

1 The Executive Council recommends this resolution be sent to a committee of the General Synod

2
3 **ON MAKING UCC CHURCH BUILDINGS MORE CARBON NEUTRAL**
4 **Submitted by the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ**

5
6 **A Resolution of Witness**

7
8 **SUMMARY**

9
10 This resolution affirms the urgency of responding to climate change and provides a framework
11 for individual congregations, conferences, and the national church to address the largest
12 contributing factor to climate change, the building sector, and respond to climate change by
13 reducing and offsetting carbon emissions with the goal of becoming a carbon neutral
14 denomination.

15
16 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE**

17
18 With wisdom God created the world (Jer 10:12, Prov 3:19) and declared it “very good” (Gen 1).
19 In the second account of creation God directed humanity to “till and care for” the Earth (Gen
20 2:15); thus establishing a mutual relationship between humanity and the land, which provided
21 necessary sustenance for humanity (Gen 2:16). As a member of the community of all of creation,
22 we are reminded in Romans to “live in harmony with one another” and “peaceably with all”
23 (Rom 12:14, 18). There is no reason to assume that our community excludes any of creation, for
24 the prophecy of peace includes all aspects of creation (Isa 11:6-9). Isaiah also warns that a
25 broken covenant with God will look like an “earth [that] lies polluted under its inhabitants” (Isa
26 24:5). As creations of God, we are called to honor our relationships with God and the Earth in
27 such a way that we live out the call “to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with
28 God” (Mic 6:8).

29
30 **BACKGROUND**

31
32 The current scientific opinion on climate change, supported by a wide body of evidence, is that
33 the earth is warming and that there is near certainty that the actions of humans are complicit
34 through activities including deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels.^{i, ii, iii} No scientific body
35 of national or international standing has maintained a dissenting opinion.^{iv} Evidence of climate
36 change has become common knowledge; the melting of our polar icecaps, migration of plant and
37 animal species to higher altitudes and latitudes, and more extreme weather conditions are a few
38 examples. Entire countries have pledged to become carbon neutral, including Norway, Iceland,
39 New Zealand, Costa Rica, Vatican City State, and others, illustrating the widespread belief that it
40 is within our moral duty and economic best interest to address and mitigate climate change with
41 the goal of becoming a carbon-neutral society.

47 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

48
49 Whereas, the twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges all segments of
50 the Church to address global warming in their decisions and investments and in their educational
51 and advocacy efforts; and

52
53 Whereas, the twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the Church to
54 address the severe nature of this global warming crisis as one of the most urgent threats to
55 humankind and, indeed, all of God’s precious planet earth; and

56
57 Whereas, General Synod is on record regarding the mediation of climate change and in 2009
58 reaffirmed that position; and

59
60 Whereas, the building sector consumes nearly half (48.7%) of all energy produced in the United
61 States and was responsible for nearly half of U.S. carbon emissions in 2009; and^v

62
63 Whereas, the U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted the “2030 Challenge for City Buildings”^{vi} in
64 June 2006, a plan which, if supported at all levels of our nation, is designed to avert dangerous
65 climate change;

66
67 Therefore be it resolved, that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
68 acknowledge that our church buildings are significant contributors to climate change and to
69 encourage congregations to take steps towards carbon neutrality by adopting the following
70 church-based adaptations to the targets presented in the 2030 Challenge:^{vii}

- 71 • Buildings undergoing new construction and/or major renovations strive to be carbon
72 neutral (operate with a net-zero use of fossil fuel, greenhouse gas emitting energy).
 - 73 ○ Carbon neutral buildings can be achieved by reducing electricity and natural gas
74 usage, generating on-site renewable power, and/or purchasing renewable
75 (suggested 20% maximum of total energy usage, in alignment with the standards
76 of the 2030 Challenge) energy.
- 77 • Existing church buildings not undergoing major renovation at this time be renovated to
78 meet a fossil fuel, greenhouse gas emitting, energy consumption performance standard of
79 at least 60% below the regional average for houses of worship or that building type.

80
81 Be it further resolved, that local congregations be requested to encourage their members to meet
82 the above standards in their own homes;

83
84 Be it further resolved, that conferences and congregations be encouraged to continue this work
85 beyond the building sector by initiating or continuing the Earthwise Congregation commitment.

86
87 **FUNDING**

88
89 The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
90 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

93
94
95
96
97

IMPLEMENTATION

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

ⁱ IPCC, Synthesis Report, Section 1.1: Observations of climate change, in IPCC AR4 SYR 2007.

ⁱⁱ IPCC, Synthesis Report, Section 2.4: Attribution of climate change, in IPCC AR4 SYR 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ America's Climate Choices: Panel on Advancing the Science of Climate Change; National Research Council (2010). *Advancing the Science of Climate Change*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. ISBN 0309145880. http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12782.

^{iv} Julie Brigham-Grette (September 2006). "Petroleum Geologists' Award to Novelist Crichton Is Inappropriate" (PDF). *Eos* 87 (36). <http://www.agu.org/fora/eos/pdfs/2006EO360008.pdf>.

^v Architecture 2030, 2030 Challenge, http://architecture2030.org/the_problem/buildings_problem_why.

^{vi} U.S. Conference of Mayors, Resolution No. 50: "Adopting the '2030 Challenge' for City Buildings," http://www.usmayors.org/74thAnnualMeeting/resolutions/ProposedResolutions_Energy.pdf.

^{vii} Architecture 2030, 2030 Challenge, http://architecture2030.org/2030_challenge/the_2030_challenge.