

The following resolution has been received by the Office of the General Minister and President after the deadline established by the Standing Rules of the Thirty-second General Synod but noting the “could not have been anticipated” paragraph in the General Synod Standing Rules. Any resolution must meet all of the requirements of the Standing Rules (see Standing Rule 11). The Sub-Committee on Disposition has recommended that this resolution go to a Committee of the General Synod. The Board of Directors will decide in June whether to affirm the recommendation of the Sub-committee on Disposition.

**LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN --
DECLARING SUPPORT FOR THE GREEN NEW DEAL
AND AFFIRMING THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF CLIMATE JUSTICE
WITH ALL JUSTICE ISSUES**

A Resolution of Witness

**Submitted by:
Vermont Conference UCC
Pacific Northwest Conference UCC
New Haven Association of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ
New York Conference UCC**

1 **SUMMARY:**
2

3 This resolution provides Synod with the opportunity to declare its support for [the Green New](#)
4 [Deal Resolution](#)ⁱ (H. Res. 109) released by Congress on February 7, 2019. The Green New Deal
5 creates an opportunity for the United States to commit to goals and projects that are consistent
6 with the UCC’s decades-long advocacy of environmental, racial and economic justice. By
7 declaring its support, Synod will proclaim the intersectionality of climate justice with all justice
8 issues and offer a path of action and hope by which humanity can address the defining moral
9 issues of our time.

10
11 **BACKGROUND:**
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13 With the release of [the Green New Deal Resolution](#)ⁱⁱ on February 7, 2019, Congress
14 created an opportunity for the United States to commit to goals and projects that are consistent
15 with the UCC’s historical (and historic!) advocacy for racial, economic and environmental
16 justice. The Green New Deal aspires to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs,
17 provide for a just transition to clean and renewable energy and secure clean air and water.

18 Recognizing that climate change threatens the safety, health, and dignity of ordinary
19 people, the authors of the Green New Deal have made environmental justice the heart of the
20 resolution. The Green New Deal specifically names the “systemic injustices” that
21 disproportionately affect “frontline and vulnerable communities” and provides a list
22 of such communities that would be familiar to anyone who has read UCC justice resolutions over
23 the past many decades: “indigenous communities, communities of color, migrant communities,
24 deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low income workers,
25 women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth.” Indeed, the genius of the

26 resolution is that it identifies and seeks to address two interrelated crises: a climate crisis and a
27 socio-economic crisis of wage stagnation and growing inequality.

28 In compliance with the Standing Rules of General Synod, this resolution is submitted as a
29 so-called Emergency Resolution because the Congressional Resolution itself (H. Res. 109) was
30 not released until February 7, 2019, well past the January 2, 2019, deadline for Standard
31 Resolutions.

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34 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

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36 **Amos 5:24 (NRSV)**

37 ²⁴ ... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

38

39 **Psalms 24:1 (NRSV)**

40 ¹ The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it

41

42 **Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)**

43 ¹⁸ Where there is no vision, the people perish

44

45 As people of faith, we recognize that **the earth is the Lord's...** Nevertheless, Creation, God's
46 great gift – the context in which all life seeks fulfillment – is in crisis. The scientific consensus is
47 unambiguous. Climate change is real, it's caused by human activity, it's already happening, and
48 it's accelerating. The scale of Creation's demise is dramatically expanding beyond our
49 comprehension.

50

51 The Green New Deal addresses this urgent crisis by offering America a comprehensive **vision**
52 that, if implemented, can save millions of lives even as it addresses economic inequalities,
53 environmental racism and other manifestations of climate injustice.

54

55 Our generation still has the power to bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice by
56 reviving creation. Indeed, by acting with the urgency and on the scale of the Green New Deal,
57 we may still have time to avoid the worst consequences of climate change as we seek to preserve
58 God's great gift of creation.

