

1 **RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN ALL CHURCH OFFERING FOR SUPPORTING**
2 **THE EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES OF MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT PREPARING**
3 **FOR AUTHORIZED MINISTRY OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

4 **Approved As Amended**

5 **A Prudential Resolution**

6 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

7 WHEREAS, God provides for God's church by calling and gifting persons for ministry in a
8 variety of ways, including pastoral leadership for the church itself;

9 WHEREAS, the church participates in this providence of God by equipping and authorizing the
10 ministries of some of its called and gifted members through theological education and ordination
11 or commissioning;

12 WHEREAS, the well-being of the church of Jesus Christ, and particularly of each local church,
13 is enhanced by calling faithful, educated and competent pastors, teachers and other leaders, and
14 is jeopardized by the unavailability of such leadership;

15 WHEREAS, the church has historically provided for its leadership needs through institutions of
16 theological-pastoral education;

17 WHEREAS, General Synod III phased out national, direct support to seminaries and called upon
18 Conferences and local churches to assume this responsibility; and General Synod X urged each
19 local church to support the seven closely related (now the seven seminaries of the United Church
20 of Christ) seminary or seminaries in its region at a level equivalent to two percent of its operating
21 budget, but few local churches have done so;

22 WHEREAS, the cost of educating persons for ministerial leadership has gradually shifted from
23 the church itself to the persons themselves, and, inclusive of living expenses, has increased to
24 \$24,000 per year and more to many seminarians;

25 WHEREAS, many of the current generation of seminary graduates have borrowed large sums of
26 money—often \$30,000 to \$50,000 in addition to any undergraduate student loans still being
27 carried—to complete their theological education and one seminary's average student loan for the
28 year 1996-97 alone was \$10,200;

29 WHEREAS, indebted seminary graduates must seek starting salaries sufficient to enable debt
30 repayment on top of costs of living, while the salaries offered by many local churches are
31 marginal at best and inadequate to do so, and these local churches are increasingly hard-pressed
32 to finance even marginally-paid leadership;

33 WHEREAS, these trends point toward a dearth of church leadership, with only wealthy persons
34 being able to afford to answer God’s call to full-time leadership and only wealthy churches being
35 able to call them;

36 WHEREAS, the fund-raising efforts of the seminaries of the United Church of Christ and of the
37 Make A Difference Campaign, although providing some increase in scholarship resources, have
38 not been sufficient to stave off these trends;

39 WHEREAS, all the previous whereas clauses were taken directly from the action of the Twenty-
40 first General Synod “Prevention and Reduction of Seminarians’ Educational Debt” (97GS40)
41 and have not been sufficiently addressed;

42 WHEREAS, the multiple paths of ministry provide for greater diversity of educational
43 preparation but do not eliminate the need for financial support for members in discernment;

44 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church
45 of Christ requests the Collegium of Officers of the United Church of Christ to develop a plan and
46 an implementation schedule for an annual all- church offering or other possible funding
47 initiatives to provide tuition assistance for theological education for members in discernment
48 with associations of the United Church of Christ.

49 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of
50 Christ recommends that the Collegium of officers of the United Church of Christ explore the
51 feasibility of offering low-interest loans to United Church of Christ members in discernment
52 with a report delivered to the Thirtieth General Synod.

53 Be it further resolved that the Collegium be requested to present an actionable plan as quickly as
54 possible and no later than the 30th General Synod in 2015.

55 **FUNDING**

56

57 Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
58 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

59

60 **IMPLEMENTATION**

61

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