



Net Zero Legislation General Conference 2024 Study Guide

Written & Edited by
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How to Use This Study Guide

This *Net Zero Legislation at General Conference 2024 Study Guide* is designed as a 5 – 6-week adult group study. The guide includes five chapters and articles that can be completed at the pace of one each week, with an added week to review if desired. The focus legislation in this study guide is now part of the governing documents of The United Methodist Church.

The chapters focus on legislation and reflection that intersects with net-zero action. Each chapter offers a summary and goal of the legislation, a bio of the legislation author, a Scripture reflection, prayer, and opportunity to brainstorm and work through next steps in context.

Between the chapters are stories about the legislation and the people who wrote and submitted that legislation for consideration, as well as the importance of the net-zero effort in The United Methodist Church. This study guide will be published on the Caretakers of God's Creation and The United Methodist Creation Justice Movement website, whose teams and volunteers helped to make this legislation possible.

Learn more about the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement
at umcreationjustice.org

This study guide is the second one in a short series. The first guide features local church legislation—green teams, church yards and more—that also passed in Charlotte, North Carolina, during General Conference:
umcreationjustice.org/library

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INTRODUCTION

Our Carbon Pledge and Why It Matters

During the 2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, creation care legislation approved by delegates brought environmental stewardship and net-zero commitments into church law and polity. The denomination added new guides and imperatives into both the *Book of Resolutions* and the *Book of Discipline*.

The legislation submitted for consideration to the General Conference came from concerned church members, church-rooted United Methodist groups, and United Methodist boards and agencies.

The legislation included in this guide alone passed the General Conference committees and plenary by whopping margins: from committees at 85%; from plenary at 91%.

The church is experiencing a call to action.

This study guide takes a faithful look at legislation addressing energy and, specifically, net zero: what net zero is, and why it

matters. Each chapter deals with new net zero and related legislation, offering scriptural reflection and an invitation to explore real-world practice and application.

What is “net zero”?

The term “net zero” can be heard just about everywhere. But, what exactly is net zero, and what does it have to do with agencies, bishops, and church?

The idea of net zero came from scientists who sought to better understand and communicate how rising carbon emissions in the atmosphere were unbalancing the carbon cycle. For the last two and a half million years, the carbon levels have been stable at about 280ppm.

This stability has maintained through the rise of humankind over the last 400,000 years. Then, over the last 100,000 years, this stability has supported the flourishing of human civilization.

You could say the conditions have been perfect. This stable climate allowed humans to count on just the right amount of rain and heat to develop settled societies and agriculture.

Over thousands of years humans have praised these planetary cycles:

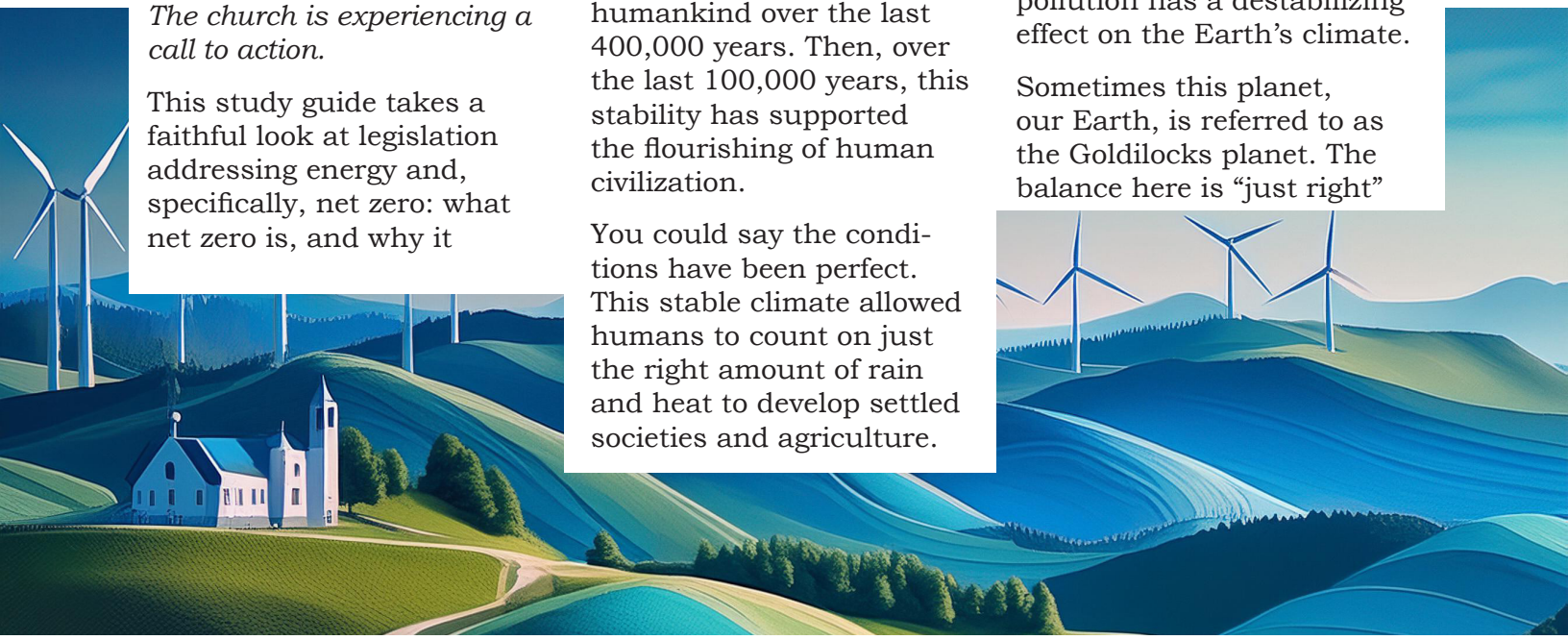
Let us fear the Lord our God, who provides rain in autumn and spring and assures us of a harvest in its season.

—Jeremiah 5:24

Then, in just the last 150 years, humans started burning fossil fuels for energy. Within decades, there was concern about what this might mean for Earth’s climate balance.

Scientists began to issue warnings and then started hollering about the amount of greenhouse gases the fossil fuel and petrochemical industries were releasing into the atmosphere—turns out big agricultural practices were trouble, too. Human activity that scaled up across the globe was and is emitting carbon, and this carbon pollution has a destabilizing effect on the Earth’s climate.

Sometimes this planet, our Earth, is referred to as the Goldilocks planet. The balance here is “just right”





for human communities to flourish. As a person of faith, I might call this a “stewardship” planet. As any good shepherd, God established a balance so the flock, and life, can thrive.

Part of that balance is the carbon cycle. Carbon is an essential building block of living things—plants, plankton, pandas, and people. “Just right” amounts of carbon are important. “Too much” is “too hot” and “too cold.”

Scientists worked decades to communicate this problem, and for the 2014 IPCC report (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) they needed to show that the atmosphere was overfilled. Carbon emissions had to stop. They coined the term “net zero” and warned that adding any more carbon increased the risk of worsening outcomes for our planet.

Net zero means that, while the natural carbon cycle might still ebb and flow a little with the seasons—as forests grow, then drop their winter leaves—this ebb and flow must equal zero new carbon added to the system.

If the carbon level in the atmosphere were water in a bucket, you would pour a little in and pour a little out, keeping it balanced.

The trouble we are in is that we are adding more and more carbon to our bucket, and it is now cracking, seeping, and overflowing. We need to *empty* our bucket by at least a third just to get back to where we were.

The idea of net zero, then, means there can be *zero more carbon added to the atmosphere*. Our activities must ultimately be carbon neutral. If we put another drop in the bucket, then we have to also get that drop back out again. Every extra drop adds to the disasters that are already happening, including flooding and fires and droughts and, worse, these effects hurt the vulnerable most of all.

What is a faithful response?

We must respond with faithful and urgent action. As people of faith, we belong to the Creator. In Genesis our Creator gave us clear instructions. It is our responsibility to ensure the Earth and its creatures are “fruitful and multiply.”

Yet instead of multiplying, Earth’s species are being threatened. Bird and insect populations are plummeting, natural spaces are disappearing, and

we are facing a sixth great extinction.

Our United Methodist bishops have called us to attend to this. Our boards and agencies have made a commitment and are taking actionable steps. The grassroots membership of the church is sending up an urgent call for action. And General Conference has spoken. We must take moral action to address carbon emissions and climate change.

This legislation is designed to help

The legislation passed at General Conference in 2024 speaks to our values, lays out the imperatives, and leads us to take actionable steps toward achieving net zero in our churches and in our lives.

The truth of it is this: Our churches must get climate-real and climate-ready. We must not continue to contribute to the harm oozing from the overflowing bucket of carbon in our atmosphere. We must shift to clean energy and be energy efficient. We must mobilize for action. We must do so for ourselves, for our children, for future generations, and for our love of our Creator. **Amen.**



Above, Worshipers gather, including many United Methodist EarthKeepers and United Women in Faith, to share a service and candlelight vigil for creation. The service was one of the kickoff events at the start of General Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, in April, 2024. Pictured includes Dan Joranko, leading the prayer.



Many members of the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement and Caretakers of God's Creation attended General Conference, sitting in committees, sharing information, and encouraging a commitment to creation justice. Pictured, l-r, Rev. Nancy Blade, Sheri Koob, Judy Smith, Rev. Pat Watkins, Mike Koob, and Cathy Velasquez Eberhart.



Joining Together to Achieve Net Zero

Robert “Bob” Downs believes in servant leadership. He is a commissioned United Methodist EarthKeeper, and his efforts to promote creation care and environmental stewardship in the United Methodist denomination span decades, including serving on the West Ohio Conference’s Creation Justice Taskforce, and co-developing *Loving People and Planet in God’s Name: Engaging the Local Church in the Study and Practice of Climate Justice*, an advanced course certified for the Lay Servant Ministries program through Discipleship Ministries.

Downs has come to believe that one of the most important actions we can take as a church at this time in history is to achieve net zero in our lives as people of faith and in our denomination.

He has followed that belief with action. Not only is he actively involved in reaching people about net zero, Bob Downs’ legislative petition, *Commitment to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, was submitted to, and passed, at four annual conferences during the summer of 2023.

With urgency in mind, Downs also submitted the legislation to the 2024 General Conference. The General Conference delegates passed the legislation with 95% voting in favor.

The petition reads:

“...Be it resolved, that we the people and churches of The United Methodist Church, confess our failure to properly steward God’s earth; ask for God’s help in restoring Creation; and join our bishops, boards, agencies, and commissions in committing to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.”

The resolution was developed as part of a

series of “model resolutions” in 2023 that included resolutions for forming green teams, addressing sustainable annual conferences, and caring for our sacred church land. (See the Study Guide covering General Conference Legislation at umcreationjustice.org/library)

Bob Downs, a leading member of the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement (UMCJM), is part of the UMCJM’s Annual Conference Working Group. Downs is quick to say that while he authored the resolution, he also enjoyed the benefits of teamwork from UMCJM and colleagues in West Ohio in honing the draft.

“The original resolution was perfected and submitted by my local church’s green team for consideration by the West Ohio Annual Conference in 2023. It was adopted and is currently being implemented by a conference-wide working group,” says Downs. “I modified the resolution to meet the guidelines of the 2024 General Conference and submitted the resolution as an individual. The UMCJM provided comment, endorsement, and publicity, promoting the resolution and its adoption.”

What this resolution does is it calls the denomination to join together to achieve net zero. Downs explains, “The resolution calls for our conferences and churches to assess current greenhouse gas emissions, determine appropriate offsets, and implement changes by 2050. It matches similar activities of our denominational boards, commissions, and agencies.”

Downs believes the race to achieve net zero is a moral and urgent one. As



Joining Together, cont.

such, says Downs, the petition “also acknowledges humanity’s responsibility for the climate crisis and expresses our need for God’s help in solving it.”

Further, says Downs, “My hope is that the resolution will encourage us as a church to do something about the degradation of our environment caused by global warming and its resulting climate change.”

As Downs himself feels impelled to act, he hopes the passage of the resolution will inspire much wide action from within the denomination. “As Christians, we are commanded to care for God’s Creation. We are told in Genesis 1 to rule as God rules and in Genesis 2 to keep, guard, or provide for our planet,” says Downs.

John Wesley, also, called for engaged and accountable stewardship, writing, “We are now God’s stewards. We are indebted to God for all we have.... A steward is not at liberty to use what is lodged in their hands as one pleases, but as one’s master pleases” (John Wesley, Sermon 51, “The Good Steward,” §II.1, Works 2:283–84).

Now, with the passage of this resolution at General Conference, the denomination is invited and urged to join the effort. Reaching net zero will take many people across many churches, standing together and learning from one another.

At work across the denomination

The UMCJM is a grassroots movement within United Methodism, founded to support creation justice and environmental stewardship across the denomination. United Methodists have many “beautiful words” addressing environmental stewardship. Yet despite

these words there has been little action from the denomination to address this urgency.

It is just the truth that denominational leadership on the whole has not attended to the action required in the face of the worsening climate crisis. This is, however, starting to change as more and more church members push to do all they can to address challenges and live into the promise of life and wellbeing that is core to the Christian faith.

Rev. Jenny Phillips, Director of Environmental Sustainability at the General Board of Global Ministries, has been a visible leader in the net-zero effort.

Her initiative, built on decades of work by advocates within United Methodism, was a catalyst when in 2021, 12 United Methodist boards and agencies made their first commitments to achieve net zero. In 2023, the Council of Bishops came alongside this pledge, publishing a statement in support, and encouraging the whole church to take action for both neighbor and creation.

This is what coalition looks like. It looks like regular, faithful United Methodists who, from wherever they are planted, form a movement to address faithful and urgent solutions to the climate crisis.

The coalition is growing. UMCJM enjoys collaborative partnerships with United Women In Faith (UWFaith), Global Ministries, Discipleship Ministries as well as church-wide organizations including Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), Love Your Neighbor Coalition (LYNC), and more.

The faithful path to net zero is before us. Can we do it? With God’s help, we will.

ONE

A Pledge for Net Zero

LEGISLATION TITLE:

Commitment to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions

VOTE COUNT!

This legislation passed with overwhelming approval both in committee, and in Plenary, at the 2024 General Conference:

Committee approval: 34
to 5

Plenary Approval:
686 to 36

LEGISLATION SUMMARY:

This legislation responds to the 2023 and 2024 support and pledges from 12 United Methodist boards and agencies, as well as the Council of Bishops, to address the climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the churches and ministries of The United Methodist Church. The “net zero” standard was initiated in the Paris Agreement of 2015, when global leaders identified the need for a global drawdown of emissions to prevent the worst impacts of climate change.

