

1 The Executive Council recommends this resolution be sent to a committee of the General Synod

2
3 **TO RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR COMPASSIONATE**
4 **CARE AND HEALING TO OUR VETERANS**

5
6 **Submitted by Trinity United Church of Christ of Akron, Ohio,**
7 **First Congregational Church of Tallmadge, Ohio,**
8 **First United Church of Christ, New Philadelphia, Ohio,**
9 **Grace United Church of Christ, Canton, Ohio**
10 **St. John's United Church of Christ, Glenmont, Ohio**
11 **St. John United Church of Christ, Strasburg, Ohio**

12
13 **A Resolution of Witness**

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15 **SUMMARY**

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17 This resolution seeks to address the needs of the United Church of Christ to recognize that there is a
18 need for a ministry and mission that helps the veterans of the military who served in periods of war and
19 peace to reintegrate fully into society upon their separation from military service, and to serve their
20 families who waited for the return of their family member serving in the military.

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22 **BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

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24 In the gospels Jesus calls his disciples to follow him and that we are connected to one another and to
25 God through our relationships. The litmus test for authentic religion is to answer these two questions:
26 1) Does my religious faith expression connect me with all people and creation? 2) Does my religious
27 faith connect me to God? Should the answer to one or both aforementioned questions be “no” then one
28 must question the legitimacy of that religious community.

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30 Veterans of military service and their families are members of our faith communities as well as our
31 neighbors. Military service changes the individual as well as the family members. Culturally there is a
32 disconnect between the civilian community and the veterans who have served to protect the nation.
33 The Church is called to bring in to awareness the needs of those who served and their families as well
34 as the effects of war on the wider community.

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36 *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love...Love each other as I have*
37 *loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:9, 12b,*
38 *13)*

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40 There are several stories in the New Testament where Jesus is reported to have healed a person and
41 directs them to return to their community as part of the healing process. In Mark's Gospel there is the
42 story of the paralytic who has been healed by Jesus, forgiven and told *I say to you pick up your pallet*
43 *and go home. (Mark 2:1-12)* In John's Gospel a man born blind is told *Go and wash in the pool of*
44 *Siloam.* His attempt to re-enter the community and the synagogue is prohibited by the religious
45 leaders. (John 9:12-41)

46
47 *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit and there are varieties of services, but the same*
48 *Lord...To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through*

49 *Spirit the utterance of wisdom...to another knowledge...to another faith...gifts of healing [all] by the*
50 *one Spirit...* (I Corinthians 12:4,5,7-9 NRSV)

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52 **BACKGROUND**

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54 The United Church of Christ (UCC) asserts in its Constitution that “God calls the whole Church and
55 every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ.” It also states “recognizes that
56 God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church...” but also
57 on behalf of all God's children beyond the Church into the world.

58

59 The world, it seems, is changing more rapidly than the United Church of Christ can adapt to and
60 maintain its value of peace and justice. Changes in the global community are often violent and draw
61 our people in to service to our nation and as a faithful response to the teachings of Jesus. Military
62 service and participation in warfare has produced physical, psychological and spiritual casualties of
63 war. These casualties are not only service members but their families.

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65 The National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that since 2010 eighteen veterans commit
66 suicide daily and that there are 950 suicide attempts monthly. (We must consider the pseudo-suicidal,
67 or risky behavioral acts that veterans engage in that are unreported).

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69 Since 1775 to the present the United States has engaged in 35 armed conflicts within our own borders
70 or in the global community. Over the course of our nation's 237 years we average no more than 7
71 years of peace. This means that every generation has experienced multiple conflicts. It is our assertion
72 that military service and the effects of engaging in warfare are a part of our national identity that is
73 grafted in the identity of many faith communities.

74

75 Many faith communities either mix faith with patriotism or the faith community vows to be pacifist
76 avoiding military service and support of those who serve in the military. Regardless, The Church is
77 called to serve the needs of all people and minister to the needs of others.

