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God is still speaking,  
...in many languages!

A multiracial and multicultural church  
sets the welcome table for all of God's  
sons and daughters so \* "that they may all  
be one." \*

UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST



\*John 17:21

**Becoming a  
Multiracial and  
Multicultural  
Church**

*A Pronouncement and  
Proposal for Action*

Adopted by the 19th General Synod of the  
United Church of Christ  
St. Louis, Missouri  
July 15 — 20, 1993

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16. CALLS UPON the President of the United Church of Christ, the Secretary, the Director of Finance and Treasurer, the Executive Council, Council of Conference Ministers, the Collegium, and the pastors and lay leaders of local congregations of the United Church of Christ to provide leadership, nurture and support towards the fulfillment of the Pronouncement and the implementation of this Proposal for Action calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church.

#### IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The Nineteenth General Synod directs the Justice and Witness Ministries (new language of :restructuring”) to co-convene an Implementation Committee which will coordinate the implementation of this Proposal for Action and request a report to be made to all subsequent General Synods. The Office of the General Minister (OGM), the Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM), the Local Church Ministries (LCM), the Wider Church Ministries (WCM) – (these four “Covenanted Ministries Offices” are the new language of the restructured church),— the Council of Racial and Ethnic Ministries and the Council of Conference Ministers are to have representatives on the Implementation Committee.

Subject to the availability of funds.

Representatives from the Pension Boards and UC Foundation were included on the team after the vote.

*Recommended by the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ and adopted by the Nineteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, July 15-20, 1993.*

#### I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this pronouncement is to call upon the United Church of Christ in all its settings to be a true multiracial and multicultural church. This is to be a “living pronouncement” which is to encourage the ongoing inclusiveness of our entire community of faith. It is vital to the future life and wholeness of the United Church of Christ to declare racial, ethnic and cultural diversities as gifts from the God of creation who through Jesus Christ demands love and justice for all peoples. A multiracial and multicultural church is defined as a church that confesses and acts out its faith in the one sovereign God who through Jesus Christ binds in covenant faithful people of all races, ethnicities and cultures. A multiracial and multicultural church embodies these diversities as gifts to the human family and rejoices in the variety of God’s grace.

#### II. BACKGROUND

Since 1957, the United Church of Christ in all its settings has struggled to define, shape, understand, and direct itself to the end “that all may be one.” Regarding the early history of the United Church of Christ, historian Louis Gunnemann wrote:

*The formation of the United Church of Christ was a venture of faith, a response to a vision created out of the heritage of the past and in the context of new responsibilities . . . Assessment and reassessment in the context of new circumstances is the continual task of those who would own the history of the United Church and thus come to understand it. In that process insights are gained, perspectives brought into focus, and visions renewed.<sup>1</sup>*

A review of the actions taken by the General Synods of the United Church of Christ demonstrates many affirmations of the gifts of diversity from many nations, peoples, ethnicities, cultures and tongues. In 1963, the Fourth General Synod called upon the United Church of Christ to be “radically committed” to “uproot intolerance, bigotry, and prejudice within our own living and to replace them with goodwill and the determination to strike down immediately the barriers which divide [people] on account of race.”<sup>2</sup>

The 1960's were a period when there was a compelling moral urgency to address issues of racism and racial inequality. The struggles of African Americans for basic human rights deeply moved the conscience of the United Church of Christ, as well as the rest of the nation. The Seventh General Synod, with the assistance of an organized African American constituency in the form of the Ministers for Racial and Social Justice (MRSJ), established in 1969 the Commission for Racial Justice (CRJ). General Synod mandated the Commission for Racial Justice to “provide leadership in mobilizing the membership of the Church to work for justice and reconciliation among persons and groups, in the area of race, both within the Church and in society in general.”<sup>3</sup>

