

**Appendices to the Minutes of the 216th Annual Meeting of the
Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ
June 12-13, 2015**

**Appendix A:
Consent Calendar**

1. *The 216th Annual Meeting adopts the Standing Rules as printed on pages 14-17 of the Advance Materials.*
2. *The 216th Annual Meeting adopts the Order of Time and Events as printed on page 2-4 of this packet.*

**Appendix B:
Dismantling Discriminatory Systems of
Mass Incarceration in Massachusetts**

Presented by Christ's Community Church (UCC), Chicopee, Massachusetts
A Resolution of Christian Conviction

Statement Describing Necessity of Adoption of Resolution At The Annual Meeting At This Timeⁱ

The United States imprisons more of its own people than any other country in the world. While the U.S. comprises 5% of the total global population, it alone accounts for a staggering 25% of the world's prison population. Indeed, more than 2.2 million people are currently incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails, while more than 5 million additional persons are under the supervision of its justice system, either on probation or on parole. All totaled, there are over 7 million people currently subject to the U.S. criminal justice system.ⁱⁱ

Moreover, the U.S. prison population is far from representative of the nation's population as a whole. For instance, while African American males comprise only 6% of the U.S. population, they make up an astonishing 40% of those in prison or jail.ⁱⁱⁱ African American males have a 32% chance of serving time at some point in their lives, while white males only have a 6% chance. Between 1980 and 2008, the number of incarcerated whites increased by 585,000, while the number of incarcerated minorities increased by 1.4 million.^{iv}

“Mass incarceration on a scale almost unexampled in human history is a fundamental fact of our

country today – perhaps the fundamental fact, as slavery was the fundamental fact of 1850. In truth, there are more black men in the grip of the criminal-justice system – in prison, on probation, or on parole – than were in slavery then. Over all, there are now more people under ‘correctional supervision’ in America – more than six million – than were in the Gulag Archipelago under Stalin at its height.”^v

“Mass incarceration has now become a principal vehicle for the reproduction of racial hierarchy in our society. Our country’s policymakers need to do something about it. And all of us are ultimately responsible for making sure that they do.”^{vi}

As people of faith, we are called to dismantle systems that violate human and civil rights. This resolution is intended to mobilize members of the United Church of Christ in Massachusetts to join the burgeoning movement of faith and community organizations to halt the rapidly growing trend of mass incarceration in this country and thereby dismantle the new caste system it has created.

Because several resolutions on mass incarceration are to be offered at the General Synod in 2015 and because the Massachusetts General Court is now in session and will have before it legislation of the type described in this resolution, it is imperative that this resolution be brought before the 216th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Biblical and Theological Grounding

“Woe to you who issue unjust laws, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice, and to rob the poor of my people of their rights.” (Isaiah 10:1-2a)

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” (Luke 4:18)

Jesus calls followers to “visit those in prison” as though He were there, and Paul urges the young Christian movement “to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” As Christians professing the teachings of the Prophets and Gospels, we are responsible for speaking and acting prophetically when the laws of the land are not just or fair to all communities they are intended to serve and protect.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS mass incarceration across our nation has reached levels unprecedented in history, akin

to Jim Crow or slavery by another name, in the words of Michelle Alexander author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* and we, as Christians, are called upon to remember those in prison and to rectify oppression and unjust laws and practices;

WHEREAS members and friends from individual congregations of the United Church of Christ in Massachusetts are working to end mass incarceration and to encourage members and friends from other congregations to do the same;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 216th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ supports legislative and administrative actions designed to reduce mass incarceration and to ameliorate its effects, including the following:

- Repeal mandatory minimum drug sentences. This would restore judicial discretion in sentencing for drug charges, reducing the risk to an offender of a sentence substantially greater than his or her personal circumstances warrant.
- End collateral sanctions and fees with the Registry of Motor Vehicles, including the minimum \$500 reinstatement fee for driver's license suspension, all of which impair the released citizen's ability to return to the community.
- Reduce specific low-level felonies to misdemeanors, thereby lowering maximum time for incarceration.
- Provide greater access to treatment for addiction and to rehabilitation services and expand medical and counseling services for those suffering mental illness.
- Promote restorative justice practices. Restorative justice programs heal communities by creating contexts in which victims can truly be heard, individuals who have engaged in destructive behavior can gain a deeper understanding of the reasons for their actions and take responsibility for the harm they have done to others, and relationships can be transformed.
- Reform the pre-trial process: 5,000 of the 15,000 people currently in jail are not being held because they have been convicted of a crime, but because they simply cannot afford bail.
- Reestablish the Sentencing Commission: the Commission has not revised its guidelines since 1996; in 2011 60% of non-drug offenders received sentences where the minimum and maximum were almost the same.
- Establish an Innocence Commission.
- Halt the construction of new prison units until the foregoing reforms can take effect.
- Redirect savings effected through criminal justice reform into human development and job creating strategies targeting communities with high rates of poverty and crime, further improving public safety for everyone.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 216th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ authorizes the Board of Directors and the Minister and President to communicate the contents of this resolution to Governor Charles Baker, Attorney General Maura Healey and all members of the Senate and House of Representatives of Massachusetts and to take whatever steps are necessary or desirable to convey to the media and interested parties the sense of this resolution;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 216th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ authorizes the Board of Directors and the Minister and President to submit to member UCC congregations a copy of this resolution, to encourage member congregations (a) to engage in prayer, consciousness raising, and education about the crisis of mass incarceration, (b) to renew efforts to engage in Sacred Conversations on Race, specifically addressing the crisis of mass incarceration and (c) to urge members and friends of such congregations to request their elected representatives to take actions, as set forth in this resolution, to reduce mass incarceration and ameliorate its effect.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 216th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ authorizes the Board of Directors and the Minister and President to lend support to (including co-sponsorship of) such resolutions as may be submitted to the General Synod of the United Church of Christ that address issues of mass incarceration and convey to their best judgment the sense of this resolution.

ⁱ The text of the Brief Summary and the Biblical, Theological, Historical Grounding, below, draws heavily on a text prepared by the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries, the Michigan Conference, the Southwest Conference, the Philadelphia Association of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference and the UCC Mental Health Network on a resolution to be offered in 2015 at General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau.

ⁱⁱⁱ African-Americans constitute 8.1% of Massachusetts' population but 28% of its prison population. Blacks and Latinos now make up 54% of Massachusetts' prison inmates. Massachusetts DOC Population Trends 2013.

^{iv} Bruce Western, Professor Sociology, Harvard University, Boston Globe December 12, 2014. ^v "The Caging of America," Adam Gopnik, The New Yorker Magazine, January 30, 2012. ^{vi} Race, Incarceration and American Values, Loury, Glenn, Boston Review, 2008, pp. 34-37.