

2020 Tennessee Annual Conference (United Methodist Church) Resolution (Approved Sept. 19, 2020)

Title: A Call to Care for God's Good Creation

#1. Whereas, Scripture proclaims the goodness of creation (Genesis 1); that “the earth is the LORD’s” (Psalm 24); and that God cares for all creatures (Psalm 124); and

#2. Whereas, Scripture also states that humankind, being formed in the image of God, has been given the profound responsibility to care for creation (Genesis 1 and 2); and

#3. Whereas, Jesus affirmed the goodness of creation by becoming flesh (John 1). And he witnessed to that same goodness by taking bread (grain from the fields) and wine (the fruit of the vine), saying, “this is my body” and “this is my blood” (Mark 14). And he further proclaimed the glory of creation by pointing to the lilies of the field (Matthew 6) and his heavenly Father’s care for it by noting that not one sparrow is “forgotten in God’s sight” (Luke 12); and

#4. Whereas, Jesus also affirmed that the two greatest commandments are to “love the Lord your God . . . and your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22). And it being clear that care for creation is an essential part of loving God and neighbor; and

#5. Whereas, creation not only sustains physical life but also, through its awe-inspiring beauty and wonder, connects us more closely to the Creator; and

#6. Whereas, the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that: “All creation is the Lord’s, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God’s creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings;” and

#7. Whereas, God has woven all of creation together in an intricately-patterned tapestry of life and therefore the wellbeing of humanity is connected to that of all other living things; and

#8. Whereas, the scientific community has given clear warning that creation is under tremendous strain due to the poisoning of air, water, and land; habitat destruction; the unsustainable consumption of earth’s finite resources; and the rapidly accelerating extinction of species; and

#9. Whereas, scientists have especially sounded the alarm of catastrophic harm to creation if global warming and associated climate change are not halted and reversed. And noting that rising temperatures have already intensified wildfires, hurricanes, drought, and sea-level rise throughout the world, with devastating impacts; and

#10. Whereas, it is the poor, persons of color, and indigenous people in this country and throughout the world who are harmed first and most by the degradation of creation. And in light of the fact that because these same groups have the fewest resources to recover from that harm, care for creation is clearly a matter of justice:

#1. Therefore, be it resolved by the 2020 Tennessee Annual Conference that: the Tennessee Annual Conference affirms the work of the Conference Creation Care Ministry (Stewards of God's Earth) in advocating for creation care and environmental justice and will support its continuance in some form in the new Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference; be it further

#2. Resolved that: every local church in the Tennessee Conference is encouraged to incorporate care for creation and environmental justice into all aspects of church life, including: worship, educational programming at all age levels, fellowship gatherings, purchasing practices, energy use, care of grounds, etc.; be it further

#3. Resolved that: given that harm to creation is systemic and that its healing must be systemic as well, local churches and individuals are encouraged to engage in shaping public policies at all levels of government that are in harmony with creation care and environmental justice; be it further

#4. Resolved that: given the special urgency of addressing climate change and its devastating impacts throughout the earth, that the Tennessee Conference Creation Care Ministry (Stewards of God's Earth) work in conjunction with other United Methodists globally in advocating for public policies and other action aimed at halting and reversing climate change, including policies geared toward steep reduction in climate-disrupting greenhouse gas emissions.

Submitted by: Rev. Paul Slentz on behalf of the Creation Care Ministry (Stewards of God's Earth) of the Tennessee Conference of The United Methodist Church

Submitted: March 23, 2020 Approved: September 19, 2020