

The following resolution was sent directly to an implementing body.

A RESOLUTION ON THE URGENCY FOR ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
A Resolution of Witness Adopted by the Connecticut Conference, October 18, 2008
Submitted December 22, 2008

Received-Office of General Ministries, December 31, 2008

SUMMARY

In light of the overwhelming accumulation of evidence concerning the danger presented by the changes in the global climate, the resolution reflects the urgency of the issue, asking for redoubled efforts on the part of the denomination, conferences and churches to stem the effects of global warming and to achieve a carbon-neutral footprint in the next seven years.

While there have been earlier resolutions concerning the need to attend to the environmental degradation we are experiencing, this resolution urges more vigorous and sustained leadership on the part of the United Church of Christ. Indeed, this resolution believes environmental action is the priority issue of our time.

In a statement made May 29, 2008, over 1700 leading scientists and economists in the U.S. sounded an alarm, stating that there needs to be a broad sense of urgency to stem the “irreversible consequences” of global warming:

We call on our nation’s leaders to swiftly establish and implement policies to bring about deep reductions in heat-trapping emissions. The strength of the science on climate change compels us to warn the nation about the growing risk of irreversible consequences as global average temperatures continue to increase. . . . As temperatures rise further, the scope and severity of global warming impacts will continue to accelerate. . . . There is no time to waste. The most risky thing we can do is nothing.

http://www.ucsus.org/assets/documents/global_warming/Scientist_Economists_Call_to_Action_fnl.pdf

THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The text of the Pastoral letter of April, 2008 provides our theological and biblical foundation:

Humanity is asked to answer a call of stewardship understood as *care* for and solidarity *with* God’s good creation. The distinction between humanity and other created things begins to soften, inviting a profound kinship, all participating in a creation community. In a time of environmental concern, the church must respond with its gifts of faith and nurture to work against reckless, negligent, or prejudicial use of natural resources. . . .

Our call to become good stewards in God’s ever evolving creation is reflected in the many resolutions passed addressing our environment. Beginning in 1959 with the Second General Synod, whereby there was a “call to Christian action in society, ‘includ(ing) (a) call for conservation and development of the Earth’s resources for the benefit of all people now and in the future.’” . . .

One thing is certain: for the love of the earth and one another, we may not remain indifferent. *We are called to face the challenges with a deep sense of urgency and hopeful attention.* (emphasis added)

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION ON THE URGENCY FOR ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

(Resolution of Witness)

WHEREAS, Scripture reveals God's will that humans shall have dominion (stewardship or responsibility) over all the earth (Genesis 1:26); that we must provide for the future, acting as trustworthy stewards (1 Corinthians 4:2) of the earth's finite resources on God's behalf (Genesis 41:46-57); that Jesus Christ teaches the church that our actions on the earth have cosmic consequences in God's will for redemption (Matthew 16:18-20)¹; and

WHEREAS, responsible stewardship of Creation is integral to Christian discipleship (General Synod resolutions 1959, 1975, 1989, 2005, 2007); and we are called to compassionate action on behalf of those who disproportionately bear the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation (General Synod resolutions 1977, 1983, 1989); and

WHEREAS, the scientific consensus concerning climate change persuades us that we must intensify our efforts beyond what has previously been adopted (General Synod resolutions 2005, 2007); and there is growing evidence that climate change is occurring at an accelerated rate and it is primarily caused by human activities; and unless the use of fossil fuels is immediately reduced, the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will reach irreversible harmful levels within the next two decades; and

WHEREAS, the evidence that glaciers and high altitude snow packs from the Andes to the Himalayas are melting at alarming rates is incontrovertible and the effects of this unprecedented circumstance has permanent life-threatening implications for millions of people in many regions of the world; and recent satellite and observational evidence indicates an unexpected rapid increase of global warming in the North polar region, some three decades ahead of warming trends projected by most computer models; and

WHEREAS, the projected long-term consequences of current trends include sea level rise, coastal flooding, wide-scale loss of species, migration of vector-borne diseases, and more heat-related episodes among vulnerable members of urban populations; and when taken together, these trends pose the most serious threat to humanity in recorded history and demand our urgent, immediate response to significantly alter our current course; and

WHEREAS, the Collegium of the United Church of Christ, in a pastoral letter issued on April 8, 2008, reminded us that "We may not remain indifferent. We are called to face the challenges, engage deeply and with hopeful attention... to invite those who seek and those who love, those who lament and those who act on prophetic and imaginative dreams, to journey with us, build greening places and spaces for the holy and one another;"

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates to this Twenty-seventh General Synod of the United Church of Christ, declare a profound sense of urgency about the present and potential environmental and social consequences of climate change; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the entire United Church of Christ, clergy and laity, officers and members, to listen carefully and prayerfully to the scientific consensus now available, to make education on these matters a priority throughout the United Church of Christ, and to take immediate steps, both individually and collectively, to address the changes required at all levels by this unprecedented global crisis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge all United Church of Christ churches to achieve energy conservation, material-use reduction and other life-style changes as soon as possible; and that we urge all conferences of the United Church of Christ to assemble and distribute currently available resource materials to assist members and churches to increase their level of “green” activity and practice within the next two to five years, with the aim of moving toward a carbon-neutral footprint over the next five to seven years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the United Church of Christ, at all levels, to advocate the prompt enactment of state and federal legislation that will forward these practices throughout the nation and will support the creation of new international agreements that address the fundamental causes of climate change. Those actions include, but are not limited to:

- a. passage of meaningful cap and trade legislation on carbon emissions;
- b. enactment of stringent gas mileage standards for motor vehicles;
- c. incentives for investing in renewable sources of energy;
- d. financial disincentives for fossil fuel consumption;
- e. allocation of significant public finances for research and development of alternative energy technologies;
- f. meaningful participation in international treaty negotiation, thereby improving our country’s moral standing in the community of nations; and

¹1989 Resolution of the Connecticut Conference, UCC – *Solid Waste and Ecologically Sound Life*

FUNDING

Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

Justice and Witness Ministries are requested to be the primary implementer of this resolution.