

01-GS-28 VOTED: The Twenty-third General Synod refers the resolution, “Mutual Respect within the Faith Community,” to the Executive Council.

MUTUAL RESPECT WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY

WHEREAS the polity of the United Church of Christ provides that each local church maintains its own autonomy while being bound together in structure and in faith;

WHEREAS there is a historic tradition within our denomination and our parent denominations, instituted by our forebears who sought a liberty of conscience, which encourages each member to individually seek God and to form an understanding of God's work and God's truth;

WHEREAS we have come to understand the United Church of Christ as a denomination that celebrates the diversity among us, which magnifies our strength, demonstrates our openness, and mandates us to welcome all of God's people;

WHEREAS a failure to be sensitive to and welcoming of this diversity sometimes causes great pain and distress to members or parts of the body of Christ within the denomination;

WHEREAS the inability of the media and the public to understand these individual freedoms and this autonomy often causes misunderstandings or misinterpretations by the media and public when statements are made by national, Conference, or Association leaders and when press releases about actions taken by one of our national or Conference bodies or the denomination are distributed;

WHEREAS our church can only grow in Christ through this diversity if it is combined with the practice of sensitivity and mutual respect for this diversity at all levels of the United Church of Christ from individual members and congregations up through and including the national ministries; and

WHEREAS we seek to grow into that perfect state of mutual respect;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls upon all national covenanted ministries, Conferences, Associations, congregations, and members of the United Church of Christ to be sensitive to, recognize, respect, and welcome this diversity within our denominational family, as we gather in our congregations and at Association, Conference, or national events and when public statements are made or public actions are taken;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls upon all national covenanted ministries, Conferences, Associations, and their spokespersons to constantly be in dialogue with individual congregations and members, keeping them informed of various actions, pronouncements, or statements being considered with opportunities for feedback whenever possible before such statements or press releases are issued publicly; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls upon all national covenanted ministries, Conferences, and Associations to explain in public statements or press releases that, because of the autonomy of our individual congregations and our structure, no national, Conference, Association body, or officer thereof speaks for the 1.4 million members as a whole.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.