RESOLUTION OF IMPLEMENTATION:
END THE PRACTICE OF PROLONGED SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN CONNECTICUT PRISONS AND JAILS

WHEREAS, The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews exhorts all to “remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured” [Hebrews 13:3]; and

WHEREAS, On any given day approximately 70,000 individuals in United States prisons and jails are being held in solitary confinement, variously called “administrative segregation,” “isolation,” “the hole,” “restrictive housing,” “the SHU” (segregated housing unit); and

WHEREAS, Juan Mendez, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, has deemed that being held in isolation in excess of 15 days amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, in short to torture; and

WHEREAS, The National Religious Campaign Against Torture, with a membership of over 300 faith organizations, including the United Church of Christ, has called for the end of the use of prolonged solitary confinement in all 50 states and the federal prison system because it is costly, inhuman, and ineffective and harms prisoners and our communities; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, the Connecticut Department of Corrections has limited its use of isolated confinement, and during this time staff assault, inmate assault, use of-force incidence, and suicide have all decreased. But none of these minimal reforms are codified by law; and

WHEREAS, In 2017 the Connecticut Legislature took an initial step towards abolishing solitary confinement with the passage of HB 7302, “An Act Concerning Isolated Confinement and Correctional Staff Training and Wellness,” which banned the placement of children in the harshest form of solitary confinement and also required annual reporting by the Department of Corrections on the use of solitary; and

WHEREAS, The Connecticut Department of Corrections still, however, uses solitary confinement statewide in its prisons and jails, including in Northern Correctional Institution, Connecticut’s supermax prison, holding individuals in excess of 15 days;
WHEREAS, In the fall of 2017 Colorado’s Department of Corrections became the first state in the United States to limit the use of restrictive housing to 15 days maximum; and both the Assembly and Senate of Connecticut’s neighboring state, New York, have now passed Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Confinement legislation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the delegates to the 2019 Special Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, declare our support for ending the practice of the use of prolonged (15 or more consecutive days) solitary confinement and commit ourselves to advocate for humane alternatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge our member congregations to become educated about the harms of solitary confinement, (2) to learn from directly impacted individuals about the ways prolonged confinement is torture, and (3) to advocate for humane alternatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge our member congregations join Stop Solitary Connecticut, a coalition that is a project of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT); and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that we request our Conference Legislative Advocate make advocating for the end of the practice of prolonged solitary confinement a priority.

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1 Solitary Confinement Should be Banned in Most Cases, UN Expert Says, UN News Centre (Oct. 18, 2011); UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ¶ 76, U.N. Doc/ A/66/268 (Aug. 5, 2011)

