

**RESOLUTION AFFIRMING AND SUPPORTING THE AUTHORIZED MINISTRIES OF
UNDER-REPRESENTED CLERGY IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS:
A CALL FOR GREATER REPRESENTATION AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE**
A Prudential Resolution

Adopted by the Thirty-first General Synod, July 3, 2017, Baltimore, Maryland

Whereas, “God created humankind in God’s image,” so that we human beings have been gifted to become co-creators with the divine and are thus ultimately responsible for what we are to make of our own lives together (Genesis 1:27a [NRSV]);

Whereas, our life together means that “we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another,” so that we are called by God to create a beloved community of mutuality whereby each person can be the benefactor and beneficiary of all persons and therefore can realize his or her full humanity (Romans 12:5 [NRSV]); Whereas, we acknowledge and confess that it is not right to disregard this call and thereby prevent all God's children from becoming fully who they are created to be; Whereas, as God’s children we know that we must do more to love others as we do ourselves and must acknowledge that God has given us the beauty and magnificence of the full spectrum of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, degree of ableness, and gender identity and expression in our world and that this spectrum must be more fully represented in the pulpits of our churches; Whereas, we acknowledge and confess that in our fractured world racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and cisgender bias have vitiated our attempts to form the beloved community and are therefore an affront to God as well as to our oneness in Jesus Christ, in which there is to be “no longer Jew or Greek . . . slave or free . . . male and female” (Galatians 3:28a [NRSV]); Whereas, we are called accordingly to denounce institutional structures that separate God’s people based upon differences in race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, degree of ableness, and gender identity and expression;

Whereas, we are further called to dismantle institutional structures and shadow ministries that –by intention or effect – construct or perpetuate systems and processes that objectify, exclude, and divide persons, as well as those that establish and propagate prejudices or maintain the status quo, including “pulpit requirements” that result in the installation of pastors and leaders who most closely resemble the congregations whom they serve and thereby prevent those same congregations from enjoying the gift of diversity; Whereas, the United Church of Christ at its Eleventh General Synod (1977), its Thirteenth General Synod (1981), its Fifteenth General Synod (1985), and its Twentieth General Synod (1995) urged all settings to employ “persons with disabilities,” including clergy, and at its Twenty-Second General Synod (1999) adopted a resolution entitled “The Calling of Clergy with Disabilities”;

Whereas, the United Church of Christ at its Fifteenth General Synod (1985) adopted a resolution “Calling on UCC Congregations to Declare Themselves Open and Affirming” and at its Eighteenth General Synod (1991) adopted a resolution “Affirming Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Persons and their Ministries”;

Whereas, the United Church of Christ at its Nineteenth General Synod (1993) adopted a resolution which called upon the UCC in all its settings to become a truly multiracial and multicultural church; Whereas, the United Church of Christ at its Twenty-Fourth General Synod (2003) adopted a resolution entitled “Affirming the Participation and Ministry of Transgender Peoples within the UCC and Supporting their Civil and Human Rights,” which, inter alia, encourages all UCC congregations “to welcome transgender people into membership, ministry, and full participation”; Whereas, the United Church of Christ at its Twenty-Second General Synod (1999) adopted, as part of a resolution entitled “Fair and Just Compensation,” a report to the Twenty-First General Synod that called for the same “attention and vigilance . . . to the fair and just treatment of persons called and employed by various settings of the UCC” as the denomination demonstrates “in the workplaces of society”;

Whereas, the United Church of Christ at its Twenty-Second General Synod (1999) adopted a resolution entitled “Pastoral Compensation” that called for an immediate review of compensation plans for clergy serving Native American congregations and for recommendations to be made to the Twenty-Third General Synod “to correct the existing disparities in compensation for clergy serving American Indian congregations”;

Whereas, the historic social justice advocacy of the UCC – as witnessed by the aforementioned resolutions – has sought to manifest itself in multiple ways to create truly emancipative change that is inspired by the biblical writings, the prophets, the teachings and life of Jesus, the historic cloud of witnesses to the Christian faith, and the leaders of transformational movements for universal peace, justice, and equality, and that is enacted in the light of God’s unbounded love for all creation; Whereas, UCC theology and polity permit its different ministries to witness and advocate in ways that are faithful to the Christian gospel, fitting to their unique gifts, and functional in their particular contexts;

Whereas, diversity in ministry is a good and a blessing, and just as it has been facilitated by the establishment of clear and attainable pathways to ordination for members of under-represented groups, so also it must be encouraged by the enactment of pro-active policies designed by congregational search committees to engage such individuals in the congregational search process;

