

## **Creation Care and Justice Legislation, 2024**

What passed at General Conference, final language

*Prepared for the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement, [umcreationjustice.org](http://umcreationjustice.org)*

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## **CREATION CARE RELATED – ACTION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH & CONFERENCE**

### **Establish a Conference Caretakers of God's Creation Coordinator in Each Annual Conference**

To be established in the Book of Discipline:

Section IX. The Annual Conference

→ ¶ 629 Other Conference Agencies

Submitted by Jaydee Hanson

Submitter Organization Caretakers of God's Creation

Committee Moves to Adopt 35 to 2

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 667; Against: 54

¶ 629. Conference Board of Church and Society – 1. The annual conference shall organize a board of church and society or other structure to provide for the functions of this ministry and maintain the connectional relationship between the General Board of Church and Society and the conference, district, and local church, as well as for church and society responsibilities related to the objectives and scope of work of the General Board of Church and Society as set forth in ¶¶ 1002-1004.

2. The conference board of church and society or equivalent structure shall be composed of those persons as determined by the annual conference, including, by virtue of their offices, the mission coordinator for social action of the conference United Methodist Women and members of the General Board of Church and Society from the annual conference who shall serve within limits set by ¶¶ 610.6 and 710.6. The conference board of church and society or equivalent structure shall also **name a conference Caretakers of God's Creation Coordinator who will be responsible for helping the conference develop programs to help it become more ecologically sustainable and to address environmental injustices** and shall name a Peace with Justice Coordinator who will be responsible for administering the conference Peace with Justice Special Sunday Offering receipts and for coordinating peace and justice ministries. Guidelines for inclusiveness in the membership shall be followed (¶ 610.5).

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### Church Land Use

To be established with inclusion in the Book of Resolution and Book of Discipline. This legislation is extensive, and will intersect with the Discipline at multiple levels, including General Administration, Annual Conferences, Districts, and Local Churches. Final listings TBD.

- Full text of resolution below "As Submitted," will appear in the Book of Resolutions.
- Text will also appear in the Book of Discipline at ¶ 2533 and potentially other paragraphs that address church property:
  - Chapter Six – Church Property
  - IV. Local Church Property

→ ¶ 2533 after ¶ 2533.6 (new section 7): Local church boards of trustees shall conduct or cause to be conducted annual assessments of church lands for the purpose of bringing them back in harmony with God’s intentions and systems. Steps in this process may include evaluating vegetation to identify native, non-native, and non-native invasive species present; replacing at least 50% of the lawn with native plant species to promote greater biodiversity and improve stormwater management; removing non-native invasive species; discontinuing the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and other biocides to promote soil health and fertility; and planting native trees that support local insect and other wildlife populations, and enhance heat resiliency. For more information see Resolution # “Church Land Use.”

As Submitted:

Submitted by Kimberly Richmond

Submitting Organization The United Methodist Creation Justice Movement

Church and Society 1 Committee Moves to Adopt 33 to 1

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 686; Against: 36

When God created the heavens and the earth, God put into place systems and cycles that would be life promoting and sustaining and made humans caretakers of all life on earth.

God gave the earth water, which is essential for all life, and created a cycle of cleansing, renewal, and release that makes the water that God gave us in the beginning usable and life-supporting still today.

God gave the earth soil where life abounds, filled with microorganisms vital to the health and fertility of the soil; where life can grow and thrive, taking nutrients and water from the soil to support the growth of plants; and where life is renewed when microorganisms perform the process of decay following death and bring forth new, fertile soil through the process.

God gave the earth plants that grow from the combination of nutrients in the soil, the sunlight, and the water, and that are used as food and shelter by other life forms on earth. These plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, which cleans the air and provides humans and other animals with oxygen they require to live. Through transpiration, these plants release water into the air that cools the air and becomes the basis for precipitation that releases water back to the ground for use, once again, by plants and other animals.

God created humans, animals, creatures of the sea, and birds of the air, to live upon the earth.

