



# Michigan Conference United Church of Christ 2008 Guidelines Regarding Resolutions

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Resolutions may be submitted for consideration at a Conference Meeting by a local church, an Association, a voting delegate, a committee or commission of the Conference, or the Board of Directors.
- 1.2 The bylaw requirements regarding resolutions are found in Article III Section F of the *Bylaws of the Michigan Conference*.
- 1.3 These guidelines further define the bylaw process by which resolutions are to be considered and have been developed with the intent of maximizing a sense of ownership by the entire conference of any resolutions finally adopted.
- 1.4 For educative and administrative purposes, these guidelines parallel and complement the resolutions process used by the General Synod.
- 1.5 The Resolutions Committee shall inform local churches and ordained ministers of the resolution process at least 120 calendar days prior to a Conference Meeting.

## **2 Definitions**

- 2.1 A “witness” resolution is an expression of the Conference concerning a moral, ethical, or religious matter confronting the church, the nation, or the world.
- 2.2 A “prudential” resolution establishes policy, institutes or revises structure or procedures, authorizes programs, approves directions, or mandates actions.
- 2.3 A “Hearing” is a dedicated meeting or session held during the Conference Meeting prior to the plenary session at which a resolution is to be considered.

## **3 Submission**

- 3.1 Resolutions must be submitted to and received by the Resolutions Committee no later than seventy-five calendar days before the Conference Meeting.
- 3.2 All resolutions shall be submitted in writing. The names and telephone numbers of those submitting resolutions shall be identified on the resolutions. Resolutions should state clearly and concisely what position or action is contemplated, who is

- responsible for implementation, and the nature of any report-back expectations. The wording should avoid conflicting, ambiguous, and inflammatory language. Resolutions must be typed on one 8½ by 11 page, double-spaced, in 12 point easily readable font, with line numbers.
- 3.3 A compelling Biblical/theological rationale articulating why the author(s) believe passage of the resolution by the Michigan Conference Annual Meeting is the will of God for this time shall be submitted with the resolution. The Biblical/theological rationale should be written so as to encourage study within local churches, and should include questions for reflection. The Biblical/theological rationale may be up to two single-spaced typed 8½ by 11 pages.
  - 3.4 An accompanying supportive statement, not to exceed one 8½ by 11 single-spaced page, should be typed on the back of the resolution, for the purpose of providing helpful background information of a non-Biblical/theological nature. This supportive statement, however, will not be considered a part of the resolution, will not be subject to any action or vote by the conference, and will not be published in the official minutes of the meeting.
  - 3.5 Additional pages documenting the content of the supportive statement may be attached. These additional pages will be made available to those delegates requesting a copy.
  - 3.6 If the resolution refers to a congressional or legislative bill, a copy of that bill must be attached.
  - 3.7 The text of a resolution, the Biblical/theological rationale, the supportive statement, and any additional pages of documentation shall not be written in a manner that brings into question the Christian commitment of those who disagree with the authors.
  - 3.8 Resolutions not submitted in the above form shall be deemed out of order and returned to the authors.
  - 3.9 All resolutions must be mailed to the attention of the Resolutions Committee, care of the Michigan Conference United Church of Christ, 5945 Park Lake Road, P.O. Box 1006, East Lansing, MI 48826-1006.
  - 3.10 Resolutions forwarded from an Association should be mailed no later than seven (7) calendar days following that Association's Spring Meeting.
  - 3.11 Non-emergency resolutions anticipated for forwarding to the General Synod must be received for consideration by the Annual Meeting held at least one year prior to General Synod.

#### **4 Resolutions Committee**

- 4.1 The Resolutions Committee, appointed by the Board of Directors, shall receive all resolutions submitted for consideration.
- 4.2 The Resolutions Committee may accept a resolution for consideration by the Conference Meeting, may edit a resolution for form and clarity (so long as the substance is not changed), or may reject a resolution as out of order.
- 4.3 If more than one resolution is received taking essentially the same position on the same issue, the Resolutions Committee will seek to negotiate with the authors of the individual resolutions for the purpose of developing a single resolution acceptable for presentation.
- 4.4 If a resolution is deemed out of order, the Resolutions Committee will provide the author(s) with the reason(s) for the rejection in writing.
- 4.5 With respect to each resolution received, the Resolutions Committee shall determine if each should be considered a “witness” or a “prudential” resolution, shall make a recommendation regarding whether a vote should be taken at the present or at a subsequent Conference Meeting, shall report financial implications as determined by the Business Manager, and shall attach a clear statement that implementation is subject to the availability of funds.
- 4.6 The Resolutions Committee shall mail all resolutions deemed to be in order to the delegates no less than thirty days before the Special or Annual Meeting.
- 4.7 Any resolution received by the Resolutions Committee after the deadline, in accordance with the Bylaws, shall be referred to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors which shall review the content of the resolution and the context within which it is presented, and shall recommend the propriety of it being heard by the Conference Meeting. A majority vote of the Executive Committee is required.
- 4.8 While resolutions of an emergency nature may be submitted as late as the initial plenary session of the Annual Meeting, if an author intends to submit a resolution of a non-emergency nature after the deadline, the Conference Office must be notified of such intention at last fourteen (14) days prior to the Annual Meeting.
- 4.9 Authors of proposed resolutions received after the deadline are responsible for providing three hundred (300) copies of their proposed resolutions to the Conference Moderator at the initial plenary session of the Conference Meeting.
- 4.10 The Resolutions Committee shall review the resolutions process annually, making recommendations for improvements to the Board of Directors.

