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uch has been said about the United Church of Christ in recent weeks, much of it hurtful for many in our country, including members of Trinity UCC in Chicago. That is why we are eager to share the broad and diverse story of the United Church of Christ, one that we celebrate.

With all Christians, we rest in God's amazing grace and hear God's voice in the words of Scripture. Yet, the UCC is unique to some because we do not require uniformity of belief. We are a church of open ideas, extravagant welcome and evangelical courage. Our passion for democracy extends to both government and church, where decision-making rests within each congregation. We support liberty in our pulpits, just as we affirm the individual conscience of our 1.2-million members to agree, disagree and wrestle with life's biggest questions in a spirit of love.

Our story is this nation's story. We are the people of the Mayflower. More than 600 of our 5,700 congregations were formed before 1776. Eleven signers of the Declaration of Independence were members of UCC predecessor bodies.

As early abolitionists, we came to the aid of the Amistad captives and founded hundreds of schools across the South after the Civil War. We were the first mainline church to ordain an African-American (1785), a woman (1853) and an openly gay pastor (1972). We were also the first to form a foreign mission society (1810). Our multi-ethnic membership includes persons from every immigrant group, as well as native peoples and descendants of freed slaves.

Our unity is not dependent upon uniform agreement, but in our shared allegiance to Jesus Christ. Ours is a risk-taking church, because ours is a risk-taking God.

God is still speaking,[®]

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OF CHRIST**

