

**A Brief Recap of the  
32<sup>nd</sup> General Synod of the  
United Church of Christ  
June 21-25 2019, Milwaukee, WI**



**Committee Resolutions**

**1. A Resolution of Witness to Abolish the Growth and Existence of Private Prisons -  
*Resolution Passed***

This Resolution calls the United Church to actualize our affirmation against private prisons through methods designed to achieve the abolition of such prisons. It specifically calls for appropriate legislation accompanied by oversight mechanisms of Congress, State legislatures, and local governments to immediately require existing private prisons to provide optimum spiritual, medical, physical and mental health care as well as safety measures.

**2a. A Prudential Resolution on Ecumenical Relationship Between the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida De Puerto Rico - *Resolution Passed***

This resolution recognizes and celebrates a new ecumenical relationship between the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico (United Evangelical Church in Puerto Rico) and creates a committee that will collaboratively explore the direction and plan to move this relationship toward a deeper commitment that reflects visible unity in the life of the church. This commitment will offer the closest possible relationship while each church retains its autonomy.

**2b. A Resolution of Witness Reaffirming the United Church of Christ's Commitment to Interreligious Relations, and Deploring Religious Bigotry - *Resolution Passed***

This resolution explicitly condemns acts of violence and bigotry against people of other religions – both in today's world and in our own history – and encourages church members to live “inter-religiously.”

**3. A Resolution of Witness Addressing the State of Global Forced Migration - *Resolution Passed***

In addition to affirming inclusivity and rejecting divisive discourse, this resolution calls on the wider church to learn about global migration, and for member churches to participate, engage and advocate for displaced people and take efforts to dismantle racism, discrimination, bigotry, and xenophobia. It also calls on the U.S. Government to take the matter of global migration seriously and participate in United Nations efforts to address the issue. Finally, the resolution urges all settings of the church to advocate for the US to work closely with the global community and partners.

**4. A Prudential Resolution Establishing an Action Team to Conduct a Listening Campaign and Bring Recommendations on the Future of Christian Witness at General Synod - Resolution Passed**

This resolution was heavily edited through the work of the committee but ultimately called on the church to create a listening campaign throughout the denomination in all of its expressions. . . to ask how the various settings most energetically and thoroughly carry out Christian mission and witness. It calls for the UCC Board, in consultation with the Council of Conference Ministers, to “consider an effective implementation plan for this listening campaign, to be reported to and by General Synod 33.”

**5a. A Resolution of Witness Regarding the Use of Plastic Foam (i.e. Styrofoam) - Resolution Passed**

One of the few resolutions taken up for specific consideration and backing by youth delegates, The resolution encourages UCC congregations and other institutions "to avoid the use of plastic foam in food packaging and other activities within their church and church-related facilities," educate members about plastic foam and "encourage the use of alternatives such as paper products, or, better yet, ceramic or other dishwasher-safe products."



**6. A Resolution of Witness Denouncing Acts of Violence, Hatred, and Racism Carried out in the Name of Neo-Nazi and White Supremacist Ideologies - Resolution Passed**

This resolution began by asking the church "to denounce all forms and expressions of white supremacist hatred" and "to speak and act in solidarity with all who are the targets of hate speech and actions." It also encouraged each congregation to work with organizations of other faiths in efforts to promote racial justice. The deliberation of the committee assigned this resolution added language about how to respond to white supremacy and encouraged ongoing dialogue in our communities.

**7a. A Prudential Resolution Designating the Mental Health Network of the United Church of Christ as a Historically Underrepresented Group - Resolution Passed**

Delegates enthusiastically welcomed the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network (UCC MHN) as an official Historically Underrepresented Group in a June 25 vote at the denomination’s General Synod. The measure, originally submitted by UCC Disabilities Ministries (UCCDM), grants the group representation at future Synods, bringing their voices to the table.

**7b. A Prudential Resolution where the Colectivo De UCC Latinx Ministries Requests to be Recognized as a Historically Underrepresented Group - Resolution Passed**

Latinx voices will continue to be heard at General Synod as an official Historically Underrepresented Group of the United Church of Christ, as delegates overwhelmingly affirmed the

recently formed Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries to take the place of the UCC Council for Hispanic Ministries (CHM). Historically Underrepresented Group status entitles the Colectivo to voice and vote at future General Synods.