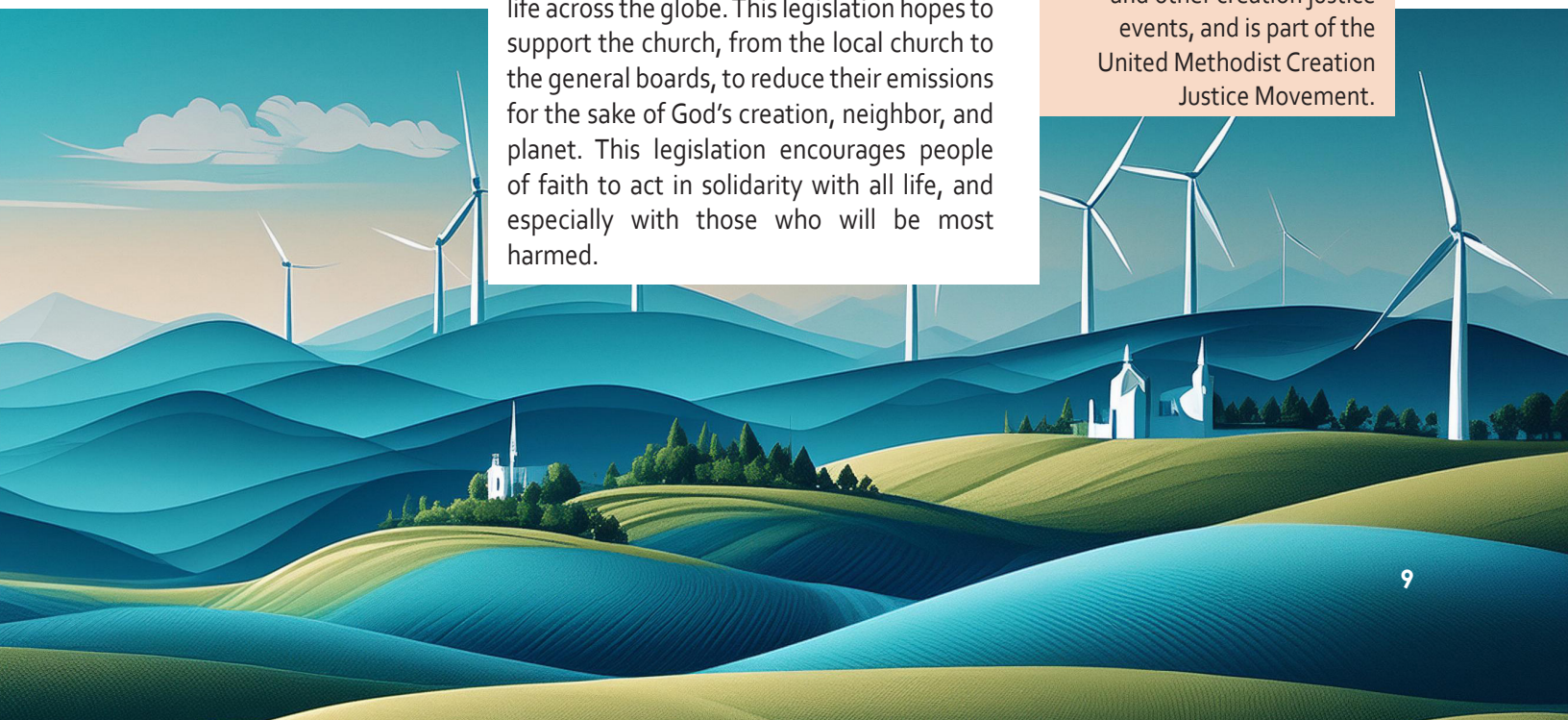
THE GOAL OF THIS LEGISLATION:

The continued rise of greenhouse gases, especially carbon and methane in the Earth’s atmosphere, is caused by human activity. The rise in these emissions is unbalancing Earth’s climate. This is a threat to species and human life across the globe. This legislation hopes to support the church, from the local church to the general boards, to reduce their emissions for the sake of God’s creation, neighbor, and planet. This legislation encourages people of faith to act in solidarity with all life, and especially with those who will be most harmed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

This legislation was submitted by Robert “Bob” Downs.

A retired engineer and biophysicist, Bob Downs is a United Methodist EarthKeeper. He attends Christ United Methodist Church in Kettering, Ohio, and chairs the Creation Care Task Force in the West Ohio Annual Conference. He developed the Lay Servant Training, *Loving People and Planet in God’s Name*, with co-writer Crys Zinkiewicz, available through United Methodist Discipleship Ministries. He leads workshops, teach-ins, and other creation justice events, and is part of the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement.



Reflection

QUESTIONS:

1. The Micah reading is often used in reference to the longing for peace during war. In the reading, prosperity is linked to the wellbeing of the natural world, which suffered from human violence. This destruction does not arise from war alone. Think about what news you may have heard lately about flooding, wildfires, smoke, or other natural disasters in your region or others. How has the destruction of the natural world impacted real people and communities?

2. Relatedly, think about places where oil, coal, or methane gas have been extracted. What impact has this had on humans, species, and the environment in terms of water and air pollution from burning and extraction alone, let alone from spills, flares, and accidents? How can achieving net zero become a restorative act for the whole of creation?

READ MICAH, right, and read the reflection, below. Share the questions, left, together.

Micah 4:3 is one of the most known Bible verses. This verse is reassuring to Micah's readers, as, in the bulk of his book, the prophet is speaking to those in Israel and Judea about to face a coming threat to their communities. The kingdom of Assyria rises in power, and its kings are set on expanding their territory and control.

As many empires do, the Assyrian Empire rose to prominence and then waned, giving way to other powers. There were also times when there was peace. In reading Micah, we hear the prophet's frustration as to how the bad behaviors of rulers do extensive harm to people and the land. It is a welcome moment, then, in verse 4.3, when Micah reminds the reader that there is a different path. In the image of the sword and the plow, we learn that restoration is possible, and that God's plan is peace.

The writers of the Hebrew Bible knew about drought and rainstorms but had no concept of climate change. None of the books written or prayers spoken during many thousands of years, while the CO₂ in the Earth's atmosphere was stable and human life flourished, show climate crisis as a concern.

Yet while there is no chapter and verse for climate change, the teachings throughout hold true.

The people of Micah's time knew about severe weather, such as 100-year storms. They knew about climactic events, such as a decade of drought. They knew these things could put farms and households at risk. They,

Micah 4:1-5

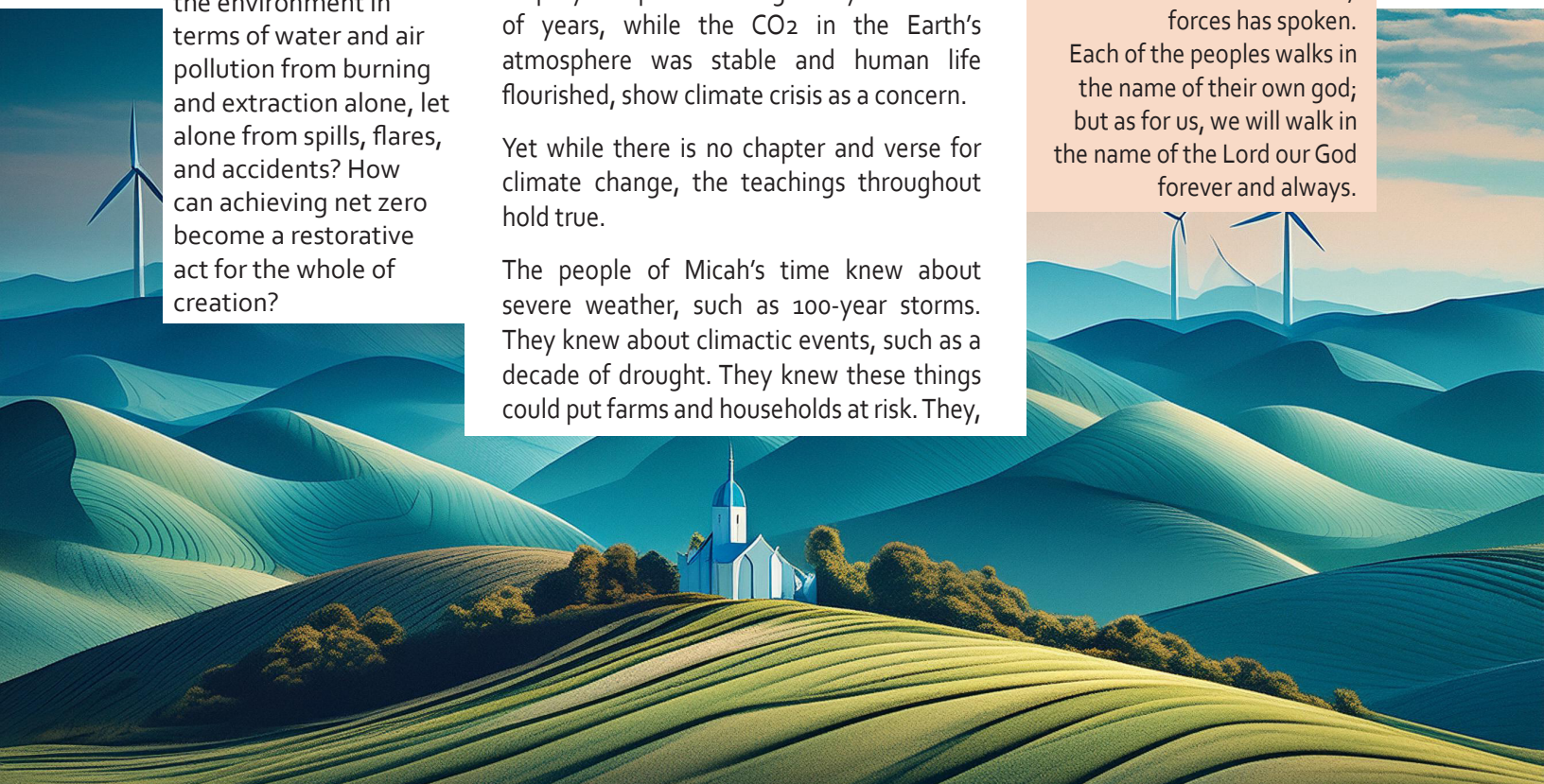
But in the days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of the mountains; it will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it.

Many nations will go and say: "Come, let's go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob's God, so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths!" Instruction will come from Zion and the Lord's word from Jerusalem.

God will judge between the nations and settle disputes of mighty nations, which are far away. They will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools.

Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war. All will sit underneath their own grapevines, under their own fig trees. There will be no one to terrify them; for the mouth of the Lord of heavenly forces has spoken.

Each of the peoples walks in the name of their own god; but as for us, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and always.



like your insurance company, talked about these things as “Acts of God.”

Today, we know climate change makes chaos of our climate, bringing those 100-year storms every five years. We know that burning fossil fuels is an act of violence against living species and people in areas where the climate impacts will hurt most.

We also know that the effort to achieve net zero is a moral act. The effort is a declaration of faith—that we can and must act to restore Earth’s balance and

shared prosperity. Today, Micah’s reassurance in 4:3 is a declaration that we will tear down the smokestacks, and that what will instead be forged will be the blades of wind turbines in wind farms.

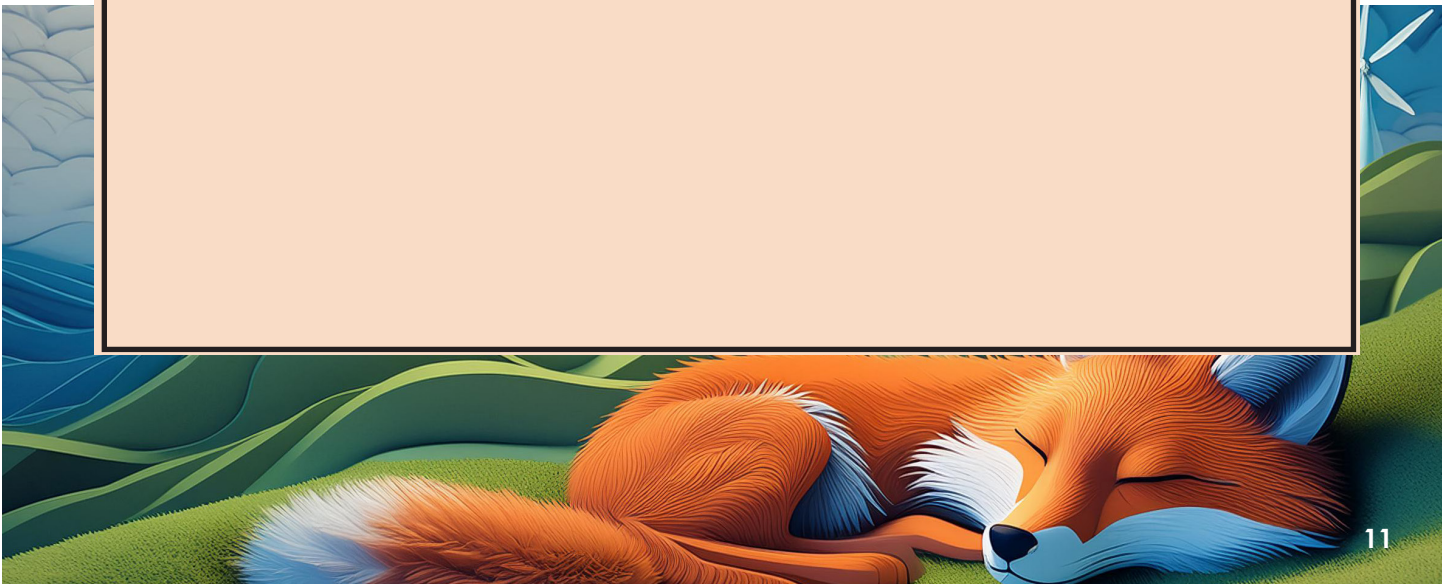
God is always calling us to the garden pathways of peace and prosperity. Instead of destruction, God calls us to planting, growing, harvesting, eating, marrying, celebrating, birthing, and all the things that happen when humans choose the pruning hooks, the fig tree and the vine, and follow the Prince of Peace.

Brainstorming

Think for a minute about the energy sources of your daily life. Does your energy come from fossil fuels, including methane gas, oil, biomass, coal, or other carbon emitting energy sources? Don’t judge, just list them here. Include all the spaces your life takes you: your car, bus, work, home, and elsewhere.

Partners

Achieving net zero will take all of us. Achieving net zero will require an energy transition, such as swapping out any heating oil furnaces for electric heat pumps. It will also require a social transition, for example letting go of lawns and petrochemical fertilizers. How can your faith community be a place to start these conversations? What partners in your community can you include in your efforts?



Talking Together

The first steps toward a transition to net zero are simply to learn more about it. Take a few moments together with your study group to simply talk together. Share a story about how climate change (fires or heat domes or hurricanes) has affected you or your family. If you are struggling with conflict as you talk about climate change, consider watching Katharine Hayhoe's TED Talk, *The most important thing you can do to fight climate change: talk about it*. Write key notes to help you remember the stories of others as they share.

Next Steps

Even as you have shared your stories of climate change together with your group, the next step will be to encourage others. How can you create some storytelling spaces in your church? How can you find ways to share those stories with your congregation?

Prayer: *God of storms and God of peace. Help us be your stewards in restoring balance to your Earth. You make the fig tree filled with fruit, an abundance meant to be shared. You make the fruit of the vine so sweet! A reminder to us that peace is also sweet. Be with us as we seek peace and abundance, transforming our energy and actions for a peaceable world. Amen.*





Social Holiness & an \$867,000 Grant

Pastor Ian Urriola was raised in The United Methodist Church. Unlike many young people, Pastor Urriola stayed in the denomination, soaking up its teachings of social holiness and following a call to ordained ministry. He has served as a youth minister and a chaplain and is now Associate Pastor of Burnt Hills UMC in the Upper New York Annual Conference.

Pastor Urriola has also been to General Conference, three times. He served as a reserve delegate in 2016, then as a young adult delegate for the 2019 and delayed 2024 General Conference. And, in serving in 2024 as a delegate, Urriola didn't just vote on the various petitions submitted from across the denomination, he wrote a number of them, including three of the net zero specific legislative petitions included in this study guide.

His petitions include two that encourage yearly emissions auditing by trustees for local church properties, as well as legislation that draws in the best of the Green New Deal type efforts to encourage United Methodists to mobilize for a green and equitable energy economy.

Many people come to climate justice work from their love of the natural world. Perhaps a deep connection with wild lands and spaces. Pastor Urriola came to the work a little differently. His effort is grounded in the greatest commandment itself: to love your God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself.