And God created all these things, and more, to work together in harmony in a manner that promotes and sustains all life on earth. When we work together as our Creator intended, God multiplies the fruits of our labors and brings forth more and more blessings.

At present, humans are not working together in harmony with the rest of Creation as God intended. We are in the midst of a biodiversity and wildlife crisis that is so extreme it is often referred to as the Sixth Extinction. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, more than 30,000 species go extinct annually. Other wildlife studies reveal that mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish have seen a devastating 69% drop in numbers, on average, since 1970, with populations in Latin America and the Caribbean suffering far worse with an average decline of 94%.

While prior mass extinction events in history were due to natural causes, this one is being caused by humans through land conversion, habitat destruction and fragmentation, use of chemical pesticides and biocides, as well as other harmful synthetic chemicals that persist in the environment known as “forever chemicals,” water pollution, and air pollution, including excessive release of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels, which is causing the climate crisis.

The good news is this: Since human actions are the cause of these problems, they can also be the solution. And, because God created the earth to incorporate life-promoting and life-sustaining systems, we humans can follow God’s intended order and renew the life-giving abilities of these systems that we have been harming.

Therefore, as United Methodists and persons of faith who wish to promote and sustain life and follow God’s intended order for Creation, be it resolved that all local churches and other holders of church lands, such as camp and retreat centers, as well as offices of general boards and agencies, conference offices and district locations, implement actions in their settings that bring their land back in harmony with God’s intentions and systems.

The following are examples of such steps:

- Evaluate the vegetation on your land and identify the species that are present. Determine which of those are native to your location, which are non-native, and

which are non-native invasives. Plants and wildlife have evolved over time to complement and depend upon each other, so plants that are native to a location are required to promote biodiversity of species and support pollinators and other wildlife. Additionally, only certain pollinators will fertilize certain species, so location-specific (native) pollinators are needed to continue certain plant species.

- Plant at least three native trees in a cluster so that they will support each other through storms, much as we humans support each other through the storms of life. It has been determined that trees and other plants form below-ground connections that help promote the health of the group and strengthen each other against strong winds. Additionally, trees provide shade in hot weather, cool the air with their transpiration, slow down the rain hitting the ground during downpours, facilitate water absorption versus runoff and flooding, clean the air by absorbing carbon dioxide, and release oxygen that wildlife and humans require to live.
- Remove non-native invasive species because they will often out-compete the native species, causing a decrease in biodiversity for the area and using more water than do native species.
- Replace at least 50% of the lawn, over time, with native plant species. Lawns promote water runoff rather than absorption, are often a place where chemical fertilizers and pesticides are used that runoff into and pollute nearby water sources, need to be mowed and trimmed using fossil fuel powered machinery, and do absolutely nothing to support pollinators, insects, birds, other wildlife, or healthy soil, water, and air.
- Discontinue the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and other biocides to promote soil health and fertility.
- Include edible native species in these plantings to make the landscape supportive of humans as well as wildlife while they clean and cool the air and slow the rain. Food forests or forest gardens are one version of this, where they more closely mimic the ecosystems and patterns already found in Creation.
- Work with an agricultural extension agency to create a teaching garden or farm if the church has sufficient acreage. Restoring the land by using regenerative agricultural techniques provides education and a witness to congregation and community.
- Plant a rain garden in areas where water runoff from hard surfaces flows into storm drains or nearby creeks and rivers. A rain garden will serve to absorb some of the runoff, slow down the flow, and even clean the water before it hits the storm drain or closest stream.
- Convert to renewable energy sources some, or all, of the facility's energy needs and let the sun, wind, and water provided by the Creator supply the power. Often the change will be financially beneficial, as well.

- Curtail the destruction of existing forests, wetlands, peatlands, and grasslands by identifying and supporting projects and organizations that will. These areas, which are vital for absorbing the carbon dioxide causing climate change, are also essential for halting the destruction and fragmentation of habitat that is needed to maintain the biodiversity of the species on earth.
- Restore wildfire-damaged and degraded forests, wetlands, peatlands, and grasslands by identifying and supporting projects and organizations that will. Restoration will increase carbon absorption and habitat needed for improved biodiversity.
- Avoid purchases that contribute to deforestation. Commit to purchasing lumber, food, building materials, and paper products that are sustainably sourced and produced, or reduce the use of paper products, for example, by forgoing the use of disposable plates and cups for church events.

