

to accept the moral responsibility that comes with living “at such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) by:

- Bear witness to the critical role science must play in understanding the challenges that now pose an existential threat to all forms of life on this planet;
- Continuing to learn from scientifically informed sources about the new realities and new solutions that are emerging every day;
- Discussing climate change with increasing frequency at church, at home, at work and in our social encounters, emphasizing how it threatens things we all value while noting that we already have the technology we need to achieve the goals of the Green New Deal;
- Incorporating into our worship life and community leadership and awareness of climate change, its consequences especially for the “frontline and vulnerable communities”, and the opportunities we still have to make the changes science says we must and technology says we can;
- Helping all communities be more prepared for extreme weather events and more resilient to the effects of the changing climate;
- Lifting up the reality that the majority of people surveyed, regardless of their political affiliation or allegiance, support a Green New Deal;
- Paying attention as federal, state and local agencies develop and propose new policies that impact our environment and planet, engaging those agencies as advocates for policies and legislation that advance the goals of the Green New Deal, including its commitment to address the “systemic injustices” that disproportionately affect “frontline and vulnerable communities”;
- Maintaining a commitment to compassion and fairness by advocating for a just transition for those workers and communities most dependent on fossil fuel energy so that they, too, have opportunities for clean, healthful and family-supporting jobs that heal our planet.

Be it further resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the whole of the church to accept that it is up to us to pour ourselves out to bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice, with joy in our hearts, beauty in our sights, and hope for a healthy and sustainable world for all children.

**Funding:**

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

**Implementation:**

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

**10. SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE THROUGH AN ONGOING CHURCH-WIDE OBSERVANCE OF BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY (BTSS)**

Moderator Williams called on Cheryl Lindsay of the Ohio Conference to present the recommended action from Committee #9.

Cheryl Lindsay moved on behalf of Committee #9 that the Thirty-second General Synod approve as amended by Committee the resolution Supporting Survivors of Rape and Sexual Violence Through an Ongoing Church-wide Observance of Break the Silence Sunday (BTSS) and also spoke to the resolution.

Discussion:  
Three spoke in favor.

**19-GS-19 VOTED:** The Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the resolution Supporting Survivors of Rape and Sexual Violence Through an Ongoing Church-wide Observance of Break the Silence Sunday (BTSS).

(VOTE: 691 Yes; 10 No; 0 Abstentions – 701 electronic submissions registered)

**SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE THROUGH AN  
ONGOING CHURCH-WIDE OBSERVANCE OF BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY  
(BTSS)**

**A Prudential Resolution**

**Text of the Resolution**

Whereas, in the more than thirty years since General Synod Fourteen the church has made little progress in truly supporting survivors of rape and sexual violence;

Whereas, survivors of rape and sexual violence are hesitant to come forward and share their stories with clergy or congregations because of theologies that perpetuate, glorify, or even encourage suffering and that advocate quick and uncomplicated forgiveness;

Whereas, the church, across traditions, has often been complicit in protecting perpetrators within their own communities and congregations, and the church has perpetuated the victim blaming and shaming, mirroring the painful doubt and disbelief survivors face in the wider society, and contributing to the rape culture in which we all live;

Whereas, due to the intensely personal nature of the crimes, the relationships that often exist between perpetrator and victim, and the challenges of the criminal justice system, the scope of rape and sexual violence is difficult to measure.

Whereas, it is estimated that every 98 seconds someone in the United States is sexually assaulted;

Whereas, the most conservative statistics estimate that one in every six women and one in every 33 men in the United States will be the victim of an attempted or completed sexual assault in their lifetime and that an estimated 63,000 children are sexually abused each year.

Whereas, we are in the midst of a cultural transformation, in the United States and around the world, with the *#metoo* movement empowering survivors to come forward and share their stories

of rape, abuse, sexual harassment, and other sexual violence;

Whereas, with the testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford during the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, the United States has clearly seen the challenges survivors face in coming forward with their stories, particularly after many years of carrying those stories in silence;

Whereas, the backlash many survivors face after telling their stories often forces them back into silence and fear, and frequently complicates or damages healing already accomplished;

Whereas, the scriptural testimony of Genesis (1.26-27, 5.1-2, and 9.6) along with Psalm 8.3-8, James 3.9 and others affirm that humanity is created in the very image of God;

Whereas, in Judges 19 the story of rape and violence ends with a clear call to the faithful to, “Consider it, take council, and speak out” (Judges 19.30);

Whereas, in numerous healing stories in the Gospels (Matthew 9.20-22, Mark 5.25-34, Mark 10.46-52, Luke 17.11-19, Luke 18.35-43) Jesus, reaching out to those in need who have come to him for healing and hope, declares “your faith has made you whole”, recognizing that the speaking the truth of our stories can save us;

Whereas, the scriptural testimony of 2 Corinthians 5.17 declares that through faith in Jesus Christ we are all a new creation;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod calls upon the national church leadership, Conferences, Associations, and local churches to speak out in support of survivors of rape and sexual violence, offer care to individuals, including silent supportive witness in courtrooms, and advocate for sexual violence prevention education;

Be it further resolved, that the national setting of the United Church of Christ, as an act of repentance and commitment to healing add an annual observance of Break The Silence Sunday (BTSS) to its calendar with the suggested date of the fourth Sunday of April so as to occur within national sexual assault awareness month;

Be it further resolved, that local churches be invited to participate in an annual observance of Break The Silence Sunday, on the suggested Sunday or any date or dates deemed appropriate, honoring within their worship, education, and community contexts the stories and struggles of survivors of rape and sexual violence, and encourage such an observance in the ecumenical community;

Be it further resolved, due to the sensitive nature of the topics of Break The Silence Sunday, that all settings of the church are encouraged to treat survivors of sexual violence and their stories (paying particular attention to the needs of communities of color, LGBTQ+ identifying people, and people with disabilities) with due care and preparation, allowing time for education, self-care, and gathering of resources;

Be it finally resolved, that all settings of the United Church of Christ be encouraged to educate clergy and laity on how to support survivors of rape and sexual violence including trauma-informed care, and to advocate on behalf of those not yet ready to speak openly so that the voices of survivors do not speak alone.

**Funding:**

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

**Implementation:**

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

**11. JESUS SAID, “FOLLOW ME”**

Moderator Williams called on Rev. Edward Livingston of the Penn SE Conference to present the recommended actions from Committee #14.

Rev. Livingston, on behalf of Committee #14, moved that the Thirty-second General Synod adopt the resolution Jesus Said “Follow Me” as amended by Committee. Rev. Livingston spoke to the resolution.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

**19-GS-20 VOTED:** The Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the resolution Jesus Said “Follow Me.”

(VOTE: 641 Yes; 34 No; 42 Abstentions – 717 electronic submissions registered)

**JESUS SAID, “FOLLOW ME.”**

**A Resolution of Witness**

**Text of the Resolution**

Whereas, as the United Church of Christ we are a unity of multiple voices, each essential, each congregation autonomous, uncoerced, and with its own integrity;

Whereas, as the United Church of Christ in these perilous times, we must heed Dr. Martin Luther King’s directive to the church to be the “conscience of the state,”

Whereas, as the United Church of Christ, we have been blessed by God’s extravagant welcome, and have sought to be agents of that graciousness,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon congregations to engage in reflection and conversation on what it means to follow Jesus in the diversity of our practices, with the intent of learning from one another and encouraging one another in faithful witness and extravagant welcome;