When Pastor Urriola speaks of climate advocacy, he speaks of two things: God and people. He speaks of the command-

ment in Genesis, that humans shall be stewards. And he speaks of the lives of people all over the world, especially the vulnerable, who are suffering because of the consequences of climate change.

"One of the first directives that God gives humanity about the new creation in the book of Genesis is, 'I have given you this creation, and it is your job to steward it for me. Steward it and take care of it, not to exploit it for your own purposes,'" Pastor Urriola explains. "Another element is especially thinking about the poor among us. It's always going to be the poor among us who are most disproportionately impacted."

Pastor Urriola sees this work as essentially about people caring about what happens to other people. He gained this perspective in church. "My upbringing in the church instilled in me these values of caring for others," he says. He credits John Wesley's views on Social Holiness and Bonhoeffer's *Sanctorum Communio* in offering him deeper theological reflection about Christ in human connection.

Whether he is connecting with a friend, or "someone living on the other side of the planet, I'm connected to that person. And though I don't know their name, though they don't know my name, I have a responsibility with the Christ that stands between me and them," he explains, "and that's something that haunts me, and so that's what compels me to move forward."

He grounds these high theological ideals deep into the practical matters of church life: local church property and a green energy transition.



Social Holiness, cont.

He hopes the legislation passed at General Conference will give a boost to local people grappling with big changes. He hopes it becomes a tool in the toolkit for local churches, green teams, and trustees.

“We’re going to do this from the bottom up, rather than the top down,” he says. He refers to a decision-making practice of the Haudenosaunee people, “We’re not going to decide on something unless we are aware of and sure that it’s going to be a benefit for our people seven generations down the line. It’s not my kids, it’s not my grandkids, but my great, great, great, great, great grandkids. Think about those people, because they’re going to inherit the world that we leave them.”

He hopes the legislation can be mobilizing. Imagine United Methodists on fire with social holiness engaging a green transition in community! As Pastor Urriola sees human connection as a vital part of faith, so he sees connectionalism as a strength within Methodism.

He explains, “What I really love about our polity and our denomination is our connectional structure. Our core governing beliefs that no individual, no one of us, no single pastor, no single disciple, no single congregation, no single annual conference can do this work on their own. But when we all come together and remain connected, that is when we can do amazing, radical things for the power of the Holy Spirit.”

This fire of social holiness is already at work across annual conferences from coast to coast. One story rises from Federal Way UMC, a local church in

the Pacific Northwest Conference that recently received a grant award for \$872,000.

\$872,000 is a huge grant for a local church and evidence of the kind of support available for local churches seeking energy equity and community ministry.

Ann Mayer a UM EarthKeeper and / lay leader at Federal Way UMC is “passionate about working toward healing our relationship with the earth.”

Her story in how her local church was able to achieve that grant is all about initiative and connection. The idea sparked when a nearby church went solar. From there she gathered a team. When the project got big, she brought in reinforcements including conference staff and energy experts at other local churches.

The project includes solar and batteries, so the church can serve as a resilience center, and “hopefully it will connect us more with the community,” Mayer says.

“The battery storage will allow us to continue to have heating and cooling when the power goes out,” Mayer explains. “This project will help with community resilience by allowing the church to act as a warming or cooling station in times of extreme heat or cold.”

Team members are excited and continue to wrap their heads around the scope of the project.

In all, says Mayer, “I hope this will help us be better stewards of God’s creation, and nudge us to do even more.”

TWO

Getting Started with Church and Property

LEGISLATION TITLE:

Annual Carbon Footprint and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Audit for the Local Church

VOTE COUNT!

This legislation passed with overwhelming approval both in committee, and in Plenary, at the 2024 General Conference:

Committee approval: 44
to 14

Plenary Approval:
606 to 91

LEGISLATION SUMMARY:

This legislation adds a new paragraph to section ¶12533 in the *Book of Discipline*. This section is one that governs the local church board of trustees. The legislation asks for a yearly audit of the church building and grounds, with an assessment of what steps could be taken to achieve net zero, what obstacles prevent that, and the development of a plan to make it work. The audit is to be included in the regular reporting of the trustees at the annual charge conference.

THE GOAL OF THIS LEGISLATION:

This legislation builds on the stated moral imperative of The United Methodist Church to lower emissions, specifically, here, to achieve net zero in the local church. As a moral imperative of the church, this effort becomes a core responsibility of the board of trustees, as they are charged with caring for the church property, grounds, buildings, and more. Including this legislation in the *Book of Discipline* signals just how important it is that the local church take faithful action to reduce emissions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

This legislation was submitted by Ian Urriola. Pastor Ian Urriola serves as Associate Pastor at Burnt Hills United Methodist Church in Burnt Hills, New York. He has worked as Director of Spiritual Development at Shenandoah University in Virginia and in youth ministry. He served as reserve delegate at the 2016 General Conference and as a lay delegate at the 2019 and 2024 General Conferences. He is a member of the Upper New York Annual Conference.



Reflection

QUESTIONS:

1. The final lines of the Scripture reading are "... Aaron and his sons will tend the lamp.... It will be a permanent regulation for the Israelites in every generation." The people of Exodus chose pure olive oil, the cleanest, natural source of energy they knew to shine on the lampstand near the covenant. In our generation, we sometimes don't think about the energy sources when we flip the light switch. What if we did? If so, what source might we choose in letting the light shine?

2. In the construction of the Tent of Meeting, we read of instructions carefully recorded by a people who want to make their reverence for the holiness of God visible top to bottom, in the very materials of the sanctuary construction. How can we do this in our own churches, as we become better stewards of God's creation?

READ EXODUS, right, and read the reflection, below. Share the questions, left, together.

These texts from Exodus are part of the segment whereby the wandering Israelites receive instructions to build a "tent of meeting." This will be the first holy sanctuary for this newly gathered people fleeing slavery in Egypt for a promised land.

The instructions for this sanctuary are very detailed, materials include goat hides, fabrics embroidered with heavenly creatures, gold rings, copper feet for standing rods, carved acacia wood, and pure olive oil. The occasion for such a richly appointed sanctuary is the reception of the new covenant between God and this Hebrew people, a covenant of law brought by Moses from Mt. Sinai.

In part, this description is of a sanctuary that is too good to be historically true. Where would wandering people get these embroidered fabrics, pure copper ore, and all the lumber?

Yet even recorded after-the-fact, the details speak to the aspiration and character of this holy place. Close your eyes and your home church may feature similarly. We see the beautiful stained glass, smooth-carved pews and carved frames and doorways. There are tall white candles glinting on golden crosses at the altar. Now, open your eyes and it's a little more realistic. You may think to yourself, "when was the last time the carpets got cleaned?"

All through the Bible we read of the different and changing ways the people of God build and maintain these sacred worship spaces. These spaces change with time and place, but

Exodus 26:31-35 27:20-21

Make a veil of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen. Work figures of winged heavenly creatures into its design. Hang it on four acacia-wood posts covered in gold. They should have gold hooks and stand on four silver bases. Hang the veil under the clasps, and put the chest containing the covenant there behind the veil. The veil will separate for you the holy from the holiest space. Place the gold cover on the chest containing the covenant in the holiest space. Place the table outside the veil, and set the lampstand opposite the table by the south wall of the dwelling.

You must require the Israelites to bring you pure oil of crushed olives for the light so that the lamp may be set up to burn continually. In the meeting tent, outside the veil that hangs in front of the covenant document, Aaron and his sons will tend the lamp from evening to morning in the Lord's presence. It will be a permanent regulation for the Israelites in every generation.



always are intended as a space that reflects God's holiness, law, and justice. Always these spaces are made, forged, carved, and embroidered using the very materials of the Earth that God created.

Long ago the olive oil in the lamp burned pure and bright. In the Dark Ages and Middle Ages, the nuns and monks chose clean-burning beeswax to light

their choirs. And then came stained glass, and the natural sun shone through!

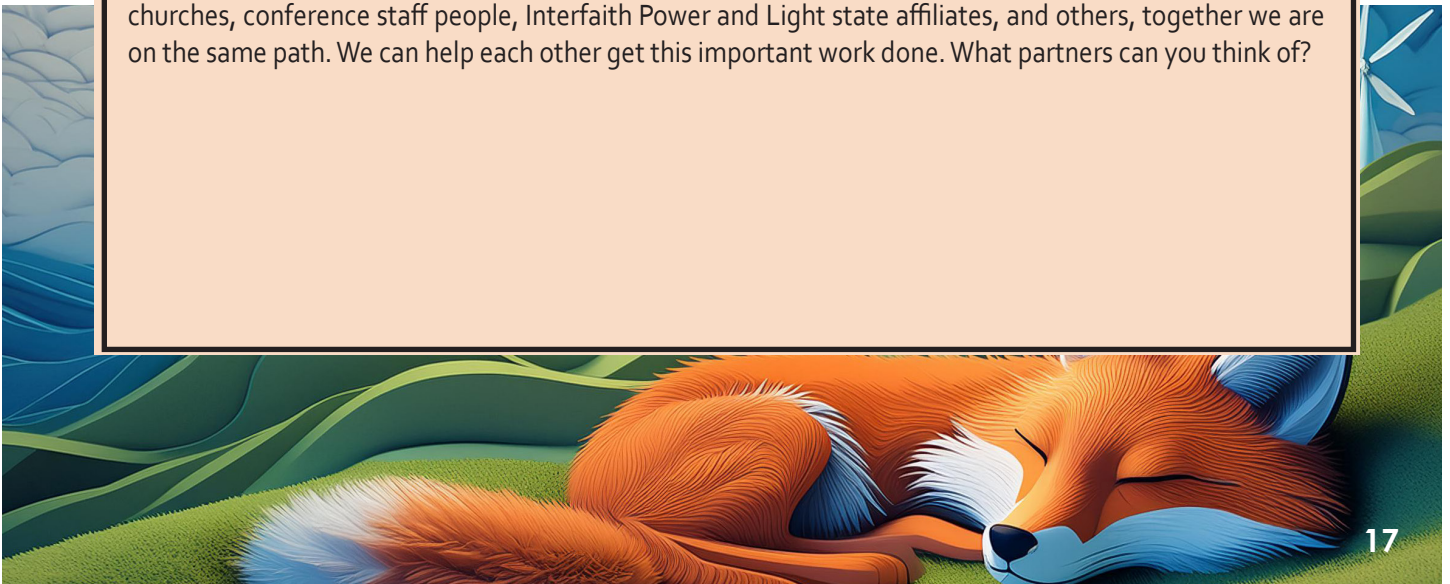
Today, in our churches, if Aaron were to tend it, what source would power our church lights? What clean and faithful ways do we bring the light into God's dwelling place?

Brainstorming

Take a few minutes to re-read Exodus 24:9-27:21. These are passages we often skip over in worship. Have you ever had a pastor preach on these chapters on Sunday? At first glance they are simply instructions. But linger over them. Look at the details, see how much love there is in them. Notice the embroidery, the yarns, and the carvings. Notice that all these holy and beautiful things are from the natural world. Note down from the reading what especially stood out to you of the natural and spiritual encounter this sanctuary could have offered.

Partners

The chapters of Exodus above are beautiful! But implementing them would be no small task to accomplish. I can imagine the rapid blinking that might have accompanied this list of instructions that night near the mountain! As we talk about net zero, we might be blinking, as well. There will be sticking points, there's a learning curve, and we will all need to help each other. We will need partners, too. With our fellow district churches, conference staff people, Interfaith Power and Light state affiliates, and others, together we are on the same path. We can help each other get this important work done. What partners can you think of?



Next Steps

You may serve on the board of trustees, reading this chapter thinking about light bulbs and light switches. It may feel daunting, or exciting! Or both. As you think about next steps, think about forming a team. The trustees are also a team, of course! If you are not a trustee, you, too, can be part of a supportive team gathering around this effort. Whoever you are, consider widening your circle to include the church green team, district trustees or teams, and those with knowledge or passion for the transition process. In this space write some names, or groups of folks who could contribute to your net zero-team.

What do you need?

Already, next steps and team building ideas are on these pages! What now do you need to reach out to partners and build your team?

NOTE: This legislation has companion legislation, also submitted by Ian Urriola. The companion legislation is titled *Reporting Church's Progress on Facilities Becoming Carbon Neutral and/or Having Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions* and is very similar. While the one is nested in the discipline with the work of the trustees, the other is nested with ¶2550, which is a section that oversees church property. The companion legislation was approved in committee, 44 to 13, and in plenary, 606 to 91.

Prayer: *God of balance, who made the carbon cycle to ebb and flow. God of carbon who builds green leaves and lush crops and wide forests from sunlight, binding carbon and life together! Help us to be the stewards you call us to be. Help us rebalance our lives to reflect your plan for the creation. Let us restore what has been degraded. Let us face new questions and build solutions into our sanctuaries. Let us build and celebrate together. Amen.*





Words Into Action — the New Solar Trailer

General, annual, and charge conferences offer the church the opportunity to showcase what is happening in their local church, region, and across the denomination.

Most of this showcasing happens in the exhibits section, where ministries, boards, organizations and shopkeepers gather to introduce people to their work, pass out information and resources, and more.

One particular showcased item at General Conference 2024 was too big for the Exhibit Hall. Disaster Ministries, Global Ministries, and the Western North Carolina Conference brought an entire trailer! This trailer was a relief and hospitality vehicle complete with pop-up tent and fresh brewed coffee.

With the climate crisis running ahead of us, the need to adapt and innovate for response and resilience is urgent. Conferences across the denomination are dealing with the aftermath of floods, storms, fires, heatwaves, power outages, and more. In seeking to meet those needs, Disaster Ministries brought a new kid to General Conference, a car/truck trailer equipped with solar panels, chargers, cables, and batteries.

The solar trailer is designed to bring comfort and aid to those affected when disaster strikes. It does that using renewable energy, making it easier to run and deploy in times of need.

This new concept is ready to go. The hope is that using these solar trailers will give conferences and churches an essential mobile relief center. The trailer brings clean, sustainable solar and battery technology. It can run in places where it is most needed without the worry of refueling.

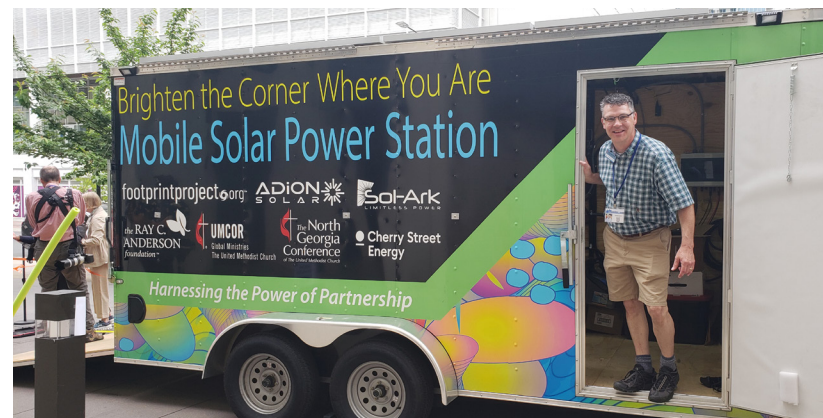
The trailer generates not only its own power, but it also generates power enough to support first responders in the middle of an emergency, be it wildfire, hurricane, tornado, heat wave, or other emergency.

In bringing the trailer to General Conference, Rev. Jonathan Brake, Program Manager for Environmental Sustainability at Global Ministries, hoped conference goers had a chance to get a hands-on introduction to the new-kid-on-the-block.

