

A RESOLUTION TO AFFIRM UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AS A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

WHEREAS, this Session's predecessors organized this church as Highland Presbyterian Church and located it in what is now East Austin on January 31, 1892; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that, as the years went by, this church, informed by the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit, expanded its understanding of itself and the community to which it was to minister to include other parts of Austin and the University of Texas; and that this expanded understanding of itself and its ministry led this church: (i) to relocate nearer to the University of Texas in 1897; (ii) to rename itself in 1908 as "Highland, The University Presbyterian Church," and still later in 1952-53 to shorten its name to "University Presbyterian Church;" and (iii) to start new missions in other parts of Austin, each of which later became new Presbyterian churches ministering to an ever-expanding City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that, this church, informed by the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit, continues to expand its understanding of itself as the body of Christ and of the community to which it is to minister; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that this expanding understanding of who we are and of God's mission for us requires us to confess our past and continuing shortcomings, including that: (i) this church has not always stood up for the rights of all people to be included as equals in the life of the community at large in an era when segregation and racism dominated the institutions of our country, including the City of Austin, The University of Texas, and even parts of the denomination to which we belonged; (ii) this church, by its silence and its location, even if not by its overt actions, may have been perceived as submissive to, if not acquiescent in, the intolerance of that era; (iii) earlier understandings of the community of which we are a part and the community to which we are to minister did not, whether by design or otherwise, include people of diverse cultural, ethnic and national origins as equals with us; and (iv) not all God's people have felt welcomed inside our doors; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that (i) we want to stand up for the rights of all people; (ii) we do not want to be silent in the face of, or submissive to or acquiescent in, intolerance or other forms of bigotry, regardless of the object of such oppression; and (iii) we want all God's people to feel welcome inside our doors; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that, as stated in the book, Living the Vision, "God intended to create a diverse world...; that the life and teachings of Jesus demonstrate a ministry of inclusion of diverse peoples, and that Jesus calls us to join his ministry of inclusion; and that God sends the Holy Spirit to dwell both within us and among us, drawing us together in all of our human diversity in order that we might learn the fullness of God's creation"; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that, as stated in The Book of Order, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., "Congregations shall welcome all persons who respond in trust and obedience to God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the membership and ministry of His Church. No person shall be denied membership because of race, ethnic origin, worldly condition, or any other reason not related to profession of faith"; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that, as set out in the PC(USA)'s document on racial/ethnic church growth, "the church of Jesus Christ is built on the universal love of God and its power to transform people of every race, culture and class into a community living together as the Household of God;" and

WHEREAS, we affirm that our expanding understanding of the community to which we belong includes this multicultural vision of the Household of God, and that our expanding understanding of God's call to us is for us to mirror God's love for all God's creation by intentionally seeking to recognize, celebrate and incorporate a diverse membership within our church; and

WHEREAS, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has provided that churches that have such a multicultural vision may be known as "Multicultural Churches"; and

WHEREAS, on July 22, 2004, in response to the question "what do you see a multicultural church being?", a group composed of members of University Presbyterian Church meeting with members from the African American Fellowship Group, being a group commissioned by the Mission Presbytery to explore the implications of being a Multicultural Church, responded as follows: (1) more community involvement and outreach; (2) more diversity in service—reflecting cultures of racial ethnic groups; (3) recognition of the importance of all individuals in the makeup of God's Kingdom; [and] (4) opportunity to learn more about one another and how we can live and work in unity;" and

WHEREAS, as set out in the PC(USA)'s document on racial/ethnic church growth, a multicultural congregation will include "more than one language...and more than one style of music...[and will] move away from our ethnocentrism towards a wider understanding;" and

WHEREAS, University Presbyterian Church has intentionally begun to develop and present sermons, Sunday School classes and music, and to form committees and undertake mission activities, designed to include the PC(USA) denomination's programs and initiatives for diverse cultural and ethnic groups, including mission outreach projects throughout Austin and mission trips to other countries and continents; the use of more than one language in our services; multiple styles of music in our services; references to different cultural, ethnic and national traditions in our Sunday School lessons and church services; and inviting ministers and lay people from different countries, cultures and ethnicities to teach and preach at the church; and

WHEREAS, University Presbyterian Church is, and is working to become more, open to all who respond in trust and obedience to God's grace in Jesus Christ and who desire to become part of the membership and ministry of His Church; and

WHEREAS, our understanding of the term "Multicultural Church" encompasses the vision of the Household of God as stated above and includes the activities and mindset set out in the five paragraphs immediately preceding this one; and

WHEREAS, these provisions form part of this Resolution and are not merely recitals;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, in accordance with our affirmations and understandings as set forth herein above, the Session of University Presbyterian Church approves this Resolution and declares University Presbyterian Church to be a Multicultural Church open to all who respond in trust and obedience to God's grace in Jesus Christ and who desire to become part of the membership and ministry of His Church;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to Mission Presbytery and the Office of Evangelism and Racial/Cultural Diversity, General Assembly, Louisville, Kentucky.

Helen Ingram
Helen Ingram, Clerk

November 15, 2006
Date