

1 **A RESOLUTION OF IMPLEMENTATION TO END MASS INCARCERATION FOR**
2 **NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES**

3 Submitted by the Leadership Circle of Shalom United Church of Christ, New Haven and Church
4 of the Redeemer, New Haven
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6 **WHEREAS** Jesus said to his disciples that when the Son of Man comes in majesty, he will say
7 to those on his right, “I was in prison and you visited me,” (Matthew 25:36) identifying
8 himself with the “least of these,” and Jesus performed his ministry in the context of his
9 proclamation quoting the prophet Isaiah that “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because*
10 *the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim*
11 *release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed and*
12 *to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”*; and
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14 **WHEREAS** the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, 6 to 10 times
15 greater than other wealthy industrialized nations, and surpassing in both absolute and per
16 capita terms countries such as Russia, China, Cuba and Iran; and
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18 **WHEREAS** rates of incarceration in the U.S. quintupled in the past 40 years, with persons of
19 color, especially black men, incarcerated in vastly disproportionate numbers, more than
20 half for non-violent crimes, and receiving longer sentences than white persons for the
21 same offenses; and
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23 **WHEREAS** the so-called “War on Drugs” has become the primary mechanism for a pervasive
24 system of racialized social control: even though a majority of illegal drug users are white,
25 three-quarters of people imprisoned for drug use are persons of color; and
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27 **WHEREAS** in 1976 and 1977, the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ
28 passed Criminal Justice resolutions to study operations and results of the Connecticut
29 justice system, and in 1982 and 1986, subsequent resolutions expressed concerns about
30 inequality in sentencing and the disparate impact of incarceration on the poor; and since
31 then, the numbers are greater and the unequal impact of incarceration on people of color
32 and those living in poverty is now substantially worse than it was in the 1980’s; and
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34 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we the delegates to the 147th Annual Meeting of the
35 Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, in the spirit of Jesus who proclaims
36 “release to the captives...,” and says that the way we treat prisoners is the way we treat
37 him, call upon members of Connecticut Conference Churches to express to all elected
38 officials in our local communities, our state, and our nation that this system of mass
39 incarceration is unjust and a morally outrageous abuse of human rights; and
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41 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Sacred Conversations on Race Ministry Team and the
42 Associations continue to educate people and Congregations of the Conference and
43 vigorously support actions to substantially remedy this human rights abuse at all levels of
44 our society; and
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46 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** we ask the Connecticut Conference’s Legislative Advocate to
47 prioritize work on ending mass incarceration by informing congregations about and by
48 advocating for the passage of legislation that promotes alternatives to mass incarceration
49 such as: racial and economic justice in criminal sentencing; treatment programs for drug
50 offenders and those with mental illness rather than criminalization and incarceration; re-
51 entry services for ex-offenders; and the implementation of restorative justice principles in
52 all possible circumstances; and

53
54 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that this resolution, if affirmed, be put into proper form for
55 submission to the 2015 General Synod.