Says Rev. Brake, “You get to step right up to a solar array, walk through the trailer to learn how it works, and then see how it powers tools and computers,

recharges batteries, cooks and refrigerates, runs medical equipment, lights up a work area, plus anything else that uses electricity.”

Rev. Jonathan Brake offers passers-by a tour to see the inner workings of the trailer. He shares that “three annual conferences now have a trailer for disaster response work.”





New Solar Trailer, cont.

Rev. Jenny Phillips, Director of Environmental Sustainability at the General Board of Global Ministries, is promoting and celebrating the project. “In the past, disaster responders needed to use noisy, polluting, fuel-powered generators to provide crucial energy for communities in need. Now they have another option—solar generators that are clean, quiet, and safe. We know that extreme weather events that cause disasters are exacerbated by fossil fuel-driven climate change.”

Brian Mateer, Director of Missional Engagement and the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator for the Western North Carolina Conference, has been a leader on the project. He welcomed General Conference-goers as they sipped coffee, viewed the trailer, and learned about this important new part of disaster response.

Mateer shared his hope and prediction for the project, saying, “Initiatives like the solar trailer project often have ripple effects beyond their immediate goals. This project may enhance awareness about renewable energy, environmental stewardship, and community resilience.”

Along with the other improvements to disaster response that the solar trailer brings, Rev. Phillips also shared how, in using clean energy to support their efforts, Global Ministries and others are taking yet another step toward meeting net-zero goals for its own ministries.

Rev. Jenny Phillips and Rev. Jonathan Brake encourage people to ask questions and learn more. Behind them are solar panels capable of generating 16 kw of power and storing 38.4 kw hours.

As such, the solar trailer project lights the way for clean, renewable power as part of the way the church cares for people and communities harmed by disaster, doing so in a way that does not compound problems for the environment.

Rev. Brake explains, “This solar mini-grid trailer is a tangible example of The United Methodist Church’s commitment to creation care and environmental stewardship. It represents how general agencies of The United Methodist Church are leaning into their pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 across ministries, facilities, operations, and investments.”

These are the kind of projects The United Methodist Church can develop as it renews itself as a church, gets realistic about the needs of a world changed by the climate crisis, and does what it knows how to do: help people in times of what may be their greatest need following a wildfire, cyclone, or other natural or unnatural, climate-fueled disaster.



THREE

UM Energy Policy — Our Values and Imperatives

LEGISLATION TITLE:

Energy Policy Statement - Part One

VOTE COUNT!

This legislation passed with overwhelming approval both in committee, and in Plenary, at the 2024 General Conference:

Committee approval: 34
to 3
Plenary Approval:
663 to 55

LEGISLATION SUMMARY:

This legislation updates the existing United Methodist Energy Policy, which goes into effect on January 1st, 2025. The first part of the policy speaks to the harm caused by the dominant energy systems over the last many decades, including fossil fuels, mining, man-made dams and reservoirs, biomass, and nuclear power. The harm these systems have caused—to life itself—is contrary to the values of United Methodists as Christian and moral people. For this chapter, we focus on the first half of the revised policy, specifically that we need to attend to values of justice, sustainability, and health.

THE GOAL OF THIS LEGISLATION:

The goal of the revised Energy Policy is to speak to the reality of the harm our energy systems have caused and are causing, including harm to ourselves, our neighbors, the vulnerable, and life itself. The goal in this first half is to show how this harm is caused, as well as call us to a different way to power our homes, cities, and lives, so as to be the moral people we are called to be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

This legislation was submitted by Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, for the General Board of Church and Society. Rev. Henry-Crowe retired in 2022 after serving 49 years in ministry, including serving as Executive Director for the General Board of Church and Society since 2014. She served the local church from 1976 – 1985, then served as Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life at Emory University, as well as on the United Methodist Judicial Council. She earned a Master of Divinity degree from Candler School of Theology and a Doctor of Divinity from Wofford College and LaGrange College. She is a member of the South Carolina Annual Conference.

Reflection

QUESTIONS:

1. Likely there have been times in your life when you have experienced temptation. Can you think of a time when you were tempted by something small? Perhaps if you cheated on a test, or lied when you should have told the truth? Usually, these small things do no lasting harm, and it is easy to choose better. On our Christian journey, we know we are constantly learning and growing in faith, and even when we make mistakes, we are assured of God's love.

2. In addition to the small temptations, you may also have experienced bigger ones. We can be tempted to do things we later very much regret. Again, we are learners, and God is loving and forgiving. For this question, when you think of the big temptations, reflect on the power of the Holy Spirit in you. How might temptation be overcome in the big things we must navigate in life? In faith, in our personal lives, we know we have the power to resist temptation and make positive change. In your life, when you seek freedom from temptation, where do you draw this power from?

READ LUKE, right, and read the reflection, below. Share the questions, left, together.

This reading from the Gospel of Luke tells the story we know as "Jesus's temptation in the wilderness." The basics of this story are that Jesus goes into the desert where the Devil/Satan tempts him to sin or turn away from God. After 40 days of this, the Devil retreats.

This is one of the big stories of the Bible. There is so much here that we cannot cover it in one small reflection. Yet there is a thread here that merits following.

Notice the story starts and ends with Jesus being "full of the Holy Spirit." Just prior to the temptation in the wilderness Jesus was baptized and the "Holy Spirit like a dove" descended. Then, at the end of the temptation story, still filled with the Spirit, Jesus goes out to begin his public ministry.

The question I like to consider in this story is this one: "Where is this power coming from?" When Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, there was a crowd of people to witness the moment when God called Jesus "my son."

I can think of few people with the potential for more power than the Son of God! That day in the Jordan River, someone previously unknown has just been given tremendous power. It is reasonable that those around him who witnessed it would be a little nervous. History is filled with kings who gain authority, but then do "evil" in front of God and everybody. Or as the Scriptures put it, "in the sight of the Lord."

The people who heard about Jesus's baptism

LUKE 4:1-14

Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There he was tempted for forty days by the devil.

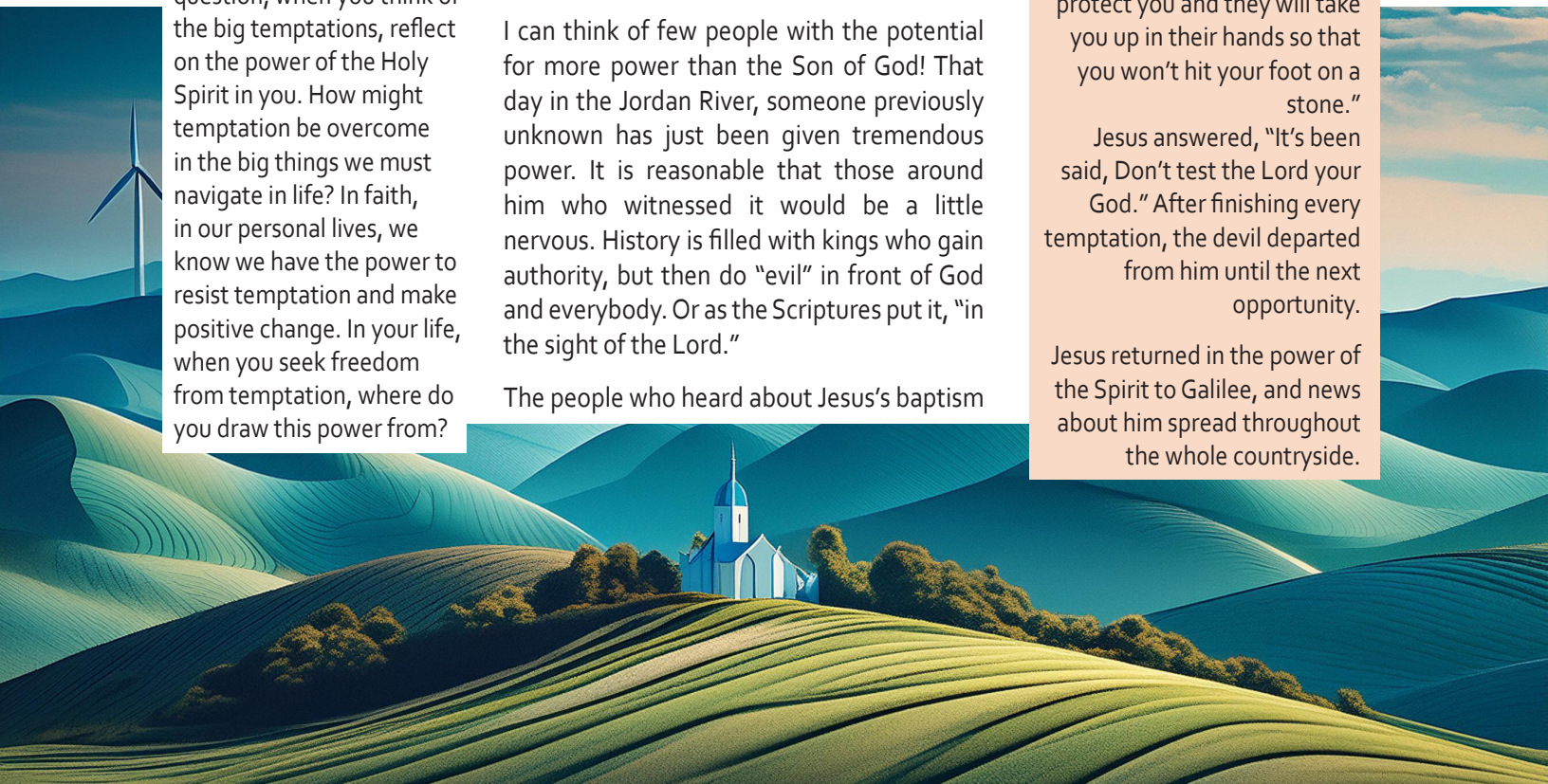
... the devil led him to a high place and showed him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said, "I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It's been entrusted to me and I can give it to anyone I want. Therefore, if you will worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered, "It's written, You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him."

The devil brought him into Jerusalem and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, "Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down from here; for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone."

Jesus answered, "It's been said, Don't test the Lord your God." After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside.



would be nervous. What would this “son of God” do with all that power?

Immediately, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, and next we learn the answer to that question. Repeatedly, Jesus is tempted. Repeatedly, Jesus refuses to sin. The Devil even offers him glory over multiple kingdoms. Jesus, still in the power of the holy spirit, teaches the Devil a thing or two about the power of God. The Devil has to walk away. And Jesus starts his ministry.

With this story, we too can reflect on this question, “Where is our power coming from?” Which brings me to our energy system. That is power too. What

do our energy sources tell us about our choices? And, if they destroy nature, community, and the planet, who does this serve? When we plug in our appliances, where does that power come from? Does the energy that powers our lives hold up to the wilderness test? Is it faithful? Does it lead to the flourishing of life?

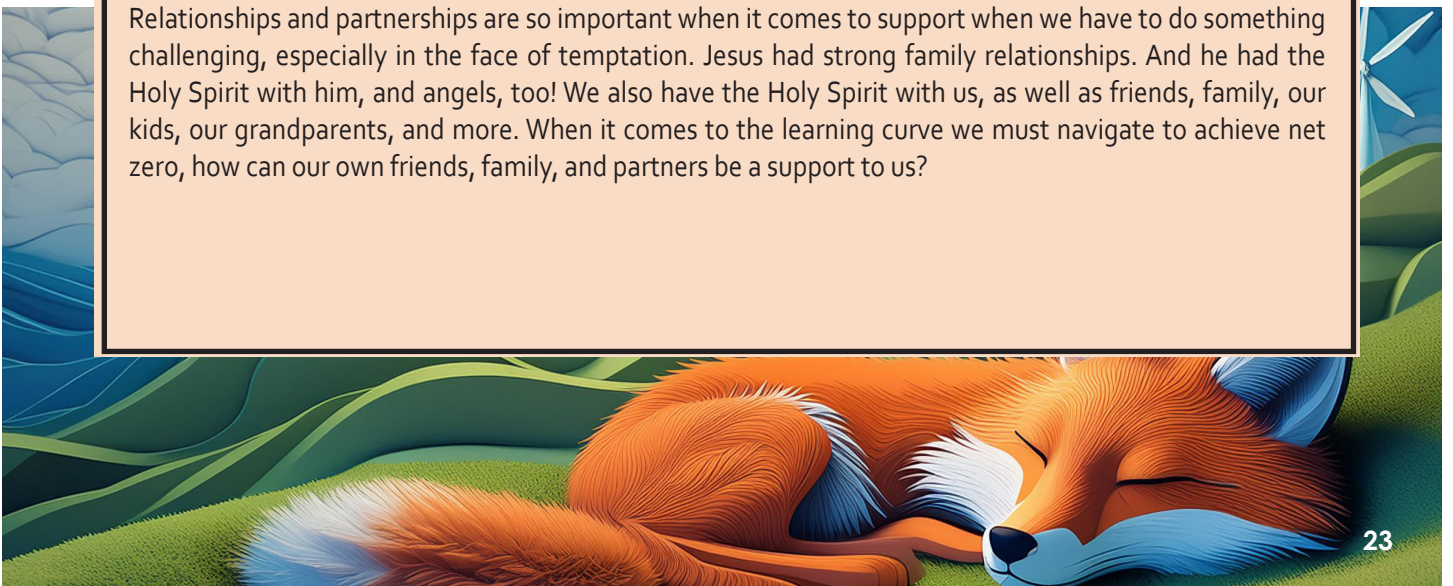
When we become Christians, we are filled with the Holy Spirit! We too face temptation. Early Methodists wrote of spiritual trials as they wrestled with sin and faith. By their witness and the story of Jesus’s temptation, we know that faith conquers all. We can—and we will!—face any wilderness. We can keep the spirit in our hearts and our eyes on God.

Brainstorming

Let’s focus again on the effort to reduce emissions and achieve net zero—or better! What ways will this effort reflect your faith? How might you address the temptation to put things off, give up, and/or just “go with the flow” of methane or oil. What will you do when you meet resistance to your efforts? Brainstorm some ideas, what can you do or say in the face of temptation? Where will your power come from?

Partners

Relationships and partnerships are so important when it comes to support when we have to do something challenging, especially in the face of temptation. Jesus had strong family relationships. And he had the Holy Spirit with him, and angels, too! We also have the Holy Spirit with us, as well as friends, family, our kids, our grandparents, and more. When it comes to the learning curve we must navigate to achieve net zero, how can our own friends, family, and partners be a support to us?



Next Steps

The next step is always to take some action. Sometimes that action involves picking up a shovel or organizing a meeting. For this chapter, though, perhaps consider taking action through prayer. To meet the challenges of temptation, a strong prayer life is really important. Today, in this space, write down at least two prayerful things you can do this week, things like spending time reading one of the Gospels, taking a prayerful walk, or reading the Psalms—perhaps Psalm 104.

What do you need?

We return to this familiar question, “What might you need from your local church and conference leadership in order to aid your success?” Ask the question this time in thinking of the spiritual side of this work. What devotional time will you need? How can you get support with and through prayer and reflection from your team, your family, your conference, and yourself as you explore your next steps?

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, after Jesus was baptized, you led him out into the wilderness. For 40 days, you were with him, filling him and keeping him, through hunger, thirst, and temptation. We pray for The United Methodist Church, every conference, every district, and every member. Fill us that we may feel the prayerful surety that you are with us. Fill us during temptation. And fill us as we seek to fulfill our ministries in Jesus’s name. Amen.*





Energy Options and Environmental Stewardship

In the introduction, I introduced some basics about how the idea of “net zero” came together and what it means.

