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**IOWA, NEBRASKA  
& SOUTH DAKOTA**  
• C O N F E R E N C E S •  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Dear siblings in Christ,

Knowing that God is indeed still speaking, the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences' Boards of Directors have been reflecting on why we are Church in this time and place. After we listened to stories, engaged in prayer, held sacred the past, and looked to the future, the words became clear. We are Church to most fully express God's extravagant welcome and to advocate for justice, so that all people may know love, safety, belonging, and dignity.

We believe God is calling us to bold, prophetic, public, and invitational ministry that fosters Brave Spaces and transformation in our Conferences and congregations. We have discerned that God is calling our Conferences to two related commitments: first, to continue our efforts to affirm and celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people (LGBTQ+) in the full life and ministry of our Conferences; and, second, to deepen our collective and ongoing work of identifying, understanding, and dismantling racism in our society, our Church, and ourselves. We invite congregations to join us in this work as well. The Boards of Directors lovingly announce our Conferences' commitments and covenants:

**The Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences are LGBTQ+ inclusive Conferences.**

The covenant and commitment we each make to being an LGBTQ+ inclusive, Open and Affirming (ONA) Church together is enclosed, and we hope you will share it with your congregation. The Conferences join the movement that has been growing since 1985, when the UCC General Synod met in Ames, IA, and encouraged congregations to dedicate time for education, conversation, and discernment, and to grow in their welcoming of all people. At the invitation of the ONA movement, churches began learning more about LGBTQ+ people's experiences, changing church culture, and publicly speaking this clear message: ALL LGBTQ+ people are welcomed, loved, and celebrated as beloved children of God.

**The Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences are Anti-Racist Conferences.** The covenant and commitment we each make to being an Anti-Racist Church together is enclosed, and we hope you will share it with your congregation. The Conferences join the movement that has been growing since 2003, when the General Synod called on the UCC to be an Anti-Racist Church and encouraged all UCC settings to examine historic and current forms of racism and their impact, and commit to dismantling racism. As an Anti-Racist Church, we are inspired by the example of Jesus to be spiritually grounded, engaged in self-reflection, grow in awareness of systems of power and oppression, and challenge the status quo.

**We ask you to join with us by creating Brave Spaces in your church for discernment and learning, and we hope you will embrace these covenants in your church.** Start by talking with your leaders about committing to creating Brave Space for conversation and learning about

LGBTQ+ inclusion and anti-racism. Then reach out to your Conference's Board of Directors so that we come alongside one another.

We request your congregation return the response sheet enclosed (or fill it out online) so we know how you are engaging in this work and how to support you. **Resources to help along this journey are enclosed and on our website.** We hope you'll utilize a Collaborating Partner and attend upcoming events.

We live in a time and place where the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of God's beloveds are at risk. We, the Church, can and should be places of celebration and life for all people. You have an important role to play in this holy, sacred, and wonderful work.

With hope for our future together,

The Iowa Conference Board of Directors  
The Nebraska Conference Board of Directors  
The South Dakota Conference Board of Directors