## **5 Hearing**

- 5.1 At the Conference Meeting each resolution will be assigned by the Executive Committee to a Hearing. Related resolutions may be assigned to the same Hearing.
- 5.2 Twenty-five (25) delegates will be assigned to attend each Hearing. At least twenty-one (21) of the delegates shall be chosen at random. Up to four (4) may be selected by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in keeping with the Conference's commitment to inclusiveness.
- 5.3 The advanced materials for the Conference Meeting will indicate that delegates may be assigned to a Hearing.
- 5.4 Author(s) of resolutions will not be included among the delegates assigned to hear his/her/their resolution.
- 5.5 Presiding over a Hearing will be a trained neutral moderator named by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. Assisting the neutral moderator will be a representative of the Resolutions Committee, named by the Resolutions Committee. Both shall enjoy voice with respect to matters of process, but not vote.
- 5.6 The author(s) of a resolution will be given voice only for the first ten minutes of the Hearing for the purpose of introducing his/her/their resolution, and thereafter may speak only when asked a question for clarification by the moderator of the Hearing. If the author of a resolution (or the author's designated representative) is not present at the Hearing, the resolution shall be considered withdrawn and shall not be considered further at that Conference Meeting.
- 5.7 While Hearings are open to other delegates and visitors to the Conference Meeting, no one shall be granted voice or vote except as noted above.
- 5.8 Proper decorum shall be maintained throughout the consideration of each resolution. Public displays and comments questioning the Christian commitment of others are inappropriate both during debate and after voting.
- 5.9 At the Hearing any of the following actions may occur.
  - 5.9.1 A resolution may be accepted as is and recommended to the delegates for passage;
  - 5.9.2 A resolution may be amended and recommended to the delegates for passage as amended;
  - 5.9.3 Similar resolutions may be combined into a single new resolution;
  - 5.9.4 A resolution may be sent to the floor with a recommendation to table pending further study by the churches, by an appointed task group, or by a particular

board or commission or committee;

- 5.9.5 A resolution may be sent to the floor with a recommendation to send it directly to the appropriate body for implementation because it is repetitive of a previous action of the annual meeting; or
- 5.9.6 A resolution may be sent to the floor with a recommendation to defeat.
- 5.10 At the Hearing up to three arguments in favor of passage of the resolution, and up to three arguments against passage of the resolution, are to be identified for communication to the Conference Meeting.

## **6 Conference Meeting**

- 6.1 The Resolutions Committee will report all properly submitted resolutions to the Annual Meeting.
- 6.2 The Resolutions Committee will report all resolutions deemed out of order. The author(s) may request that a rejected resolution be heard. There shall be no debate on a question to consider and a majority vote of the Conference Meeting is required to consider the resolution further at that Conference Meeting.
- 6.3 The Executive Committee will report any resolutions received late, making recommendation regarding the propriety of their being considered at the Conference Meeting. A majority vote of the delegates shall be required for these resolutions to be addressed at the Conference Meeting.
- 6.4 The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors will determine the order in which resolutions are presented on the floor of the Conference Meeting.
- 6.5 On the floor of the Conference Meeting the neutral moderator of each Hearing will read the “Therefore be it resolved” clauses of each resolution as determined by the Hearing, up to three arguments in favor of the resolution’s passage, up to three arguments against passage of the resolution, and the Hearing’s recommendation regarding an appropriate action by the Conference Meeting.
- 6.6 The chairperson of the Resolutions Committee (or designee) will move each resolution based upon the outcome of the Hearing process. Debate will be limited to the “Therefore be it resolved” clauses, and to pro and con arguments not previously identified at the Hearing and reported to the Conference Meeting by the neutral moderator. Proper decorum shall be maintained throughout the consideration of each resolution. Public displays and comments questioning the Christian commitment of others are inappropriate both during debate and after voting. Subject to the will of the Conference Meeting, the moderator may impose specific time limits for consideration of each resolution.

- 6.7 Final voting on resolutions shall be by written ballot, with the majority necessary for passage defined in the standing rules. A two-thirds (2/3<sup>rd</sup>) majority typically has been required for passage of a “witness” resolution. A simple majority typically has been required for passage of a “prudential” resolution.

**7 Deadlines for 2008**

- 7.1 January 17, 2008: Resolution Guidelines mailed to the churches.
- 7.2 March 2, 2008: Resolutions are received by the Resolutions Committee.
- 7.3 April 16, 2008: Resolutions are mailed to the delegates.