

03-GS-39 VOTED: The Twenty-fourth General Synod adopts the resolution, “Affirming the Participation and Ministry of Transgender People Within the United Church of Christ and Supporting Their Civil and Human Rights.”

**AFFIRMING THE PARTICIPATION AND MINISTRY OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE WITHIN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND SUPPORTING THEIR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, God has brought forth human beings as creatures who are male, female, and sometimes dramatically or subtly a complex mix of male and female in their bodies; and

WHEREAS, human cultures have created a broad diversity of roles for men and women, and have sometimes created roles for people named as neither man nor woman often revered and respected roles; and

WHEREAS, rules of appearance in the Bible, such as in Deuteronomy 22:5, are certainly among the rules criticized by Jesus as focused on outward conformity rather than inward integrity grounded in the acceptance of God’s love; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous biblical affirmations of the goodness of creation and the love of God for all people, including Genesis 1, Psalm 139, John 1: 1-5, and Acts 10: 34-43; and

WHEREAS, Galatians 3: 26-29 calls on those who are baptized to put on Christ like a garment and to look past human divisions to become one person in Christ; and

WHEREAS, transgender and intersexual people are currently offering valuable ministry within the United Church of Christ, both as lay people and as clergy; and

WHEREAS, transgender people are recognized within the constitution of the United Church of Christ as appropriately sharing in the guidance of the national expression of the United Church of Christ (as part of the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Concerns); and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ in numerous program activities in all expressions of the church has affirmed the positive virtues carried by men within traditional cultures, by women within traditional cultures, while also calling for the transformation of gender roles that are oppressive of men or women, or otherwise not fully reflective of Christian values; and

WHEREAS, Christian transgender people have sometimes experienced rejection and non-acceptance within some expressions of the United Church of Christ and in other expressions of Christ’s Church, and are in need of a welcoming Christian community where they are valued as Christian people, and

WHEREAS, many settings of the United Church of Christ have little understanding of transgender people; of how to meet their needs and make them feel welcome, of how to integrate their gifts and capacities for ministry into the life of the church and of how to integrate them into liturgy and expressions of worship.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT all congregations of the United Church of Christ are encouraged to welcome transgender people into membership, ministry, and full participation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT all settings of the United Church of Christ are encouraged to learn about the realities of transgender experience and expression, including the gifts and callings and needs of transgender people, and are encouraged to engage in appropriate dialogue with transgender people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Wider Church Ministries and Local Church Ministries are encouraged to develop appropriate resources, in consultation with a representative group of transgender people within the United Church of Christ, to encourage the participation and ministry of transgender people in the life of the church and to prepare individuals and churches to receive such participation and ministry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Justice and Witness Ministries is encouraged to develop a program of education and advocacy, in consultation with a representative group of transgender people within the United Church of Christ, and then to provide leadership in advocating for the human and civil rights of transgender people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT a representative group of transgender people within the United Church of Christ shall be invited to report on progress made in regard to participation within the United Church of Christ and the development of education and advocacy concerning civil and human rights by the United Church of Christ, and to make additional suggestions, to the Twenty-fifth General Synod.

Expected Outcomes are: the strengthening of the United Church of Christ through deepening hospitality; the enriching of church life and mission as the ministries of transgender members are encouraged; the increase of righteousness in society as the human and civil rights of transgender persons are addressed.

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