

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Fifth General Synod recommends this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

**ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT AND FAITHFUL SUPPORT FOR THE
DECRIMINALIZATION OF ENTHEOGENIC AND PSYCHEDELIC MEDICINES**

A Resolution of Witness

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1 **SUMMARY**

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3 This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to stand in solidarity with religious
4 communities, researchers, and medical providers throughout the United States and across the
5 globe in demanding that psychedelic and entheogenic plant and fungus-based medicines be
6 decriminalized and made available for further research by scholars and healers for their
7 beneficial and therapeutic capacities.

8
9 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

10
11 God’s message of love and healing as revealed in scripture involves an intimate, codependent
12 relationship between human and plant life. The Bible instructs that the Creator intentionally
13 positioned human beings and plants together for mutual thriving. Throughout the biblical
14 narrative God gives instruction through the prophets that plants may be used for healing and
15 revelation.^{1,2,3,4}

16
17 Theologies of liberation encourage interrogation with prophetic integrity all policies and
18 behaviors (including legal statutes) that may threaten human flourishing. The United Church of
19 Christ has an established history of standing on the side of those in need of healing and
20 healthcare.¹⁹ Recently, the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ passed a
21 resolution, “Faithful Advocacy For Intersectional And Transformational Healing In Harm

22 Reduction.” This present Resolution also seeks to enhance access to medicines that can
23 specifically empower this work.

24
25 An entheogen is a psychoactive compound, typically from natural sources such as plants or
26 fungi, that can be used to alter consciousness for spiritual purposes.⁸ Thousands of years of
27 knowledge from traditional medicine practices outlined the dose, efficacy, and preparation of
28 many natural medicines and have demonstrated that entheogens are a powerful tool for healing
29 various conditions.⁹ There is early evidence that these substances can provide unique
30 interventions for patients with mental health conditions that do not respond well to standard
31 psychopharmaceuticals, including treatment-resistant depression, generalized anxiety disorder,
32 substance use disorder and PTSD.^{28,29}

33
34 The archaeological and sociological record contains a near-universal, global relationship
35 between human spiritual life and entheogenic plants and fungi.^{5,6,7,8,9,10} These records include the
36 use of entheogens by the people of the Bible.^{11,12} Ecstatic states of consciousness and mystical
37 experiences have certainly played a role in the history and development of Christian theology
38 and revelation.^{13,14} Today, research has shown these substances possess a unique capacity for
39 alleviating human misery.

40

41 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

42

43 **WHEREAS** the Bible informs a belief that the Creator placed plants (including fungus) into
44 human life for the purpose of human thriving, that they may be used for human healing - both
45 physical and emotional^{1,2,3,4}; and

46

47 **WHEREAS** the prevailing research demonstrates that entheogenic compounds possess
48 worthwhile capacities and a strong safety profile^{15,16,17} for treating and alleviating human pain
49 and misery¹⁸; and

50

51 **WHEREAS** current research indicates that many entheogenic medicines may be of life-saving
52 therapeutic value for individuals with mental health conditions that do not respond well to
53 standard psychopharmaceuticals^{28,29}; and

54

55 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has demonstrated an historic commitment to scientific
56 rigor and an ongoing commitment to the value of the medical sciences^{19,20,21}; and

57

58 **WHEREAS** the use of entheogens has demonstrated a capacity in the context of Christian life
59 and worship toward sustaining personal meaning and spiritual significance and faithful people
60 of the United Church of Christ have testified to the benefits of entheogenic substances for
61 healing and revelation^{22,23,24,25}; and

62

63 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ is committed to alleviating the suffering of victims of
64 war (including military veterans - where on average 44 perish daily in America from suicide and
65 self-injury mortality)²⁶, and those suffering with addiction and depressive disorders^{27,28,29}; and

66

67 **WHEREAS** the United States of America has elected to declare these useful medicines illegal

68 and have imposed draconian sentencing laws^{30,31}; and

69

70 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has established itself in solidarity with victims of the
71 carceral state and victims of the “war on drugs,” and presently advocates for reduced penalties
72 for non-violent offenders as per 2 Corinthians 2:5-8^{32,33}

73

74 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church
75 of Christ urges our state and federal legislators to immediately work toward the
76 decriminalization and legalization of entheogenic substances.

77

78 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this Resolution be submitted to the United
79 States Senate and House of Representatives and the President and Vice-President of the United
80 States of America.

81

82 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of
83 Christ encourages advocacy by all settings of the church for the decriminalization and
84 legalization of entheogenic substances in total solidarity with our ecumenical faith partners and
85 communities of faith throughout creation.

86

87 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of
88 Christ encourages all Congregations, Associations, And Conferences to work together to
89 advocate for the further study of the therapeutic benefits of these substances, and study the
90 value of these substances in our shared religious life together.

91

92 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance
93 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

94

95 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
96 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ Genesis 43:11: “Then their father Israel said to them, ‘If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry them down as a present to the man—a little balm and a little honey, gum, resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds.”

² Psalm 45:8: “...your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;”

³ Psalm 51:7: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

⁴ 2 Kings 20:7: “Then Isaiah said, ‘Bring a lump of figs. Let them take it and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover.’”

⁵ Capriles, José M.; Moore, Christine; Albarracin-Jordan, Juan; Miller, Melanie J. (2019-06-04). "Chemical evidence for the use of multiple psychotropic plants in a 1,000-year-old ritual bundle from South America". *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 116 (23): 11207–11212.

⁶ Carod-Artal, F.J. (2015-01-01). "Hallucinogenic drugs in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures". *Neurología (English Edition)*.

⁷ Furst, Peter T. (1972) *Flesh of the Gods: The Ritual Use of Hallucinogens* (with contributions from Wasson and others). Praeger Publishers, Westport.

