

1 The following resolution has been received by the Office of General Ministries under provisions established in the Standing Rules of
2 the Twenty-seventh General Synod allowing for the possibility the subject matter of a resolution could not have been anticipated prior
3 to the January 1, 2009 deadline established for normal submission of resolutions. Receipt of this resolution should not be considered
4 an indication it will come before delegates to the General Synod. This resolution is now being researched by the Executive Council's
5 Committee of Reference. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements in the Standing Rules (see
6 <http://www.ucc.org/synod/standing.pdf>). The Executive Council will decide in June whether this resolution meets those
7 requirements.

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10 **PROPOSED RESOLUTION OF WITNESS:**
11 **AFFIRMING DIVERSITY/MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION**
12 **IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

13 Submitted by the Northern California Nevada Conference, June 5, 2009
14 after adoption by the NCNC Annual Meeting, May 30, 2009
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17 **Summary**—This proposed resolution seeks to create a progressive Christian witness in support of
18 organizations which provide diversity/multi-cultural education that builds tolerance for “all the people”
19 including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and families, and people of all racial and
20 ethnic backgrounds, abilities, and faiths. In particular, this proposed resolution addresses concerns that public
21 school systems are being openly challenged by national and local religious groups who seek to limit exposure to
22 diversity/multi-cultural education, and in some cases even to prohibit diversity/multi-cultural education in
23 public schools.

24
25 **Background**—Recently in California, both the Castro Valley Unified School District’s “Days of Diversity,”
26 and plans by the Alameda Unified School District to institute in its schools a K–5 diversity/multi-cultural
27 curriculum, which includes an LGBT unit, have come under fire by religious groups from within and outside
28 the community who are working in tandem to stop efforts by local school districts to implement diversity/multi-
29 cultural enrichment programs and develop safe schools curricula that seek to foster respect for “all the people in
30 our neighborhood.” There is particular opposition to the component of the programs designed to give visibility
31 to same-gender parented families and people and reduce anti-gay slurs and bullying, which are rampant within
32 our public schools.

33 While those who oppose diversity/multi-cultural education declare it a threat to “family values” and the
34 “nuclear family,” study of the Bible reveals that there are numerous types of families described – none of which
35 includes the so-called “nuclear family.” In fact, today, the so-called ‘traditional nuclear family’ (husband
36 working outside the home, wife working inside the home and 2.2 children) represents less than 5% of the
37 population in the US.¹

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39 School districts have a mandate to keep all their children safe from emotional and physical harm by providing
40 lessons to address the ways in which words like “gay” are misused by children as early as kindergarten to tease,
41 humiliate and bully fellow students. Developing diversity/multi-cultural curricula and encouraging “days of
42 diversity” are essential to creating an environment where all children can learn and play in safety, as well as
43 reach their full potential, without fear or intimidation.

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45 **Biblical, Theological, and Ethical Rationale**—In the First Letter of John we are reminded that “there is no
46 fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). The love of God that we experience through Jesus
47 dispels our fear of “the other,” whoever they may be, and allows us to see and appreciate their full humanity as
48 creations of God.

¹ James B. Nelson’s article in the UCC Marriage Curriculum <http://www.ucc.org/justice/pdfs/mdgr.pdf>

49 As the Northern California Nevada Conference gathered on Pentecost weekend, we remembered that the most
50 important requirement of discipleship is inclusiveness, born through the ministry of Jesus who instructs us,
51 “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22: 39, Mark 12: 31). There are no exceptions, no foot-notes
52 or qualifiers. Many of the recent lections for the Season of Easter have reminded us of how the earliest apostles
53 came to realize that God accepts “all the people” [cf. Acts 8:26-40 and Acts 10:34].

54 The community Jesus gathered around him challenged the conventional wisdom of his day that defined who
55 was worthy of inclusion and who was not. In the first century CE where eating together was “symbolic of
56 friendship, intimacy and social unity,”² Jesus broke bread with the marginalized, thereby discrediting himself
57 in the eyes of the religious authorities. As we today confront the same kind of marginalization of people
58 because of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or gender identity, we as Christ’s body on earth
59 would do well to follow his lead.

60 **Expected Outcomes:**

- 61 1. Increased awareness among members of Local Churches in the United Church of Christ regarding the well-
62 funded and well-organized national and local opposition to diversity/multi-cultural education in our public
63 schools.
- 64 2. Increased resources for and capacity among United Church of Christ pastors and Local Church members to
65 support local school leaders in offering high-quality diversity/multi-cultural education programs in our
66 public schools.
- 67 3. Increased support for public school teachers, administrators, and school board members who seek, through
68 responsible programs of diversity/multi-cultural education, to ensure the safety and acceptance of all
69 students in their care, and to create and sustain a healthy learning environment.
- 70 4. Increased acceptance of “all the people” as children of God.
- 71 5. Reduced violence, derogatory speech, and bullying of school children.

