

REGARDING THE “EMERGENCY RESOLUTION”

Dear Delegates to the 2024 Annual Celebration,

We had a late piece of business added to our agenda. It comes to us in the form of an “Emergency Resolution” from one of our Illinois Conference Congregations --**St. John UCC-Freeport**. The Conference Executive Committee (serving as the Business Committee of the Annual Celebration) has reviewed the submitted resolution—and determined that it can be placed on the agenda. That means TWO things (and two votes) for you as a delegate:

1. Without having any discussion or debate, the delegates will first decide whether (or not) they wish to consider this emergency resolution as a piece of business. (Thus, waiving the required one year period of study that normally takes place before we debate and vote upon a resolution). This motion will require a 2/3 majority “yes” vote from the delegates in order for the motion to pass and in order for the resolution to be considered by the delegates.
2. If at least 2/3 of the delegates (who are voting) determine that we will consider this resolution, there will be then be approximately 20 minutes of discussion and debate on the emergency resolution that we received from St. John UCC --Freeport. This will be followed by a vote regarding whether (or not) we wish to adopt the resolution from St. John UCC. That motion also requires a 2/3 majority vote in order for the motion to be passed.

What follows is from an email that I received from the Rev. Hank Fairman, the pastor of the congregation which is submitting the emergency resolution. Hank wrote:

I am submitting the attached Emergency Resolution on behalf of the Council and Leadership Teams of St. John UCC-Freeport, in accordance with the Conference’s submission guidelines. I will act as the point person for the Resolution on their behalf.

The reason for this Resolution to be considered as an Emergency Resolution is twofold:

- **First, the Resolution of Witness was submitted to the General Synod Business Committee on 10/14/2024, with their acknowledgement on the same date. The resolution was not available for submission to the Conference prior to the submission deadline.**
- **Second, the rescheduling of the Illinois Conference Annual Meeting to a fall date has created an issue of our ability to an agile submission of resolutions to General Synod. As described in the Emergency Resolution's text:**

"The scheduling of the Illinois Conference UCC will not meet again for regular business before General Synod 35, prohibiting the Conference’s consideration of the resolution as a Standard Resolution;"

Additionally, it should be noted that the current standing rules do not set out specific submission deadlines for Resolutions for the same reason: the shift to a fall meeting date. One may infer a deadline of 30 days prior to the meeting from its final paragraphs. However, the published rules are still based on a June meeting schedule, and for the 2018 meeting.

The Submitters ask that the Emergency Resolution and the primary General Synod Resolution of Witness be submitted to the Executive Committee for their approval to the Agenda of the Annual Meeting.

The delegates are receiving two documents (in addition to this letter from me):

- 1) The Emergency Resolution from St. John UCC, Freeport, and;
2. The other resolution to which the St. John resolution is referring to their resolution. That other resolution is entitled: **“Faithful Stewardship of Our Whole Lives and Advocacy for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Faith Communities through Interfaith Collaboration. A Resolution of Witness”**

Many blessings to each of you!

Rev. Jon Prain
Illinois Conference President

An Emergency Resolution of the Illinois Conference UCC,
to acknowledge and affirm the Resolution:

Faithful Stewardship of Our Whole Lives and Advocacy for
Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Faith Communities
through Interfaith Collaboration

A Resolution of Witness, to be presented at General Synod 35

WHEREAS:

A Resolution has been submitted to General Synod 35 by a group of 12 Delegates from 5 Conferences (including 2 Delegates from the Illinois Conference UCC), which is summarized:

This resolution lifts up the need to continue the United Church of Christ's faithful stewardship of the Our Whole Lives ministry, which provides training and resources to embrace the diversity of God's creation, a framework to view bodies and relationships as sacred, and information about bodies and relationships as helpful, not harmful.

and

WHEREAS:

The submitters have outlined a compelling Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding within the faith and tradition of the United Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS:

The Text of this resolution *"calls upon all settings of the church" to celebrate 25 years of Our Whole Lives as comprehensive, inclusive, faith-based, life-affirming sexuality education by renewing our commitment to provide continually updated, accurate curriculum and resource;* and

WHEREAS:

The Illinois Conference UCC became an Open and Affirming (ONA) Conference in 2002, with more than 50 ONA Congregations, affirming the need for prophetic tools and methods for promoting the full personhood of all people inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression; and through this resolution committed itself to a prophetic witness through "its structures and practices;" and