The actions of General Synod during the thirty-six-year history of the United Church of Christ were a response to social and racial realities of the broader U.S. society. The aforementioned actions of General Synod came during the height of the civil rights movement of the 1960's, when issues of racial and cultural exclusion were seen primarily in terms of black and white. In 1970, United Black Christians (UBC) was organized to further impact the church concerning the aspirations of the African American constituency within the church and society. Since then, the other racial-ethnic constituencies within the United Church of Christ have organized themselves to become fully vested members of the Church. In 1971, the Eighth General Synod extended recognition to the Council of American Indian Ministry (CAIM). In 1975, the Tenth General Synod recognized the Pacific Asian American Ministries (PAAM).<sup>4</sup> In 1977, the Eleventh General Synod voted to support the program of the Council of Hispanic Ministries (CHM).<sup>5</sup> In 1983, the Fourteenth General Synod voted to establish the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM).<sup>6</sup>

The racial and ethnic constituencies of the United Church of Christ came to recognize that self-determination and self-empowerment were essential elements for helping the Church struggle to live out its faith in Christ in action. Many of the prescribed General Synod actions have yet to be addressed seriously. The status of United Church of Christ today is one of great contrast. On the one hand, a vibrant celebration of multiracial and multicultural diversity within the Church took place in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1992 at the multicultural convocation sponsored by the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries and the other racial and ethnic caucuses of the Church. On the other hand, the Church's racial and ethnic membership remains at no more than 7 percent, far below the racial and ethnic composition of American society as a whole, as well as the composition of the communities in which many of our churches are located.<sup>7</sup>

to conduct a church-wide affirmative action audit to ascertain the current status of affirmative action within the life of the UCC.

11. CALLS UPON the Local Church Ministries (new language of “restructuring”), associations, and conferences, in close consultation with COREM and its constituent bodies, to develop, support and implement new programmatic strategies concerning evangelism and new church development in racial and ethnic communities across the nation, particularly in those areas undergoing rapid demographic changes with increased populations of communities of color.

12. CALLS UPON the Local Church Ministries (new language of “restructuring”) in close consultation with COREM and its constituent bodies, to prepare and make available Christian education resources and materials relevant to the diversity of racial and ethnic Christian faith traditions and cultures within the UCC.

13. CALLS UPON the colleges and seminaries related to the United Church of Christ to expand curriculum development and educational programs to include awareness and knowledge concerning the diversity of cultural heritages and theological traditions of our multiracial and multicultural world.

14. CALLS UPON the Local Church Ministries, Office of General Ministries, United Church of Christ Foundation, Pension Boards and other national bodies of the United Church of Christ to plan and implement a strategy to help ensure and promote a faithful and equitable stewardship and sharing of the financial resources of the UCC in regard to the empowerment of all local churches and in particular the empowerment of local racial and ethnic congregations that have been marginalized due to racial discrimination in society.

15. CALLS UPON the Office of Proclamation and Identity to communicate the United Church of Christ's multiracial and multicultural diversity policy and the multiracial and multicultural realities of the United Church of Christ and to promote the transition of the United Church of Christ into a truly multiracial and multicultural church.

ing intentional and unintentional acts of racism in church and society.

6. CALLS UPON the Local Church Ministries (new language of “restructuring”), associations, conferences, and all other pertinent local, regional, and national bodies to use an inclusive and equitable procedure for the recognition of calling, determination of placement, and standing of ministers in the United Church of Christ; and to ensure equal access to employment in all settings of the United Church of Christ.

7. CALLS UPON the Justice and Witness Ministries (new language of “restructuring”), in close consultation with COREM and its constituent bodies, to continue to coordinate the implementation of programmatic strategies in all settings of the UCC to challenge racial injustice, discrimination, and bigotry; and to provide leadership in helping to mobilize and involve the entire membership of the UCC to make racial justice a reality for all people in church and society.

8. CALLS UPON the Covenanted Ministries (new language of “restructuring”) and other national bodies, and all other settings to engage in effective prophetic advocacy and public policy development on the issues of racial, social, economic, and environmental justice, in particular as to how these issues impact the quality of life of people of color communities in the United States and throughout the world; and that these bodies seek new creative opportunities to experience the multiracial and multicultural realities of our world.

9. CALLS UPON all settings of the United Church of Christ to support the development and dissemination of multilingual resources for use throughout the UCC and, where appropriate, to facilitate the translation of all official church documents such as the UCC Constitution and Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Statement of Mission into languages that are becoming spoken fluently in UCC local churches.

