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45 Unfortunately, we do not always live up to our best ideals. There are provisions within the
46 Bylaws of the United Church of Christ (Article I, Paragraphs 152-154: Ministerial
47 Accountability) and within the bylaws of each of the four Associations of the Southern
48 California Nevada Conference that give the responsibilities of oversight and accountability to the
49 Association in which the authorized minister holds standing. It is the responsibility of the
50 Association to grant, suspend or terminate the authorized standing of a minister.

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52 The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ are silent on matters of oversight
53 and accountability on the part of Local Churches. Article V, Paragraph 18 of the Constitution of
54 the United Church of Christ states that the autonomy of the Local Church is inherent and
55 modifiable only by its own action, including “to withdraw by its own decision from the United
56 Church of Christ at any time.” As membership in the United Church of Christ is a covenantal
57 relationship that includes multiple parties, we read in this paragraph that releasing a Local
58 Church from membership in the United Church of Christ would not impede, but rather enhance
59 the autonomy of the Local Church.

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61 The Association is called upon to offer encouragement, guidance, and assistance in the
62 organization of new Local Churches and to receive Local Churches into the United Church of
63 Christ. (UCC Bylaws Article II, Paragraphs 155-164.) Conferences are called upon to receive
64 from Local Churches contributions for denominational support and to discharge duties and
65 provide services to Local Churches. (UCC Bylaws, Article II, Paragraphs 171 & 174.)

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67 The United Church of Christ Manual on Church, which stresses both autonomy and covenant in
68 the relationships between Local Churches and the Association, states that an Association or
69 Conference acting as an Association “may also develop policies concerning the fitness or
70 discipline of local churches.” (Lines 443-444) The Manual does not make suggestions as to what
71 those policies may or should include.

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73 The UCC Manual on Church attempts to set forth “Covenantal Expectations of the Local
74 Church.” These expectations include:

- 75 a. Providing delegates to the Association and Conference meetings
76 b. Participating in Ecclesiastical Councils, Ordinations, Installations and other celebrations
77 c. Nominating representatives from among its members for election or appointment to the
78 standing committees, task forces and working groups of the Association and Conference
79 d. Providing statistics, data, annual reports, and other information
80 e. Making timely per capita payments to the Association and Conference
81 f. Contributing generously to Our Church’s Wider Mission
82 g. Providing support for UCC related seminaries, agencies and special offerings
83 (UCC Manual on Church, lines 694-719)

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85 While the Manual on Church provides excellent guidance for establishing a covenantal
86 relationship between a Local Church and an Association, it, too, is silent on how to dissolve a
87 covenantal relationship.

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89 Given that the governing documents of the United Church of Christ provide no guidance for how
90 or when a Local Church may be released from membership in the United Church of Christⁱ, and
91 given that the Manual on Church clearly states measureable and minimal responsibilities of a
92 Local Church living in covenant with its Association and Conference, we submit the following
93 resolution for consideration at the Thirty-Second General Synod of the United Church of Christ
94 in Milwaukee in 2019.

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96 **The Text of the Resolution:**

97 WHEREAS Article III of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ describes the ideals of
98 covenantal relationships but does not describe or provide for the accountability necessary to live
99 into these covenantal relationships; and

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101 WHEREAS Article V of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ defines how
102 Associations receive churches into membership in the United Church of Christ, yet provides no
103 guidance as to how a local church may be released from membership; and

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105 WHEREAS the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry names specific responsibilities of
106 the Local Church to the Association and the Conference;

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108 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ Board provide guidance,
109 which may include revisions to the Constitution of the United Church of Christ, for Associations
110 and Conferences on how to release Local Churches from membership in the United Church of
111 Christ.

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113 Funding: The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with
114 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

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116 Implementation: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other
117 entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

ⁱ At its 2018 Annual Meeting, the Southern California Nevada Conference passed a resolution that established criteria and guidelines through which an Association can remove a local church from its membership. The language of the resolution:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference requests that the Church and Ministry Committees of its member Associations:

1. Maintain records of each Local Church's participation in regularly called and special meetings of the Association, Ecclesiastical Councils, Ordinations and Installations.
2. Consider revisions to their bylaws that intend to strengthen the relationships and the mutual accountability between the Association and its Local Churches, including oversight for Local Churches and the possibility of releasing Local Churches from membership, just as the Association exercises oversight for authorized ministers and grants, suspends and terminates authorized ministerial standing.
3. Consider suspending or terminating the standing of a Local Church when all of the following applies:
 - a. The Local Church has not participated in a regularly called meeting of the Association for more than three years,
 - b. The Local Church has not contributed to the financial well-being of the Association, Conference and denomination through payment of Association and Conference per capita dues or Our Church's Wider Mission for more than three years,
 - c. The Local Church does not respond to overtures from the Association or Conference that would initiate conversation aimed at improving the covenantal ties between the Local Church and the Association and/or Conference.