

GA-1723 (Sense-of-the Assembly)

RESOLUTION CONCERNING CARBON NEUTRALITY

WHEREAS, scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, refers to the entire cosmos as God's sacred creation and calls followers of Christ to love our neighbors and to care for creation;¹ and

WHEREAS, resource extraction and overconsumption are putting unprecedented pressure on ecosystems, global climate, vital natural resources and communities,² and

WHEREAS, there has been a long-term shift in the earth's climate,³ with the beginning of the 21st century being the warmest period on record globally,⁴ resulting in unpredictable, extreme, and dangerous weather events,⁵ species extinction, rapidly changing habitats,⁶ water scarcity,⁷ more frequent flooding⁸ and fires,⁹ shifting seasons,¹⁰ and species migration;¹¹ and

WHEREAS, climate change puts all of our health at risk,¹² especially threatening the wellbeing of children, elderly, and those with chronic illnesses¹³ such as asthma;¹⁴ and

WHEREAS, the rate and severity of disasters such as floods, droughts, storms, and fires have seen a marked increase, directly affecting the work of Disciples Volunteering and Week of Compassion, and threatening to undo decades of collaborative work by Global Ministries¹⁵ and international partners around the world;¹⁶ and

WHEREAS, the effects of climate change, such as drought and rising sea levels,¹⁷ contribute to the current crisis of displacement of people through mass migrations and exacerbated conflicts;¹⁸ and

WHEREAS, our sisters and brothers, including many indigenous communities,¹⁹ in low-lying areas, especially island nations²⁰ and coastal cities,²¹ are most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, including superstorms, flooding, rising sea levels, severe drought, and the mass migrations that follow;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 8-12, 2017 urges all Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations, organizations, ministries, and institutions, as children of God and followers of Christ Jesus, to address climate change through action and covenant to:

Worship God with all creation and pray for the healing of the earth;

Study the climate crisis and engage others in climate solutions;

Repent and ask forgiveness for the harm we have inflicted on the earth that sustains life;

Advocate for ecojustice public policies and witness by living sustainable lifestyles; and

Rest in God's good creation and invite others to delight in nature²²; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls upon all members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada to support national, state, or provincial legislation which protects, supports, and empowers communities including those who are oppressed as well as those communities who are currently dependent on an extractive energy economy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls all congregations, ministries, organizations and institutions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to diligently strive to

faithfully care for all of God's creation by becoming climate-literate,²³ intentionally engaging in collaborative dialogue and education that serves to advance the discussion, offering support for solutions through means of best practices and resources within the context of worship, committee meetings, community organizations, and national gatherings;²⁴ and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 stands with our ecumenical partners²⁵ and people of many faith traditions²⁶ to care for our neighbors, God's creation, and future generations in calling for immediate action on climate change; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls individuals, congregations, and ministries to work to reduce our carbon output with our goal to become carbon neutral by the year 2030 and climate positive by 2035, and to do this by:

- conserving and using energy wisely;
- substituting clean, renewable energy for polluting fossil fuels;
- offsetting any energy source we cannot reduce or replace;
- urging our policy makers to provide clean energy choices;
- guiding and supporting our churches and our sisters and brothers as they do the same.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls upon Disciples to stand together in Christ's name studying, planning, and acting to accomplish these goals, with faith that we will overcome.

Submitted by

Christmount National Camp and Conference Center
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Black Mountain, North Carolina

Green Chalice

A Partnership Ministry of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky
and Disciples Home Missions

Week of Compassion

The relief, refugee and development mission fund of the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

Disciples Volunteering

Disciples Home Missions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Global Ministries

Division of Overseas Ministries
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
United Church of Christ

Background Information

We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late." - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, called to "do justice" which includes caring for God's good earth. But we are experiencing crises of unprecedented proportions due to global climate change. Our planet struggles to sustain all life and the first people affected are those among us with the least resources, including indigenous, poor, and marginalized peoples.

The earth is warmed by the sun and gases are released into the atmosphere through natural and human activities creating a blanket around the earth. The primary emitted gas, carbon dioxide, is constantly being exchanged among the atmosphere, ocean, and land surface as it is both produced and absorbed by many microorganisms, plants, and animals, in a carbon cycle. Since the Industrial Revolution, human activities have contributed CO₂ to the atmosphere in greater and greater amounts from the burning of fossil fuels, solid waste, and wood throwing off the balance of the carbon cycle.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a founding partner of Blessed Tomorrow, a coalition of diverse religious partners united as faithful stewards of God's creation. With churches like ours, they inspire communities to take action on one of the greatest moral challenges of our era — protecting our shared home. The Blessed Tomorrow is a program coordinated by ecoAmerica, a nonprofit that creates engagement programs to build awareness and action for climate solutions. In order to act with the speed and impact that effective climate solutions require, ecoAmerica has an organizational commitment to go climate positive by 2025 and encourages its partners to do the same.

Striving to balance the carbon cycle, we advocate for all Disciples to live sustainable lifestyles with the goal of being carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon positive by 2035. Climate Neutrality is achieved when there is no net climate impact that results from carbon or other greenhouse gases. This can be accomplished through a hierarchy of actions that include aggressive reduction of energy consumption, a conversion to low or no impact energy sources, and through carbon offsets. Climate Positive requires taking the additional steps to offset more carbon than is emitted into the atmosphere. Striving toward becoming Climate Positive, while difficult, will help us lead and support our neighbors, particularly "the least of these."

