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Sierra Club President Aaron Mair to Address United Church of Christ's General Synod as Denomination Considers Resolution to Address Climate Change

CLEVELAND (June 27, 2017)— Former Sierra Club President **Aaron Mair** will deliver a keynote address to the 31st General Synod of the United Church of Christ July 3 in Baltimore as the denomination takes up an emergency resolution denouncing the recent U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord.

Nearly 4,000 delegates are expected to attend the denomination's biennial governance meeting.

The emergency resolution, "The Earth is the Lord's, Not Ours to Wreck," was quickly drafted after President Trump announced on June 1 that the United States would abandon the 2015 pact. The resolution was sponsored by the denomination's Southern California-Nevada Conference and has already been endorsed by 11 other regional bodies of the UCC.

The resolution calls on clergy across the 900,000-member denomination to preach on the urgent need to address the problem of climate change.

Mair, the Sierra Club's first African-American president, is one of two featured speakers during the five-day gathering. Synod Moderator the **Rev. Sue Artt** said that Mair "brings a long and deep history of work in environmental justice initiatives and award-winning justice actions."

The UCC noted that during his time with the Sierra Club, Mair has shown a commitment to grassroots action, environmental justice, and transforming the culture of the Sierra Club to make it — in his words — "a more welcoming environment to all people, regardless of their race or socio-economic status."

Artt said, "Our hope is that his environmental advocacy and deep wisdom, born of years of on-the-ground service, will serve to inspire Synod delegates to step up their local actions on behalf of a healthy environment."

The UCC's emergency resolution on climate change calls on the denomination to resist further expansion of fossil fuels and to demand new sources of renewable energy available to all communities. It also charges clergy and communities across the church to put their faith in action, leading by example.

The resolution specifically calls upon clergy to preach about the climate crisis. "Now is the time for clergy to speak from their pulpits about the moral obligation of our generation to protect God's creation," the resolution states. "Let the world know that whatever the current American administration may say or do, we who follow Jesus will not back away from God's call to protect our common home."

The power of the people in the pews is also underscored in the document. "Accepting that it is up to us — we the people — whether in the streets, at the State House, in the halls of power, with our phones and emails, by committing our time, financial resources and prayers — let us pour ourselves out to bend the moral arc of justice, with joy in our hearts, beauty in our sights, and hope for the children."

Other regional UCC conferences endorsing the resolution include the South Dakota, Northern Plains, Southeast, Vermont, Maine, Northern California-Nevada, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Minnesota, and Kansas-Oklahoma conferences. The denomination's 2013 General Synod approved an earlier resolution that endorsed divestment from fossil fuel companies and other strategies designed to combat climate change.

The full text of the resolution is available at <http://synod.uccpages.org/res21.html>.

Mair is scheduled to speak during the Monday morning session, which begins at 8 a.m. General Synod plenary sessions will be livestreamed on the UCC website at <http://synod.uccpages.org/live.html>.

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About the United Church of Christ The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination comprised of nearly 900,000 members and 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American.

The UCC and its members are tireless advocates for social issues such as immigration reform, racial equality, LGBT rights, marriage equality, environmental protection and economic justice.