#### **8. A Resolution of Witness on the Stewardship of Exhibit Space as a Mission of Justice - Resolution Tabled**

This Resolution called for exhibits in the General Synod hall to be in accordance with resolutions previously passed at General Synod, aimed specifically at the Faithful and Welcoming Churches, which advocate against ordaining LGBTQ+ clergy or allowing same-sex marriage. The committee broadened the language to include advocacy against any UCC-defined Historically Underrepresented Group; plenary tabled the entire resolution indefinitely.

#### **9. A Prudential Resolution Supporting Survivors Of Rape and Sexual Violence Through An Ongoing Church-Wide Observance of Break The Silence Sunday - Resolution Passed**

This resolution establishes a Break the Silence Sunday observance across the denomination for the purpose of opening conversation throughout the church about rape and sexual assault. In addition to designating one Sunday each year for conversation and education, the resolution also encourages churches and local associations to treat survivors and their stories “with due care and preparation, allowing time for education, self-care, and gathering of resources.”

#### **10. A Resolution of Witness Calling for the United States to pull “Back From The Brink” and Prevent Nuclear War - Resolution Passed**

This resolution urges the United States to change its nuclear arms policies and to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. There are five principles embedded in this resolution of witness. The resolution calls for: (1) Renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first; (2) Ending any U.S. President’s ability to authorize a first strike nuclear attack; (3) Taking U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; (4) Canceling the plan to replace the nation’s arsenal with new, enhanced weapons; and (5) Actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear states to eliminate their arsenals.

#### **11. A Prudential Resolution Discerning, Articulating, and Resourcing the Nature, Purpose, Composition, Covenantal Autonomy and Definition of ‘the basic unit of life and organization of the United Church of Christ’ for the Twenty-first Century - Resolution Passed**

A resolution calling on the UCC Board to convene a working group to enter into a discernment process regarding the nature, purpose, composition, covenantal autonomy, and definition of “Local Church” as “the basic unit of life and organization of the United Church of Christ.” Simply put to explore how local churches, conferences and the national church can better live into their covenantal relationship. This included the need for a revision of the Manual on Church to offer guidelines on how to fully live into our covenantal responsibilities and privileges.

#### **12. A Resolution of Witness Calling upon the United Church of Christ Board to Bring Bylaws Revisions that include Non-Binary Gender Language - Resolution Passed**

This resolution called for the UCC Board to review our bylaws and to bring a bylaws revision to General Synod 33 that would use expansive and inclusive language, rather than gender binary language, to outline the requirements for representation for Synod delegations and the UCC Board.

**13. A Prudential Witness Calling for Oversight of the Local Church and its Covenantal Relationship with the Association in Which it Holds Standing as a Local Church of the United Church of Christ - *Resolution Tabled***

This resolution was very similar to Resolution 11 in structure and content, though the committee felt that it was less comprehensive than 11. So, the committee recommended tabling this resolution in favor of resolution 11.

**14. A Resolution of Witness titled JESUS SAID, “FOLLOW ME.” - *Resolution Passed***

This resolution calls for conversation within, between, and among churches about what it means to follow Jesus in the 21st century. It places particular attention on the church’s role in guiding the ethics of our nation. Emphasis is on following Jesus, rather than on believing a particular way. It also highlights the diversity within and among churches and the variety of ways each church follows Jesus.

**15. A Resolution of Witness Declaring Support for the Green New Deal and Affirming the Intersectionality of Climate Justice with all Justice Issues - *Resolution Passed***

This resolution made the UCC the first U.S. Christian body to endorse the Green New Deal, a congressional proposal that lays out a plan for tackling climate change. The Green New Deal (H.R. 109, S.R. 59) is a good match for our own conviction that “climate justice” concerns are linked to racial and economic ones. “The vision and urgency of the Green New Deal are what is needed to preserve and restore God’s great gift of creation,” said the Rev. Jim Antal of Norwich, Vt., who wrote the Synod resolution.

**Direct-to-Plenary Resolutions:**

**On Protection of Immigrant Children and Their Families - *Resolution Passed***

This Resolution of Witness calls upon the UCC to advocate for the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and other applicable governmental departments and agencies to immediately end the practice of separating minor children from their parents, except for the rare cases when the parents pose a threat to their own children, and that minor children who already have been taken from their parents be quickly reunited with them.