Whereas, the generally low percentages of clergy from under-represented groups in the denomination’s solo and senior pastorates indicate there is still much work to be done in realizing a truly representative, just, and inclusive ordained ministry in our churches; Whereas, the collection, tracking, reporting, and analysis of data regarding the composition and compensation of, as well as the complexion of candidacy pools for, authorized ministerial positions in local churches have been incomplete and/or inconsistent;

Whereas, there are no current means to certify that there is fair application of compensation guidelines; and

Whereas, experience has taught us that clergy from under-represented groups are often paid less than their counterparts in comparable ministerial settings, resulting in congregational-serving UCC clergy from under-represented groups often having less in their pension funds for retirement than those counterparts;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Thirty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon:

1. UCC congregations, through open dialogue, and discussion, and education to seek to identify and eliminate barriers to authorized ministry that are based upon institutional bias;
2. UCC congregations to carry out search processes for their authorized ministers, as well as to examine and – if need be – amend or emend their personnel policies, in ways that heed the Holy Spirit’s call for inclusiveness and justice;
3. UCC congregations to heed that call not only by eliminating explicit and implicit policies and procedures that exclude candidates to authorized ministerial positions on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity and expression, but also – and perhaps more importantly – by implementing policies and procedures, including statements in their church profiles, that welcome and include the widest diversity of candidates possible;
4. the search committees of UCC congregations to interview persons from under-represented groups for all their authorized ministerial positions;
5. each authorized ministerial search committee of a UCC congregation to certify to those responsible for the administration and oversight of its Conference’s search and call process that there is diversity of race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability to the extent that such can be and is known in the candidacy pool beginning at the first interview stage, and also to certify that a diversity of candidates has been or will be interviewed for the authorized ministerial position, and that, where there is a lack of such diversity, each authorized ministerial search committee of a UCC congregation will work with those responsible for the administration and oversight of its Conference’s search and call process to identify such candidates;
6. the candidates for authorized ministry in a local church to be in contact with their Conference’s office, as well as those responsible for the administration and oversight of that Conference’s search and call process to assist such candidates as they prepare for the search interview process;
7. UCC congregations to commit to comparable compensation and promotion of its authorized ministers who have similar qualifications and responsibilities, regardless of their race, ethnicity,

age, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, or disability and to be assisted in this endeavor by attending and adhering closely to their Conference's compensation guidelines;

8. the many UCC Conference and Association committees on ministry, the UCC's Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization Team (MESA), and those responsible for the administration and oversight of the Conferences' search and call processes to develop strategies to ensure fair and equitable compensation packages and to explore ways in which local congregations can certify that their compensation package(s) are meeting certain minimum standards, including those related to benefits and pensions;

9. the Boards of Directors of the Conferences, in consultation with the Associations of the Conferences, to continue to acknowledge, examine, and help address the economic challenges facing authorized ministers in the UCC;

10. those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call process to encourage the inclusion of members of under-represented groups in their Conference's local church authorized ministerial searches, and to specify a means to provide leadership, guidance, and training, including inclusion strategies and practices, to their local church search committees in order that they may seriously consider and call diverse authorized ministerial leadership;

11. those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call process to identify a means to collect and disseminate annual demographic data related to all local church authorized ministers in their Conference beginning no later than 2018;

12. those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call process to develop and implement a strategic plan, based upon the initial demographic data collected, that sets out specific diversity goals and objectives as a means of informing and alerting the congregations of their Conference about best practices in creating opportunities and meeting expectations for greater inclusion, comparable compensation, and equitable promotion of individuals from under-represented groups with respect to local church authorized ministerial positions;

13. those responsible for the administration and oversight of their Conference's search and call process to deliver to their Board of Directors copies of the aforementioned strategic plans within six (6) months of the collection of the initial demographic data;

14. the Associations of a Conference to assist in encouraging and supporting the progress of their local congregations in reaching these specified diversity goals and objectives and the Board of Directors of each Conference to certify to its apposite Conference Annual Meeting the status of that progress;

15. the UCC's Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) and the UCC's Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team (MESA) to develop a strategic plan to collect

(through, among other means, requests for annual reports/reviews of clergy employment and compensation) data by race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and disability, such data to include composition at the assistant, associate, senior, and solo pastor levels, comparative compensation, and representation in selection pools – all in order to track and measure the realization of a truly representative, just, and inclusive ordained ministry in our churches; and

16. the Board of Directors of the UCC to send a copy of this resolution to the UCC's Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) and to the UCC's Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team (MESA).

Funding:

The funding for the implementation of this 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.