

1 The Board of Directors has recommended this resolution be sent directly to a Plenary Session of
2 the General Synod.

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5 **RESOLUTION MARKING THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JUST**
6 **PEACE PRONOUNCEMENT BY RECOMMITTING OURSELVES TO BE A**
7 **JUST PEACE CHURCH**
8

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10 **Submitted by: Christ Congregation (Princeton, NJ), Circle of Mercy (Ashville, NC),**
11 **Clackamas United Church of Christ (Milwaukie, OR), Congregational Church of**
12 **Laconia United Church of Christ (Laconia, NH), First Congregational United**
13 **Church of Christ (Berea, OH), First Congregational United Church of Christ**
14 **(Washington, DC), Grace Immanuel United Church of Christ (Louisville, KY),**
15 **Kenwood United Church of Christ (Chicago, IL), New Ark United Church of Christ**
16 **(Newark, DE), Olmsted Community Church (Olmsted Falls, OH), Peace United**
17 **Church of Christ (Duluth, MN), Plymouth Church United Church of Christ**
18 **(Milwaukee, WI), St. John’s United Church of Christ (Belvidere, IL), St. Peters**
19 **United Church of Christ (DuBois, IN), St. Peters United Church of Christ (Lamar,**
20 **IN), Trinity United Church of Christ (Fulda, IN), Trinity United Church of Christ**
21 **(North Park, MI), Union Congregational United Church of Christ (West Palm**
22 **Beach, FL)**

23 **A Resolution of Witness**
24

25
26 **SUMMARY**
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28 In 1985 the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ made a landmark decision to
29 become a Just Peace Church and called on congregations, associations, and conferences to
30 become communities of Just Peace. Moving beyond traditional Christian approaches to war and
31 peace, the General Synod affirmed Just Peace as “*the vision of shalom, linking peace, and*
32 *justice*” and the “*interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence.*” Since
33 that time the need for a vigorous Just Peace movement in our world has only intensified. Nations
34 and regions of the world, and non-national entities, have entered into seasons of nearly perpetual
35 warfare, in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Colombia, Israel/Palestine, Sudan and The
36 Republic of Congo. In our own country, the rise in gun violence and mass shootings speak to the
37 need for Just Peace, as does the rapid increase in income inequality, poverty, and environmental
38 degradation.

39
40 With each new conflict on the global scene a call to “do something” arises and military
41 intervention is frequently the first option considered. Domestic conflicts are met with
42 increasingly militarized policing and incarceration. Just Peacemaking expresses our
43 commitment to engage practices to resolve conflict at every level- in ourselves, in our families,
44 in our communities, and in our world- without violence whenever possible; when it is not
45 possible, to then restrain, contain and reduce violence; and finally to work actively to bring it to a
46 swift, sustainable, and just conclusion. The power of the Just Peace movement is that it does not

47 simply respond to violence and sources of conflict like inequality and exclusion, but it works to
48 address these challenges at their roots by changing the structures that give rise to conflict and
49 injustice. It is a highly active response to the ever-changing nature of conflict and injustice most
50 fitting for the Christian Church following Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

51

52 **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE**

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54 As the 1985 Pronouncement says:

55

56 *“A Just Peace is grounded in God's activity in creation. Creation shows the desire of God*
57 *to sustain the world and not destroy. The creation anticipates what is to come: the*
58 *history-long relationship between God and humanity and the coming vision of shalom.”*

59 *“Just Peace is grounded in covenant relationship. God creates and calls us into*
60 *covenant, God's gift of friendship: "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be*
61 *an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set*
62 *my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezekiel 37:26). When God's abiding*
63 *presence is embraced, human well-being results, or Shalom, which can be translated as*
64 *Just Peace.”*

65

66 *“A Just Peace is grounded in the reconciling activity of Jesus Christ. Human sin is the*
67 *rejection of the covenant of friendship with God and one another and the creation and*
68 *perpetuation of structures of evil. Through God's own suffering love in the cross, the*
69 *power of these structures has been broken and the possibility for relationship restored.”*

70

71 *“A Just Peace is grounded in the presence of the Holy Spirit. God sends the Holy Spirit to*
72 *continue the struggle to overcome the powers ranged against human bonding. Thus, our*
73 *hope for a Just Peace does not rest on human efforts alone, but on God's promise that we*
74 *will 'have life and have it abundantly' (John 10:10).*

75

76 *“A Just Peace is grounded in the community of reconciliation: the Just Peace Church.*
77 *Jesus, who is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), performed signs of forgiveness and healing*
78 *and made manifest that God's reign is for those who are in need. The church is a*
79 *continuation of that servant manifestation. As a Just Peace Church, we embody a Christ*
80 *fully engaged in human events. The church is thus a real countervailing power to those*
81 *forces that divide, that perpetuate human enmity and injustice, and that destroy.”*