We join hands as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to address the urgent issues of overconsumption in the United States and Canada and the inequality of distribution and use of the earth's resources. Starting with ourselves, we lead by example and empower and educate our congregations and communities about how to walk more gently on the earth. We will pursue energy conservation and renewable energy toward carbon neutrality. We will help guide and support one another as others do the same. We don't know how we'll accomplish this, but with God's help we will study, plan, and act in faith that we will succeed. Finally we seek to be in awe as we rest in God's good creation and invite others to delight in nature as well.

Steps toward Carbon Neutrality²⁷

Carbon: calculate the carbon footprint of your family and congregation,²⁸ conduct an energy audit of your home and church building, try a carbon fast, or support and purchase carbon offsets.²⁹

Buildings: install programmable thermostats (set for lower or higher temperatures in the winter/summer), insulate and weatherstrip, purchase only the energy efficient appliances you need, lower temperature on water heaters, use less heated water, maintain HVAC and boiler systems, buy or rent a smaller home or apartment, close off areas not in use, shade your windows, replace indoor and outdoor incandescent light bulbs with CFL or LED bulbs, dry clothes on a line, turn off unused equipment and computers, install solar panels or geothermal or connect to a solar or wind farm.

Transportation: ride a bike or walk more and drive less, reduce speed while driving, purchase fuel-efficient and smaller vehicles, commute by public transportation, limit flying.

Food: grow a garden for fruit, vegetables, and herbs; purchase local, seasonal foods through a CSA, farmers' markets, and grocery store; limit packaging and waste' eat fewer animal products; compost food scraps; and stop using bottled water.

Yard and Fields: plant native perennials rather than grass to limit mowing, use manual mower or an electric mower, install rain barrels, mulch leaves and yard waste, plant bird and insect friendly trees and plants, create a rain garden, start a worm farm, compost for soil enrichment, plant trees and support organizations that plant trees.

Education: read, explore websites,³⁰ attend community events, host green events.³¹

Advocacy: become informed on energy issues, write or call your elected officials at every level about ecojustice issues, become a Green Chalice Ministry.³²

¹ Genesis 1:28, Genesis 2:15, John 1:3, Mark 12:30-31

² <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=671>

³ <http://climate.nasa.gov/>

⁴ <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-noaa-data-show-2016-warmest-year-on-record-globally>

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/climate-change-science/understanding-link-between-climate-change-and-extreme-weather>

⁶ http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/elements_of_biodiversity/extinction_crisis/

⁷ <http://water.worldbank.org/topics/water-resources-management/water-and-climate-change>

⁸ <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-coastal-flooding>

⁹ https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/11/science/climate-change-forest-fires.html?_r=0

¹⁰ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/sns-green-climate-change-shift-story.html>

¹¹ <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140331-global-warming-climate-change-ipcc-animals-science-environment/>

¹² <https://health2016.globalchange.gov/>

¹³ http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/publications/climate_change_work_ability_2009/en/

¹⁴ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-change-may-speed-asthma-spread/>

¹⁵ Global Ministry partners in the Pacific islands of Fiji, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, etc. have documented rising seawater and increasingly brackish groundwater due to climate change. This has contributed to increased emigration from the islands. Both drought and flooding rivers have been a problem in the Congo River basin in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and flooding and problems with sedimentation in the Ganges river system in Bangladesh—the Bangladesh case due to melting glaciers from the Himalayas. Droughts and changing monsoon patterns in India have negatively affected agriculture and contributed to social problems as populations—especially men—leave rural areas and swell urban areas (pollution, lack of housing and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, etc). In Hong Kong partners have addressed urban environmental concerns as well as the damaging effects of warming waters on coral reefs and sufficient fish stocks. Finally, water shortages are alleged to be partial causes of some conflicts in the Middle East.

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- ¹⁶ <http://www.weekofcompassion.org/our-impact/2010/9/28/caring-for-our-world-working-with-its-people.html?rq=climate%20change>, <http://www.weekofcompassion.org/our-impact/2016/4/26/fighting-climate-change-and-poverty-in-the-republic-of-georgia?rq=climate%20change>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html>
- ¹⁸ <https://climateandsecurity.org/2016/07/07/general-keys-the-military-thinks-climate-change-is-serious/>, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/climate-change-and-disasters.html>
- ¹⁹ <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=671>
- ²⁰ <http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/11/5/054011>
- ²¹ <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-coastal-areas>
- ²² <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/green-chalice-covenant-2/>
- ²³ <http://blessedtomorrow.org/impact>
- ²⁴ <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/green-chalice-covenant-2/>
- ²⁵ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
- ²⁶ <http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/religious-statements-on-climate-change/>, <http://www.greenfaith.org/media>
- ²⁷ “Climate Change and Global Warming”, United Church of Christ
http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_climate-change-and-global, “Energy Conservation,” Green Faith
<http://www.greenfaith.org/resource-center/stewardship/energy-conservation>, “Carbon Fast Resources,” Interfaith, Power and Light
<http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/resources/carbon-fast-resources/> and “Campaigns,” Creation Justice Ministries
<http://www.creationjustice.org/campaigns.html>
- ²⁸ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/household-carbon-footprint-calculator>
- ²⁹ <http://www.communitycarbontrees.org/>, <https://carbonfund.org/individuals/>
- ³⁰ <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/resources/>
- ³¹ <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/resources/green-events-resources/>
- ³² <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/green-chalice-program/>