

Committee 4

TRANSITION FROM FOSSIL FUELS TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

WHEREAS, the use of any fossil fuel, including coal, natural gas and oil, results in an increase of carbon dioxide and other dangerous greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, which causes global warming and climate change, such that if we do not immediately decrease our use of these fuels, and completely eliminate them by the year 2040 all life on earth will likely experience previously unknown devastating results including drought, wildfires, extreme precipitation and cyclones, drinking water scarcity, diminished food production, population migrations, human mortality, violent conflicts, and species extinction, thereby upsetting the whole ecology of Earth". and

WHEREAS, feasibility studies indicate that transitioning to all renewable energy like wind, solar, and hydro, is not only possible but economically desirable; and

WHEREAS, nonrenewable fossil fuel extraction continues to be subsidized by our government, while at the same time, renewable energy sources are significantly under-supported, resulting in the de-emphasis of critical renewable energy development; and

WHEREAS, investment in extensive infrastructures supporting the fossil fuel industries and especially the fracking (horizontal slickwater hydraulic fracturing) industry precludes investment, invention, introduction, development and employment opportunities essential for building a renewable energy future; and

WHEREAS, the United States contains large subterranean supplies of natural gas and oil in underground rock formations far beneath the earth's surface in which natural gas and oil extraction is being considered or in which natural gas and oil extraction is already occurring by the process known as fracking; which uses millions of gallons of water, often mixed with sand and toxic chemicals, some of which returns to the surface contaminated and sometimes radioactive and has led to contamination of air, surface and other underground water resources, and has also caused earthquakes; and

WHEREAS, hydraulic fracturing has an impact on individuals and communities, including such justice issues as the use of "forced pooling," private vs public practices of eminent domain, concerns about worker safety, illegal dumping, and environmental racism issues including siting of waste disposal facilities in or near low-income communities of color; and

WHEREAS, the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, recognizing that there is a wide range of stances on the issues of climate change, fossil fuels, hydraulic fracturing and renewable energy among its members and that these issues have the potential to be divisive within the body of Christ, still and all understands that the gospel is the permission and the commandment to enter difficulty with hope; and

WHEREAS, although we understand the pull of immediate, short-term, economic and political necessities, as people of faith we answer a higher call, which is to have a deep moral obligation to be good stewards of God's creation so that all humans, other creatures and future generations may thrive on clean air, clean water, and clean soil.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ place itself on moral record and implore its pastors, conferences and members to advocate with federal and state

lawmakers to enact or extend incentives and renewable portfolio standards that will lead to the rapid transition to renewable energy sources, energy conservation and energy efficiency measures worldwide, with a goal of total transition as soon as possible but no later than 2040; eliminate immediately all fossil fuel subsidies; enact some form of a carbon tax; enact legislation that will eliminate as quickly as possible any further extraction of coal, oil and gas nationally or internationally, particularly by corporations chartered in the United States; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod implore its pastors, conferences and members to advocate with federal and state lawmakers to enact an immediate ban on all gas and oil well hydraulic fracturing; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod, through its General Minister and President convey our concerns about fossil fuels and hydraulic fracturing in writing, including a copy of this resolution, to all governors, appropriate regulatory agencies, and state and federal elected officials, and to all appropriate denominational instrumentalities informing them of the United Church of Christ's position, and implore its pastors and members to send this resolution to state and federal elected representatives; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod requests that Justice and Witness Ministries, through its Minister for Environmental Justice, establish a national task force and report back to all future General Synods the progress on all imperatives listed in this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod encourage conferences to establish task forces working in conjunction with the Minister for Environmental Justice, as appropriate, to study, monitor, and report to the churches on justice issues relating to fossil fuel use and hydraulic fracturing--including but not limited to climate change; ecological protections of our lands, air, and water; dangers to public health and welfare; impacts on communities around issues such as crime and violence, housing, education, etc.; and that these task forces be charged with educating and organizing congregants in their decision-making and actions around these issues, and that such task forces also listen to the people in the pews with deep intent to hear the moral dilemmas facing our members about the relationship between the short term and the longer term implications; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ invites and encourages its members to inform and educate themselves about the issues pertaining to fossil fuel use, hydraulic fracturing, climate change and renewable energy by assessing personal and congregational carbon footprints and engaging in humble and open grassroots conversation, with particular sensitivity to energy consumption patterns and to our most vulnerable citizens, those without sufficient income to meet daily needs, as well as the long-term needs for energy that all face; in the sharing of pertinent stories about the impasse that our dependency on non-renewable energy resources discloses; and in workshops and study groups that discern and express the theological, moral, economic and personal facets of the enterprises of fossil fuel use and hydraulic fracturing, with the above conversations designed to yield a renewable form of spiritual and moral energy to resolve our physical energy needs; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED resolved that it is our belief that the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is among the most compelling and urgent moral issues of our times. that although some political and technological advances may take time, that where progress can be achieved more immediately that the UCC move with all deliberate speed to champion those objectives and that the UCC most not only

insist upon swift and measurable action among state and federal governments, but that it model these commitments in all of its religious and administrative buildings, as well as its expenditures and allocations of resources and that we encourage other ecumenical partners do the same.

FUNDING

The funding for the implementation of this Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

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