59

60

61 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

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63 WHEREAS, the Green New Deal is rooted in the scientific findings from the October 2018
64 [Special Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Changeⁱⁱⁱ](#), which declares that
65 carbon emissions must be reduced by about fifty per cent before 2030 and completely phased out
66 before 2050 if global temperature rise is to be limited to 1.5°Celsius;^{iv}

67

68 WHEREAS, humanity is already contending with changes on a scale we can hardly comprehend,
69 such as:

70

- Rainfall from big storms is now measured in feet - not inches (e.g., Houston received five
71 feet (61") of rain from Hurricane Harvey).^v

- 72 • The Earth's temperature is already well into the range that existed during the Eemian
73 period, 120,000 years ago, when sea level was 20 to 30 feet higher than it is now.^{vi}
- 74 • The cost of catastrophic, unprecedented flooding in the Midwest in the spring of 2019 is
75 well over \$3 billion.^{vii}
- 76 • “Not since World War II have more human beings been at risk from disease and
77 starvation than at this very moment.” Climate change is the primary cause of droughts,
78 which are increasingly rendering areas in Africa uninhabitable.^{viii}
- 79 • Recognizing that the sixth mass extinction in geological history is now underway,
80 biologists are using the term “Biological Annihilation” as species are going extinct at
81 least 100 times the normal rate;^{ix}

82 WHEREAS, the urgency of the climate crisis is accelerating faster than anyone imagined. For
83 example:

- 84 • In January, 2019, scientists learned that the oceans are warming 40% faster than they had
85 previously thought.^x
- 86 • As the oceans absorb CO₂, they are becoming more acidic at a frightening rate in excess
87 of any change the world has seen in 300 million years;^{xi}

88
89 WHEREAS, climate change multiplies and accelerates injustice by hitting the poorest people and
90 people of color first and worst because it’s the poorest people and people of color who typically
91 live in areas most likely to flood, most prone to disease, and most subject to the droughts, heat-
92 waves and various diseases that are now migrating on account of climate change.^{xii}

93
94 WHEREAS, climate change is creating and accelerating a health crisis in our inner cities that
95 gets worse each summer, especially as rising temperatures create urban heat islands responsible
96 for more and more cases of asthma that are disabling – and killing – children and elderly people
97 of color.^{xiii}

98
99 WHEREAS, those most affected by climate change have not caused it and are powerless to stop
100 it. For example, the farmers in parts of Africa who are losing their lands either to drought or to
101 unprecedented flooding have a carbon footprint that is virtually 1/200th the carbon footprint of
102 the average American;^{xiv}

103
104 WHEREAS, the people and institutions who actually caused and are causing climate change
105 aren’t being held accountable for the catastrophic damage climate change is already causing;^{xv}

106
107 WHEREAS, the Green New Deal acknowledges the necessity of assuming moral responsibility
108 for intergenerational harm caused by failure to act on climate change and the urgency of taking
109 action on a comprehensive scale to reduce the catastrophe future generations will inherit;^{xvi}

110
111 WHEREAS, on March 15, 2019, more than 1,400,000 young people in 128 countries, in over
112 2,200 cities and towns, and on every continent (including Antarctica) walked out of their schools
113 on a school strike for climate action – the biggest day of global climate action ever – insisting
114 that, in the words of 16-year old Greta Thunberg, initiator of the school strike for the climate and
115 Nobel Prize nominee, “We need a whole new way of thinking...we need to start cooperating and
116 sharing the remaining resources of this planet in a fair way”;^{xvii}

