The Business Committee of the Thirty-Second General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

THE COLECTIVO DE UCC LATINX MINISTRIES REQUESTS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUP

Submitted by the Council for Hispanic Ministries,
Council for American Indian Ministry
Ministers for Racial, Social, and Economic Justice,
Pacific Islander Asian American Ministries,
United Black Christians,
United Samoan Ministries,
Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM)

A Prudential Resolution

SUMMARY:

The Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries (The Colectivo) seeks to be recognized as a Historically Underrepresented Group taking the place of the UCC Council for Hispanic Ministries (CHM) through an Amendment to the UCC Bylaws, Article VI Self-Created Groups. This resolution further requests that the Colectivo become a member of the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-12)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The United Church of Christ has long affirmed its commitments to unity in diversity by celebrating the beloved excerpt from the Gospel of John “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). In particular, this commitment has been evidenced in the Church’s pronouncements to be Multiracial and Multicultural (GS 19), Open and Affirming (GS 15), and Accessible to All (GS 25). Additionally, one of the UCC’s guiding phrases is “in essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things charity,” signifying that under the umbrella of our denomination exists a multiplicity of traditions, identities and expressions.

Out of these many traditions, identities and expressions arose the formation of several Historically-Underrepresented Groups (HUGs), including the UCC Council for Hispanic
Ministries (CHM) in 1977. On the occasion of its 21st anniversary, CHM published a report describing its rich history and presence in the life of the church. The following excerpt in that report continues to be true today.

**Latinos and Latinas in the United States are not a homogeneous group of people.** We comprise twenty different cultures bound by a common language that, when spoken, sounds different to the ears of the listener...

**In spite of the odds against us, the Latinas and Latinos in our beloved United Church of Christ grow strong and faithful, with our hearts and minds rooted in Jesus Christ, hoping that our tomorrow will be a time of rejoicing and real unity in the midst of diversity.**

In September 2015, the CHM Executive Committee voted unanimously to suspend its Bylaws and governing structure and empowered a UCC Latina/o Hispanic Transition Team (The Transition Team) to function in its place. The Transition Team was also asked to lead a two-year churchwide assessment and discernment process. The Transition Team undertook the task of designing and implementing a process for gathering opinions, insights, and wisdom focused on the future of Latinx ministries and leadership in the UCC, which included a large-scale survey and focus groups with UCC Latinx authorized ministers and laypeople around the country. The result was a comprehensive report entitled “**Latinx Ministries: A Living History of the United Church of Christ**” completed in June 2017 that focused on the demographics and experiences of UCC Latinx individuals within the church. This Report was delivered to Latinx members, the Collegium of Officers and the United Church of Christ Board of Directors in 2017.

Some of the findings of the report highlight the joys and continuing challenges Latinx persons face within the UCC for increased connection, visibility, and equity. As expected, UCC Latinx claim origins in numerous countries, ethnicities, and racial identities, with a majority (59%) attending Euro-American or Multiracial churches and nearly half (45%) being fluent in both Spanish and English. In addition, estimates using data from the 2015 Faith Communities Today survey of UCC congregations found that 2.1% of all participants in congregational life identified as Latinx. In 2015, this translated to roughly 19,200 Latinx out of the UCC’s total membership of 914,871. United States Census data figures from 2014 indicate that Hispanics make up 17% of the total U.S. population (53 million people). They further indicate that there has been a growth of over 6 million Hispanic persons between 2010 and 2015. That growth is nearly equivalent to the growth in African American and Asian populations combined in the same time frame. Predictions that the Hispanic population would be the largest minority community in the United States by 2050 have already come to pass.

The United Church of Christ is also changing. Statistical data from 2015 indicates that UCC membership was 88.1% white in 2005; that number dropped to 84.9% in 2015. The percentage of congregations identified as Hispanic/Latino also dropped from 1.4% in 2005 to 0.4% 2015. The percentage of Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial and Other congregations increased from 1.2% in 2005 to 4.0% in 2015 over this same time period.
With the results of the comprehensive report and the information gathered from focus groups sessions, the Colectivo identified the following goals for a new organization known as the Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries.

- To form a nationally based collection of groups (regional, issue focused, specific identified) committed to a common mission in ministry with Latinx communities in the UCC;
- To claim an identity that exhibits radical inclusivity and extravagant welcome in word and deed;
- To build relationships across our pluralism, recognizing and embracing our theologies, cultural uniqueness and national heritage; and
- To value the common good and taking collective action for social change, within and outside the church.

**TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION:**

WHEREAS it has been documented and affirmed that the Latinx community in the United States is not a homogenous group of people, but is comprised of twenty different cultures linked by a common language, bound by a history of oppression and diaspora, and connected by a powerful and undeterred faith in God; vii

AND WHEREAS racial discrimination against Latinx communities is rampant throughout the United States, yet discussions of White Privilege within the UCC are focused on the racial duality of black and white, without mention of the marginalization of the Latinx community; viii

AND WHEREAS it has been documented and affirmed that Latinx population in the UCC is disproportionately underrepresented at the association and conference settings within the wider church; ix

AND WHEREAS in 2015 the Executive Committee of the Council for Hispanic Ministries voted unanimously to suspend its Bylaws and governing structure and replace it with a UCC Latin@/Hispanic Transition Team to study and report on the status and needs of the Latinx community in the UCC; x

AND WHEREAS the Transition Team recommends that a new nationally based body be formed within the UCC to focus on a covenanted common mission in ministry with Latinx communities;

AND WHEREAS the Latinx community in the UCC is anxious to claim its place within the body of Christ and be mutually accountable for the future, seeking to be members, not a mission of the United Church of Christ.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Thirty-Second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls for the establishment of the Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries, a leadership body in covenant with the UCC comprised of UCC congregations, associations, and conferences; ecumenical and interfaith partners; and community-based organizations who share and endorse the goals and values of the Colectivo and covenant to strengthen and support the mission and ministry of Latinx people within the UCC.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that at the request of the Council for Hispanic Ministries, the Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries takes the place of the Council for Hispanic Ministries in the UCC Bylaws, Article VI Self-Determining Groups.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries is recognized as a Historically Underrepresented Group and a member of the Council of Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM).

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

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1 Latinx (Lat-een-ex) is a gender-neutral alternative to Latino, Latina, and/or Latin@. It is being used by a growing number of activists, journalists, scholars, and is rapidly gaining popularity among the general public. It is part of a linguistic revolution that aims to move beyond binaries and is inclusive of intersecting identities of Latin American descendants.


3 Latinx Ministries: A Living History of the United Church of Christ, June 2017.

4 http://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/Fall-2016-UCC-Statistical-Profile.pdf

5 http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml


7 Latinx Ministries: A Living History of the United Church of Christ, June 2017.


9 Latinx Ministries: A Living History of the United Church of Christ, June 2017.

10 Ibid.