

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Second General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent to a Plenary of the General Synod.

TA1 MOTION TO GENERAL SYNOD 32, 2019

A Prudential Resolution

Submitted by the Connecticut Conference, the Massachusetts Conference, and the Rhode Island Conference

“...ἵνα πάντες ἕν ὧσιν...”
John 17:21

TOGETHER AS ONE (TA1)

A Motion to the Thirty-Second General Synod from the Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island Conferences of the United Church of Christ

SUMMARY

This motion asks the Thirty-Second General Synod to recognize a new Conference in Southern New England and vicinity, provisionally called “the “TA1 Conference of the United Church of Christ”, and to grant it standing as a Conference of the United Church of Christ, terminating the standing of the Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island Conferences, the Associations of which will become Associations of the new Conference.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

The fundamental biblical grounding for the proposed ecclesiastical merger of the three Conferences is found in Christ’s farewell discourse in the Gospel of John, “...that all of them may be one,” John 17:21 (NIV). For centuries, this has been a scriptural basis for uniting Christians throughout the world.

In the context of the challenges of today’s secularizing culture and the opportunities created by increasingly powerful means of communication, we have been inspired by the Deutero-Pauline ambition, “...that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith...and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:12-13 (NIV). To us, this means that we are called to outgrow an attitude of “Yankee Independence” that has been prominent in our polity for more than three hundred years (since the 1648 Cambridge Platform). It means that we are called to build a stronger and larger network of covenants through which we can become stronger as the body of Christ in Southern New England. It means that we can be much stronger by capitalizing on the many ways we are increasingly interdependent in today’s world. It means, as our new Vision, Mission and Purpose Statement declares, that together we will be able to more effectively make “God’s love and justice real by loving our neighbors, children, and all creation through our collective work, such as seeking racial, economic, environmental, and LGBTQ justice.”

We believe that discerning God’s will and God’s call to us is best done in community, gathering and listening to each other. This we have done, spending a full year between our 2017 and 2018

43 Annual Meetings intentionally discerning a call to unite our three Conferences. For several years
44 before, the leaders of our three Conferences had many discussions of ways in which joining
45 together might leverage our witness of gospel and justice in the wider world, set an example of
46 adaptive change for our congregations, strengthen our support for local churches, and facilitate
47 sharing innovative programs and best practices among our churches and Associations. We have
48 already taken small steps in this direction, sharing key personnel and other resources in the areas
49 such as communications, information technology, accounting, and racial justice ministry.

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51 Our year of discernment culminated in the nearly-unanimous vote of delegates at the Annual
52 Meeting of each of our three Conferences to join together to form a new Conference of the
53 United Church of Christ. “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive
54 it?” Isaiah 43:19 (NIV).

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56 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

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58 **Whereas** in a 2014 study of the health and vitality of its conferences, the United Church of
59 Christ found that Conferences need and desire to work collaboratively; and

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61 **Whereas**, in June 2017, the Annual Meetings of the Rhode Island Conference of the United
62 Church of Christ, the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, and the
63 Connecticut Conference each voted to approve a resolution calling for the creation of a new
64 Conference of the United Church of Christ in Southern New England; and

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66 **Whereas** the three said Conferences have each spent the year between their 2017 and 2018
67 Annual Meetings discerning a call to join together as one single new Conference of the United
68 Church of Christ in Southern New England; and

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70 **Whereas** the Boards of Directors of the three said Conferences each voted unanimously to
71 recommend to their 2018 Annual Meetings a common vision statement, a covenant agreement
72 among the three Conferences, and articles of incorporation and bylaws for the proposed new
73 Conference; and

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75 **Whereas** the three said Conferences voted nearly unanimously at each of their 2018 Annual
76 Meetings to approve the proposed common vision, covenant, articles, and bylaws; and

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78 **Whereas** the three said Conferences voted nearly unanimously at each of their 2018 Annual
79 Meetings to elect a new united Board of Directors to take office upon the formation of the new
80 Conference organization; and

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82 **Whereas** the Reverend John Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the United Church of
83 Christ, declared that the proposed union of the three said Conferences into a new Southern New
84 England Conference would signal to the wider church “...that we can accomplish more together
85 than apart, that we live in an interdependent world in which we all need each other...”;

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87 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the Thirty-Second General Synod does hereby recognize a new
88 Conference in Southern New England and vicinity (provisionally called the “TA1 Conference of

89 the United Church of Christ”), created with geographic boundaries encompassing those
90 previously of the Rhode Island Conference, the Massachusetts Conference, and the Connecticut
91 Conference, effective January 1, 2020; and

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93 **Be it further resolved** that, the Thirty-Second General Synod does hereby approve the
94 termination of the standing of the Rhode Island Conference, the Massachusetts Conference, and
95 the Connecticut Conference with the General Synod, effective January 1, 2020, and concurrently
96 grants the new TA1 Conference of the United Church of Christ standing as a Conference of the
97 United Church of Christ, including all the powers, privileges, and responsibilities, of a
98 Conference of the United Church of Christ; and

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100 **Be it further resolved** that the Thirty-Second General Synod acknowledges that, effective
101 January 1, 2020, each Association of the said three shall automatically become an Association of
102 the new TA1 Conference of the United Church of Christ, as determined by the new TA1
103 Conference.

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105 **Funding:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with
106 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

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108 **Implementation:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or
109 other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.