78

79 It is necessary to understand:

- 80 ▲ Many, if not most, of our members have a person of their family who has served in the military.
- 81 ▲ Military service changes the individual psychology, physically, spiritually, emotionally.
- 82 ▲ The veteran who returns home is changed and the family has changed.
- 83 ▲ The veteran has been challenged in their religious faith, values and personal ethics.
- 84 ▲ The returning veteran often feels isolated, misunderstood, and alienated at home.
- 85 ▲ Recent awareness through the Veteran's Administration Psychologists coined the term “Moral
86 Injury” with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. (Brett Litz, VA Clinical Psychologist, Boston)
- 87 ▲ Many veterans of World War II, Korea, The Cold War, Viet Nam, Persian Gulf, Operation Iraqi
88 Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and all other “Peace Time” service are disconnected
89 from the society they swore an oath to protect and defend. (We will serve the intention of this
90 resolution when we remember Kosovo, Grenada, The Drug War, Somalia, Beirut, etc. Many
91 veterans served in undeclared wars or experienced “kill or be killed” situations during their time
92 period of service.

93

94 There are 21.5 million Americans who have served in the military and 1.6 million are women. Every
95 cultural group is represented in this number. Every congregation of the United Church of Christ has a
96 human connection to the United States Military service and a connection to war. Every person is

97 affected by military service.

98

99 Brett Litz a Veteran's Administration Clinical Psychologist (Boston VA) has become aware of the moral
100 injury stating that many patients he has served express sadness attributed to, “bearing witness to evil
101 and human suffering and seeing death and participating in it” as foundational to Post Traumatic Stress
102 Disorder. (The Daily Beast, Tony Dokoupil, Time, December 3, 2012. editorial@thedailybeast.com)
103

104 In order to reintegrate those who have served in the military and serve their family members, as well as
105 the community, the United Church of Christ needs to pay attention to:

106 ▲ Our collective theologies of ministry and ministry and support soul retrieval and soul healing.

107 ▲ Understand the sincere and authentic practice of welcoming home our veterans.

108 ▲ Allow the engagement of deep and authentic conversation with the veteran valuing their
109 wisdom and guidance that enhances our efforts to achieve peace (Shalom).

110 ▲ Developing the skills of listening, speaking, and the patience to allow the healing process.

111 ▲ Address in meaningful ways the moral injury and soul recovery/healing through education,
112 spiritual practices, and services of worship engaging the whole community.
113

114 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

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116 Whereas the recent wars of The Persian Gulf (1990 – 1991), Operation Provide Comfort (1991 – 1996),
117 Somalia Intervention (1992 – 1995), Bosnia (1995 – 2004), NATO Air Campaign Yugoslavia (1999),
118 Afghanistan 2001 – present, and Iraq 2003 – 2011 used regular military forces, activation of Reserves
119 military, and the Federalization of state's National Guard units experiencing multiple deployments our
120 citizen – soldiers have returned to civilian communities that are unaware of the effects of military
121 service.
122

123 Whereas the political landscape has shifted since World War II and military objectives and purpose
124 have become increasingly abstract veterans suffer from a crisis of purpose which affects the individual
125 as well as our nation.
126

127 Whereas political objects are nebulous and the military is used as political “muscle” on the global stage
128 our service personnel are sometimes left feeling used and betrayed by the society they swore an
129 allegiance to protect and defend.
130

131 Whereas these persons are our brothers and sisters, parents, neighbors, students, employees, and
132 cohorts we have an obligation as followers of Jesus to be sensitive to their needs.
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134 Whereas the therapists within the Veteran's Administration are now speaking about the “moral injury”
135 of military service the moral injury is a spiritual and soul issue and needs to be addressed by The
136 Church.
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138 Whereas the United Church of Christ extends gracious hospitality and welcome to all people from
139 every walk of life it behooves the United Church of Christ to become sensitive to the effects of military
140 service and accept their responsibility to protect the veteran upon their return home.
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142 Therefore be it resolved that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
143 encourages all of the United Church of Christ congregations to express compassionate care and healing
144 ministry to our veterans through education and the development of sensitivity of the issues of soul

145 healing and spiritual care.

146

147 Be it further resolved that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages
148 “grass roots” awareness and reaching out to local Veteran's Administration, Veteran's Service
149 Commission, support of Veteran's Courts, and in so doing be the example of Christ not from a sense of
150 patriotism, but from compassion that is rooted in the teachings and example of Jesus.

151

152 Be it finally resolved that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages
153 the members of the United Church of Christ not to abdicate the responsibility to serve others with
154 healing care to the medical and military established protocols, but seek ways to liturgically through
155 worship welcome our veterans home, restore their place in our communities, and serve the needs of
156 their families to bring peace to our world.

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158 **FUNDING**

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160 The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
161 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

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163 **IMPLEMENTATION**

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165 The Collegium of Officers, in consultation with the appropriate ministries or other entities within the
166 United Church of Christ will determine the implementing body.