To quickly re-cap: The carbon in the Earth’s atmosphere has increased over the last 150 years from 280ppm to over 420ppm. As a result, the planet is warming and this warming is having dire effects: melting ice caps, causing heat domes, and worse. We are already in trouble. We cannot add any more carbon to our atmosphere.

At the 2024 General Conference of The United Methodist church a new, revised Energy Policy was approved by delegates. The new policy asks every church member to learn more about the energy they use, as well as the impact their energy choices have on their neighbors and our Earth.

The bottom line is we have an emissions crisis. This problem is new. It happened because fossil fuels became the dominant energy during the industrial age. The energy in fossil fuels is released by combustion, or little explosions. Fossil-fuel combustion is what powers your car or gas lawnmower.

The problem with using combustion of fossil fuels or biomass for energy is that it doesn’t burn cleanly. When it combusts, bits are left over. The leftovers hang around, drifting as carbon emissions into the atmosphere and oceans. This pollution lasts for potentially thousands of years.

I think of this sometimes in comparison to dinner time with toddlers. Toddlers are messy eaters, at least mine were. If you give a toddler some macaroni and cheese, yes, some of it will get into their

mouths. But there will be a lot left over on the highchair tray, on the floor, and on their faces. These mac and cheese leftovers are now waste, cheesy globs and smears that must be cleaned up.

The fossil-fuel combustion process is in some ways similar. Feeding a gallon of gasoline to your car wastes about 30% of the energy potential. For every gas station fill-up, you are getting 70 cents of value for every dollar. Even more is wasted when you factor in fossil-fuel extraction, transportation, and spills. It’s not just the mac and cheese. Think of that toddler carrying a cup of milk across the kitchen floor!

The worst part is that the waste doesn’t disappear with the wipe of a kitchen sponge. Unburned fuel, exploded bits, and carbon molecules, end up rising to the skies, washing into rivers, and causing harm.

That is where we stand, now. Millions of cars and furnaces have been munching macaroni and cheese and clean-up is now an emergency. Dirty fuels have made a mess, and the resulting carbon pollution is causing sea level rise and threatening category six hurricanes.

This is why it matters so much what choices we make. The energy we choose to power our homes, churches, and lives have a direct impact on life on planet Earth—God’s Earth. If we choose dirty fuels, the mess we make will last far beyond our lifetimes.

Moving away from fossil fuels means moving away from energy systems that make dangerous messes. It also means that even as we move to clean energy systems, we do that carefully and



Energy options, cont.

faithfully, ensuring we do not cause further harm or just a different kind of mess. We have to get this right.

The United Methodist Energy Policy speaks directly to the different kinds of energy we could choose right now. It asks us to choose carefully, not only for ourselves, but for the toddlers who will live in the world we make, and the many generations of toddlers we pray are yet to come.

Energy choice rundown:

Methane gas, coal, oil, and fracked gas processes for plastic production are key culprits not only causing the emissions that are heating the Earth, but also in the prevalence of polluting spills, petrochemicals, plastics and microplastics. Continuing with oil and gas extraction continues this pollution, which is rapidly degrading the Earth.

The UM Energy Policy asks us to consider not just what kind of energy we should use, but also calls us to be aware of how our energy is produced. We have learned the hard way that energy cannot and must not be produced in a way that destroys aquifers, pollutes farmland, sickens communities, and heats the planet. The cost is just too high.

Which father among you would give a snake to your child if the child asked for a fish? If a child asked for an egg, what father would give the child a scorpion?

—Luke 11:11-12

We need to apply scrutiny to our energy options and choose carefully. For example, hydroelectric dams seemed like a great way to produce clean, inexpensive electricity. Except that

hydro caused unjust harm to rural and Indigenous people. Building them had consequences to fisheries, species, ecosystems, and lifeways.

Then there is nuclear power. The nuclear conversation is complex. But at the core of the challenge there is the nuclear waste and maintenance problem. Imagine if the bits and smears your toddler leaves from their lunch were radioactive in addition to being harmful to life. What *then*?

There is already nuclear waste stock-piled and leaking in different parts of the globe. This is waste future people will have to deal with for 1000 generations. Nuclear disasters happen because nuclear energy requires precise handling and no surprises. Hanford in Oregon still stores 56 million gallons of radioactive waste that is leaking into groundwater. Just one accident at the Fukushima facility in Japan resulted in hundreds of millions of gallons of radioactive water being released into the ocean.

Solar and wind energy, on the other hand, are currently the cleanest options available. Solar and wind energy is generated cleanly, converted rather than combusted, and makes minimal or no emissions. As we adopt clean energy, we need to do so in a way that preserves life for current and future generations.

Energy Policies may seem like worldly things. It is more satisfying to spend time in prayer and singing hymns! But we need to transition away from oil and gas, and quickly. And, who better to act to preserve life than the people of God! For, we can do it singing!

FOUR

UM Energy Policy — A Transition for All God's Community

LEGISLATION TITLE:

Energy Policy Statement - Part Two

VOTE COUNT!

This legislation passed with overwhelming approval both in committee, and in Plenary, at the 2024 General Conference:

Committee approval: 34
to 3

Plenary Approval:
663 to 55.

LEGISLATION SUMMARY:

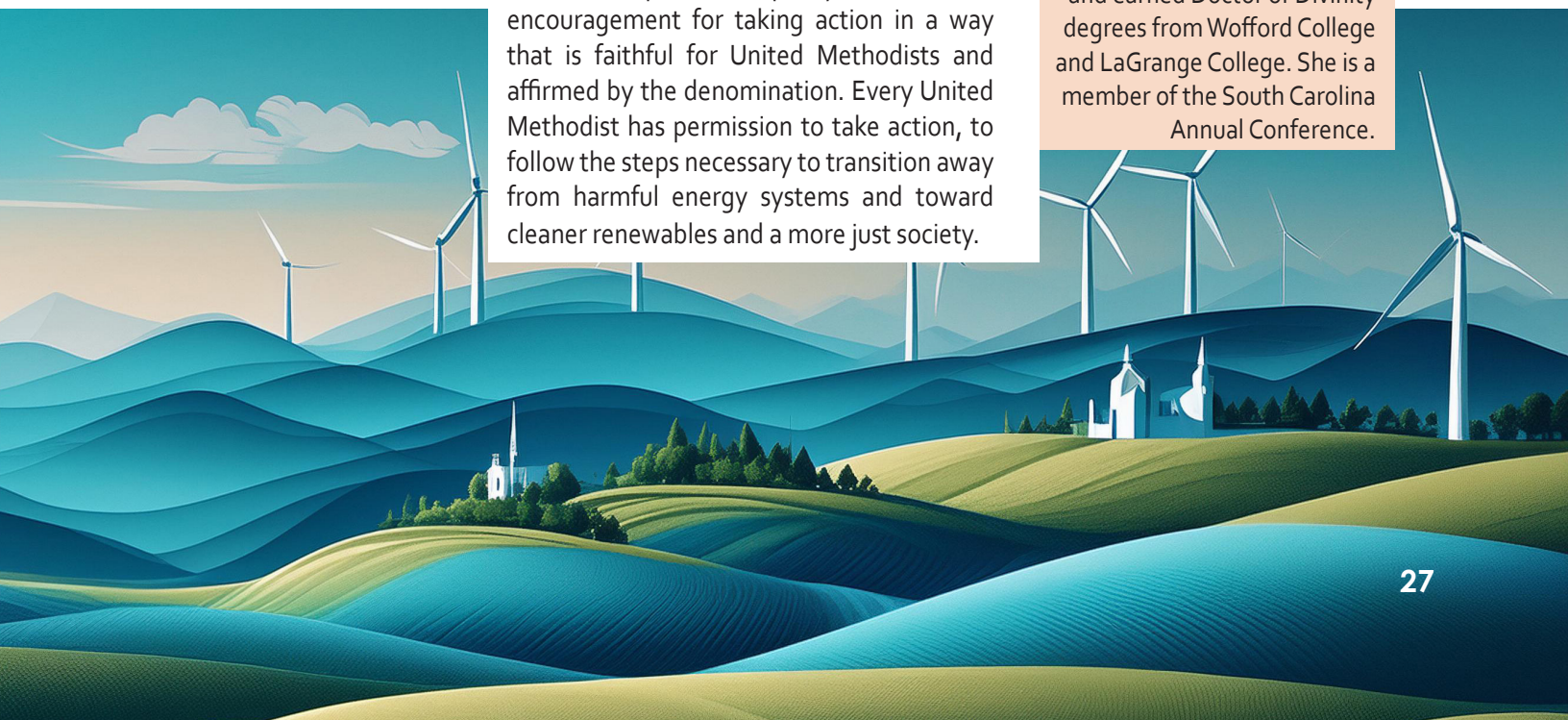
The first part of the revised United Methodist Energy Policy establishes the imperatives we face as we grapple with the harms of our current energy system. In this chapter, we turn to the second half, which lays out a road map as to how United Methodists might be part of the solution moving forward. In 12 points, the policy asserts the importance of energy conservation, efficiency, and a rapid transition to a clean, renewable, and equitable energy system. It asserts the value of local solutions, the imperative of local voices, and the invitation that United Methodists can be exemplars in their churches and communities.

THE GOAL OF THIS LEGISLATION:

This second part of the policy offers a lot of encouragement for taking action in a way that is faithful for United Methodists and affirmed by the denomination. Every United Methodist has permission to take action, to follow the steps necessary to transition away from harmful energy systems and toward cleaner renewables and a more just society.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

This legislation was submitted by Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, for General Board of Church and Society. Rev. Henry-Crowe retired in 2022 after serving 49 years in ministry, including serving as Executive Director for the General Board of Church and Society since 2014. She served the local church from 1976 – 1985, then as Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life at Emory University, as well as on the United Methodist Judicial Council. She earned a Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology and earned Doctor of Divinity degrees from Wofford College and LaGrange College. She is a member of the South Carolina Annual Conference.



Reflection

QUESTIONS:

1. At the turn of the last century, around the 1900s, oil was called black gold. If you somehow managed to strike oil on your property, you'd be rich! Now, in 2024, most everyone agrees that fossil fuels, and the manner in which they were pursued, is an ongoing disaster for the planet. Today, many countries are trying to stop new drilling as we now know the harm it causes. Has your community been affected by drilling or fracking? What have you heard about from other regions?
2. In thinking of the impacts from oil drilling or fracking that communities have experienced, what might the Christian response be? What actions might United Methodists take to support those who are dealing with legacy pollution, or living in sacrifice zones?

READ PHILIPPIANS, right, and read the reflection, below. Share the questions, left, together.

Following the Luke reading for the last chapter, this reading from Philippians may feel like too big a reading to bring alongside a policy discussion. When you think about it, though, policy is hugely impactful to how we live our lives. The challenges that drive policy deserve the full attention of our faith.

In this reading, the Apostle, teacher, and tentmaker Paul is addressing the church at Philippi. During these early years following Jesus's crucifixion, different groups had different, often competing, ideas. There was disagreement about who Jesus was and what it meant to be a Christ-believer.

Paul acknowledges there are different ideas. He speaks of his impatience for some who may not be acting in the best interests of others, calling them "jealous" with "selfish ambition." He praises others whose teachings are instead "motivated by love" (Philippians 1:13-14).

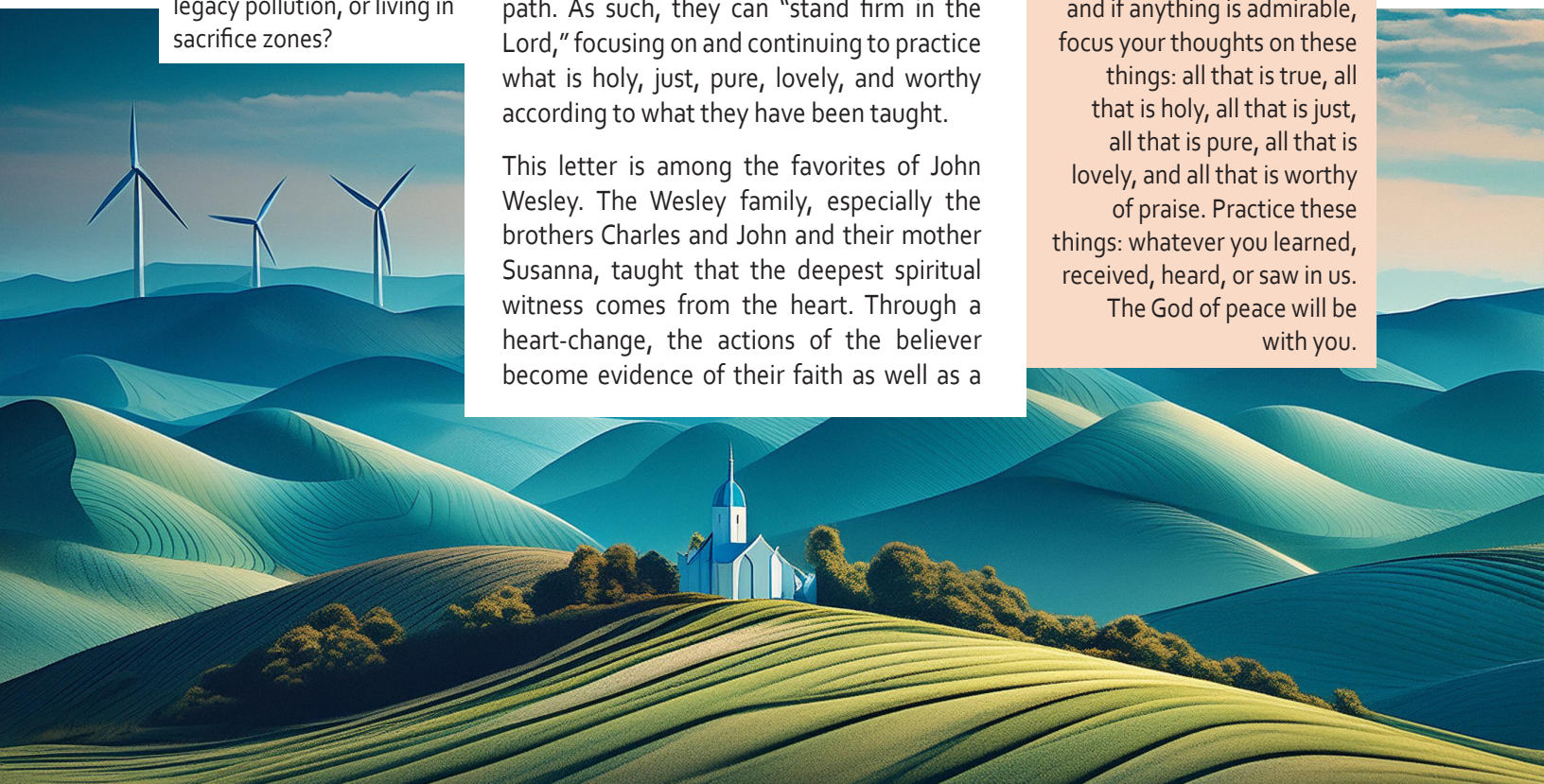
Importantly, he reassures the Philippians that they are a vibrant church on a faithful path. As such, they can "stand firm in the Lord," focusing on and continuing to practice what is holy, just, pure, lovely, and worthy according to what they have been taught.