72 **Motion to be voted:**

- 73 *WHEREAS,* There are no exceptions, no foot-notes, no qualifiers to Jesus’ commandment to “love your
74 neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22: 39, Mark 12: 31, Galatians 5:14, Romans 13: 9, James 2: 8);
- 75 *WHEREAS,* The love of God that we experience through Jesus Christ dispels our fears of those who are in
76 any way “different” from ourselves; [1 John 4: 18]
- 77 *WHEREAS,* God accepts “all the people” as evidenced by Jesus’ breaking bread with the marginalized, to
78 the dismay of the religious authorities of his day; [Matthew 9: 10-11, Mark 2: 16, Luke 5: 30]
- 79 *WHEREAS,* We confront in our own times the marginalization of people because of race, ethnicity, gender,
80 ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity;
- 81 *WHEREAS,* Children who are marginalized, or whose families are marginalized, are the targets of derision,
82 bullying, and violence in schools and communities;
- 83 *WHEREAS,* Public schools’ programs of diversity/multi-cultural education have been aimed at keeping all
84 children safe from such emotional and physical intimidation and harm, and have met
85 with national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-cultural education as a threat
86 to “family values;”

87 ***THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT GENERAL SYNOD XXVII:***

- 88 ● Supports the efforts of organizations, especially public school districts, to develop programs that promote
89 acceptance of wide-ranging diversity;

² Marcus Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*, © 2006 Marcus Borg, Harper San Francisco, pp. 157-160.

- 93 ● Affirms that diversity/multi-cultural education should embrace people of all races, ethnic origins, genders,
94 faiths, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and their families;
95 ● Decries organized and systematic efforts to cast diversity/multi-cultural education in negative terms using
96 fear and intimidation;
97 ● Affirms and supports congregations, church leaders, and public school districts that are playing a prophetic
98 role in the encouragement of diversity/multi-cultural education in their communities;
99

100 *AND CALLS UPON—*

101 Local Churches and Conferences to:

- 102 ● Be aware of and keep alert to national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-cultural education
103 in their public school districts;
104 ● Call for processes and protocols for public discourse on diversity/multi-cultural education that ensure
105 the inclusion of viewpoints representative of the whole community;
106 ● Speak up in support of diversity/multi-cultural education from the perspective of their faith
107 commitment and informed by the Bible's overwhelming mandate to defend the cause of justice;
108 ● Continue to address topics of race, ethnicity, gender, faith, abilities, sexual orientation, and gender
109 identity within their congregations;
110 ● Engage in public witness to affirm diversity/multi-cultural and to support those who are engaged
111 faithfully in acts of inclusion;
112 ● Develop and participate in broad-based ecumenical and interfaith coalitions that will advocate for anti-
113 bullying, safe schools, and diversity/multi-cultural education in our public schools;
114 ● Celebrate the diversity of individuals and families as a gift of God.
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116 The Collegium to:

- 117 ● Be aware of and keep alert to national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-cultural education
118 in public school districts;
119 ● Speak up in support of and diversity/multi-cultural education from the perspective of their faith
120 commitment and informed by the Bible's overwhelming mandate to defend the cause of justice;
121 ● Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of multi-cultural
122 and diversity/multi-cultural education that includes LGBT experience in public schools in the
123 United States.
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125 The Office of General Ministries to:

- 126 ● Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-
127 cultural education that includes LGBT experience in public schools in the United States;
128 ● Collaborate with local UCC church leaders, Conferences, and other faith groups and secular advocacy
129 organizations to develop and implement a national media strategy that affirms the value of
130 diversity/multi-cultural programs in our public schools, and that supports the introduction and
131 continuation of these vital programs.
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133 Justice & Witness Ministries to:

- 134 ● Alert Local Churches and Conferences to national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-
135 cultural education in public school districts;
136 ● Consult with and support faith leaders and public school leaders who have been besieged by opponents
137 of diversity/multi-cultural education, to compile lists of resources and to document accounts of
138 successful plans to promote diversity/multi-cultural education in our public schools, and of
139 successful responses to groups that might otherwise undermine these efforts;

- 140 ●Help Local Church and Conference leaders develop strategies that promote and sustain high-quality
141 diversity/multi-cultural education programs so that Local Churches and Conferences may
142 successfully advocate for and support the inclusion of these programs in local schools;
143 ●Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-
144 cultural education that includes LGBT experience in public schools in the United States.
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146 Local Church Ministries to:

- 147 ●Assemble resources and promote the use of diversity/multi-cultural education programs for Local
148 Churches, Associations, Conferences and the national setting of the church which build on the
149 United Church of Christ’s capacity to practice what we are preaching about the importance of
150 diversity/multi-cultural education in our public schools;
151 ●Actively promote curriculum and resources that uphold anti-bullying, safe schools, and
152 diversity/multi-cultural education programs in our public schools;
153 ●Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-
154 cultural education that includes LGBT experience in public schools in the United States.
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156 Wider Church Ministries to:

- 157 ● Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-
158 cultural education that includes LGBT experience, in public schools in the United States and
159 within mission partner schools around the world;
160 ● Continue to help Local Church, Association, and Conference leaders develop a coalition of faith-based
161 and secular non-profit organizations that will help local leaders introduce and advocate for
162 diversity/multicultural education in their public schools that includes the experience of LGBT
163 families and individuals;
164 ● Express the need for diversity/multi-cultural education that ensures more successful integration of
165 refugees and immigrants into our public schools and communities, and reduces their experience
166 of isolation and bullying.
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168 **Funding**—Funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made available in accordance with the
169 overall mandates of the Covenanted Ministries called upon and the funds available.
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171 **Implementation**—Justice & Witness Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, and the
172 Office of General Ministries will be responsible for developing the strategies, programs, and resources to
173 implement the Resolution.
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