

AFFIRMING DIVERSITY/MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

WHEREAS, there are no exceptions, no foot-notes, no qualifiers to Jesus' commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 39, Mark 12: 31, Galatians 5:14, Romans 13: 9, James 2: 8);

WHEREAS, the love of God that we experience through Jesus Christ dispels our fears of those who are in any way "different" from ourselves; [1 John 4: 18]

WHEREAS, God accepts "all the people" as evidenced by Jesus' breaking bread with the marginalized, to the dismay of the religious authorities of his day; [Matthew 9: 10-11, Mark 2: 16, Luke 5: 30]

WHEREAS, we confront in our own times the marginalization of people because of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity;

WHEREAS, children who are marginalized, or whose families are marginalized, are the targets of derision, bullying, and violence in schools and communities;

WHEREAS, public schools' programs of diversity/multi-cultural education have been aimed at keeping all children safe from such emotional and physical intimidation and harm, and have met with national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-cultural education as a threat to "family values;"

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-seventh General Synod:

- Supports the efforts of organizations, especially public school districts, to develop programs that promote anti-bullying, safe schools, age and family structure acceptance of wide-ranging diversity;
- Affirms that diversity/multi-cultural education should embrace people of all races, ethnic origins, genders, faiths, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, socio-economic classes, countries of origin, and their families;
- Decries organized and systematic efforts to cast diversity/multi-cultural education in negative terms using fear and intimidation;
- Affirms and supports congregations, church leaders, and public school districts that are playing a prophetic role in the encouragement of diversity/multi-cultural education in their communities;

AND CALLS UPON—

Local Churches and Conferences to:

- Be aware of and keep alert to national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-cultural education in their public school districts;
- Call for processes and protocols for public discourse on diversity/multi-cultural education that ensure the inclusion of viewpoints representative of the whole community;
- Speak up in support of diversity/multi-cultural education from the perspective of their faith commitment and informed by the Bible's overwhelming mandate to defend the cause of justice;

- Continue to address topics of age and family structure race, ethnic origin, gender, faith, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic class, and country of origin within their congregations;
- Engage in public witness to affirm diversity/multi-cultural and to support those who are engaged faithfully in acts of inclusion;
- Develop and participate in broad-based ecumenical and interfaith coalitions that will advocate for anti-bullying, safe schools, and diversity/multi-cultural education in our public schools;
- Celebrate the diversity of individuals and families as a gift of God.

The Collegium to:

- Be aware of and keep alert to national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-cultural education in public school districts;
- Speak up in support of diversity/multi-cultural education from the perspective of their faith commitment and informed by the Bible's overwhelming mandate to defend the cause of justice;
- Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-cultural education that includes the experience of LGBT individuals and families in public schools in the United States.

The Office of General Ministries to:

- Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-cultural education that includes the experience of LGBT individuals and families in public schools in the United States;
- Collaborate with local UCC church leaders, Conferences, and other faith groups and secular advocacy organizations to develop and implement a national media strategy that affirms the value of diversity/multi-cultural programs in our public schools, and that supports the introduction and continuation of these vital programs.

Justice & Witness Ministries to:

- Alert Local Churches and Conferences to national and local efforts to undermine diversity/multi-cultural education in public school districts;
- Consult with and support faith leaders and public school leaders who have been besieged by opponents of diversity/multi-cultural education, to compile lists of resources and to document accounts of successful plans to promote diversity/multi-cultural education in our public schools, and of successful responses to groups that might otherwise undermine these efforts;
- Help Local Church and Conference leaders develop strategies that promote and sustain high-quality diversity/multi-cultural education programs so that Local Churches and Conferences may successfully advocate for and support the inclusion of these programs in local schools;
- Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-cultural education that includes the experience of LGBT individuals and families in public schools in the United States.
- Express the need for diversity/multi-cultural education that ensures more successful integration of refugees and immigrants into our public schools and communities, and reduces their experience of isolation and bullying.

Local Church Ministries to:

- Assemble resources and promote the use of diversity/multi-cultural education programs for Local Churches, Associations, Conferences and the national setting of the church which build on the United Church of Christ's capacity to practice what we are preaching about the importance of diversity/multi-cultural education in our public schools;
- Actively promote curriculum and resources that uphold anti-bullying, safe schools, and diversity/multi-cultural education programs in our public schools;
- Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-cultural education that includes the experience of LGBT individuals and families in public schools in the United States.

Wider Church Ministries to:

- Develop awareness among ecumenical and interfaith partners about the importance of diversity/multi-cultural education that includes the experience of LGBT individuals and families, in public schools in the United States and within mission partner schools around the world;
- Continue to help Local Church, Association, and Conference leaders develop a coalition of faith-based and secular non-profit organizations that will help local leaders introduce and advocate for diversity/multicultural education in their public schools that includes the experience of LGBT individuals and families;
- Express the need for diversity/multi-cultural education that ensures more successful integration of refugees and immigrants into our public schools and communities, and reduces their experience of isolation and bullying.

FUNDING

Funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made available in accordance with the overall mandates of the Covenanted Ministries called upon and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

Justice & Witness Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, and the Office of General Ministries will be responsible for developing the strategies, programs, and resources to implement the Resolution.

* This resolution is not to be considered final or enforce until and upon the approval of the Minutes of the Twenty-seventh General Synod by the Executive Council of the General Synod. A vote on approval is expected in October 2009 and may be verified through the Office of the Minister for Governing Body Relations, United Church of Christ.