This letter is among the favorites of John Wesley. The Wesley family, especially the brothers Charles and John and their mother Susanna, taught that the deepest spiritual witness comes from the heart. Through a heart-change, the actions of the believer become evidence of their faith as well as a

PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21, 4:1, 8-9

Brothers and sisters, become imitators of me and watch those who live this way—you can use us as models. As I have told you many times and now say with deep sadness, many people live as enemies of the cross. Their lives end with destruction. Their god is their stomach, and they take pride in their disgrace because their thoughts focus on earthly things. Our citizenship is in heaven. We look forward to a savior that comes from there—the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform our humble bodies so that they are like his glorious body, by the power that also makes him able to subject all things to himself.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters whom I love and miss, who are my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord. From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us. The God of peace will be with you.



witness for others to see. The Christian commitment is not only about prayer and worship, but also to learn, grow, and seek completeness—or perfection—in Christ.

In addition to the letter, Paul is sending the Philippians teachers to support them, telling them that as they learn, they can model themselves after Paul and the teachers he will send. He tells them, “Live together in a manner worthy of Christ’s good news,” and be an example for others.

In this time of climate change, the Christian call to take action comes rooted in our traditions. The suffering of the planet, the destruction of communities, and the threat to God’s creation is all too present.

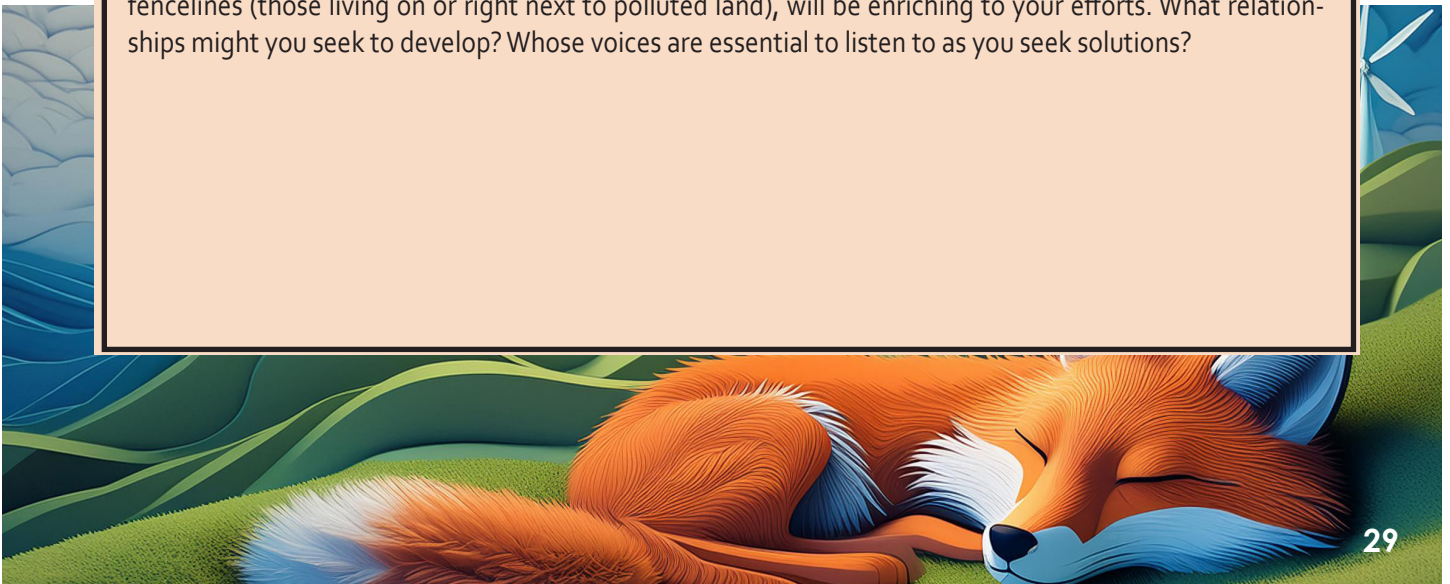
As Christian people, our example matters. Our humility and courage matter. Lifting up our community matters. Serving our neighbor matters. And addressing the peril of climate change is excellent and admirable action that we can take standing firmly in the good news of Jesus Christ.

Brainstorming

The second half of the reading, Philippians 4:1, 8-9 is beautiful writing. But what does it mean to “focus” on “all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy” when we are talking about our planet and net zero? What are the “just,” “worthy,” and “lovely” things about your church and community? For example, clean water for baptism, fresh air for the church playground, and nutritious food to share in fellowship. How will net zero help preserve or transform those things?

Partners

Net zero is an effort of every local church. Yet it is so much bigger than that! As you brainstorm about the benefits of achieving net zero for your church, think also of how important it is that solutions benefit others, as well. Conversations with others, especially people on the frontlines (hurt “first and worst”) and fencelines (those living on or right next to polluted land), will be enriching to your efforts. What relationships might you seek to develop? Whose voices are essential to listen to as you seek solutions?



Discipleship as Learnership

A disciple is a learner. Those who followed Jesus were amazed by the new things Jesus taught them. Jesus's on-the-ground leadership revealed for his followers faithful ways to seek the kingdom and kin-dom of God. Jesus asked his disciples and followers to watch and learn what a faithful life looked like. In response to questions, Jesus mentioned core teachings including the greatest commandment: to love God and neighbor. Daily life has changed since Jesus's time. Yet the importance of a just and sustainable life, a life of wellbeing, with love of God and neighbor is still the faithful path.

The revised United Methodist Energy Policy comes at a time of urgency. The policy names our energy system as it exists: fossil fuels, fracking, biomass, hydroelectric, nuclear, solar, and wind. It urges United Methodists to look both inwardly and outwardly to learn more about these different ways energy is produced. From this learning, it asks us to further look at what impacts our energy choices have on the planet and our neighbor. How do our actions toward sustainability demonstrate our love for the Creator, so that we may be examples of God's love.

Next Steps

The Energy Policy ends in an exhortation—which is very Methodist! The final paragraph asks that local church congregations engage in serious study to better understand issues of energy, sustainability, and faith, as well as how consumer choices can worsen the crisis. What next steps could you take in your church to engage this kind of study? Perhaps by inviting speakers to your church or district, or engaging Global Ministries or UWFaith initiatives, and prioritizing these activities as urgent and important work of the church.

Prayer: *Sustaining God, we seek to be your disciples. We read the Scriptures and raise our prayers so that we might know you better, so that we may walk with justice and righteousness, so that we may be an example of what it means to live a life in Christ. We seek your kingdom, a kin-dom of community you created to include all living things on this good earth. Help us be the stewards you created us to be. Help us learn from each other and achieve net zero. Amen.*





“Manna from Heaven”—Finding Funding & Support

With the urgency of the climate crisis every day more evident, the need to mobilize to prevent worse harm comes clearly into view. Yet, even as churches seek to be good stewards of the Earth, so also must they practice good stewardship of congregational finances and donations.

Everywhere, churches are finding a way to do both. People of faith are all about salvation—and, as we have been saved, so also did Christ reconcile the creation to himself. When we act to save life, preserve nature, strengthen communities, and love our neighbor, these are all acts of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ.

An inspirational story of faith and funding comes from the Mountain Sky Conference’s Creation Justice Task Force. Members of local church green teams seized an opportunity to apply for a Department of Energy RAN (Renew America’s Nonprofits) Grant. Their efforts culminated in a grant award of \$5.87 million dollars.

This grant means hundreds of churches in Wyoming, Utah, Montana, Idaho, and Colorado could be sub-recipients and receive part of this RAN Grant award, up to \$200,000 per church for energy efficiency upgrades.

Jay Vestal is one of those at the center of the excitement and activity. He is a UM EarthKeeper, serves on the Mountain Sky Conference Creation Justice Task Force, and now chairs the Mountain Sky RAN Grant Team.

Vestal is no stranger to leadership in the church. He has served just about every possible committee, and also as lay leader. In 2009, he worked with a team

in his home church, Christ UMC in Salt Lake City, Utah, to install 21 kW—99 solar panels—on the church roof. To support the installation, Vestal and his green team were awarded a \$60,000 Blue Sky Grant from their local utility.

The installation saves the congregation about \$800 a month in utility costs, money they use to support other ministries, such as Family Promise, a ministry of the church that provides emergency housing to families experiencing homelessness, as well as to refugees from Venezuela and Ukraine.

The solar project went so well, the church added two EV chargers in the parking lot. These chargers, says Vestal, “are available to the community for free. We have a QR code on the sign outside that says, ‘If you want to support the Creation Justice efforts of Christ United Methodist, use the QR code and make a donation.’”

Vestal sees the projects as outreach to the community. As with the solar installation, they found grants, also, for the chargers. They received a 50% match of the cost for the EV charger installation from the Utah Department of Air Quality and other donations.

All of this to say that Vestal wants churches to know there is money available, “manna from heaven” he says, and funding in support of efficiency and clean energy projects.

The RAN Grant is an even bigger project involving potentially hundreds of churches. RAN Grants come from \$45 million dollars allocated to the Department of Energy from the Inflation Reduction Act. RAN Grants are distributed by Prime Grant recipient



“Manna from Heaven,” cont.

organizations. These organizations then take that money and award it to sub-recipients, including nonprofits and churches in specific geographical areas.

On hearing about Renew America’s Nonprofits program, there was a felt urgency among the members of the Mountain Sky Creation Justice Task Force.

What happened next came from both inspiration and initiative. Says Vestal, “Literally, a couple of the guys on the Task Force who live in the Denver area drove up to the University of Colorado and sat down with a professor there who directs the graduate engineering program.” They told him, “We think you should apply for a grant as a prime recipient and make the Mountain Sky Conference one of your partners.’ And he did.”

The University of Colorado was awarded \$5.87 million dollars overall, money that will go to qualifying sub-recipients. Mountain Sky Conference churches now may apply for federal grants up to \$200,000 to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings.

The next step is getting that money out the door to fund and support local churches. Says Vestal, “The University will be reviewing applications from churches and other nonprofits that can reduce their energy use by at least 30% or better by replacing an old gas boiler, for example, with a new heat pump or something like that.”

Churches may receive awards that will cover 80% of the project cost. The other 20% must be raised locally. For some smaller churches, this might seem daunting. Yet even this is doable. Everyone is learning together how best to make this happen.

Partners include the Mountain Sky faith foundation, Methodists Helping Methodists. The foundation is actively working with churches to offer bridge loans and other financial support and encouragement.

Vestal is quick to tell churches to “seize the opportunity.” Says Vestal, “If we can get churches to get some of these grants, that’s money that they’re not burning up a flue. It can be put to missional outreach efforts.”

Most importantly, this is a matter of faith. “I’m now a grandfather,” says Vestal. “I raised my kids here in Salt Lake City enjoying the outdoors and all the beauty of creation. ... I was hiking last Thursday night and came right up on a moose. You know, stuff like that is meaningful to me, and I hope my own grandchildren will be able to enjoy it.”

In seeking to preserve nature and God’s creation, the climate crisis is on Vestal’s mind. “There are huge issues right now with climate change.... We’re trying to live out our faith through actions that we can take.”

The effort is important, and absolutely worth it. Says Vestal, “This has been so satisfying, working with others on our RAN Grant Team, most of whom I’ve never met in person. But it’s a great bunch of volunteer lay members who all are committed.”

And the benefit for the local church is clear, “If a church puts in a new HVAC system or they take those single pane windows and make them energy efficient, think of all the money that they’re going to save and can put into serving others. That’s what we want everybody to be doing.”

FIVE

Rolling It Out

LEGISLATION TITLE:

Recognizing United Methodist Support for Global Green New Deal Initiatives and Legislative Efforts

VOTE COUNT!

This legislation passed with overwhelming approval both in committee, and in Plenary, at the 2024 General Conference:

Committee approval: 34
to 3

Plenary Approval:
686 to 36

LEGISLATION SUMMARY:

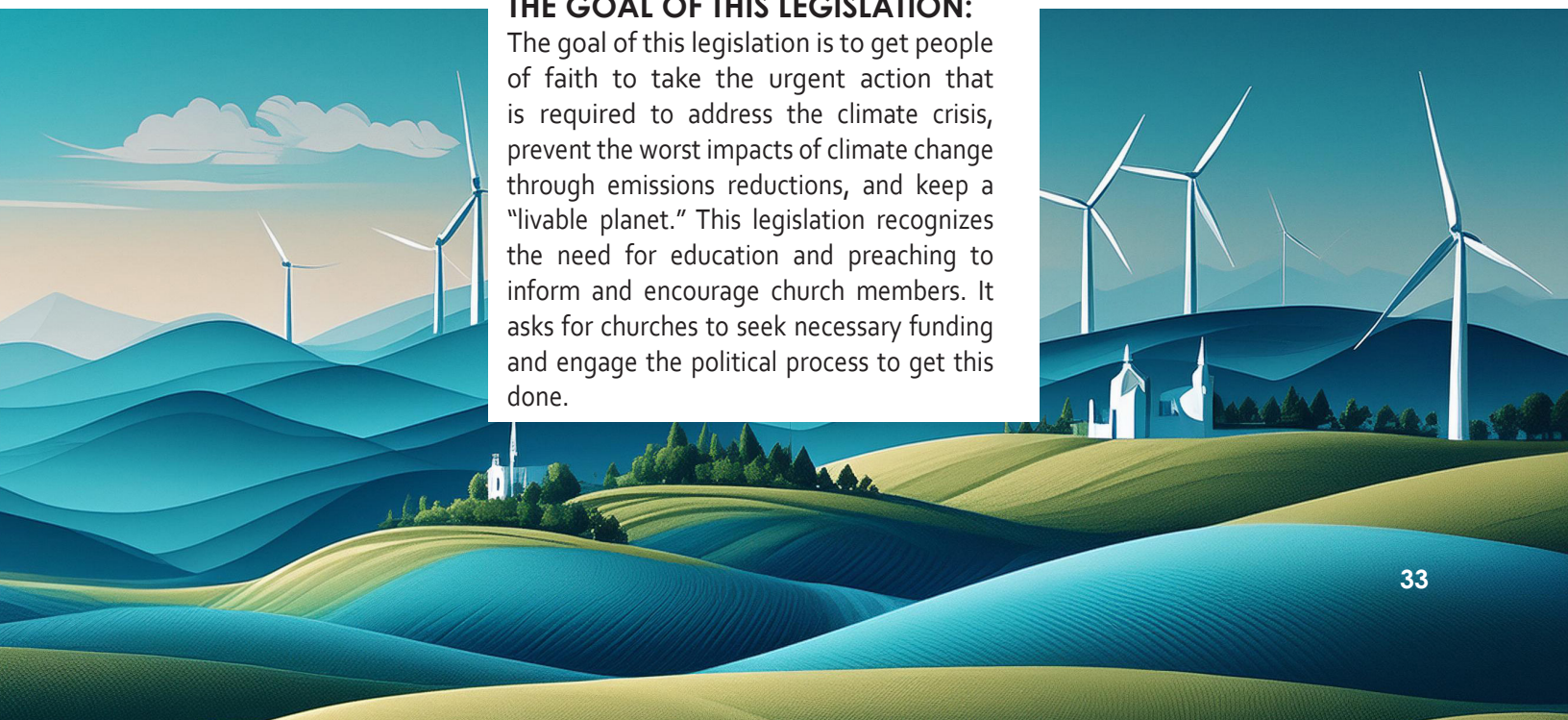
This legislation asks United Methodists to mobilize to achieve net zero to benefit the US and the world. Elements of this legislation include a just energy transition, political engagement, and participation in a national effort to establish a green economy. For the church this means mobilization at every level ensuring the transition is a just one. It also asks the church to preach and teach about why carbon neutrality is urgent and belongs at the forefront of church ministry. This mobilization would have similarities to the proposed "Green New Deal." At its heart, the Green New Deal was about getting transitional financial and other resources directly to consumers and organizations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

This legislation was submitted by Ian Urriola. Pastor Ian Urriola serves as Associate Pastor at Burnt Hills United Methodist Church in Burnt Hills, New York. He has worked as Director of Spiritual Development at Shenandoah University in Virginia and in youth ministry. He served as reserve delegate at the 2016 General Conference and as a lay delegate at the 2019 and 2024 General Conferences. He is a member of the Upper New York Annual Conference.