82

83 *“A Just Peace is grounded in hope. Shalom is the vision that pulls all creation toward a*
84 *time when weapons are swept off the earth and all creatures lie down together without*
85 *fear; where all have their own fig tree and dwell secure from want. As Christians, we*
86 *offer this conviction to the world: Peace is possible.”*

87

88 **MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

89

90 The 1985 Just Peace Pronouncement issued a call for *“churches to organize themselves so as to*
91 *be effective instruments of God's Just Peace.”* It made the provocative declaration that it was not
92 only possible, but our direct call as Christians to join the reconciling work of Jesus Christ and

93 end war. The Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ will re-issue this call for
94 “churches to organize themselves so as to be effective instruments of God’s Just Peace” with a
95 specific call to develop practices, programs, partnerships, and networks of Just Peace at the local,
96 regional, and national levels.

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98 **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**
99

100 The Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ will request that all churches,
101 associations, conferences, and associated bodies of the United Church of Christ consider how to
102 implement this resolution with the support and encouragement of the Covenanted Ministries.
103

104 **PROBABILITY OF INFLUENCING SOCIAL CHANGE**
105

106 The 1985 Just Peace Pronouncement made clear: “*We have barely begun to explore this little*
107 *known process of reconciliation.*” In the thirty intervening years we have seen the United States’
108 investment in military spending exceed the rest of the world’s military spending combined. We
109 have since 9/11 waged the longest war in this country’s history, yet have seen that our battlefield
110 successes rarely translate into a sustainable peace. The toll on our nation’s military families and
111 veterans has been considerable and in the coming years we will welcome back into our
112 congregations veterans who exhibit unprecedented levels of post-traumatic stress and moral
113 injury.
114

115 With the adoption of this resolution, the United Church of Christ will recommit itself to the
116 inward and outward journey of Just Peace and reaffirm the bold and audacious declaration in our
117 Just Peace Pronouncement: “*war can and must be eliminated.*”
118

119 **Committing Ourselves to the Inward Journey of Just Peace**

120 We give thanks for the wisdom, expressed in the 1985 Just Peace Pronouncement when it issued
121 the call for an “*inward journey of spiritual nurture*” and an “*inward journey of education.*” The
122 Just Peace Pronouncement was clear, as we continue to be clear, that the disciplines of study and
123 prayer are not incidental elements of Just Peace, but foundational, essential elements. The
124 Pronouncement commended the “*use of the World Peace Prayer, using the example of the*
125 *Benedictine Sisters who pray this specific prayer each day at 12 noon:*

126 *Lead me/us from death to life,*

127 *from falsehood to truth.*

128 *Lead me/us from despair to hope,*

129 *from fear to trust.*

130 *Lead me/us from hate to love,*

131 *from war to peace.*

132 *Let peace fill our hearts,*

133 *Our world, our universe.”*

134 Being sustained for the inward journey of Just Peacemaking requires cultivating spiritual
135 disciplines such as forgiveness and grounding ourselves in hope. As in 1 Peter 3:15 “Always be
136 prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have”,
137 we are called to be witnesses to the hope that we have found. Just Peacemaking practices have

138 been revealed, applied, and tested in the last thirty years- often confounding the wisdom of the
139 world with the hope of the Gospel.

140

141 The Just Peace practices call us to:

- 142 1. Support nonviolent direct action
- 143 2. Take independent initiative to reduce threat
- 144 3. Use Cooperative conflict resolution
- 145 4. Acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice, and seek repentance and forgiveness
- 146 5. Advanced democracy, human rights, and religious liberty
- 147 6. Foster just and sustainable economic development
- 148 7. Work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system
- 149 8. Strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights
- 150 9. Reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade
- 151 10. Encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations

152

153 We have seen in the last thirty years how these and other Just Peace practices were applied in
154 South Africa, where geopolitical pundits were sure there would be a bloody race war to end
155 Apartheid. We've seen the Berlin Wall come down and East and West Germany peacefully
156 reunited. We've witnessed the number of US and Soviet Union nuclear warheads reduce from a
157 high in 1985 of 65,000 to less than a quarter that number today. We watched what many thought
158 was an intractable civil war in Liberia brought to an end by the peaceful demonstration of
159 women who courageously took to the streets. These stories ground our hope in real world
160 experience, contradict and confound the pessimist, and strengthen our resolve to proclaim our
161 faith in God's future of Shalom.

