come down to deliver them..." (Exodus 3:7,8) During the exodus sojourn, God
28 instructed the Hebrews to designate six cities as "cities of refuge" where the refugee could find
29 safe haven. (Numbers 35:9-15) The ideal practice of designating every 50th year a time of
30 jubilee, as expressed in the Leviticus codes, mandated that debt be cancelled and land released
31 and returned to the original owners. (Leviticus 25).

32
33 Psalm 146 declared that God 'watches over the strangers and upholds the orphan and the
34 widow.'" (v. 9)

35 The prophets applied this covenant of care to all of Israel calling for distributive justice and
36 demonstrated equity from the greatest to the least. Jeremiah was ashamed that so many of the
37 people "from the least to the greatest of them... is greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest
38 everyone deals falsely." (6:13) Amos spoke of establishing justice in the gates of the cities
39 (5:15) and declared that justice must roll down like waters. (5:24). Isaiah was inspired to call for
40 the renewal of Israel's faithfulness after its captivity, based on the rules of justice and mercy:

41
42 If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking
43 of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
44 then your light shall rise in the darkness... Your ancient ruins will be rebuilt; you
45 shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer
46 of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. (58:9b – 12)

1
2 Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) was one of Christ's most memorable
3 examples of a great reversal in consciousness. Debating who was or who was not a neighbor had
4 no merit. Instead the work of the faithful one is to be the caring one who comes to the aid of
5 anyone on one's path. Jesus path was the way of love as the good neighbor for all whether friend
6 or enemy. In one of his final teachings, the story of the final judgment (Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus
7 made these teachings tangible in equating eternal blessings with direct care and concern for the
8 hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned.

9 This good news was practiced in the early church even as the Acts of the Apostles described the
10 community as having one heart and mind so that no one was in need. (4:32-35) In the letter of
11 James, this apostle of the early church declared that faith without works is dead and wrote of
12 caring for the poor, homeless, and hungry as the real work of the church. (2:14-18) Paul, in his
13 1st letter to the Corinthians suggested that those who would not share their bread with the needy
14 in the community of faith were not worthy to receive the Lord's Supper themselves. (11:17-22)

15
16 In the history of the church and the heritage of the United Church of Christ concern for the
17 health, welfare, and safety of others has been great. Schools, hospitals, homes for the aged,
18 human service agencies, orphanages, day care centers, pre-schools, community development
19 organizations, shelters, food banks and many additional ministries have helped define the way of
20 faithfulness and make Christ's spirit known generation after generation. The pursuit of social
21 justice, political action and advocacy have likewise brought Christ's voice into the public arena
22 to shape a more just society.

23
24 However, today there are economic and human welfare problems facing people that are among
25 the greatest in many years. These issues are among the worst since the great depression. The
26 church is called to respond in prayer, spiritual and congregational refreshment, in human service,
27 and in social action. Even as social justice is pursued, because the problems are unprecedented in
28 these days the church is compelled to reach out to those in need with equally compelling
29 urgency.

30 31 The Resolution

32
33 **Whereas**, the nation is facing economic problems of crisis proportions;

34
35 **Whereas**, the General Synod is meeting in Michigan, whose citizens are among the most
36 adversely affected, with the loss of 700,000 jobs in the last seven years, with the highest
37 unemployment rate in the nation and with metropolitan areas among the most distressed in the
38 nation;

39
40 **Whereas**, people everywhere are losing jobs, being forced into foreclosure on homes, carrying
41 heavy debts, going without health insurance, seeing retirement savings disappear, and facing
42 poverty, dislocation and hunger;

1 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the **Michigan Conference of the U.C.C. calls on the** 27th
2 General Synod **to** be in prayer and solidarity with those who struggle and are suffering due to the
3 nation's economic crisis.

4
5 **Be it further resolved** that the **27th General** Synod, **it is** meeting in the State of Michigan,
6 **recognizes it is** among those who are bearing especially heavy burdens in the economic crisis,
7 and pledges to hold these people, and all those adversely affected, in **their its** prayers.

8
9 **Be it further resolved** that the **27th General** Synod asks the national bodies of the **U.C.C.**
10 **United Church of Christ, and** its Conferences, Associations and local churches to undertake
11 renewed efforts to envision, encourage, support, and strengthen spiritual refreshment and
12 outreach ministries that serve those in distress due to issues such as unemployment, bankruptcy,
13 dislocation, hunger, illness, and financial problems. To that end the following actions are
14 encouraged:

- 15 1. **That the Local Church Ministries of the U.C.C. United Church of Christ at the**
16 **national setting continue to** develop a web-based clearing house describing a full
17 spectrum of human service and outreach ministries and programs that **conferences,**
18 **associations, and local churches** are **pursuing being and may be pursued or and**
19 **might be** duplicated throughout the **Conferences, Associations and local churches of**
20 **our the U.C.C. United Church of Christ** in order to help and serve people who are
21 struggling and suffering in the economic crisis.
- 22 2. That each congregation in the **U.C.C. United Church of Christ** be urged to respond to
23 the economic crisis by implementing additional ministries and programs for the
24 unemployed, dislocated, indebted, hungry, and distressed in their churches and
25 communities.
- 26 3. That each congregation in the **U.C.C. United Church of Christ** be urged to undertake
27 teaching ministries that encourage the adoption of simpler, just, debt-free, and sustainable
28 lifestyles for those in the churches and communities.

29
30 **Be it finally resolved** that this resolution of witness, calling for an increase in direct and
31 charitable actions to serve those who are struggling and suffering in the current economic crisis,
32 also recognizes and supports the **mandate past and ongoing work** of the national bodies of the
33 **U.C.C. United Church of Christ** and its Conferences, Associations and local churches to seek
34 social justice through political action and advocacy to **likewise** bring Christ's voice into the
35 public arena to shape a more just society **and global economic system.**

36 Funding

37
38
39 Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
40 mandates of the affected agencies and funds available.

41 Implementation

42
43
44 **Local Church Ministries:** The Proclamation, Identity, and Communication Ministry of the
45 Office of General Ministries; and Justice and Witness Ministries are requested to collaborate and
46 implement this resolution.