THE GOAL OF THIS LEGISLATION:

The goal of this legislation is to get people of faith to take the urgent action that is required to address the climate crisis, prevent the worst impacts of climate change through emissions reductions, and keep a "livable planet." This legislation recognizes the need for education and preaching to inform and encourage church members. It asks for churches to seek necessary funding and engage the political process to get this done.



Reflection

QUESTIONS:

1. The Isaiah passage tells us something big is happening, something that will change the future in a way that can only be imagined. Transitions are both exciting and nerve-wracking. Like when a child is born, or when two people get married, or a new job, or any time you step out in faith. Can you think of a time when you experienced a big transition in your life, a transition that had many moving parts? Perhaps something that led to good things, yet had challenges, even big challenges? When you started, you may not have been able to imagine how it might end up. Can you think of such a time in your life?

2. When you reflect on that time of transition you thought of in question #1, above, where did you see Christ as part of that experience? Finding Christ in challenging times can be so helpful to steady and reassure us. Looking now to the challenges we face with rising global emissions and the need to mobilize for net zero, where do you see God in this?

READ ISAIAH, right, and read the reflection, below. Share the questions, left, together.

This section from the book of the Prophet Isaiah is often read during Lent. When read from the Christian perspective, it serves as a foretelling of the life-giving good news of the coming Christ. It serves also as a prayerful remembrance of the passion and crucifixion of Jesus.

This passage tells of a God in the midst of doing something new. This new thing is unsettling in that it is not yet known. Yet it will “spread out.” It will lead to a “new song” It will be a continuation of the love of God generation after generation on this Earth.

This new thing, Isaiah tells us, is not yet mapped. It does not come in a neat outline with diagrams. It is being created even as new songs are sung, and the map unfolds. It will impact every person. We are all held in the hands of God.

It will also be a work of justice. It will free the prisoners and throw down idols. It will open the eyes of those who have been blinded or refuse to see. It will transform the faithful with light, so they may be a beacon to all life.

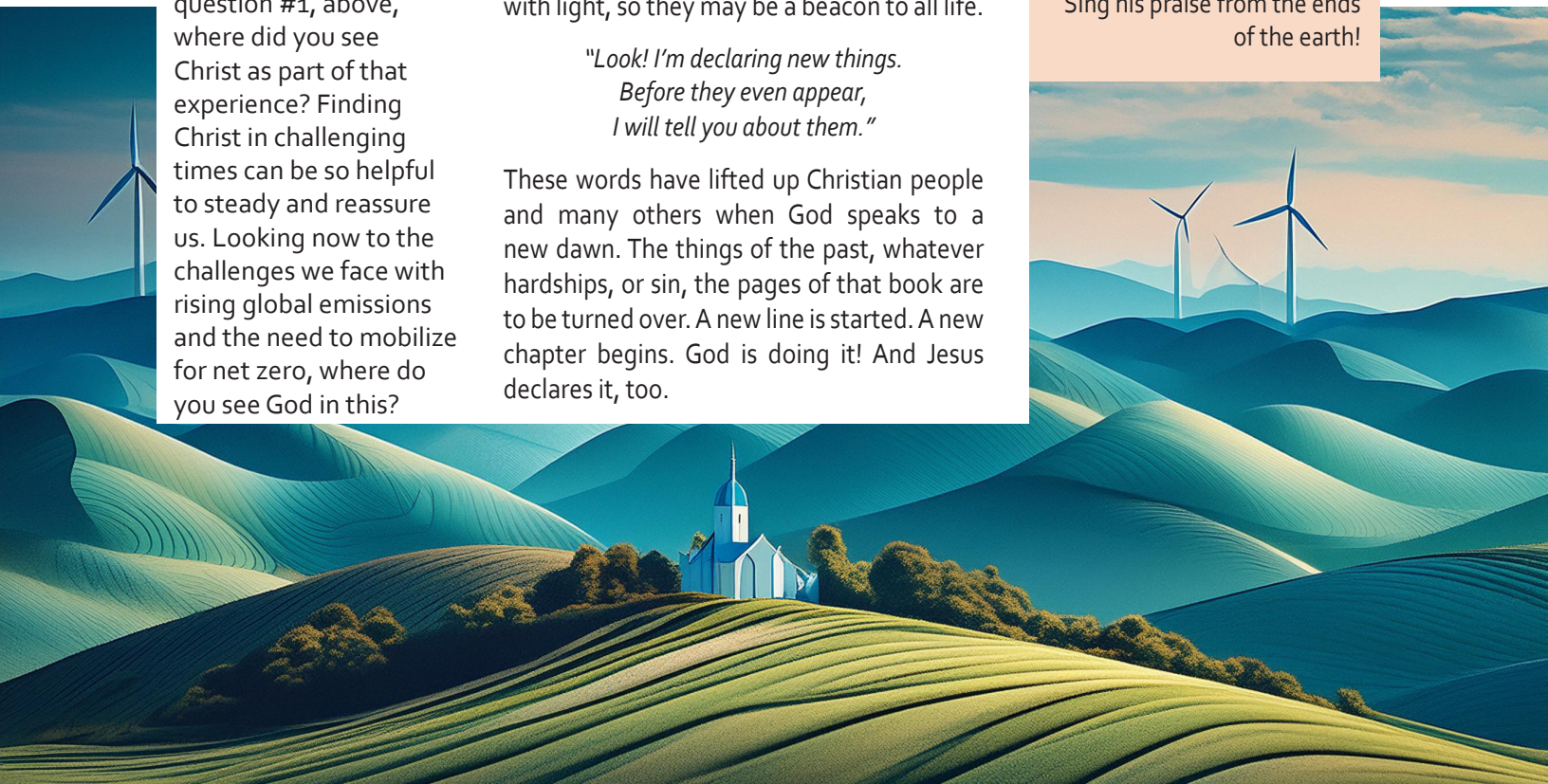
*“Look! I’m declaring new things.
Before they even appear,
I will tell you about them.”*

These words have lifted up Christian people and many others when God speaks to a new dawn. The things of the past, whatever hardships, or sin, the pages of that book are to be turned over. A new line is started. A new chapter begins. God is doing it! And Jesus declares it, too.

ISAIAH 42:5-10

God the Lord says—
the one who created
the heavens, the one who
stretched them out,
the one who spread out the
earth and its offspring,
the one who gave breath
to its people and life to those
who walk on it—
I, the Lord, have called you
for a good reason. I will grasp
your hand and guard you,
and give you as a covenant
to the people, as a light to the
nations, to open blind eyes, to
lead the prisoners from prison,
and those who sit in
darkness from the dungeon.
I am the Lord; that is my
name; I don’t hand out my
glory to others or my praise to
idols. The things announced
in the past—look—they’ve
already happened, but I’m
declaring new things.
Before they even appear,
I tell you about them.

Sing to the Lord a new song!
Sing his praise from the ends
of the earth!



Since Isaiah wrote these words, there have been many chapters added to our Good Book, chapters that tell of the divine in stories that have affected humans and habitats on this Earth. These stories tell us what happened. They hint at what is to come. And we know in the great work of God that new stories are yet to come.

In times of change, Jonah served reluctantly; Noah served with determination; Abraham left Ur to cross to Canaan; Moses left Egypt to cross a desert; and the apostles, one by one, followed Jesus who told them, "I am doing something new."

We are in a time of great urgency. We are being called to stride forward without a GPS. We do not know how it will turn out. Yet, we *do* know that we must act. We must follow this path of justice. We must do it for ourselves, our neighbors, our children, and for future generations. We are building solar and planting trees so that future generations can breathe and know life.

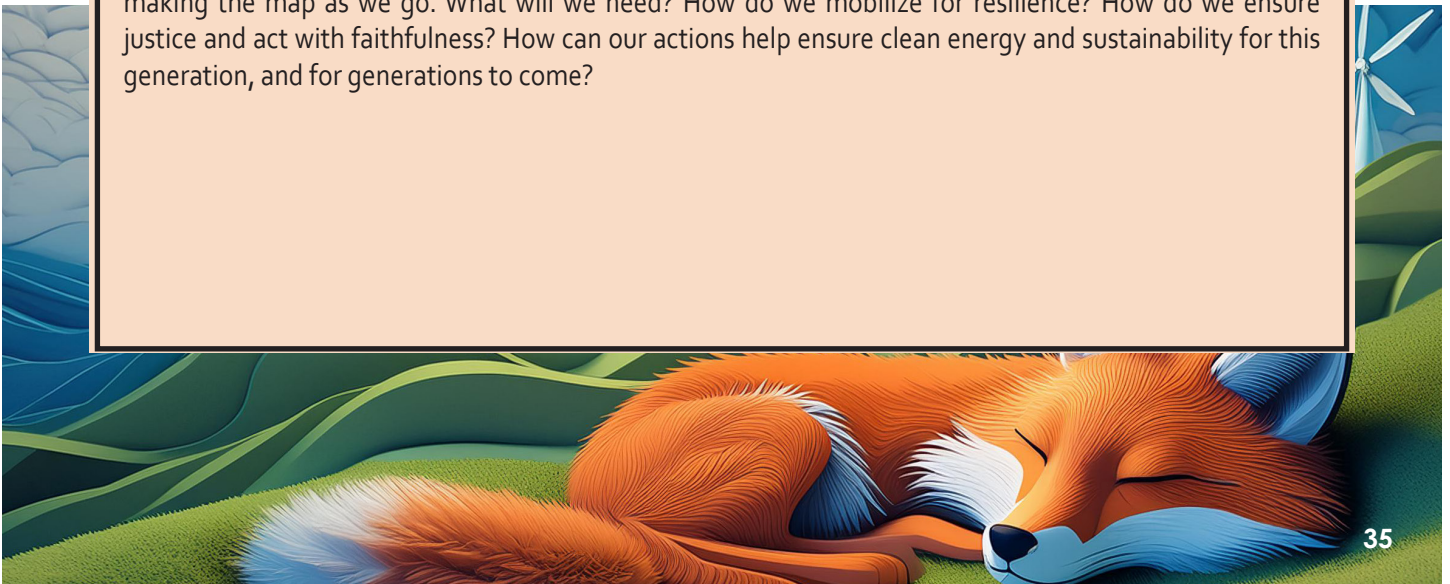
And, though we cannot see the outcome, we are not alone. As we transform our energy systems and usher in a long-awaited justice, we do that with God guarding us, encouraging us, and leading us.

Brainstorming

Think about what mobilizations there have been in the past. For instance, when there is a natural disaster (or unnatural climate impact) Disaster Ministries and UMCOR mobilize the faithful to address health and wellbeing, pass out water, supply batteries, food, clothing, whatever is needed. The mobilization includes worship, prayer, offering, listening, and raising voices to God in lament, praise, and hope. Churches know how to mobilize! Brainstorm in this space what a church mobilization looks like when there is a disaster.

Map Making

In this section, build on your brainstorming, above, where you reflected on the efforts of your church and church members in responding to disaster by mobilizing resources for relief. In these instances, there is usually a manual. Now think of the mobilization for net zero. Even as we begin, we will be mapmakers, making the map as we go. What will we need? How do we mobilize for resilience? How do we ensure justice and act with faithfulness? How can our actions help ensure clean energy and sustainability for this generation, and for generations to come?



Next Steps

Reflect on the brainstorming work of the previous page. It may feel like there are so many things to note or consider that the brainstorming boxes are crammed full of notes. Or, it might have felt overwhelming and confusing, and you were not sure exactly what to write. Remember, though, the words of Isaiah: We are mobilizing even before the new thing appears! God will show us the way. For now, the good news is even the most complex journey begins with a single step. Below, write 1 – 3 things that you can do right now to begin.

What do you need?

Reflect on the last few sections of this chapter once more. Look at the brainstorming exercises, then look at the 1 – 3 items you have listed that can be a beginning. Take a few moments to write down what you will need to make this beginning happen. What will need to be done? You might note a need to connect with your conference or city council. You might want to talk to your pastor, trustees, or district chapter of UWFaith. You may need more information or more funding. What do you need to make a beginning as you begin to make a map to net zero?

Prayer: *God of ages. Almighty God who made the beginning and the end of all things. Lord of seasons, of cycles, of wheels that turn, and fruit that seeds, sprouts, grows, and ripens. Your goodness surpasses all understanding. Your ways are unfathomable. You called to Abraham, to Jonah, to Noah, to Moses and here we are, standing steady in praise of you. Triune God, in the person of Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit, you transformed the whole creation! Net zero is a small thing to you. Justice is everything to you. Strengthen us as we mobilize for the work we are called to in this age. Bless us as we plant trees and electrify our churches. Let us be a light for all to see. By your holy name and in your love, we praise your name. Amen.*





Conclusion: Resources for What's Next

When it comes to faith-based conversations about climate change and net-zero aspirations, often there are three things that bubble up:

One is the anxiety we feel when we have conversations about climate change.

Another is the sense of being overwhelmed. The magnitude of the effort will not be a small one as we address emissions in our churches, our homes, and our lives.

The third is hope. There is so much to be hopeful for! And as churches turn their faith to action and solutions, that hope is rising. We can do this.

Some resources to consider:

The United Methodist Creation Justice Movement has recommended books to read with a group to help support these hard conversations. These recommendations include:

Earth & Soul: Reconnecting Amid Climate Chaos, by Leah Rampy. Check out the Movement Café at umcreationjustice.org where Leah Rampy joined the conversation and offered her support for book studies.

Life After Doom, by Brian McLaren. McLaren has been listening to the conversations around him and brings that conversation to people of faith in this recommended book.

The Future We Choose: The Stubborn Optimist's Guide to the Climate Crisis, by Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac. Figueres was Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) from 2010-2016. She

was the key negotiator in the historic Paris Agreement of 2015. Both she and her co-writer have engaging TED Talks.

All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis, by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson. This book lifts up the voices of 60 women speaking and working in the climate movement.

Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World by Climate Scientist and Evangelical Christian Katharine Hayhoe. Hayhoe's voice in both faith and everyday settings has inspired many to tell their stories and learn what can be done.

Connecting with others:

This work is work that must be done together. Yes, we have personal choices to make. Yet we also need support systems and supportive infrastructure and projects to ensure we are all moving together toward sustainable goals.

Perhaps your church has not yet begun. Or maybe your church green team is already raising a solar roof! Wherever you are on the path to net zero you are not alone.

Check out the Newsletter, Creation Justice Tips, and Movement Café at the umcreationjustice.org to learn what is happening in the denomination. Get inspired. Find folks to pray, brainstorm, and take action with.

Worship together:

Yes, there is the roll-up-your-sleeve type work to be done. Yet even as we



What's Next, cont.

are creatures of aptitude and capacity, we are also God's children, and God calls us to times of both worship and of sabbath.

The UMCJM has a worship team that has developed materials over the last few years to be freely shared, including complete Eastertide and Season of Creation worship series. See the resource pages at umcreationjustice.org/library.

On those same pages, you can also find worshipful hymns, readings, and other materials, including a booklet of prayers, *Prayers for the Earth and God's People*, with contributors from across the denomination.

As part of the of Creation series for 2024 is a five-week study guide that accompanies the teachings each week. This guide can also be used as a standalone study for groups, or alongside the series. Find that, too, on the umcreationjustice.org resources page.

Keep in touch:

Connect with the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement. The Movement includes a monthly Movement Café, many blogs, articles, newsletters, and working teams for inspiration and support.

