

97-GS-37 VOTED: The Twenty-first General Synod adopts the Proposal for Action "Renewed by God's Spirit: Affirming God's Presence and Power in the Life of the United Church of Christ."

PROPOSAL FOR ACTION ARENEWED BY GOD-S SPIRIT: AFFIRMING GOD-S PRESENCE AND POWER IN THE LIFE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST®

I. SUMMARY

This pronouncement calls the whole church to identify, affirm and practice the diversity of spiritual disciplines among our local churches, associations, conferences and General Synod; to develop resources for sharing our differing spiritual disciplines and practices in order to enrich the whole church; to develop new resources where needed to promote household devotional practices and connect them to the church's corporate life.

II. BACKGROUND

The need for renewed attention to spiritual disciplines has been evident for some time. The Office for Church Life and Leadership developed The Pilgrimage Retreat Movement, which continues to introduce persons to a variety of spiritual disciplines with threshold experiences. Faith Exploration experiences have nurtured many of our members over the years. Yet the disciples' plea to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray!" seems to be the contemporary plea of many of our members. The Division of Evangelism and Local Church Development has led the United Church of Christ toward more faithful proclamation of the gospel. We are uncertain of the good news we have to proclaim. A more basic faith formation will contribute to numerical growth. At recent meetings of the Executive Council, conversations about the need for a revival illustrated both the need for and diversity of spiritual gifts throughout the church.

III. DIRECTIONAL STATEMENT

This pronouncement calls the United Church of Christ to rediscover, practice and appreciate the diverse spiritual practices represented among our multiethnic, multicultural membership. It requests the national instrumentalities to compile and disseminate for pervasive use throughout the church a variety of spiritual disciplines and practices to nurture personal faith and corporate life for mission. The publication of Book of Worship and The New Century Hymnal are vitally important expressions of potential unity and diversity for the worship life of our congregations. Yet their effectiveness will be strengthened significantly by more disciplined faith nurtured in personal and family spiritual disciplines.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The Twenty-first General Synod calls upon all settings of the United Church of Christ to rediscover, practice and appreciate the diverse spiritual practices present among the people of God.

The Twenty-first General Synod calls upon all covenantal bodies of the United Church of Christ, [including the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Commission for Racial Justice, the Office for Church Life and Leadership, the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Stewardship Council, the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society, the Office of Church in Society, and all constituents groups of the United Church of Christ] to develop and continue to collect and publish resources for renewing our spiritual life.

We encourage all settings of the church to discover the resources already available, such as The New Century Hymnal, Book of Worship, and United Church of Christ congregational learning resources (Bible Discovery, The Inviting Word, Created in God's Image), and to gather resources that allow us to share the diversity of disciplines and practices from the differing ages, cultures and races comprising the United Church of Christ.

We call on our United Church of Christ seminaries to include, in required curricula, exposure to a variety of spiritual disciplines and to offer training for clergy in spiritual direction.

We call on Conferences, associations and, especially, local churches to become places where one can find the teaching and practice of various spiritual disciplines.