

Model Resolution for Annual Conferences
Annual Conference Divestment from Fossil fuels

**NEW LEGISLATION RESOLUTION ON
Annual Conference DIVESTMENT FROM FOSSIL FUELS**

BE IT RESOLVED that by [September 1, 2024] the [Conference Name] Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church shall identify all investments in their portfolios whose core business activity involves the production of coal, petroleum, or natural gas. Core business activity refers to a company's primary, or central focus of activity and is an essential element in the company's economic success. A "core business" is one that accounts for 10% or more of a company's revenue derived from the objectionable products and/or services, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that by [October 1, 2024] the [Conference Name] Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church shall begin to eliminate investments in any company or entity whose core business activity involves the production of coal, petroleum, or natural gas, and to invest instead in products or services that are consistent with United Methodist values as stated in the Social Principles, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that by December 31, 2024, the investment portfolios of the [Conference Name] Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church shall be free of investments whose core business activity involves the production of coal, petroleum, or natural gas, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Conference Name] Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church request that [name of regional UMC Foundation] add a similar investment screen to its holdings and investments, also to be in place by [January 1, 2023].

Background:

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Luke 6:31

“*First:* By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced...”

John Wesley, [“The General Rules”](#)

In 1980, The United Methodist General Conference as a body passed a resolution on Energy Policy acknowledging the harm caused by fossil fuels. It was the first denomination to call for a just transition away from fossil fuels toward conservation and renewable energy by governments and the church, yet our denomination continues to invest in and profit from coal, oil, and gas. There are many alternative investment funds available that are fossil free, including a fund administered by Wespeth.

In addition to being the primary drivers of climate change, these fossil fuels cause tremendous harm in their extraction, transport, and processing. They create “sacrifice zones” by polluting marginalized neighborhoods, regions, and countries, and when burned they cause [harm on a scale that threatens human civilization and the community of creation](#) here on Earth. This harm disproportionately impacts the world’s most vulnerable people, who have done the least to cause climate change.

The United Methodist Church’s endorsement of fossil fuel corporations through our investments belies our stated commitment to a transition away from fossil fuels and toward a just and sustainable future. Two decades of corporate engagement and stockholder actions with the world’s largest greenhouse gas producers, including Chevron, Exxon Mobile, and Occidental Petroleum, have failed. Instead of transitioning away from fossil fuels, [they are doubling down](#). [Chevron recently boasted](#) that 2023 was their best year for production and profits ever.

These corporations have known since before 1980 that their products would warm the climate and endanger creation, but instead of transitioning to conservation and renewable energy, they created a massive public relations campaign to foster doubt that climate change was real. Their profit-seeking strategies continue today in the form of “greenwashing,” lobbying government for corporate subsidies, and blocking strong climate legislation and international treaties. By continuing to invest and engage with them, we provide moral cover for these corporate “bad actors.” This makes us complicit in **knowingly** causing unspeakable harm to children, marginalized people, our human family, and the community of all creation, not just now but into the future.

Meanwhile, the global climate justice divestment movement has now grown to over 1,600 institutions with assets totaling over \$40 trillion that have divested from fossil fuels. Thirty-five percent of them are churches and other faith communities. In 2023, churches in Scotland, England, and Wales divested, including the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England. As the first denomination to call for a transition away from fossil fuels, it is ironic that we are so far behind. We can divest from fossil fuel here in Cal-Nevada in hope that in this instance, the first will not be last.

The spiritual and moral reasons for divesting from fossil fuels are clear. The simplest reason, in secular terms, is that “It is wrong to profit from wrecking the planet.”

There are also financial reasons to divest. [In the past ten years, fossil fuels have underperformed when compared to the overall stock market](#). Meanwhile, new studies show that [portfolios that avoided investments in fossil fuels had higher returns](#).

Investing is always risky, but [investing in fossil fuel stocks will become ever-riskier](#) as climate change accelerates. Their value is based on their coal, oil, and methane gas reserves, which cannot all be burned without making the planet uninhabitable. These reserves will become “stranded assets” as the global transition to renewables advances, as renewables continue to gain market ground, as governments develop stronger climate legislation to meet global

commitments, as lawsuits against fossil fuel corporations become more common, and as large institutions continue to divest.

The [name of annual conference] has been a leader in the movement calling for The United Methodist Church to divest from fossil fuels, in solidarity with the movement for climate justice. [Delete this sentence or edit and change the dates to make it correct: In 2015 and/ or 2023 the [Conference name] Annual Conference passed a divestment petition and submitted them to the General Conferences held in 2016 and/or 2024.] Whatever General Conference decides in 2024 about whether to screen out fossil fuel divestments from United Methodist portfolios, the global divestment movement will continue to grow, and United Methodists will continue to challenge their members, churches, and other institutions to divest. By divesting from fossil fuels as an annual conference, [Conference name] Annual Conference takes a step towards living into our commitments regarding climate change and transitioning toward a just and sustainable clean energy future.