Consider training as a United Methodist EarthKeeper through United Methodist Global Ministries.

Connect with your local church or annual conference green team or creation justice task force. Find out who is the Caretakers of God's Creation

Coordinator in your conference.

Consider also connecting with me on my free substack at JustCreation.org.

General Conference legislative study guides

This guide is one of a three-part series, all dealing with creation justice in the local church and annual conference, and all pertaining to the creation justice legislation passed at the 2024 General Conference. The three guides are:

Creation Justice Legislation at General Conference 2024 Study Guide.

Net Zero Legislation at General Conference 2024 Study Guide.

Divestment and Fossil Free UMC at General Conference 2024 Study Guide. (upcoming)

If you haven't already, download these from the umcreationjustice.org resources page.



Appendix

Legislation—Full Text

Commitment to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Whereas God created Earth and charged humankind with its stewardship (Gen 1-2);

Whereas we have failed in that task by despoiling our planet, degrading its environment, altering its climate, and destroying its habitability;

Whereas “without God, we cannot remedy the problem” and “without us, God will not solve it” (St Augustine);

Whereas the Council of Bishops in their 2009 Pastoral Letter [God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action] recognized that “our neglect, selfishness, and pride have fostered environmental degradation” and that “we cannot help the world until we change our way of being in it”;

Whereas twelve boards and agencies of the UMC have pledged to achieve net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 across ministries, facilities, operations, and investments and to leverage the gifts of our connection putting equity and justice at the center as we build a net-zero emission economy by 2050]; and

Whereas the Council of Bishops has joined in that pledge.

Therefore, be it resolved, that

we the people and churches of The United Methodist Church, confess our failure to properly steward God’s earth;

Ask for God’s help in restoring Creation; and

Support our Bishops, Boards, Agencies, and Commissions in committing to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Annual Carbon Footprint and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Audit for Local Church

Add new subparagraph to ¶2533 after ¶2533.6.

7. The board of trustees is urged to conduct or cause to be conducted an annual carbon footprint and/or greenhouse gas emissions audit of their buildings, grounds, and facilities to discover and identify what physical, architectural, and communication barriers exist that impede the church from being at least carbon neutral and/or having at least net zero greenhouse gas emissions and make plans and determine priorities for the elimination of such barriers. This audit for churches may be used in filling out the annual church and/or charge conference reports.

Reporting Church’s Progress on Facilities Becoming Carbon Neutral and/or Having Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Add new subparagraph to ¶2550 after ¶2550.10.

11. An evaluation of all church buildings, grounds, and facilities in relation to their impact on the church’s ability to be carbon neutral and/or have net zero greenhouse gas emissions; and, when applicable, a plan and time line for the renovation and development of church buildings, grounds, and facilities to bring the church closer to being at least carbon neutral and/or having at least net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Recognizing United Methodist Support for Global Green New Deal Initiatives and Legislative Efforts

Add new Resolution #NEW to “The Natural World” Recognizing United Methodist Support for Global Green New Deal Initiatives and Legislative Efforts



Appendix, cont.

WHEREAS, the October 2018 report entitled “Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the November 2018 Fourth National Climate Assessment report found that—

1. human activity is the dominant cause of observed climate change over the past century;
2. a changing climate is causing sea levels to rise and an increase in wildfires, severe storms, droughts, and other extreme weather events that threaten human life, healthy communities, and critical infrastructure;
3. global warming at or above 2 degrees Celsius beyond pre-industrialized levels will cause—

- a. mass migration from the regions most affected by climate change;
- b. a loss of more than 99 percent of all coral reefs on Earth;
- c. a projected increase in hot days in most land regions, with the highest increases in the tropics;
- d. a higher risk from extreme weather-related events on a global scale;
- e. a higher risk from sea level rise and its amplified exposure on small islands, low-lying coastal areas and deltas;
- f. an increased risk for species loss and extinction and its subsequent

impact on biodiversity and ecosystems;

- g. an increased negative impact on global human populations that are already disadvantaged and vulnerable, including but not limited to indigenous populations, the global poor, and local communities dependent on agricultural or coastal livelihoods;
- h. an increased negative impact on human health, including but not limited to heat-related morbidity and mortality, ozone-related mortality, vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, and amplified adverse impacts of heat waves in cities;
- i. an increased risk to global aggregated economic growth due to climate change impacts;
- j. an increased exposure to multiple and compound climate-related risks across energy, food, and water sectors with greater proportions of people both so exposed and susceptible to poverty in Africa and Asia; and

4. global temperature increases must be kept below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrialized levels to avoid the most severe impacts of a changing climate, which will require—

- a. global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from human sources of 40 to 60 percent from 2010 levels by 2030; and
- b. net-zero global emissions by 2050;

WHEREAS, reversing these troubling trends will require broad cooperation on a global scale between institutions, governments, businesses, and individuals;

WHEREAS, the command of Scripture is clear: we are called to take care of God’s creation (Genesis 2:15);

WHEREAS, the people of The United Methodist Church affirm that—

1. “all creation is the Lord’s and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it” (§ 160, preamble, of *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church);
2. “water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, [and] animal life . . . are to be valued and conserved because they are God’s creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings” (§ 160, preamble, of *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church); and
3. the church and its members have a responsibility to “place a high priority on changes in economic, political,



Appendix, cont.

social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation" (§ 160, preamble, of *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church);

Therefore, be it resolved, that the people of The United Methodist Church wholeheartedly support legislative and policy efforts by governments around the world akin to the "Green New Deal" in the United States of America, and call upon all world leaders to create plans for the world to be carbon neutral;

Be it further resolved, that the people of The United Methodist Church call on global leaders and policy makers, especially those in the "Western" and "developed" world, which have historically led the world in greenhouse gas emissions, to take steps that will drastically reduce their nation's greenhouse gas emissions, up to and beyond net-zero, in a manner that is compassionate toward the most disadvantaged and impoverished populations in their countries and reduces income and wealth inequality;

Be it further resolved, that the people of The United Methodist Church call on every level of its

denominational polity to lead the way in this effort by—

1. striving continuously to reduce the carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions of local churches, districts, annual conferences, jurisdictions, central conferences, and general boards and agencies and their respective ministries up to and beyond carbon neutral and net zero, respectively; and

2. placing climate justice, and the ways in which climate justice intersects with every other systemic justice-related issue, at the forefront of their preaching, teaching, and programmatic ministries.

Revised Energy Policy Statement

Humankind enjoys a unique place in God's universe. We are created in the very image of God, with the divine Spirit breathed into us, and entrusted to "take charge of" God's creation (Genesis 2:7; 1:26, 28; see Psalm 8:6). Yet, we are simply one of God's many finite creatures, made from the "topsoil of the fertile land," bound in time and space, fallible in judgment, limited in control, dependent upon our Creator, and interdependent with all other creatures. We are

simultaneously caretakers with all creation and, because of the divine summons, caretakers with God of the world in which we live. And as a reflection of our church's global connection, our United Methodist values are rooted in our common faith and shaped by the diverse contexts and circumstances in which we live.

The Values Involved in Energy Policy

The decisions that humans make will either enhance or degrade the quality of life on the planet. We live in an era of energy interdependence. Confronting global issues such as climate change, energy inequity, and pollution will require local, national, and international solutions based upon the values of justice and sustainability.

Scripture provides an imperative for our action and lays the foundation for the values that we seek to realize. These values underlying the policies we advocate are justice and sustainability.

1. Justice. As God's covenant people, with Noah, Abraham, Jacob and the prophets, we bear a special responsibility for justice. "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24) is a cry echoed in hundreds of contexts throughout the Old and New Testaments. Biblical righteousness includes a special



Appendix, cont.

concern for the least and the last: the poor, the prisoner, the oppressed (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1-2). As people of the Christian covenant, we support energy policies that seek to actualize the multifaceted biblical vision of justice. Just energy policies: close the gap dividing wealth and poverty, rich nations and poor; liberate and do not oppress; fairly distribute the benefits, burdens, and hazards of energy production and consumption, taking into consideration the living and those not yet born; and give priority to meeting basic human needs such as air, water, food, clothing, and shelter.

2. Sustainability. We recognize that creation entails limits to the resources entrusted to us as stewards of the earth. While God has created an economy of abundance with sufficient resources to meet all human need, our inclinations toward greed and overuse too often have transformed sufficiency into scarcity. In addition, we recognize limits to nonrenewable fuel sources available for our consumption and limits to our environment's capacity to absorb poisonous wastes. Energy policy decisions must be measured by sustainability as a criterion in addition to justice. In terms of energy policy, sustainability means harnessing, extracting, utilizing, and disposing of the byproducts of energy sources that will: ensure adequate resources

and opportunity for present and future generations to enjoy a healthy quality of life; enhance local environmental and economic vitality while minimizing impacts on the health of both human and non-human creation; and promote social and intergenerational equity.

Technological advances have created an increasingly sophisticated and industrialized world community. As we pursue an energy policy that is just and sustainable, it is not a realistic option to ask all global citizens to return to an era where wood and candles provided the only sources of heat and light. Also, we should be aware of the tragic effects that steadily increasing energy costs will have, especially upon the aged and those living in poverty. Furthermore, some cleaner energy options available to wealthier nations are not available to peoples in all parts of the world; hence, we should endeavor to develop just and equitable energy policies. We must creatively explore all sustainable energy options available to us. There are environmental and social problems connected with certain energy options. We believe that the economic, environmental, and social implications of each energy source should be fully assessed.

Today, the leading source of global energy consumption is fossil fuels including oil,

coal, and natural gas. From extraction to end use, the life cycle of energy produced from fossil fuels has led to severe strain on both the local and global environment. Underground mining of coal, in addition to operational accidents, causes disabling illness or death from black lung. Strip mining and mountaintop removal despoil lands and ruin them for further use if restoration measures are not practiced. Hydraulic fracturing, commonly called "fracking," has opened vast new deposits of oil and gas for exploration but with serious consequences for communities' water quality and geological stability. Deep sea extraction presents consequences and risks we do not yet fully understand, including destruction of aquatic ecosystems and pollution from leaks and spills. The burning of fossil fuels causes large-scale pollution and seriously alters the environment by increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

In addition to fueling regional instability, the use of oil resources poses significant environmental dangers. Tankers and offshore wells have created spills that have devastated seacoast areas often with long-lasting or permanent ecological damage. The emissions produced from the use of oil as fuel are a leading source of air pollution, particularly in centers



Appendix, cont.

of dense population.

Hydroelectric dams, particularly those in areas with considerable seismic activity, pose dangers to nearby communities and the environment. Furthermore, the building of hydroelectric dams and reservoirs destroys communities, wildlife habitats, and natural scenic beauty. Generating energy from plant-based materials and food and industrial waste, raises concerns over food security, deforestation, land and water use, and toxic air emissions.

Nuclear energy poses significant threats to the life and health of our eco-systems—including humans—for generations. From the extraction of materials on indigenous lands to the safety risks posed in communities near reactors and along transit and storage sites for the radioactive byproducts of nuclear energy, the full life cycle of nuclear energy poses deep challenges to our values of justice and sustainability. The destructive potential of a catastrophic accident involves a great risk of irreversible damage to the environment and all living species. Additionally, the development of nuclear energy possibly has masked ambitions for nuclear armament. The United Methodist Church urges a review of the safety of currently operating nuclear plants, a moratorium on future development, and reaffirms its support for a full phase-out

of nuclear production for the purpose of creating weapons.

Today, cleaner energy sources are available and increasingly cost-competitive. Harnessing solar and wind power can produce energy with far fewer net emissions. Facing increased global demand for energy resources and ever increasing strain on the global environment, we must chart a new course rooted in our shared principles of justice and sustainability. To this end:

1. We support strenuous efforts to conserve energy, increase energy efficiency, and transition to renewable energy. A transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will combat global warming, protect human health, create new jobs, and ensure a secure, affordable energy future. Economists have concluded that a greater increase in end use energy can be gained through conservation and energy efficiency than through any single new source of fuel. Furthermore, conservation is nonpolluting and job producing.
2. We will be models for energy conservation. United Methodists, including churches, annual conferences, general boards and agencies will model energy conservation.
3. We will model rapid transition to clean renewable energy. We urge all annual conferences, churches, and agencies to

develop ambitious, just, and equitable transition pathways for their energy sources to be clean and renewable. Clean, renewable energy is any form of energy from solar, geophysical, or biological sources that is replenished by natural processes at a rate that equals or exceeds its rate of use and is not harmful to our communities and our environment. We urge the General Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Women to support its members to advocate for renewable energy policies and practices and the infrastructure needed to make renewable energy accessible and affordable at the local, federal, and global level. We support the development and utilization of appropriate technologies for small-scale, decentralized energy systems; and expansion of the infrastructure needed for cycling, cleaner energy vehicles, public transportation and ride-sharing.

4. We will model sustainable and just energy values. United Methodist Church programs and mission projects must model our sustainable and just energy values. We particularly urge the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) to support and fund renewable and energy efficient mission projects.

5. We support increased government funding for research



Appendix, cont.

and development of renewable energy sources and elimination of fossil fuel subsidies. We oppose mechanisms such as emission trading to meet targets for emission reductions which often perpetuate environmental injustice with continued emission impacts in countries and communities with fewest resources. We encourage the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies and government incentives to speed the application of the resulting technologies to our energy needs. The greatest national and international effort should be made in the areas of conservation and renewable energy sources.

6. We support local, regional, and national efforts to provide transition pathways including economic development and training for communities currently dependent on old energy economies such as fossil fuels, nuclear power, and large-scale hydro projects. Honoring the contributions and sacrifices these communities and workers have made, often for generations, The United Methodist Church commits to being in ministry with and supporting these individuals, families, and communities as we seek a healthier and more equitable energy future.

7. We encourage international lending institutions and aid agencies to promote sustainable and just energy policies.

8. We oppose any energy policy that will result in continuing exploitation of indigenous peoples' lands. Oil exploration, hydroelectric projects, the mining of coal, and the milling of uranium despoil indigenous peoples' lands and increase health and socioeconomic problems.

9. We support national energy programs that do not increase the financial burden on the poor, the elderly, and those with fixed incomes. Energy policies must guarantee universal, affordable access to all, with particular attention to the needs of low-income and rural residents.

10. We support full cooperation of all nations in efforts to ensure equitable distribution of necessary energy supplies, the control of global warming, and rapid development and deployment of appropriate technologies based on renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, and water energy generation.

11. We urge transparency in global energy market transactions. Market manipulation can disrupt pricing and access causing harm, particularly to poor and marginalized countries and communities. We affirm that while we have common goals, communities and countries have different responsibilities based on their historic emissions and current economic realities. We

believe it is a matter of justice that those most responsible for the crisis should bear additional responsibilities and be more ambitious in their targets for emissions reductions and financing for a transition to a cleaner, safer, energy future.

12. We exhort The United Methodist Church at all levels to engage in a serious study of these energy issues in the context of Christian faith, especially the values of justice and sustainability. This includes educating our congregants on energy production and usage in relation to global warming, studying the consequences of our consumer choices, taking action to lessen our impact on the environment, and advocating for policies that respond to the growing threat of climate change.

*Let my whole being bless the Lord!
Lord my God, how fantastic you are!
You are clothed in glory and grandeur!
You wear light like a robe;
you open the skies like a curtain.
You build your lofty house on the waters;
you make the clouds your chariot,
going around on the wings of the wind.
You make the winds your messengers;
you make fire and flame your ministers.
You established the earth on its foundations
so that it will never ever fall.*

Psalm 104:1-5