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### **Green Team Formation**

To be established in the Book of Resolutions (Paragraph and section TBD), and Book of Discipline by referral to ¶ 254:

PART VI Organization and Administration, The Local Church

→ VI. Organization and Administration

→ ¶ 254. Other Ministry Group Coordinators.

Submitted by Crys Zinkiewicz

Committee Moves to Adopt 33 to 1

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 686; Against: 36

### **THEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE**

Whereas,

Scripture proclaims God created all – from Earth’s hospitable atmosphere, mighty seas, abundant forests and other plants to nutrient-rich soil, from majestic whales to the tiniest microbes and all sentient and non-sentient beings in between; Scripture also proclaims God called humans to be caretakers of creation (Genesis 1–2). Jesus declared the Greatest Commandments are to love God and to love neighbor, especially the most vulnerable (Luke 10:25-37). Persons living in poverty, persons of color, and indigenous people in this country and throughout the world are harmed first and most by the

degradation of creation, and these same groups have the fewest resources to recover from that harm. Care for creation is clearly a matter of justice. Creation, including all people, is already or will be affected by the current and coming level of danger from climate change and its consequences that intersect with multiple expressions of injustice. It follows that loving God, the Creator, means loving God's Creation and that loving neighbors in distress requires stopping harm and righting wrongs, in other words, working for justice.

Tradition for United Methodists includes John Wesley's Three Simple Rules for living faithfully: First, do no harm; second, do all the good you can; and third, stay in love with God. Our proposed 2020 Social Principles begin with "The Community of All Creation," outlining the care and justice work that is needed in the midst of the crises upon crises that are adversely affecting God's creation and our neighbors. The 2009 Pastoral Letter of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action, pledges leadership in addressing the work of renewal. The 2016 Book of Discipline (Paragraph 254) includes an Earth Advocacy ministry group as a way "to fulfill the mission of the local church." It follows that the church provides both a mandate and guidance for doing what is needed.

Reason is a God-given gift. Our reasoning capabilities are informed by modern scientific research and practices. The scientific community has given clear warning that creation is under tremendous strain due to the polluting of air, water, and land; habitat destruction; the unsustainable consumption of earth's finite resources; and the rapidly accelerating extinction of species. Scientists have sounded the alarm of catastrophic harm to creation if global warming and associated climate change are not halted and reversed. They point to how rising temperatures have already intensified wildfires, hurricanes, drought, and sea-level rise throughout the world with devastating impacts. Our reasoning capabilities are also informed by the examples of indigenous peoples whose traditional wisdom and practices honor living in harmony with nature. It follows that, globally, humans have the capacity for understanding the damage and danger and for stopping or mitigating the effects. Individuals and congregations have access to trustworthy knowledge and the reasoning ability to discern what is needed and how to carry out plans in their local situations.

Experience is honored by United Methodists as a way of recognizing lifetime gains of knowledge, understanding, perspectives, and practices of individuals, which they all bring to the work before them. Functioning as a team, they become stronger in their efforts (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Experience is also honored as the varied ways in which humans encounter God. For many people that meeting is through God's gift of the natural world. It follows that a group of people who care about creation and justice,

working together can use their wisdom and passion to create faithful and meaningful experiences that help others love God and neighbor.