WHEREAS:

The Illinois Conference UCC has 15 congregations who currently host and/or historically have hosted Our Whole Lives programs; and

WHEREAS:

The the Illinois Conference UCC will not meet again for regular business before General Synod 35, prohibiting the Conference's consideration of the resolution as a Standard Resolution.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by Emergency Resolution:

The Illinois Conference UCC acknowledges the Resolution of Witness titled:

Faithful Stewardship of Our Whole Lives and Advocacy for
Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Faith Communities
through Interfaith Collaboration

And adding the support of the Delegates gathered at the Conference Annual Celebration 2025 in promotion of its desired outcomes; and

The Illinois Conference UCC affirms the celebration in 2025 that marks 25 years of partnership between the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association in the publication of *Our Whole Lives* resources; and the importance of *Our Whole Lives* in the justice mission "to eradicate stigma and dehumanization of people related to their gender, gender expression, orientation, or sexual history;" and

The Illinois Conference UCC commits to continue educating its local churches in how *Our Whole Lives* and *Sexuality and Our Faith* are tools for celebrating the sacred embodiment of people of all ages, and how they engage with the intersectional justice issues of reproductive justice, LGBTQIA+ lived experience, racial inequality, and sexual violence.

The Illinois Conference empowers the Conference Minister to share the primary Resolution of Witness and this Emergency Resolution with the local congregations of the Illinois Conference for their consideration and affirmation.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED

The Illinois Conference UCC empowers the Conference Minister to communicate the affirmation of this Emergency Resolution to the General Synod of the United Church of Christ as a companion to the primary Resolution of Witness.

Submitted by:

The Church Council, Worship & Education Leadership Team, Mission & Outreach Leadership Team, and Care & Community Leadership Team of St. John UCC-Freeport

Faithful Stewardship of Our Whole Lives and Advocacy for
Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Faith Communities
through Interfaith Collaboration

A Resolution of Witness

Submitters:

Rev. Patty Higgins (MI Conference)
Rev. Dan Barnum-Steggerda (MI Conference)
Rev. Joshua Simon (WI Conference)
Elliott Luedke (WI Conference)
Rev. Kerri L. Parker (WI Conference)
Michael Southcombe (WI Conference)
Shannon Joshi (WI Conference)
Christina Ables Fairman (IL Conference)
Rev. Hank Fairman (IL Conference)
Rev. Jim Burklo (SCN Conference)
Rev. Jeannie Douglas (WI Conference)
Katelyn O'Brien (WI Conference)

Summary: The United Church of Christ has a 50+ year history studying sexuality, surveying the needs of congregations, and developing resources to provide faith-based comprehensive sexuality education within our local churches. Over the last 25 years, this work has been done in partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Association through the Our Whole Lives ministries. This resolution lifts up the need to continue the United Church of Christ's faithful stewardship of the Our Whole Lives ministry, which provides training and resources to embrace the diversity of God's creation, a framework to view bodies and relationships as sacred, and information about bodies and relationships as helpful, not harmful.

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding:

Proverbs 22:6 tells us *Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray. [NRSVUE]*, and helps us understand that teaching our children to perceive themselves without shame is one way to be closer to God and what God wants for each of us; and

In *Genesis 1:27* scripture tells us that *God created humans[a] in their image, in the image of God they created them;* and in *Genesis 1:31* *God saw everything that they had made, and indeed, it was very good;* and

We are called to "love your neighbor as yourself" in *Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14 and James 2:8.*

We hereby proclaim the beautiful diversity of God's creation and state that we are commended care of that creation.

In addition, the United Church of Christ has a 50-year commitment to understanding human sexuality as evidenced by but not limited to:

- In 1973, General Synod 10 asked the Executive Council "to commission a study concerning the dynamics of human sexuality" (75-GS-65, Minutes, 1975, p.68.)¹
- In 1991, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the Unitarian Universalist Association convened a Sexuality Education Task Force "to create a vision for a positive and

¹ *Human Sexuality: A Preliminary Study.* edited by United Church Board of Homeland Ministries, New York, United Church Press, 1977, p. 234.

comprehensive life-span sexuality education program.” Throughout its work, the Sexuality Education Task Force was guided by these words from its philosophy statement: “We come together as representatives of two denominations to create a vision for a positive and comprehensive lifespan sexuality education program... a safe environment within which people can come to understand and respond to the challenges facing them as sexual beings.”²

