

**RESOLUTION OF WITNESS:
CALLING FOR A CONFERENCE-WIDE RESPONSE TO BULLYING**

*Submitted by the Justice and Witness Council
of the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ*

1 *Note: This resolution was created by the Open and Affirming Ministry Team of the Connecticut Conference and*
2 *graciously shared with the Massachusetts Conference Open and Affirming Ministry Team and Justice and Witness*
3 *Council. Minor changes have been made for its use in Massachusetts.*

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5 *This resolution has been assigned by the Business Committee to a two-meeting process, per the Standing Rules. It*
6 *will be discussed at a forum at Annual Meeting in 2018, and come before the Annual Meeting for a vote in 2019.*

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9 WHEREAS, Jesus taught, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39); and

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11 WHEREAS, there should be no fear in the Church’s love, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;

12 for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love” (1 John 4:18); and
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14 WHEREAS, many people are hurting from the effects of bullying in the forms of physical and verbal harassment,

15 oppression, and exclusion; and
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17 WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports, “Compared with other students, negative
18 attitudes toward LGB (lesbian, gay, bisexual) persons may put these youth at increased risk for experiences with
19 violence. ‘Violence’ can include behaviors such as bullying, teasing, harassment, and physical assault. According to
20 data from the 2015 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), of surveyed LGB students:

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22 • 10% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property
23 • 34% were bullied on school property
24 • 28% were bullied electronically
25 • 23% of LGB students who had dated or went out with someone during the 12 months before the
26 survey had experienced sexual dating violence in the prior year
27 • 18% of LGB students had experienced physical dating violence
28 • 18% of LGB students had been forced to have sexual intercourse at some point in their lives”¹; and

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30 WHEREAS, GLSEN reports that 75% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school, and those who are able to
31 persevere had significantly lower GPAs, were more likely to miss school out of concern for their safety, and were
32 less likely to plan on continuing their education. In addition, 59% of trans students have been denied access to
33 restrooms consistent with their gender identity. Rather than focusing on their education, many students struggle for
34 the ability to come to school and be themselves without being punished for wearing clothes or using facilities
35 consistent with who they are. Some are denied opportunities to go on field trips or participate in sports. Together
36 with bullying and victim-blaming, these conflicts can lead to disproportionate discipline, school pushout, and
37 involvement in the juvenile justice system;² and

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39 WHEREAS, the 27th General Synod of the United Church of Christ resolved that it

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41 • Supports the efforts of organizations, especially public school districts, to develop programs that promote
42 anti-bullying, safe schools, age and family structure acceptance of wide-ranging diversity;
43 • Affirms that diversity/multi-cultural education should embrace people of all races, ethnic origins, genders,
44 faiths, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, socio-economic classes, and countries of origin, and
45 their families;

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- 46 • Decries organized and systematic efforts to cast diversity/multi-cultural education in negative terms
- 47 using fear and intimidation;
- 48 • Affirms and supports congregations, church leaders, and public school districts that are playing a
- 49 prophetic role in the encouragement of diversity/multi-cultural education in their communities; and

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51 WHEREAS, the 151st Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference will consider a similar resolution in
52 June 2018;

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54 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates to the 219th Annual Meeting of the Massachu-
55 setts Conference of the United Church of Christ, call upon the churches of the Massachusetts Conference
56 UCC to speak out about the value of each and every life, and to that end, we boldly proclaim our opposition
57 to the practices of bullying in all its forms; and

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59 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge our churches, committees, and camping retreat ministries to
60 create safe space for each and every child of God, without regard to religion, race, ethnicity, culture,
61 citizenship, socio-economic status, gender identity, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation; and

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63 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED in the spirit of advocating for safe sanctuary, we call upon every United
64 Church of Christ member to respond to acts of bullying with acts of compassion, and to take a
65 public stand against speeches of hate, harassment and acts of violence filled with long-held
66 prejudices against all persons; and

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68 MOREOVER, we call upon the Church and society to intentionally validate, support, and empower persons
69 being injured by bullying behavior in workplaces, in schools, and in all environments.

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73 ¹*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "LGBT Youth," Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health,*
74 *<https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm> (Accessed June 23, 2017).*

75 ²*National Center for Transgender Equality, "Youth & Students," <https://transequality.org/issues/youth-students>*
76 *(Accessed November 17, 2017).*

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