

03-GS-25 VOTED: The Twenty-fourth General Synod adopts the resolution “The United Church of Christ and the Boy Scouts of America.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, Jesus’ prayer, “that they may all be one” (John 17:21) offers the guiding vision of the United Church of Christ and invites us to celebrate the gifts and graces of all God’s children; and

WHEREAS, Paul wrote, “The body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ....Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27); and

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America has offered generations of youth and adults opportunities to build friendships and foster mentoring relationships, develop leadership skills, and embody values that encourage a reverence for the earth and service on behalf of others; and

WHEREAS, the Boy Scouts of America established a policy in 1978 of not accepting gay youth and adults and in February 2002 reaffirmed its discriminatory policies and practices upon the recommendation and by action of the Relationships Committee of the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has recently (June 2000) upheld the right of the Boy Scouts of America to set membership criteria; thus effectively allowing them to exclude homosexuals as members or leaders or as professional or non-professional employees; and

WHEREAS, various settings of the United Church of Christ, in various actions and communications, have requested that the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America cease its discriminatory practices against gay youth and adults and allow local scouting units autonomy and therefore variance from the Boy Scouts of America’s discriminatory policies and practices; and

WHEREAS, the discriminatory policies of the Boy Scouts of America have caused pain to gay and bisexual youth and adults in the United Church of Christ, as well as to their heterosexual peers, families, and allies; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns has endorsed “Scouting for All,” an organization which works for the inclusion of all in scouting, regardless of sexual or affectional orientation; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ believes in a gospel that affirms and welcomes all, including gay and bisexual youth and adults, and we believe that the discriminatory policies and practices of the Boy Scouts of America invite gay or bisexual persons to feel diminished, invisible, and marginalized.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that we, the delegates to the Twenty-fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ reaffirm our belief that discrimination against anyone based on sexual orientation is contrary to our understanding of the teachings of Christ; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage the use of the local church resource packet, "The United Church of Christ Local Churches and the Boy Scouts of America" (2001), prepared by the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support the actions of congregations within a full range of options, including those who wish to sever their ties to the Boy Scouts of America and those who wish to remain in dialogue and connection with the Boy Scouts of America; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that we direct the Collegium and encourage other settings of the church to urge the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America to adopt a membership policy that does not discriminate based on sexual orientation, and that allows for the reactivation of membership of persons who were previously excluded solely on that basis; and

LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, that we prayerfully refer this issue to the local churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and other settings of the United Church of Christ for study, discernment, and advocacy.

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