

The First Congregational Church of Essex Junction
Proposal 2 Resolution

“Amend the Vermont Constitution to clarify that slavery and indentured servitude in any form are prohibited.” [Section 1, Proposal 2]

1 Resolution to Advocate for Legislation to Amend Article 1 of the Vermont Constitution: Proposal 2 is scheduled to be on the ballot in November 2022; and

2 Whereas, in the Old Testament in Genesis 1 “Humankind was created as God’s reflection: in the divine image God created them;” and

3 Whereas, in the New Testament in Paul’s Letter in Galatians 3 “In Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female;” and

4 Whereas, Jesus’ prophetic ministry included a call to “bring good news to the poor and to proclaim release to the captives and let the oppressed go free;” and

5 Whereas, present racial inequity stems from the history of enslavement. Four hundred years of racism in the United States has divided humanity and denied the dignity of every human being; and

6 Whereas, racism is a pernicious evil in our race conscious society, we need to uproot it from all public and private systems and institutions; and

7 Whereas, the United States, Vermont, and the United Church of Christ continue to address the bondage between institutional racism in history and in its present forms; and

8 Whereas, the Vermont State Constitution does not clearly ban enslavement or indentured servitude by allowing exceptions. The Vermont State Constitution currently states: “no person born in this country, or brought from oversea, ought to be held by law, to serve any person as a servant, slave or apprentice, after arriving to the age of twenty-one years, unless bound by the person's own consent, after

arriving to such age, or bound by law for the payment of debts, damages, fines, costs, or the like;” and

9 Whereas, the white washing of Vermont’s history with abolitionist movements has allowed for the myth that Vermont fully eliminated slavery in its constitution. However, many of us were taught and believed the myth of Vermont being the first state to outlaw slavery. This whitewashing creates a division between White and Black Vermonters. When a people try to hide the reality of oppression, it distorts the relationship between people. Racism hinders progress towards the creation of the Beloved Community; and

10 Whereas, indentured servitude can never fully be voluntary. Recognizing indentured servitude requires astute attention to relationships between people and their economic agency and worth; and

11 Whereas, every human being is created with equality, worth and respect in the presence of God. Therefore, we are called as students of Jesus to follow in his prophetic path. Racism can be eliminated, but it requires conscious attention and action; and

12 Whereas, November 2022 voting ballots will provide the voters of Vermont the opportunity to amend Article 1 of the Vermont Constitution to abolish slavery and enslavement in any and all forms; and

13 Therefore, be it resolved that we encourage true repentance, a turning of the heart and mind away from white supremacy and privilege; and

14 Therefore, be it resolved that the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction advocates to amend the Vermont Constitution via Proposal 2 to abolish slavery and enslavement in all its forms for any person in Vermont; and

15 Finally, and therefore, be it resolved that we encourage our members to vote “YES” for passage of Proposal 2 to amend the Vermont Constitution and also oppose slavery and enslavement in any and every form throughout the United States.