Prudential Resolution to 31st General Synod, Submitted by St. Louis Association Council of Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ. (A Prudential Resolution establishes policy, institutes or revises structure or procedures, authorizes programs, approves directions, or requests actions by a majority vote.)

STUDY OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY/SENSITIVITY AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM BE INCLUDED IN PREPARATION FOR AUTHORIZED MINISTRY AND FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION AND REQUIRED FOR MAINTAINING GOOD STANDING FOR ALL PERSONS ENGAGED IN AUTHORIZED MINISTRY WITHIN AND ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

WHEREAS, from the beginning of our Biblical narrative all humanity has been declared good: “Humankind was created as God’s reflection: in the divine image God created them; female and male God made them.”¹ “God looked at all of this creation, and proclaimed that it was good - very good.”² WHEREAS, the body of Christ is meant, instructed, and commanded to be radically inclusive, “In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, slave or citizen, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus.”³ WHEREAS, from its inception the United Church of Christ has declared itself a denomination devoted to uniting all Christians in response to the Jesus prayer: “I don’t pray for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all may be one.”⁴ WHEREAS, members of the United Church of Christ gather in worship and proclaim together in one united voice: “God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.”⁵ WHEREAS, in the year 1993, The Nineteenth General Synod adopted the "Statement of Christian Conviction of the Proposed Pronouncement Calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church.”⁶ WHEREAS, by adopting the above statement the church called itself in all settings to be a true multiracial and multicultural church, “confessing and acting out its faith in the one sovereign God who through Jesus Christ binds in covenant faithful people of all races, ethnicities and cultures and to rejoice in these diversities as gifts to the human family in the variety of God's grace.”⁷ WHEREAS, by the year 2045, the majority of United States citizens will be multicultural and multiracial with African, Asian, Latino, Pacific Islander and Native American roots demanding greater need for understanding and acceptance among all who claim through the Holy Spirit to belong to the Body of Christ. WHEREAS, in this year 2017, many United Church of Christ churches have been unable to fulfill the commitment made at the 19th General Synod and continue to reflect ‘the most segregated hour of the week’ leaving African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islander Americans in primarily African, Asian, European, Latino, Native, and Pacific Islander United Church of Christ churches isolated by their own ethnicity, unable to understand, reach out or support those in other ethnic communities affected by the widespread incidents of racial violence and injustice spreading across our country and rendering many of us impotent in the process of dismantling institutional racism, a task to which we are called as members of the body Christ.

WHEREAS, as people of faith and witnesses of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Galilee we are called to be a coalition of Easter people bound together by our support of one another, showing up for each other where there is injustice and celebrating together where there is joy for “If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, if one member is honored, all the members share its joy.”⁸ WHEREAS, the realization of Jesus’ prayer, “that they may all be one,” is impossible without self-reflection, serious study and by engaging in safe, meaningful, substantive and bold conversations on the
brokenness and divisiveness created within the body of Christ by the realities of institutional racism, lack of understanding and failure to nurture and lift up our cultural differences and gifts.

WHEREAS, there is considerable evidence that when people actually begin to share their own preconceptions, misunderstandings and fears about cultural diversity/sensitivity and institutional racism in discussions groups, boundaries and walls are dismantled and healing occurs.

WHEREAS, UCC’s Local Church Ministries and UCC’s Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team (MESA) published in April 2009, a revised list of “The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ” and named in the marks of “Personal and Professional formation for Ministry” (Section 3) Item 14c “to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all, united and unifying church” and to encourage ongoing conversation regarding issues of ministry in the 21st century.”

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and many seminaries, conferences, associations and local churches currently have curriculum resources available to facilitate the study of cultural diversity/sensitivity and institutional racism including a new curriculum, “White Privilege – Let’s Talk,” published by the United Church of Christ’s Justice and Witness Ministries.

WHEREAS, the authorized minister called upon to serve in each United Church of Christ ministry setting is the primary leader, teacher and facilitator of such study and conversation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THE 31st GENERAL SYNOD OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CALLS UPON ALL THE JUDICATORY AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS OF THE DENOMINATION TO INCLUDE THE STUDY OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY/SENSITIVITY AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN CLERGY PREPARATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION AND AS A REQUIREMENT FOR MAINTAING STANDING FOR ALL PERSONS ENGAGED IN AUTHORIZED MINISTRY WITHIN AND ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ’s Justice and Witness Ministries, cooperate with UCC’s Local Church Ministries and UCC’s Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team (MESA) to support the implementation of such requirement and study.

FUNDING

The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

“Statement of Christian Conviction of the Proposed Pronouncement Calling the United Church of Christ to be a Multiracial and Multicultural Church” (General Synod 17, 1993), Section IV, Paragraph A.

op. cit. I Corinthians 12.