

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Second General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

RESOLUTION Calling for the United States to pull “Back From The Brink” and Prevent Nuclear War

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by: First Churches of Northampton, UCC&ABC, Northampton, MA; West Cummington Congregational Church, UCC, West Cummington MA; First Congregational Church, UCC, Ashfield, MA; Haydenville Congregational Church, UCC, Haydenville, MA; Christ Congregational Church, UCC, Princeton, NJ; and Saint Andrew Church, UCC, Sarasota, FL.

SUMMARY This resolution is offered in response to increasing international concern over the threat of nuclear war and the moral threat inherent in the existence of nuclear weapons. The expiration of nuclear treaties between the U.S. and Russia, as well as studies into the grave humanitarian impact of even a limited nuclear strike contribute to a growing urgency to address the crisis of nuclear weapons. This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to strengthen its historic work for a world free of nuclear weapons by endorsing the Back from the Brink Campaign (BFTB) and its five principles, and issue a call for United States to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons called for in the campaign.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE As Christians, we are followers of Jesus who taught that the two greatest commandments are to love God with our heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). In the biblical narrative, Jesus called his followers to show kindness and care to the “least of these” for in doing so, we care for him (Matthew 25: 35-36). God’s shalom, God’s peace, is a gift given to humanity (John 14:27) to be lived out in friendship and covenant with all God’s people. The use of nuclear weapons is the ultimate refusal to embrace and follow these foundational commandments and teachings of our faith.

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY The United Church of Christ has spoken throughout its history against the production, testing, sale, and use of nuclear weapons. In 1959, the General Synod addressed nuclear weapons by calling on churches and their members to work “For effective international control and reduction of all national armaments, including the testing of nuclear weapons.” (A Call to Christian Action in Society). In 1985, the United Church of Christ’s Pronouncement on Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church¹ declared its “opposition to all weapons of mass destruction” and called all nations to: “(1) declare that they will never use such weapons; (2) cease immediately the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons; (3) begin dismantling these arsenals, and; (4) while the process of dismantling is going on, negotiate comprehensive treaties banning all such future weapons by any nation.” The 32nd General Synod will renew our commitment to arms control and the vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY The 32nd General Synod of the United Church of Christ will request that all churches, associations, conferences, and associated bodies of the United Church of Christ consider how to implement this resolution with the support and encouragement of the

44 Covenanted Ministries.

45

46 **PROBABILITY OF INFLUENCING SOCIAL CHANGE** On July 7th 2017, the United Nations
47 (UN) Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by 122ⁱⁱ member states,
48 and was opened for signature. This treaty was brought in response to growing awareness among UN
49 member states of the dire humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. The TPNW
50 treaty creates a legally binding mechanism to prohibit nuclear weapons or any nuclear weapon
51 activities including the development, testing, purchasing, possession, use, or threatening of their use.
52 It will enter into force when 50 nations ratify it. As of November 2018, the treaty has 69 signatories
53 and 19 states parties that have ratified it.

54

55 In 2018, the “Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War” national grassroots movement
56 issued a call to faith communities and civil society groups to work together toward a fundamental
57 change in U.S. nuclear weapons policy. This movement, initiated by Physicians for Social
58 Responsibility, has the endorsement of many national faith groups, non-governmental organizations,
59 and a growing number of state and local governments that have passed statements of support,
60 including the State of California and the cities of Baltimore, Los Angeles and others. The goal is to
61 create political will for the U.S. to ratify the TPNW treaty, and endorse five common-sense steps:

62 1. Renounce the option of using nuclear weapons first 2. End the sole, unchecked
63 authority of any U.S. president to launch a nuclear attack 3. Take U.S. nuclear weapons
64 off hair-trigger alert 4. Cancel plans to replace the entire nuclear arsenal with enhanced
65 weapons 5. Actively pursue a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to
66 eliminate their nuclear arsenals

67 Now is the time to stand up, join with other people of conscience and faith in our nation and around
68 the world to take action to abolish all nuclear weapons.