**On Recognizing Opioid Addiction as a Health Epidemic, Ensuring Access to Treatment and Pharmaceutical Corporate Responsibility - *Resolution Passed***

This resolution calls on local churches and conferences to recognize opioid addiction as a “health epidemic” and to partner with corporations, governments, and health care providers to find ways to address behaviors that can lead to addiction.

## **Nehemiah's Life: A Call for Congressional Hearings on Violence in America - Resolution Passed**

This resolution states that violence in America has risen to "crisis levels," and calls on Congress to hold hearings to uncover causes and receive suggestions for actions to reduce incidents of violence. This resolution was named after Nehemiah Williams, the 34-year-old son of a minister who was killed in a suburban Chicago parking lot. Bill McCarthy, who presented the resolution, stated that, "Only congressional hearings on the subject of civilian violence in America will be able to bring enough attention to the epidemic of violence in our country that meaningful changes can be identified and undertaken to alleviate the effects of violence on the American people."

## **A New Conference in Southern New England - Resolution Passed**

This resolution approved a request by the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island Conferences to each dissolve and join together to form a new conference: Together as One. The Rev. Jocelyn Gardner Spencer will be moderator of the newly forming conference, and said, "Building this new institution is an opportunity to reexamine the patterns and practices that hold us back from fully embodying the gospel. We are shifting from independence to interdependence, from ownership to stewardship, from competition to collaboration."

## **Acts of Justice and Witness**

### **Service of Blessing held at Milwaukee Planned Parenthood clinic**

In the wake of new state legislation and Trump administration policies restricting the reproductive rights of women, a group of clergy and lay people attending the United Church of Christ's General Synod traveled to a Milwaukee Planned Parenthood clinic after worship on Sunday to join its staff in a service of blessing and solidarity. The gathering reaffirmed the denomination's long history of support for reproductive choice for women and for health care providers delivering the full range of services to their women patients.



### **Rally to denounce the border separation of families and unjust deportations at Milwaukee ICE office**

More than 500 delegates and visitors to General Synod joined 100 more local demonstrators at the ICE office, calling for a change in policies that separate families. A resolution of witness had already been passed at Synod calling for this, and members of the UCC acted out that witness on Monday. The fight was personal for many attendees, who knew people who had been rounded up, including a student pastor serving an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Wisconsin.

## Celebrations

### **Movement Makers Award**

On Saturday, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) was presented with the Movement Makers Award, the award from Justice and Local Church Ministries given at each Synod to an external organization that embodies the ethos that the United Church of Christ holds dear as followers of the Way.

Eight years ago, CIW began working to eradicate what many recognized as modern day slavery in the tomato industry in a small town in Florida. The group started with a successful boycott of Taco Bell and went on to reach agreement with 14 major corporations to both pay a penny more a pound to increase the wages of tomato pickers, and to only buy from growers proven to abide by policies aimed at preventing sexual abuse and harassment.

### **Antoinette Brown Award**

The Antoinette Brown Award is presented at General Synod to UCC clergywomen whose lives and ministries exemplify Brown's spirit of trailblazing leadership in church and society. In 1853, Brown became the first woman ordained into Christian ministry since biblical times. This year's awards were presented to:

**The Rev. Liddy Barlow**, who in 2014 was the first woman to be installed as executive minister of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania, an ecumenical agency bringing together 28 Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox church bodies. In recognizing Barlow, the selection committee lifted up the work she did in the wake of the mass killings at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh last year.

**The Rev. Eileen Norrington**, who was recognized for her work in the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps. In 1996, Norrington was the first woman in the Navy Chaplain Corps history promoted to the rank of captain. Since she retired from the Navy, she has filled roles in the national setting.

**The Rev. Marti Baumer**, one of the first women to serve as a Conference Minister when she served in Illinois South, was lifted up for her "serious attention to people and place, the articulation of firmly held values, and strength of character that encourages others and strengthens the church."

**Woman Preach! Inc.**, an organization that seeks to provide intimate, practical training and nurturing community spaces to empower preachers, received the institutional Catalyst Award. Over the past eight years, *WomanPreach!* has mentored hundreds through its programming, and stands in support of equity and freedom for all people.