117
118 WHEREAS, in 2017, 97% of Synod delegates acknowledged the profound moral implications of
119 climate change by voting to “declare a new moral era,” and committing to the “moral
120 imperative” of urging “clergy to speak from their pulpits about the moral obligation of
121 our generation to protect God’s creation”,^{xviii}
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123 WHEREAS, the two interfaith environmental organizations with which the United Church of
124 Christ partners - [Interfaith Power and Light](#)^{xix} (a national organization with affiliates in almost
125 every state) and [Greenfaith](#)^{xx} - describe the Green New Deal as “a tangible expression of key
126 values that animate [our] vision of a better world” and as “a profound moral opportunity”
127 because the Green New Deal is informed by truth and science, driven by urgency, far reaching in
128 its scale and comprehensive in its goals;¹²
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130 WHEREAS, Yale researchers say 81% of the voters they polled support a Green New Deal to
131 create jobs and work toward renewable energy;^{xxi}
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133 WHEREAS, scores of scientists have spoken out in favor of the Green New Deal, including
134 Stanford Professor Mark Jacobson, whose research demonstrates that each of the 50 states can
135 establish a zero-emissions economy by 2035 and who says, "Right now, we have about ninety
136 per cent or ninety-five per cent of the technology we need.... We don't need a technological
137 miracle to solve this problem. The bottom line is we just need to deploy, deploy, deploy";^{xxii}
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139 WHEREAS, on February 8, 2019, [the executive leadership of the United Church of Christ](#)
140 [endorsed the Green New Deal](#).^{xxiii}
141

142 WHEREAS, over the past 50+ years the UCC, along with religious leaders from other faiths and
143 denominations, has issued countless statements on the goodness of Creation and our call to act as
144 responsible environmental stewards, all of which has been an insufficient witness;
145

146 WHEREAS, the Core Purpose of the United Church of Christ states (in part): “... we serve God
147 in the co-creation of a just and sustainable world as made manifest in the Gospel of Jesus
148 Christ”^{xxiv}; and
149

150 WHEREAS, this historic moment provides Christian communities with a powerful opportunity
151 to bear witness to the sacredness of God’s Creation and the urgent call to preserve it, and
152 responding to this call expresses the new mission initiative of the UCC known as [the three great](#)
153 [loves](#)^{xxv}, one of which is love of creation;
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155

156 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United
157 Church of Christ, in keeping with numerous resolutions passed by previous General Synods,
158 recognizes the scale and immediacy of the climate crisis, the urgent need to achieve net-zero
159 greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and the moral obligation to embrace the
160 unprecedented socio-economic changes that we must effect and engage **as opportunities** to
161 create fair paying jobs, secure clean air and water, redress manifestations of environmental
162 racism and pursue a just transition to clean and renewable energy.

163
164 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of
165 Christ joins [the executive leadership of the United Church of Christ](#)^{xxvi} and the United Church of
166 Christ Council for Climate Justice (with representatives from all geographic conferences of the
167 UCC) in endorsing [the Green New Deal Resolution](#)^{xxvii} (H. Res. 109) released by Congress on
168 February 7, 2019.

169
170 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of
171 Christ calls upon the whole of the church to accept the moral responsibility that comes with
172 living “at such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) by:

- 173 • Standing up for the critical role science must play in understanding the challenges that
174 now pose an existential threat to life as we have known it on this planet;
- 175 • Continuing to learn from scientifically informed sources about the new realities and new
176 solutions that are emerging every day;
- 177 • Discussing climate change with increasing frequency at church, at home, at work and in
178 our social encounters, emphasizing how it threatens things we all value while noting that
179 we already have all the technology we need^{xxviii} to achieve the goals of the Green New
180 Deal;
- 181 • Incorporating into our worship life and community leadership an awareness of climate
182 change, its consequences (especially for vulnerable, frontline communities), and the
183 opportunities we still have to make the changes science says we must and technology
184 says we can;
- 185 • Helping our communities to be more prepared for extreme weather events and more
186 resilient to a changing climate in the long term;
- 187 • Lifting up the reality that many people, regardless of their political affiliation or
188 allegiance, support the Green New Deal because it addresses not only climate change but
189 also numerous forms of injustice;
- 190 • Paying attention as federal, state and local agencies develop and propose new policies
191 that impact our environment and engaging those agencies as advocates for policies and
192 legislation that advance the goals of the Green New Deal, including its commitment to
193 address the “systemic injustices” that disproportionately affect “frontline and vulnerable
194 communities”;
- 195 • Maintaining a commitment to compassion and fairness by advocating for a just transition
196 for those workers and communities most dependent on fossil fuel energy so that they, too,
197 have opportunities for clean, healthful and family-supporting jobs that heal our planet.