10. CALLS UPON the Office of General Ministries and the Executive Council and all settings of the United Church of Christ to reaffirm a commitment to accomplish the affirmative action goals and objectives that have been adopted by the General Synod; and

Many different racial, ethnic, cultural, and theological traditions make up the history of the United Church of Christ and its predecessors. The Afro-Christian tradition began during the Slave Period in the United States and has continued to be maintained by persons of African descent in the United Church of Christ who have developed their own indigenous theological response to the God of justice through faith in Jesus Christ. The Calvin Synod is a non-geographical conference organized along the lines of ethnicity, language, and theological tradition. The Native American, Latino and Pacific Islander Asian American constituencies have also brought to the United Church of Christ unique theological traditions. For example, in 1992 the Hawaii Conference voted to establish a non-geographic association of Native Hawaiian congregations.

As we move toward the twenty-first century, multiracial and multicultural traditions in Christian faith are taking on greater significance. The United Church of Christ Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Planning Process Statement calls for the United Church of Christ to be “a Church inclusive of all people.”

At a time when our society and world is undergoing renewed racial and ethnic strife, polarization and fratricidal violence, the nation seems to have lost its will to openly confront issues of racism and racial diversity. There is a general feeling pervading social and religious institutions that racial diversity is something to be feared and avoided rather than desired and embraced. Thus gifts of God’s diversity are rejected rather than rejoiced in.

The nation, the world, and the communities in which our churches are located are undergoing periods of enormous transition. These are changes that we as a church cannot ignore. The changes are economic, cultural, demographic, social, linguistic, generational, and indeed spiritual in nature. They are reflected in the seemingly intransigent problems of our nation’s decaying cities, as well as the loss of competitiveness in a world economy more and more international and interdependent in character. These problems are evidence of the fact that racial and cultural diversity is an issue of increasing significance in American society.

The Church needs to be cognizant of the realities both for the survival and growth of the United Church of Christ as a faith community and as a prophetic voice for the rest of society. While a multiracial America is an undeniable reality, there is by no means a consensus that the nation should build a truly multicultural society. We have not fully addressed the historical racism such as the genocide of Native Americans, violence and xenophobia against Pacific Islanders/Asian Americans, or the dis-

crimination against Hispanic Americans. Nor is it guaranteed that America will not suffer a fate similar to apartheid in South Africa or the ethnic strife now existing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We must recognize that racial and ethnic diversity provides the best opportunities for renewal and rebirth, the key to a multiracial and multicultural renaissance needed in a twenty-first century United States where European Americans will become a numerical minority.

The rationale for this pronouncement is both a theological and demographic imperative. As we move towards the next century, it is an imperative that we make multiracial and multicultural inclusiveness a key organizing principle for church and society.

It is vitally important that, as a continued “venture of our faith,” the United Church of Christ once again examine “the heritage of the past and in the context of new responsibilities.”<sup>8</sup> In 1990, the officers, instrumentality executives and the conference ministers of the United Church of Christ issued a “Pastoral Letter on Contemporary Racism and the Role of the Church.” In this Pastoral Letter, the fifty-four signatories affirmed the United Church of Christ as a multiracial and multicultural church.

We call every member and local church of the United Church of Christ to renew our faith in the unity God intends, and to increase our commitment to stem the resurgent tide of racism in our increasingly multiracial and multicultural society. Indeed, we must challenge ourselves, our church and our society to be active in seeking new ways to welcome the gifts of people of every racial and ethnic heritage.<sup>9</sup>

The Commission for Racial Justice, at its October 16-17, 1992, Annual Meeting, voted unanimously to bring to the Nineteenth General Synod a Pronouncement on “Calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church.” A Drafting Committee consisting of clergy and lay leaders from local UCC churches, Conferences, and representatives of CAIM, MRSJ, UBC, CHM, PAAM, and COREM worked with CRJ staff to draft this pronouncement.

### **III. THEOLOGICAL, BIBLICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

In the Book of Genesis (1:27), we are called to recognize the oneness of all of humanity created equally in the image of God. God’s gift of humanity in creation is full of the richness of unity and diversity.