69

70 **TEXT OF MOTION**

71 WHEREAS, in our scriptures we read that “where there is no vision, the people perish”
72 (Proverbs 29:18); and

73

74 WHEREAS, in 2018 the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved the Doomsday Clock ahead by 30
75 seconds — to 11:58 p.m. A symbolic gesture suggesting that civilization is two minutes away from
76 destruction;ⁱⁱⁱ and

77

78 WHEREAS, the 12th General Synod of the United Church of Christ passed a pronouncement
79 “Reversing the Arms Race”; and

80

81 WHEREAS, the 15th General Synod passed a pronouncement declaring the United Church of Christ
82 a “Just Peace Church” that declared opposition to all weapons of mass destruction, calling for the
83 immediate cessation of testing, production, and deployment of such arsenals; and

84

85 WHEREAS, 95 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons are in the hands of the United State and Russia
86 and the rest are held by seven other countries: China, France, Israel, India, North Korea, Pakistan, and
87 the United Kingdom ; and^{iv}

88

89 WHEREAS, since the height of the Cold War, the United States and Russia have dismantled more

90 than 70,000 nuclear warheads, but 14,485 of these weapons still exist and pose an intolerable risk
91 to human survival;^v and

92
93 WHEREAS, former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry has said, “the risk of a nuclear
94 catastrophe today is greater than it was during the Cold War — and yet our public is blissfully
95 unaware of the new nuclear dangers they face;”^{vi} and

96
97 WHEREAS, the use of even a tiny fraction of these weapons would cause worldwide climate
98 disruption and global famine;^{vii} and

99
100 WHEREAS, a large scale nuclear war would kill hundreds of millions of people directly and cause
101 unimaginable environmental damage and catastrophic climate disruption;^{viii} and

102
103 WHEREAS, as the effects of climate change place increased stress on communities around the
104 world and intensify the likelihood of conflict, the danger of nuclear war will grow;^{ix} and

105
106 WHEREAS, despite assurances that these arsenals exist solely to guarantee that they are never used,
107 there have been many occasions when nuclear armed states have prepared to use these weapons, and
108 war has been averted only at the last minute;^x and

109
110 WHEREAS, the planned expenditure of more than \$1 trillion to enhance our nuclear arsenal will not
111 only increase the risk of nuclear disaster but fuel a global arms race and divert crucial resources needed
112 to assure the well-being of the American people and people all over the world;^{xi} and

113
114 WHEREAS, there is an alternative to this march to nuclear war: in July 2017, 122 nations called for
115 the elimination of all nuclear weapons by adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear
116 Weapons.^{xii}

117
118 WHEREAS, in 2018 the U.S. has expressed its intent to exit the Intermediate-Range Nuclear
119 Forces Treaty, a critical agreement to curtail nuclear weapons;^{xiii} and

120
121 WHEREAS, living into the United Church of Christ’ current mission statement to “Build a just
122 world for all” will necessitate the elimination of nuclear weapons;^{xiv}

123
124 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Second General Synod of the United Church of
125 Christ reaffirms its vision of a nuclear weapon free world and endorses the Back from the Brink: The
126 Call to Prevent Nuclear War campaign,^{xv} calling upon policymakers to take common sense policy
127 measures to prevent nuclear war by:

- 128 • renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first;
- 129 • ending any president’s sole, unchecked authority to launch a nuclear attack;
- 130 • taking US nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert;
- 131 • cancelling the plan to replace its entire arsenal with enhanced weapons; and
- 132 • actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear armed states to eliminate their
133 nuclear arsenals.^{xvi}

134
135 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Second General Synod of the United Church of Christ

136 calls on the U.S. President and Congress take necessary steps to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of
137 Nuclear Weapons^{xvii} and make nuclear disarmament^{xviii} the centerpiece of our national security policy;
138 and urges the National setting, conferences, associations, and local churches to convey this message to
139 policymakers.

140
141 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with
142 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

143
144 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or
145 other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

146

ⁱ <http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALL-TO-CHRISTIAN-ACTION-IN-SOCIETY.pdf>

ⁱⁱ https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/2017/07/20170707%2003-42%20PM/Ch_XXVI_9.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://thebulletin.org/2018-doomsday-clock-statement/>

^{iv} <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>

^v <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>

^{vi} https://www.huffingtonpost.com/william-jperry/nuclear-catastrophe-risk_b_9019558.html

^{vii} <https://www.psr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/two-billion-at-risk.pdf> and <http://www.icanw.org/the-facts/catastrophic-harm/climate-disruption-and-nuclear-famine/>

^{viii} <http://www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/projected-us-casualties-and-destruction.pdf>

^{ix} <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/once-again-climate-change-cited-as-trigger-for-war/>

^x <http://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2015/04/Close%20Calls%20with%20Nuclear%20Weapons.pdf>

^{xi} <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/USNuclearModernization>

^{xii} <http://www.icanw.org/treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/>

^{xiii} <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-11/news/trump-withdraw-us-inf-treaty>

^{xiv} http://www.ucc.org/about-us_purpose_vision_and_mission

^{xv} <https://www.preventnuclearwar.org/>

^{xvi} <http://www.preventnuclearwar.org>

^{xvii} <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>

^{xviii} www.nuclearban.us