

Becoming a Church of Contemplatives in Action – Resolution Summary

By Sterling Fritz & Charlotte Pinette

This Resolution of Witness (a resolution affirming the UCC's position on moral, ethical, and religious matters) was overwhelmingly passed by General Synod 33. Biblically based on Jesus' life, examples, and teachings as found in Matthew 4:1-11 Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-21, 13 among other verses. Jesus could often be found teaching, praying, supporting the marginalized, and seeking solitude to commune with God. As Colossians 1:15 says "Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God made visible in the world". The church's vocation is to incarnate Christ in order that God's love, justice, and peace be made manifest.

The resolution recognizes that "the UCC has not historically emphasized to the greatest extent possible the fostering of spiritual, contemplative practices to love God and ourselves and to see God in all things, all people, and creation." That contemplation is a holistic commitment to a spiritual awakening. As Joan Chittister says "Contemplation brings us to see the big picture. It brings us to see beyond our own boundaries, beyond our own denominations, beyond our own doctrines, and dogma, and institutional self interests... We become connected to everything, to everyone...Then action and prayer are one."

With the General Synod's approval of this resolution, it is resolved that future clergy and lay leaders be trained in contemplative ways. That local churches commit to spending time communing with God in various ways. That all settings of the UCC invest in curriculum and resources to support contemplative behavior. Finally, all settings of the UCC seek to live out the foundations of contemplative practices in God's ministry.

Now that contemplative ministry is to be emphasized in each UCC church, how can that be done? It all starts with you. You, the clergy and you, the laity. As Rev. Traci Blackmon says "Jesus is not just asking us to be courageous, Jesus has a bigger ask. Jesus is asking us to be transformed...and be changed from the inside out." Meditation can aid us to better access the Divine. The goal of meditation is to remove the world and tap into the Spirit within. Looking toward that stillness and silence can help us to be more reflective of who God wants us to be. Communing with God can clarify our path and lead us to our more authentic selves. Encountering Christ in different ways can aid in contemplative behaviors. Remembering the sacrament of communion's meaning and displaying it to others is being contemplative. Creating spiritual groups for individual and conventional relationships is being contemplative. Creating a "mood" in worship services using all the senses to praise God is contemplative. What other ways can you be contemplative? Pray about it, and you will be led! A contemplative seeks a life primarily devoted to prayer. Putting that prayer in to action offers a way to mimic Jesus' life and ways. To place prayer into action helps us to be "changed from the inside out."

The complete text of this resolution can be found here: <https://www.generalsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Contemplatives-in-Action.pdf>