

1 The Business Committee of the Thirty-first General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution  
2 be sent directly to the United Church of Christ Board of Directors.

## 3 4 5 **Manual on Ministry, Re-Visioned**

### 6 7 **A Prudential Resolution**

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9 **Submitted by the Pennsylvania Southeast and Massachusetts Conferences**

#### 10 11 **Summary**

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13 The United Church of Christ's *Manual on Ministry* has shaped the formation, authorization and  
14 oversight of ministers since the denomination's inception and in its predecessor traditions.  
15 Recently re-visioned, the newest iteration of the *Manual on Ministry* has been developed through  
16 prayerful discernment and conversation with all settings of the denomination. This re-visioned  
17 *Manual* reflects the latest understandings of ministerial formation, authorization and oversight  
18 not currently reflected in the UCC's Constitution and Bylaws. This prudential resolution calls for  
19 a period of engagement and reflection with the re-visioned *Manual* prior to presenting  
20 Constitution and Bylaws recommendations at General Synod in 2019.

#### 21 22 **Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding**

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24 From the start, the United Church of Christ's *Manual on Ministry* has served as a touch point of  
25 covenantal relations within the denomination. Through periodic revisions, the *Manual* has  
26 continued to reflect the ecclesiastical needs of the church regarding formation, authorization and  
27 oversight of ministers.

28 *"The LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner  
29 may read it."* Habakkuk 2:2

30 In 2013 an invitation was extended to all members of the United Church of Christ via letters to  
31 every local congregation to participate in the re-visioning of the *Manual on Ministry*, last  
32 updated in the 1980's and printed in 2002. Out of an applicant pool of one hundred fifty persons  
33 a diverse working group of seventeen members was called together under the name Habakkuk  
34 Group, derived from the prophetic call to "capture the vision and make it plain."

35 *"I will stand at my watch-post, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what  
36 he will say to me."* Habakkuk 2:1

37 The Habakkuk Group engaged with all settings of the denomination to take seriously the  
38 prophet's declaration to stand at the watch-post and be stationed on the ramparts, that is, to  
39 observe the church's and world's landscape and prayerfully discern God's movement. During  
40 this work of prayer and observation, the Habakkuk group noted significant changes in the life of  
41 the church including:

42 a decade of implementation of the Ministry Issues Pronouncement from General Synod Min  
43 2005, most notably the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers;  
44 counter to the work of Ministry Issues, an understanding and use of licensed ministry in some  
45 contexts to underpay local church pastors with non-seminary formation;  
46 the failure of "authorized" to achieve equal regard for and among licensed, commissioned and  
47 ordained ministers;

48 the multiplication of ministry settings beyond local churches and familiar institutions such as  
49 hospitals and military service and universities.

50 *“For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it  
51 seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.” Habakkuk 2:3*

52 Taking in these observations the Habakkuk Group engaged with partners across the United  
53 Church of Christ to build and test a vision for ministerial formation, authorization and oversight  
54 reflective of the current needs of the church. The materials were tested and honed with diverse  
55 readers, conference staff, committees on ministry, seminaries and regional theological education  
56 programs, and ecumenical partners.

57 *“Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines.” Habakkuk 3:17*

58 Recognizing that there is always a period of growth between planting and harvesting, the re-  
59 visioned *Manual on Ministry* bears within it theological grounding, practices of covenantal  
60 relationships, and numerous resources for Committees on Ministry in the United Church of  
61 Christ, all of which will take time and intentionality for the church to explore.

62 The *Manual on Ministry* is the consistent resource used to shape the common work of  
63 Committees on Ministry. Committees on Ministry are the central locus of covenant in the United  
64 Church of Christ, binding together local churches, individual authorized ministers, associations,  
65 conferences, and the national church. Service on a Committee on Ministry is a ministry in and of  
66 itself. The United Church of Christ depends on COMs to make decisions for the whole church,  
67 thus it is imperative that COMs are well trained and maintain consistent practices across diverse  
68 settings.

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#### 70 **Text of the Motion**

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72 Whereas the United Church of Christ *Manual on Ministry* has been re-visioned in order to  
73 continue serving as a touch point of covenantal relations within the denomination.

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75 Whereas the *Manual on Ministry* reflects theological foundations, covenantal relationships, and  
76 best practices in response to current needs of the church regarding formation, authorization and  
77 oversight of ministers.

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79 Whereas Committees on Ministry are a locus of covenant, needing regular training and shared  
80 understanding working from a common denominational resource.

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82 Whereas changes to the *Manual* need to be explored and experienced by the wider church before  
83 changes can be recommended to the United Church of Christ Constitution and Bylaws.

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85 Whereas a transition plan to move from the existing *Manual on Ministry* to the re-visioned  
86 edition has been presented to conferences and associations.

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88 Therefore the Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls for a time of  
89 exploration and transition using the re-visioned *Manual on Ministry* in our Committees on  
90 Ministry prior to the consideration of consequent changes to the UCC Constitution and Bylaws at  
91 General Synod in 2019.

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#### 93 **Funding:**

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

96 **Implementation:**

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