RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN ALL CHURCH OFFERING FOR SUPPORTING
THE EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES OF MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT PREPARING
FOR AUTHORIZED MINISTRY OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Approved As Amended

A Prudential Resolution

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS, God provides for God’s church by calling and gifting persons for ministry in a
variety of ways, including pastoral leadership for the church itself;

WHEREAS, the church participates in this providence of God by equipping and authorizing the
ministries of some of its called and gifted members through theological education and ordination
or commissioning;

WHEREAS, the well-being of the church of Jesus Christ, and particularly of each local church,
is enhanced by calling faithful, educated and competent pastors, teachers and other leaders, and
is jeopardized by the unavailability of such leadership;

WHEREAS, the church has historically provided for its leadership needs through institutions of
theological-pastoral education;

WHEREAS, General Synod III phased out national, direct support to seminaries and called upon
Conferences and local churches to assume this responsibility; and General Synod X urged each
local church to support the seven closely related (now the seven seminaries of the United Church
of Christ) seminary or seminaries in its region at a level equivalent to two percent of its operating
budget, but few local churches have done so;

WHEREAS, the cost of educating persons for ministerial leadership has gradually shifted from
the church itself to the persons themselves, and, inclusive of living expenses, has increased to
$24,000 per year and more to many seminarians;

WHEREAS, many of the current generation of seminary graduates have borrowed large sums of
money—often $30,000 to $50,000 in addition to any undergraduate student loans still being
carried—to complete their theological education and one seminary’s average student loan for the
year 1996-97 alone was $10,200;

WHEREAS, indebted seminary graduates must seek starting salaries sufficient to enable debt
repayment on top of costs of living, while the salaries offered by many local churches are
marginal at best and inadequate to do so, and these local churches are increasingly hard-pressed
to finance even marginally-paid leadership;
WHEREAS, these trends point toward a dearth of church leadership, with only wealthy persons being able to afford to answer God’s call to full-time leadership and only wealthy churches being able to call them;

WHEREAS, the fund-raising efforts of the seminaries of the United Church of Christ and of the Make A Difference Campaign, although providing some increase in scholarship resources, have not been sufficient to stave off these trends;

WHEREAS, all the previous whereas clauses were taken directly from the action of the Twenty-first General Synod “Prevention and Reduction of Seminarians’ Educational Debt” (97GS40) and have not been sufficiently addressed;

WHEREAS, the multiple paths of ministry provide for greater diversity of educational preparation but do not eliminate the need for financial support for members in discernment;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests the Collegium of Officers of the United Church of Christ to develop a plan and an implementation schedule for an annual all-church offering or other possible funding initiatives to provide tuition assistance for theological education for members in discernment with associations of the United Church of Christ.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recommends that the Collegium of officers of the United Church of Christ explore the feasibility of offering low-interest loans to United Church of Christ members in discernment with a report delivered to the Thirtieth General Synod.

Be it further resolved that the Collegium be requested to present an actionable plan as quickly as possible and no later than the 30th General Synod in 2015.

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.