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2 **A RESOLUTION TO FORM A THEOLOGICAL FORUM**  
3 **A Prudential Resolution**  
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5 **Submitted by 10 Delegates or Delegates-elect to the Twenty-eighth General Synod; Rev. James Hughes,**  
6 **pastor, Grace UCC, Greencastle, Rev. Galen Russell, pastor, Chapel Hill UCC, Camp Hill, Ryan Troup,**  
7 **Shiloh UCC, Danville, Carol Hostetter, Quentin UCC, Quentin, Rev. Sarah Rentzel-Jones, pastor, St.**  
8 **Peter's {Lischey's} UCC, Spring Grove, Rev. Marja Coons-Torn, Church of the Redeemer, Hershey**  
9 **delegate for Local Church Ministries Board, Rev. Ken Heasley, retired pastor, Hanover, Mr. Walter**  
10 **Maust, Trinity UCC, Hanover, Frank Deaner, Tabor UCC, Lebanon, Nancy Foust Wagner, Zwingli**  
11 **UCC, East Berlin, Lee Ann Strine, Faith UCC, York, Rev. Mike Loser, Dover UCC, Dover (Penn Central**  
12 **Conference), Jane Hess, Moderator-elect, Bill Metzger, Zeigels Union Church, Breinigsville, Rev. David**  
13 **Charles Smith, senior pastor, Jordan UCC, Allentown, Rev. Deb Hess, pastor, St. Thomas UCC,**  
14 **Bethlehem (Penn Northeast Conference), William Field, Secretary to the Board, Rev. Robert F.R. Peters,**  
15 **Jr. (Central Atlantic Conference), Rev. Lisa Schmatzhagen, First Congregational UCC, Oconomowoc**  
16 **(Wisconsin Conference)**  
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19 **SUMMARY**  
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21 This resolution calls for the formation of a theological forum to serve as a resource for helping our church in  
22 work it has committed to do in our Constitution Preamble: holding fast to the historic Christian faith, “in each  
23 generation to make this faith its own” .... “in honesty of thought and expression.”  
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25 **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**  
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27 Each one of us is called to be a theologian. This call to engage in theological reflection is a function of  
28 the even more basic call to spread the good news of God’s reconciling and liberating action in Jesus Christ.  
29 Baptized into Christ’s mission, anointed by the Spirit, we are directed to “make disciples of all nations,  
30 baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I  
31 have commanded you.” To be a disciple means to be a continuing learner, reflecting on the good news of Jesus  
32 Christ, attentive to the Word of God in all the changing contexts of life in order to teach others who are  
33 responding to the good news. God’s revelation is not self-interpreting; appreciating its implications for our lives  
34 requires prayer, study, reflection, and conversation.

35 Jesus’ words show that he expects disciples to be in relationship – with him, and with one another.  
36 Community, therefore, should be the basic context for the doing of theology. As well as individual attention to  
37 the Word, mutual attention is absolutely essential. Our understanding of what God has done and is doing in  
38 love for the world grows as we reflect in covenant with one another. The letter to the Ephesians affirms this in  
39 its prayer “that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and  
40 height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.”

41 We all have the experience of learning together with other saints, members in our local churches. Even  
42 there it sometimes happens that our conversation is mainly with only some of the saints – those whose  
43 perspectives are similar to our own. The more we move toward conversing with all the saints, the more fully  
44 we will be exploring “the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ.” Is not this what the  
45 writer of the letter to the Ephesians had in mind when including the phrase “all the saints”? The letter is  
46 addressed to Jews and Gentiles, who come from very different perspectives in thinking about God. No single  
47 local community of Christians by itself contains all the perspectives necessary for discerning the multiplex  
48 richness of God’s revelation.

49 The United Church of Christ has always affirmed the need to engage in the theological task on a church-  
50 wide basis. In living together as disciples of Jesus Christ, the sole Head of the Church, we have, in the Preamble  
51 of our Constitution, joined in basic theological affirmations, saying that our church “acknowledges as its sole  
52 Head, Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior. It acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share in this  
53 confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to

54 prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church  
55 expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers.” In doing  
56 theological work, we act on the responsibility of our United Church “in each generation to make this faith its  
57 own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.”

## 58 59 RESOLUTION

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61 WHEREAS a Seminar Group called together by the Office of Church Life and Leadership, in their document of  
62 1978 “Toward the Task of Sound Teaching”, called us to be “more intentional and disciplined in teaching the  
63 faith”; and

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65 WHEREAS this document, immediately studied in partnership with the Evangelical Church of the Union in  
66 Germany and currently being studied anew, is an important milestone in the ongoing theological discussion  
67 between our two churches within a process that led to celebrating Kirchengemeinschaft- in the Thirteenth  
68 General Synod in 1981, exactly 30 years prior to this Synod, – a partnership that has helped us be more faithful  
69 and discerning in mission; and

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71 WHEREAS our partner church in Germany, now the United Evangelical Church, says that it would be helpful  
72 for our partnership if there were at the national level of the United Church of Christ a theological commission to  
73 which their Theological Commission could relate; and

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75 WHEREAS our commitment to participate in God's mission to the world would be enriched by intentional and  
76 broad-based theological reflection; and

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78 WHEREAS a letter to the Executive Council from 39 faculty members engaged in theological education,  
79 entitled “A Most difficult and Urgent Time” in 1984 has not yet been fully responded to in its call for  
80 “sustained rethinking of our theological tradition (as reflected in the various traditions behind the United  
81 Church) to see how that tradition can be reappropriated In faithful and fresh ways as a discipline and resource  
82 for our life and faith”, urging the Executive Council “to constitute a body of theological leadership and  
83 reflection responsible for assisting the local congregations, associations, conferences, national officers, and  
84 instrumentalities in developing teaching consensus”; and

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86 WHEREAS no mechanism currently exists specifically intended to promote a denomination-wide theological  
87 conversation; and

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89 WHEREAS we have a valuable resource in the *The Living Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ*  
90 that deserves to be more widely shared and used; and

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92 WHEREAS, a theological forum could help in deciding priorities, so that we can use our limited resources more  
93 effectively, since theology, as reflection on the good news about what God has done and is doing, can provide  
94 guidance about what we need to be doing as partners with God,

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96 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates to the Twenty-eighth General Synod request the formation  
97 of a theological forum, structured so as to engage the widest possible diversity of perspectives within the United  
98 Church of Christ, , to promote theological reflection and dialogue within our church and with partner churches,  
99 and to be a resource for local churches, local church members, associations, conferences, national leadership,  
100 and instrumentalities. This forum would not be a prescriptive council, but a forum for descriptive and diverse  
101 theologies across the Church. The delegates request that the structure for such a proposed forum be developed  
102 by Local Church Ministries and the Office of General Ministries and brought to the Executive Council, with  
103 possible financial details, for approval.

## 104 105 FUNDING

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107 | Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the  
108 | affected agencies and the funds available.

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110 | **IMPLEMENTATION**

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112 | The Office of Local Church Ministries and the Office of General Ministries are requested to implement this  
113 | resolution.