198 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of
199 Christ calls upon the whole of the church to accept that it is up to us to pour ourselves out to
200 bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice, with joy in our hearts, beauty in our sights,
201 and hope for the children.

202
203 **FUNDING**

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

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207 **IMPLEMENTATION**

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

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- ⁱ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
- ^{iv} <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
- ^v https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2018/09/19/meteorology-behind-hurricane-floresces-historic-rain-flooding/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7a32682e6a21
- ^{vi} Jeff Goodell, "Will We Miss Our Last Chance to Save the World From Climate Change?" *Rolling Stone*, December 22, 2016, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/will-we-miss-our-last-chance-to-survive-climate-change-w456917>
- ^{vii} <https://www.vox.com/2019/3/22/18277244/nebraska-flood-2019>
- ^{viii} Jeffrey Gettleman, "Loss of Fertile Land Fuels 'Looming Crisis' Across Africa," *New York Times*, July 30, 2017, accessed September 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/29/world/africa/africa-climate-change-kenya-land-disputes.html?_r=0
- ^{ix} Tatiana Schlossberg, "Era of 'Biological Annihilation' Is Underway, Scientists Warn," *New York Times*, July 11, 2017, accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/11/climate/mass-extinction-animal-species.html?mcubz=1>
- ^x https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/10/climate/ocean-warming-climate-change.html?emc=edit_th_190111&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=543283340111
- ^{xi} Hönisch, et al., "The Geological Record of Ocean Acidification," *Science*, March 2, 2012, 1058-1063.
- ^{xii} <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/13/6001> ; https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/03/12/whites-are-mainly-blame-air-pollution-blacks-hispanics-bear-burden-says-new-study/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.30e85d2d8562; https://advancementproject.org/climate-change-not-future-problem-communities-color-now-problem/#_edn5 ; Clean Air Task Force for Clear the Air, *Air of Injustice: African Americans and Power Plant Pollution*, 2002; J. Andrew Hoerner and Nia Robinson, *A Climate of Change: African Americans, Global Warming, and a Just Climate Policy for the U.S.*, Environmental Justice & Climate Change Initiative, 2008; Environmental Justice and Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform, *Who's in Danger? Race, Poverty, and Chemical Disasters: A Democratic Analysis of Chemical Disaster Vulnerability Zones*, 2014; Liam Downey and Brian Hawkins, *Race, Income and Environmental Inequality in the United States*, SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE, December 1, 2008, 51 (4): 759-781.
- ^{xiii} http://climatehealthconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Guide_Section4.pdf
- ^{xiv} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_carbon_dioxide_emissions ; see Chad
- ^{xv} <https://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming/fossil-fuel-companies-knew-about-global-warming>
- ^{xvi} <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>
- ^{xvii} <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/19/school-climate-strikes-more-than-1-million-took-part-say-campaigners-greta-thunberg>
- ^{xviii} <https://www.macucc.org/earthislords>
- ^{xix} http://salsa4.salsalabs.com/o/50836/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=25983
- ^{xx} <https://greenfaith.org/GND>
- ^{xxi} http://salsa4.salsalabs.com/o/50836/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=25983 and <https://greenfaith.org/greennewdeal#>
- ^{xxii} <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/26/green-new-deal-climate-change-democrats>
- ^{xxiii} <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-good-news-about-a-green-new-deal>
- ^{xxiv} http://www.ucc.org/news_the_green_new_deal_legislating_environmental_justice_02082019
- ^{xxv} <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/VisionPlanHandout.pdf>
- ^{xxvi} http://www.ucc.org/commentary_three_great_loves_04272017
- ^{xxvii} http://www.ucc.org/news_the_green_new_deal_legislating_environmental_justice_02082019
- ^{xxviii} <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

xxviii <https://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/I/100Pct-WWS-Papers.pdf> and
<https://thesolutionsproject.org/> and <https://www.100.org/>