**BE IT RESOLVED:**

**That every local church, charge, cluster, or district is urged to create a “green team” or strengthen an existing one for action in four areas each year – Worship, Education, Practice, and Advocacy – providing children, youth, and adults of all ages with inspiration, knowledge, encouragement, and practical means for caring for creation and justice. These actions include:**

**One or more occasions of worship, celebrating God’s grace, glory, and beauty in creation and connecting creation care and justice to the scriptural call to love God and neighbor. (For example, observing Earth Day (April 22); creating an outdoor worship service; integrating creation care and justice in sermons and liturgy.)**

**One or more educational opportunities, held within and for the congregation and/or community, related to some aspect of creation care and justice. (For example, facilitating nature experience events for various age groups and groupings, including walks in the woods, wildflower walks, “I spy” challenges, trip to a beach or waterway, a zoo, and so on to help people love and learn to protect creation; leading a Bible study and programs on creation care and justice; arranging for speakers with environmental expertise, especially about local issues.)**

**One or more positive changes in the practices of the church’s life and/or to the church building or grounds. (For example, stopping the use of Styrofoam and plastic plates and cups for meals; adding native trees to church property; placing recycling bins where needed and visible; reducing energy consumption.)**

**One or more actions that advocate for change in systems that perpetuate injustice and harm to creation and communities either locally, regionally, nationally, or globally. (For example, researching an issue, identifying the change-makers, and communicating with them; informing the congregation on local issues related to creation justice and encouraging them to communicate their values to the appropriate decisionmakers.)**

**That creation care and justice will be lifted up in all areas of ministry and mission, including preaching, liturgy, communications, education, outreach, and advocacy so that the church will become an increasingly effective witness of loving God and neighbor.**



**That these actions are to be communicated as an idea exchange and inspiration throughout the connection. They can be reported at charge conference and should be celebrated locally, in the conference, and beyond.**

**That the annual conference will assist churches with resources and mentors, as needed, particularly – but not exclusively – through the conference’s Creation Care/Justice Team.**

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### **Other Ministry Group Coordinators**

To be established in the Book of Discipline:

PART VI Organization and Administration, The Local Church

→ VI. Organization and Administration

→ ¶ 254. Other Ministry Group Coordinators.

Submitted by Crys Zinkiewicz

Submitter Organization United Methodist Creation Justice Movement

Committee Moves to Adopt 43 to 4

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 663; Against: 60

¶ 254. Other Ministry Group Coordinators-In order to fulfill the mission of the local church, the charge conference may elect annually a coordinator or ministry group chairperson for any or all of these areas: Christian unity and interreligious relationships, church and society, community volunteers, education, evangelism, higher education and campus ministry, missions, prayer advocacy, religion and race, status and role of women, earth advocacy/**green teams**, stewardship, worship, advocacy for persons with special needs, and church media resources. Every local United Methodist church may have a campus ministry coordinator, who may have membership on the church council. A primary responsibility of the campus ministry coordinator shall be to report the names and contact information (i.e., addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses) of all college students from their local church each semester to the appropriate United Methodist campus ministry, such as the Wesley Foundation. The campus ministry coordinator shall be encouraged to contact every college student from their church each semester by letter, e-mail, or phone and encourage the student’s active participation in United Methodist student ministry. The campus ministry coordinator in every church shall also promote financial and other support of United Methodist campus ministries, such as the Wesley Foundations, within their local church.

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## **Sustainable Practices for Annual Conference Sessions**

To be established in the Book of Discipline:

The Conferences

→ IX. The Annual Conference

→ ¶603 Organization

→ ¶603 4.

Submitted by Nancy Blade

Committee Moves to Adopt 69 to 17

Plenary Action Moves to Adopt 606 to 91

Amend ¶603 Annual Conference Organization by addition

4. The annual conference sessions shall be held in places that are accessible to people with disabilities **and that, when possible, have sustainable practices for energy, waste, and consumption.**

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## **Use of Plastic**

To be established in the Book of Resolutions.

Submitted by Harald Rueckert

Committee Moves to Adopt 35 to 2

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 686; Against: 36

The whole earth is God's good creation and has as such an inherent value. We are aware that the current utilization of energy resources threatens this creation fundamentally. As members of The United Methodist Church we are committed to caring for creation and, especially, to responsible handling of its resources.

In its call to action "God's Renewed Creation", the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church calls for the practice of environmental holiness to conserve natural resources including the use of only renewable resources in every gathering and every

ministry of our congregations and church. An important expression of this is to reduce the amount of plastic we use during our church's meetings.