In the Gospel according to John (17:21), Jesus Christ revealed the importance of Christian unity and diversity. Jesus prayed, “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me, and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” The good news of the Gospel cannot be limited exclusively to only some people, but rather the Gospel story is a living testimony for all of humanity.

2. CALLS UPON all members, congregations, associations, conferences, covenantal ministries (new language of “restructure”), other national bodies, and related institutions of the United Church of Christ to acknowledge and confess faithfully their sins of racism, to repent and refrain from all acts of racial discrimination and bigotry, to confront indifference, ignorance and neglect, and to participate in deliberate study and action to stem the resurgent tide of racism in American society, by identifying the root causes of racism as well as other forms of discrimination and oppressive acts that preclude our fulfillment of our covenant with God and each other.

3. CALLS UPON all members, congregations, associations, conferences, covenanted ministries (new language of “restructure”), other national bodies, and related institutions of the United Church of Christ to affirm consistently the necessity of Christian unity while celebrating the theological and liturgical richness that arises from the racial and ethnic diversity of the United Church of Christ; and to participate actively in God’s mission of doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God in all communities with all peoples in all places.

4. CALLS UPON all congregations, associations, conferences, covenanted ministries (new language of “restructuring”), other national bodies, related institutions and future General Synods of the United Church of Christ to consciously elect, now and forever more, significant numbers of persons of all races, ethnicities, and cultures to policy making positions throughout the church.

5. CALLS FOR an ethic of accountability in our relationships with each other in all settings of the church by empowering the Covenanted Ministries (new language of “restructuring”) to collaborate and work collectively to develop and implement the study and action process of the “Pastoral Letter on Contemporary Racism” through out the United Church of Christ; to incorporate the concern for institutional racism in all future plans and program implementation, and to request the Council of Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM) to monitor continually the implementation of this Proposal for Action throughout the United Church of Christ, reporting to each General Synod through the Office of the General Minister and the Executive Council (new language of “restructuring”), on the church’s effort, progress, and status in eradicat-

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## I. SUMMARY

The Proposal for Action outlines the implementation of the Pronouncement on Calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church. All settings of the United Church of Christ are called to participate affirmatively and actively in ensuring the ongoing inclusiveness of our entire community of faith. By definition a multiracial and multicultural church is a church that confesses and acts out its faith in the one sovereign God who through Jesus Christ binds in covenant faithful people of all races, ethnicities, and cultures. A multiracial and multicultural church embodies these diversities as gifts to the human family and rejoices in the variety of God's grace.

## II. BACKGROUND

The historical evolution of the United Church of Christ continues to be an increasingly inclusive venture of affirming the Christian faith. This Proposal for Action is designed to help the United Church of Christ move forward toward the 21<sup>st</sup> century celebrating the diversity of racial and ethnic constituencies in all settings of the UCC.

For too long in the United States there have been churches that have remained racially exclusive in terms of membership, ministry and mission. The United Church of Christ is called by the God of Creation to be open to all peoples who seek to worship and to live life by the teachings, examples and ministries of Christ Jesus.

Through faithful response to God's love and demand for justice, the United Church of Christ seeks to embody in action the marks of a multiracial and multicultural church.

## III. DIRECTIONAL STATEMENT

Whereas the Nineteenth General Synod has adopted the Pronouncement on Calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church, and whereas General Synod in the Statement of Christian Conviction recognized the marks of a multiracial and multicultural church, the Nineteenth General Synod:

1. CALLS UPON the United Church of Christ in all its settings to be a true multiracial and multicultural church and to affirm a commitment to achieve this goal.

All people are to be welcomed into the Christian community of faith without discrimination because of color, race, ethnicity, language or culture. The ethical and moral imperatives of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are for all who seek to be Christian. The United Church of Christ is called by God in Christ to be a multiracial and multicultural church that is open to all who seek to worship and to live life by the teachings, examples and ministries of Christ Jesus.

The Christian faith is a universal faith that affirms God's love through Jesus Christ for all peoples. In the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (12:3-6), the varieties and diversities of the divine gifts of life are emphasized. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Now... there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." In the United Church of Christ, there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. Yet, the sin of racism in our society and church has prevented an authentic embrace of the varieties of race, ethnicity and culture in the midst of our denomination.