162

163 Committing Ourselves to the Outward Journey of Just Peace

164 In the words of the Pronouncement:

165 *"We call all local churches to the outward journey of political witness, enabling all*
166 *members to join the search for the politics of a Just Peace."*

167 And we have seen our congregations; members and church officers become powerful
168 constituents and advocates for peace in places like Sri Lanka, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan.
169 We have been a powerful voice for third world debt relief, nuclear arms reduction, the protection
170 of our environment, and the dangers of a growing income inequality.

171

172 *"We call all local churches to the outward journey of community witness."*

173 And we have seen our members take up vigils to end gun violence in the streets of their
174 communities, stand in solidarity against the militarization of our police forces, and raise warning
175 about this country's incarceration crisis.

176

177 *"We call for local churches to make their convictions known in their communities*
178 *through public forums, media, and presence in the public arena."*

179 And we have seen our churches lead difficult conversations around the need to defend hard
180 fought rights of minorities, women, and the LGBT community.

181

182 One of the boldest statements in the Just Peace Pronouncement is a simple sentence: *"War can*
183 *and must be eliminated."* The world doubts, believing instead that violence is an inherent part of

184 human nature. But our hope is rooted in deeper soil; that being created in the image of God, we
185 can transcend violence as the way to resolve conflict. Forgetting this, losing the imagination to
186 picture peace as a real possibility, is a temptation with tragic consequences. Believing that with
187 God all things are possible; believing that God promises peace; believing that it is peace that
188 Jesus leaves with us; these are foundational beliefs for the United Church of Christ and are
189 central to the inward and outward journey of being a Just Peace Church.

190

191 **TEXT OF MOTION**

192

193 WHEREAS, scripture calls us to seek God’s shalom and participate in the reconciling mission of
194 Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

195

196 WHEREAS, at its Fifteenth General Synod in Ames, Iowa the General Synod adopted the
197 pronouncement “*Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church,*” and called on
198 its local churches, conferences and national bodies to “*organize their common life so as to make*
199 *a difference in the achieving of a Just Peace and the ending of the institution of war.*”

200

201 WHEREAS, in the thirty years since the adoption of the Just Peace pronouncement, we have
202 seen protracted violent conflicts, intractable systemic injustices, and crippling cultural prejudices
203 resolved using just peacemaking practices.

204

205 WHEREAS, in the thirty years since the adoption of the Just Peace pronouncement, many United
206 Church of Christ Conferences, Seminaries, Institutions, and congregations have declared
207 themselves Just Peace communities and have adopted policies and strategies to live out this call.

208

209 WHEREAS, in the year 2001, the United Church of Christ along with other global faith
210 communities affirmed and participated actively in the World Council of Churches “Decade to
211 Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace” program, and joined with
212 other communions in marking the end of the decade in 2011 at the International Ecumenical
213 Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica.

214

215 WHEREAS, the World Council of Churches commended for study and action an “Ecumenical
216 Call to Just Peace,” and re-affirmed at its General Assembly in Busan in 2013 a “Statement on
217 the Way of Just Peace,” highlighting a growing ecumenical consensus toward Just Peacemaking,
218 calling on member churches to join an “Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,” by seeking
219 peace in four distinct contexts:

220

For Just Peace in the Community- so that all may live free from fear,

221

For Just Peace with the Earth- so that life is sustained,

222

For Just Peace in the Marketplace- so that all may live in dignity,

223

For Just Peace Among the Nations- so that human lives are protected

224

225 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod mark the 30th Anniversary
226 of the Just Peace Pronouncement by reinvigorating the Just Peace movement in the United
227 Church of Christ and beyond. In common cause with all who seek peace with justice, a renewed
228 Just Peace movement will most surely include ecumenical relations with Christian Churches

229 throughout the world, interfaith partnerships in the United States and beyond, and strong new
230 alliances wherever they may be made.

231
232 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each congregation of the United Church of Christ be
233 invited to become a Just Peace congregation, if they have not already done so.

234
235 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod invites a litany of covenant
236 making to be celebrated throughout the church and spread liberally across the minutes,
237 publications and communication media of the United Church of Christ. Let this litany give God
238 Praise for the first thirty years of witness in the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace church
239 and covenant all who pray it into a common bond of love and service.

240
241 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod invites congregations of the
242 United Church of Christ to mark the Sunday preceding September 21 (which the United Nation
243 recognizes as the “International Day of Prayer for Peace”) as Just Peace Sunday.

244
245 AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod invites all settings of the
246 church who have committed themselves to Just Peace to create local, regional, and national
247 partnerships and networks with the encouragement and support of the Covenanted Ministries of
248 the United Church of Christ; to raise awareness of conflictual justice issues, share concerns,
249 stories, and experience of Just Peace practices at work, and build constituencies around Just
250 Peacemaking.

251
252 **FUNDING**

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

256
257 **IMPLEMENTATION**

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259 The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within
260 the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.