⁸ Roberts, T. B. "Chemical Input—Religious Output: Entheogens." Chapter 10 in *Where God and Science Meet: Vol. 3: The Psychology of Religious Experience*

⁹ Saromini, Giorgio (1992). "The Oldest Representation of Hallucinogenic Mushrooms in the World". *Integration: Journal for Mind-Moving Plants and Culture*. 1992, r. September, 2013

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- ¹⁰ Roberts, T. B. (editor) (2001). *Psychoactive Sacramentals: Essays on Entheogens and Religion*. San Francisco: Council on Spiritual Practices
- ¹¹ Arie, E., Rosen, B., & Namdar, D. (2020). Cannabis and Frankincense at the Judahite Shrine of Arad. *Tel Aviv*, 47(1), 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03344355.2020.1732046>
- ¹² Zlas, J., Stark, H., Seligman, J. et al. Early medical use of cannabis. *Nature* 363, 215 (1993). <https://doi.org/10.1038/363215a0>
- ¹³ Smith, Allyne. *Philokalia: The Eastern Christian Spiritual Texts : Selections Annotated & Explained* SkyLight Paths Pub., 2006.
- ¹⁴ Griffiths, R.R., Richards, W.A., McCann, U. et al. Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance. *Psychopharmacology* 187, 268–283 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-006-0457-5>
- ¹⁵ Gable RS. Comparison of acute lethal toxicity of commonly abused psychoactive substances. *Addiction*. 2004;99(6):686-696. doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.2004.00744.x
- ¹⁶ Breeksema JJ, Kuin BW, Kamphuis J, van den Brink W, Vermetten E, Schoevers RA. Adverse events in clinical treatments with serotonergic psychedelics and MDMA: A mixed-methods systematic review. *J Psychopharmacol*. 2022;36(10):1100-1117. doi:10.1177/02698811221116926
- ¹⁷ Schlag AK, Aday J, Salam I, Neill JC, Nutt DJ. Adverse effects of psychedelics: From anecdotes and misinformation to systematic science [published online ahead of print, 2022 Feb 2]. *J Psychopharmacol*. 2022;2698811211069100. doi:10.1177/02698811211069100
- ¹⁸ Luoma JB, Chwyl C, Bathje GJ, Davis AK, Lancelotta R. A Meta-Analysis of Placebo-Controlled Trials of Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy. *J Psychoactive Drugs*. 2020 Sep-Oct;52(4):289-299. doi: 10.1080/02791072.2020
- ¹⁹ See, for example, any of the 55 General Synod Resolutions listed under “Health Issues” in the publication index, “Subject Index - General Synod Resolutions, Pronouncements And Proposals For Action” at <https://www.new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/GS-Resolutions-Subject-Index-thru-GS31.pdf>
- ²⁰ The UCC Health Equity Resolution, The Twenty-seventh General Synod adopts the resolution “An Urgent Call for Advocacy in Support of Health Care for All, as in H.R. 676.” - at <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/health-equity.pdf>
- ²¹ “Reclaiming the Church’s Ministry of Health and Healing,” adopted at General Synod 21 - at <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/RECLAIMING-THE-CHURCH-S-MINISTRY-OF-HEALTH-AND-HEALING.pdf>
- ²² Rev. Molly Baskette, “How to Change Your Mind” (sermon, First Church Berkeley UCC, Berkeley, CA, July 15, 2018) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMi7y7eGACM>
- ²³ Hollensbe, Heath, “A Holy High: Advocating for the Spiritual Use of Hallucinogens.” *Christ and Cascadia*, April 27, 2023 - <https://christandcascadia.com/author/heath-hollensbe/>
- ²⁴ Lattin, Don, “Can Psychedelics Guide a Mystic’s Path to Mystery?” *Lucid News*, June, 2023. <https://www.lucid.news/psychedelics-mystics-path-to-mystery/>
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- ²⁶ Summary of Interim Report by Operation Deep Dive - CANA Analytics, Degrange, W. “Analysis of suicide and SIM per day.”
- ²⁷ Yuan, H., Ma, Q., Ye, L., & Piao, G. (2016). The traditional medicine and modern medicine from natural products. *Molecules*, 21(5), 559. <https://doi.org/10.3390/molecules21050559>.
- ²⁸ Agin-Liebes, G., Haas, T., Lancelotta, R., Uthaug, M., Ramaekers, J., & Davis, A. (2021). Naturalistic use of mescaline is associated with self-reported psychiatric improvements and enduring positive life changes. *ACS Pharmacology and Translational Science*, 4(2), 543–552. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acspsci.1c00018>.
- ²⁹ Bogenschutz, M., Ross, S., Bhatt, S., Baron, T., Forcehimes, A., Laska, E., et al. (2022). Percentage of heavy drinking days following psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy vs placebo in the treatment of adult patients with alcohol use disorder: A randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 79(10), 953–962. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2022.2096>.
- ³⁰ Callahan, J., Kirby, M., “Legal Status of Psychedelic Drugs and Research Involving Possible Medical Uses,” Connecticut Office of Legal Research. December 15, 2020 <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2020/rpt/pdf/2020-R-0323.pdf>
- ³¹ 2024 Guidelines Manual, Part D — “Offenses Involving Drugs And Narco-Terrorism.” United States Sentencing Commission. https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/guidelines-manual/2024/CHAPTER_2_D.pdf
- ³² “A Compassionate Response To Substance Abuse.” 21st General Synod <https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/COMPASSIONATE-RESPONSE-TO-SUBSTANCE-ABUSE.pdf>
- ³³ “Confronting Racism and Militarism in U.S. Drug Policy.” 24th General Synod

<https://new.uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CONFRONTING-RACISM-AND-MILITARISM-IN-U-S.pdf>