- In 1995, A new UCBHM-UUA Sexuality Education Task Force was formed to develop new materials which eventually come to be identified as Our Whole Lives, a comprehensive, inclusive, lifespan sexuality education curriculum.³

TEXT OF MOTION

WHEREAS: The American Civil Liberties Union tracked 510 bills ([2023 legislative session](#)) and 527 bills ([2024 legislative session](#)) that restrict rights to medical care for and provide education about bodies and gender. While not all of these bills will become law, they all cause harm to God’s creation (especially women and LGBTQ+ people.); and

WHEREAS: LGBTQ+ young people are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity but rather are placed at higher risk because of how they are mistreated, stigmatized in society, and live with a significantly higher rate of risk for physical harm and discrimination⁴, demonstrating how shame and stigma can be fatal; and

WHEREAS abstinence-only sex education lacks medically accurate information and often includes intentional misinformation, both of which increase the rates of unintended pregnancy and potentially life-threatening infections;⁵ and

WHEREAS General Synod 15 called upon United Church of Christ congregations to declare themselves open and affirming by encouraging congregations to adopt a policy of non-discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and to adopt a Covenant of Openness and Affirmation of persons of lesbian, gay and bisexual orientation;⁶ and

WHEREAS General Synods (12, 13, 16, 18) have paired support for safe and legal abortions with a desire for information and resources about contraception and family planning, and teen abortion rates decline with free access to contraception;⁷ and

WHEREAS General Synod 34 called upon Local Churches and their members to engage with the Our Whole Lives: Sexuality and Our Faith curriculum to promote holistic sexuality education, including information and education about contraception, and to support and offer access to contraceptives;⁸ and

² Hanson, Ann, editor. *Human Sexuality Education and Justice: A Selected Chronology of Relevant Actions and Events*. 2012, p. 2. Accessed 29 Aug. 2024.

³ *ibid*

⁴ [Trevor Project](#)

⁵ [Abstinence-only education and teen pregnancy rates: why we need comprehensive sex education in the U.S - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#) and [Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Programs: Harmful and Ineffective | Guttmacher Institute](#)

⁶ [RESOLUTION CALLING ON UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONS TO DECLARE THEMSELVES OPEN AND AFFIRMING](#)

⁷ Colorado’s teen birth rate fell 54 percent and the [teen abortion rate declined 64 percent in the last eight years](#) due to free access to contraception, especially IUD’s.

⁸ [Abortion-as-Healthcare-Plenary-Final.pdf \(uccresolutions.org\)](#)

WHEREAS: 2025 marks 25 years of partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Association in the publication of Our Whole Lives resources, which have expanded to include seven levels of comprehensive and inclusive curriculum, serving everyone from young children to older adults, and which include a commitment to medically accurate information, and inclusion of the diversity of human sexuality identity and experience;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms that doing God's work in the world includes providing life-affirming lifespan sexuality education that is developmentally appropriate and scientifically accurate, with an understanding that information about human sexuality is helpful, not harmful, and it takes the following actions:

calls upon all settings of the church, including local congregations, Associations, Conferences, and Council of Conference Ministers to:

Celebrate 25 years of Our Whole Lives as comprehensive, inclusive, faith-based, life-affirming sexuality education by renewing our commitment to provide continually updated, accurate curriculum and resources;

Work to eradicate stigma and dehumanization of people related to their gender, gender expression, orientation, or sexual history.

Educate themselves and others about how Our Whole Lives and Sexuality and Our Faith are tools for celebrating the sacred embodiment of people of all ages, and how they engage with the intersectional justice issues of reproductive justice, LGBTQIA+ lived experience, racial inequality, and sexual violence.

Participate in an annual observance of Our Whole Lives, on the first Sunday in May as part of Sex Ed for All Month, or any date or dates deemed appropriate, honoring within their worship and education the Our Whole Lives values of self-worth, sexual health, responsibility, and justice and inclusivity as ways we love ourselves and our neighbors; and

Proclaim that this work is ongoing. As scripture says in Galatians 6:9 *So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.* If we do not give up, we can continue to build a world where there is no shame about our bodies and relationships, and where we are in one human community together.

FUNDING The 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 and other entities of the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.