This issue has a global impact, not only because of the pervasive presence of microplastic, including in our oceans and in our food. Plastic production and disposal also cause the emission of greenhouse gases. In 2019, the volume of such emissions to mid-year alone was 850 million tons. Across the globe, church and unchurched people are reducing their use of plastic because of its impact on the climate. Resolution 1031 ("Resolution on Global Warming," The Book of Resolutions, 2012) resolves "that (church-)members should make an effort to learn about human production and release of greenhouse gases and evaluate their own lifestyles to identify areas where reductions in production and release of greenhouse gases can be made. [...] [and] that members should also work to make their own congregations more aware of the issue of global warming and create policies and practices which reduce greenhouse gas emissions from congregational infrastructure." This includes not only church buildings, parsonages and vehicles but also single use dishes, plastic bags, wrapping material. Building on the experience of communities worldwide and of annual and central conferences (e.g., Germany) who have started the journey toward comprehensive mandatory concepts reducing the use of plastic in daily life and especially at church events, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church resolves

- 1. that for all church activities of local, annual, central, jurisdictional, and General Conference bodies, a twofold strategy of avoiding (avoiding plastic where possible, replacing single-use plastic items such as dishes, coffee cups, or bags with items made of recyclable, preferably naturally occurring material) and reducing (e.g., using dishes that can be washed and reused) is to be pursued;**
  
  - 2. that all delegates commit to personal action of the same kind, modeling a change in behavior for the sake of environmental protection.**
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## CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION / NET ZERO RELATED

### **Commitment to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

To be established in the Book of Resolutions:

Submitted by Robert Downs

Committee Moves to Adopt 34 to 5

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 686; Against: 36

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.**

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

To be established in the Book of Resolutions

Submitted by Ian Urriola

Committee Moves to Adopt 34 to 3

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 686; Against: 36

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

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, 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.**

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### **Annual Carbon Footprint and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Audit for Local Church**

To be established in the Book of Discipline.

Chapter Six Church Property

→ VI. Local Church Property

→ ¶ 2533. Board of Trustees’ Powers and Limitations

→ ¶ 2533. 7. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Audit

Submitted by Ian Urriola

Committee Moves to Adopt 44 to 14

Main Floor Vote to Adopt 606 to 91

Plenary Vote on Main Motion (Consent Calendar); For: 606; Against 91.

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.

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

To be established in the Book of Discipline.

Chapter Six Church Property

→ VI. Local Church Property

→ ¶ 2550. Board of Trustees Report to the Charge Conference

→ ¶ 2533. 11. Reporting Church's Carbon Neutral Progress

Submitted by Ian Urriola

Committee moves to adopt 44 to 13

Plenary Action to Adopt 606 to 91

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.**

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## OTHER

**Other Creation Care related legislation** included the reaffirmation of current statements in the Book of Resolutions to include Energy Policy, Caring for Creation: A Call to Stewardship and Justice, and more. Also passed at General Conference were petitions related to Creation Justice including petitions addressing immigration, racism, white privilege, rights of children and more.

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**Revised Social Principles** – Accepted without revision.

Revises existing statement in the Book of Discipleship

Committee Vote: For: 30; Against: 5; Not Voting: 2

[Link to full text revision.](#)

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**Revised Energy Policy Statement.** Accepted with original revisions.

Revises existing statement in the Book of Resolutions ¶ 160.

Committee Vote: For 34, Against 3, Not Voting 1

### **1001. 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 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 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 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.

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**Readopt “Care for Creation: A Call to Stewardship and Justice.” “Climate Change and the Church’s Response.”** Accepted as submitted.

Committee Vote: For 33, Against 2, Not voting 3

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**Environmental Racism, Law of the Sea, Protection of Water, Principles for Just and Sustainable Extraction and Production, and Environmental Health.** Also

SUPPORTED as submitted (For 33, Against 1, Not Voting 2) Retain Resolutions: R1025, R1028, R1029, R1032. R1034;