Accepting the call of God to be a multiracial and multicultural church is to formally recognize and utilize the racial and cultural varieties of gifts in our church. We are all one in Christ and our diversities should be celebrated within the context of Christian unity.

## IV. STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

- A. The Nineteenth General Synod calls upon the United Church of Christ in all its settings to be a true multiracial and multicultural church. A multiracial and multicultural church confesses and acts out its faith in the one sovereign God who through Jesus Christ binds in covenant faithful people of all races, ethnicities and cultures. A multiracial and multicultural church embodies these diversities as gifts to the human family and rejoices in the variety of God's grace.
- B. The Nineteenth General Synod recognizes the following as marks of a multiracial and multicultural church:

1. **CONFESSION:** A multiracial and multicultural church is called by God through Jesus Christ to confess the sins of racism and to repent and refrain from all acts of racial discrimination and bigotry.

2. **THEOLOGY:** A multiracial and multicultural church affirms Christian unity while celebrating the theological and liturgical richness that arises from its racial and ethnic diversity.

3. **MISSION:** A multiracial and multicultural church is called to participate in God's mission of doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God through Christ in all communities with all peoples in all places.

4. **INCLUSIVE MINISTRY:** A multiracial and multicultural church institutes an inclusive and equitable procedure for the calling, placement and standing of ministries in the church while providing equal access to all who are called to ministry in all settings of the church, locally, regionally, nationally, globally, and ecumenically.

5. **RACIAL JUSTICE STRUCTURE:** A multiracial and multicultural church mandates the establishment of a full-time national racial justice agency that seeks to coordinate programmatic strategies and involve the entire membership of the church in making racial justice a reality in church and society.

6. **MONITORING BODY:** A multiracial and multicultural church mandates the establishment of a racial and ethnic body to monitor all settings of the church regarding issues of racial and ethnic inclusivity in the ministry, mission and programs.

7. **PROPHETIC ADVOCACY:** A multiracial and multicultural church engages in effective prophetic advocacy and public policy development on the issues of racial, social, economic and environmental justice, in particular as to how these issues impact the quality for life of people of color communities.

8. **MULTILINGUALISM:** A multiracial and multicultural church supports the development and dissemination of multilingual resources for use throughout the church and facilitates the translation of all official church documents such as the constitution and bylaws, creeds or statements of faith into languages that are spoken fluently in the local churches.

9. **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMMITMENT:** A multiracial and multicultural church affirms a commitment to accomplish specific affirmative action goals and objectives.

10. **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, EVANGELISM, AND NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT:** A multiracial and multicultural church develops, supports and implements strategies concerning

evangelism and new church development in racial and ethnic communities; and prepares Christian education resources relevant to the diversity of racial and ethnic Christian faith traditions and cultures within the church.

11. **SEMINARY TRAINING:** A multiracial and multicultural church encourages related seminaries to develop curricula and educational programs for the training of ministers to include awareness and knowledge concerning the diversity of cultural heritages and theological traditions of the racial and ethnic constituencies of the church.

12. **FAITHFUL AND EQUITABLE STEWARDSHIP:** A multiracial and multicultural church plans and implements strategies to help ensure and promote a faithful and equitable stewardship and sharing of the financial resources of the church in regard to the empowerment of all local churches, and in particular the empowerment of local racial and ethnic congregations that have been marginalized due to racial discrimination in society.

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3. *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ*, 1991 edition (Cleveland: United Church of Christ, 1991 edition).
4. Resolution on "The Pacific and American Ministries," Minutes of the Tenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, June 30, 1975, 38.
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6. Resolution on "Creation of the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries," Minutes of the Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, June 27, 1983, 55.
7. Figures based upon Yearbook of the United Church of Christ, 1992 (Cleveland: United Church of Christ, 1992).
8. Gunnemann, *The Shaping of the United Church of Christ*, 197.
9. *A Pastoral Letter on Contemporary Racism and the Role of the Church* (Cleveland: United Church of Christ, 1990), 3.