19-GS-36 A Resolution on Ecumenical Relationship Between the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico

Report Submitted By: Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries and Operations

Rev. Mark Pettis, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Manager

The delegates to the 32nd General Synod of the United Church of Christ voted and approved “19-GS-36: A Resolution on Ecumenical Relationship Between the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico, which calls on “the Ecumenical Partnership Committee (to) bring back to the Thirty-Third General Synod recommendations for further steps and activities to bring the two communions to the closest possible relationship while remaining independent churches.”

Due to the impact of several factors, the Ecumenical Partnership Committee was not appointed and was therefore unable to meet to move these proposed conversations forward. Among the factors contributing to the delay in this work have been:

- The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson was elected by the General Synod to serve as the Associate General Minister, vacating the role of Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations in July 2019. The position of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Manager (title change) was vacant until February 2021, when Rev. Mark Pettis was named to the position. Two search processes were conducted to fill the role – the first was unsuccessful in providing an eligible candidate.
- The COVID-19 pandemic severely limited the ability of the two denominations to meet. Imposed travel restrictions precluded the possibilities of meeting in person.
- The devastating effects of the virus, here in the United States and in Puerto Rico, resulted in denominational attention being placed on the pandemic, the earthquakes and other issues that arose late in 2019 and early 2020. While these situations were challenging, they also provided opportunities for collaborative engagements that strengthened the commitment to the ecumenical partnership.

Communication between the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico has been maintained throughout the pandemic and the travel restrictions. The United Church of Christ continued to walk with IEUPR partners offering support for hurricane, earthquake, and pandemic relief.
The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Manager started on February 1, 2021. The implementation of this body of work is a priority following General Synod, starting with the joint conversation with IEUPR to frame the representation of the joint committee to undertake the partnership. This work will begin virtually. Following that meeting, the appointment of committee members from the UCC will be completed.

In this way, the foundation is being laid to reengage the commitment made for ecumenical partnership with the the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico following General Synod 33.
The following resolution was approved by the delegates at a plenary of the Thirty-Second General Synod.

**A RESOLUTION ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN**

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND

THE IGLESIA EVANGELICA UNIDA DE PUERTO RICO

**A Prudential Resolution**

WHEREAS, the gospel of Jesus Christ unites the followers of Christ in a single community of faith and compels us to make our unity visible so “that the world may believe…” John 17:21;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico are both united and uniting churches with multiple denominational streams which identify them and shape their Christian self-understanding;

WHEREAS, the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico and the United Church of Christ have common commitment to the visible unity of the church of Jesus Christ and to the one ecumenical movement;

WHEREAS, the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico and the United Church of Christ have common Congregational and Reformed heritage and sit in common witness to mission, worship, theological conversation and commitment to justice;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico were one church for fifteen years, sharing ministry to the world together and united in Christ’s love;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Thirty Second General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico as an ecumenical partner;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty Second General Synod of the United Church of Christ commits to forming an ecumenical partnership committee with the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the ecumenical partnership committee brings back to the Thirty Third General Synod recommendations for further steps and activities to bring the two communions to the closest possible relationship while remaining independent churches.

**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 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.