

1
2 **SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS RELATED TO SEXUAL**
3 **ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY**

4 **A Resolution of Witness**

5
6 **Submitted by Wider Church Ministries**

7
8 **SUMMARY**
9

10 This resolution seeks to raise awareness of international instances of systematic
11 discrimination, violence and abuse targeting persons based on their sexual orientation or gender
12 identity (SOGI), and of contexts where such abuse is not prohibited by law but rather legally,
13 politically, socially, and even religiously sanctioned. The resolution would commit the UCC to
14 advocate for the fair and equal application of universal human rights principles and laws toward
15 the protection of all persons from sexual or gender status-based abuse, discrimination or criminal
16 prosecution.
17

18 **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE**
19

20 The foundation of human rights derives from the creation narratives of scripture in which human
21 beings are created by God in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus’
22 public ministry begins with the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus teaches his disciples to
23 hunger and thirst for justice, to be merciful, to be peacemakers, and to accept persecution for the
24 sake of justice (Matt. 5: 6, 7, 9, 10); in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus calls on his disciples to follow
25 the Golden Rule: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” And, Jesus’ exhorts his
26 disciples to address the needs of the “least” that are hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, or in
27 prison (Matthew 25:34-40). The Church acts faithfully when it regards all humans as equal in
28 worth and dignity and when it seeks the just treatment of all in societies and by laws and public
29 authorities.
30

31 **RESOLUTION**
32

33 **WHEREAS:**

34 The Tenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ (1975) declared, “In faithfulness to the
35 biblical and historic mandate, we hold that, as a child of God, every person is endowed with
36 worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside.” (A Pronouncement: Civil Liberties
37 without Discrimination Related to Affectional or Sexual Preference), and previous General
38 Synod and Executive Council actions have declared faithful support for the Universal
39 Declaration of Human Rights (GS2, 1959) and committed to church to seek the full application
40 of international human rights (GS12, 1979);
41

42 International human rights standards delineate the positive obligations a nation must fulfill in
43 order for its residents to live fully human lives. Collectively, these liberties and obligations
44 define the “common good” and implicate government to be proactive in the establishment and
45 maintenance of that good; and
46

47 International human rights standards can provide common language to describe universal
48 concerns, including promises and claims to justice that transcend any one nation; common vision

49 around which disparate and affected groups can gather and build coalitions to create change; and
50 common measurements that all can use to hold public officials, policymakers, agencies and
51 organizations accountable; and

52
53 In order for universal human rights standards to be truly universal, every person, whatever their
54 sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, is entitled to the full enjoyment of all
55 human rights; and

56
57 The use of criminal law, or proposals to use criminal law, against members of sexual minorities
58 creates a legal and social environment that is discriminatory and violates the human rights
59 endorsed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is evident in the many cases of
60 harassment, arrest and prosecution of persons based on their real or perceived sexual orientation
61 or gender identity, and in the inflammatory statements issued by national and local leaders
62 (including religious and other civil society leaders) which vilify sexual minorities and gender
63 non-conforming people and, in extreme cases, call for violence against them; and

64
65 Around the world, such discrimination, violence and abuse targeting persons based on their
66 sexual orientation or gender identity often goes unreported, uninvestigated and unpunished; and
67 Around the world, such discrimination, violence and abuse targeting persons based on their
68 sexual orientation or gender identity seriously undermines attempts to provide effective HIV
69 prevention, treatment, care and support; and

70
71 In many countries, the work of human rights defenders is opposed, obstructed or banned; and
72 where the right to peacefully gather is denied and actions are taken to silence the voices of
73 human rights supporters; and

74
75 The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations
76 Development Program (UNDP) urgently supports countries towards the adoption and
77 implementation of laws and law enforcement that protect sexual minorities from discrimination,
78 harassment, violence, and arrest and prosecution on the basis of sexual orientation and gender
79 identity;

80
81 The United States continues to address how best legally and socially to protect the human rights
82 of everyone in our own country;

83
84
85
86 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of
87 Christ:

88
89 Reaffirms the 10th General Synod of the United Church of Christ (1975), “A Pronouncement:
90 Civil Liberties without Discrimination Related to Affectional or Sexual Preference,” and
91 previous General Synod and Executive Council actions in support of the Universal Declaration
92 of Human Rights (GS2, 1959) and of denominational advocacy toward the full application of
93 international human rights (GS12, 1979); and

94
95 In faithfulness to the biblical and historic mandate, holds that, as a child of God, every person is
96 | endowed by God with worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside; and

97

98 Deplores the use of scripture to generate hatred and the violation of human rights, including
99 human rights violations in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression;
100 and

101

102 Declares its support for the Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human
103 Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI); and

104

105 Calls upon the leadership of faith communities to foster discussion and a deeper understanding of
106 the foundations of human rights, so that our churches and the wider community may better
107 understand the source beliefs that undergird fair and just practices for all, including SOGI
108 communities; and

109

110 Calls upon the individual members of our churches, lay leaders, clergy, local churches,
111 institution, agencies, and the various geographical and other expressions of the church to
112 advocate for policies and legislation consistent with the Yogyakarta Principles at the United
113 Nations, and at the federal, state and local levels of government of the United States; and

114

115 Calls upon the leadership of local churches, geographical expressions of the church, and program
116 ministers in the national settings to identify and distribute materials that describe universal
117 human rights as they have been defined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; and

118

119 Calls upon the leadership of local churches, geographical expressions of the church, and program
120 ministers in the national settings, to maintain a constant awareness of violations of human rights
121 in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity, through the use of reporting and a wide
122 range of communication outlets, and encourages our affiliated, ecumenical and interfaith partners
123 to do the same; and

124

125 Calls upon the national ministries of the United Church of Christ to work collaboratively with
126 Common Global Ministries to identify partners with which to cooperate for the effective
127 implementation of this resolution in ways that are respectful of cultural sensitivities; and Directs
128 that Justice & Witness Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, and the
129 Office of General Ministries will be responsible for developing the strategies, programs, and
130 resources to implement the Resolution.

131

132

133

134

135 **FUNDING**

136

137 Funding for the implementation of this Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
138 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

139

140 **IMPLEMENTATION**

141

142 The Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ are requested to implement this
143 resolution.

144