

**EARTHWISE CONGREGATION:
A RESOLUTION ON MEDIATING CLIMATE CHANGE.**

Resolution Passed June 8, 2008
by the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference
United Church of Christ

*Only the “Be It Resolved” statements were voted upon by the Annual Meeting.
The Summary, Background, Implementation and Whereas sections were neither voted upon
nor approved.*

SUBMITTED BY: Mayflower Community Congregational United Church of Christ by its Church Council

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF INTENT OF THE RESOLUTION: Affirms the United Church of Christ as an environmentally conscious entity and provides a framework for individual congregations and the UCC as a whole to show unity and solidarity in mediating climate change and advancing justice through sustainability.

BACKGROUND AND SUPPORTING STATEMENT: The twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ, specifically Wider Church Ministries and Justice and Witness Ministries, to address the severe nature of this global warming crisis as one of the most urgent threats to humankind and, indeed, all of God’s precious planet earth and that Local Church Ministries develop materials to help churches “green” their buildings.

In Genesis 2:15, God took the first human into the garden and gave instructions to “till and care for it.” Genesis 9:15 reminds us that God is in a covenantal relationship with all beings: “I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind.” When people today despair it is too late to save life on Earth, the Gospels remind us where to place our hope. In Mark 10:26-27, the disciples asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’”

FUNDING: 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: Local congregations are requested to be the primary implementers of this resolution by voting to become Earthwise Congregations, and by following the guidelines set forth in the resolution.

TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION:

**EARTHWISE CONGREGATION:
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WHEREAS, the Twenty Sixth Synod of the United Church of Christ admits Christian complicity in the damage human beings have caused to the Earth’s climate system, urges responsible stewardship of God’s creation, and expresses profound concern for the pending environmental, economic and social tragedies threatened by global warming;

WHEREAS, the Twenty Sixth Synod of the United Church of Christ urges all segments of the Church to address global warming in their decisions and investments and in their educational and advocacy efforts;

WHEREAS, the Twenty Sixth Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ to address the severe nature of the global warming crisis as one of the most urgent threats to humankind;

WHEREAS, United Church of Christ congregations have successfully brought about culture change through church identification with significant community issues, via designations such as “Open and Affirming” or “Peace with Justice”.

WHEREAS, congregations have begun to take action addressing climate change, and demonstrated the need for a cohesive and meaningful framework for action which will promote the change of culture necessary to transform and heal our current environmental crisis.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Minnesota Conference calls on the United Church of Christ to create a new congregation designation, the Earthwise Congregation, thus answering the 26th General Synod’s call for environmental stewardship. The Earthwise Congregation will be a body of action and a voice of hope, grounded in faith. The following statement defines the parameters for an Earthwise Congregation.

EARTHWISE CONGREGATION

Addressing the charges set forth by the Twenty Sixth Synod of the United Church of Christ, selecting and adapting guidelines set forth by the community-based U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, and adding pertinent church-based guidelines, our congregation commits to the following actions and ideals:

A. We will strive to meet or exceed meaningful targets for reducing global warming pollution by taking immediate actions, where possible, in our own operations, beginning with:

1. Promoting transportation options such as walking, bicycling, car pooling and public transit;
2. Making energy efficiency a priority through building improvements, retrofitting facilities with energy efficient lighting and urging employees to conserve energy;
3. Purchasing only Energy Star equipment and appliances for church use, including but not limited to refrigerators and freezers, dishwashers, dehumidifiers, room air conditioners, heating and cooling systems, audio and video, and office equipment.
4. Maximizing recycling rates in church operations and promoting recycling in the community;
5. Engaging in tree planting to increase shading on church property and to absorb CO₂, and promoting tree planting and urban reforestation elsewhere.

B. Our congregation will establish an Earthwise Congregation committee which will complete the following tasks:

1. Conduct periodic energy audits of church facilities with the purpose of identifying a comprehensive, whole-church approach to improving energy efficiency and comfort, while helping to protect the environment.
2. Conduct an annual review of new standards and new technologies, with the goal of maintaining meaningful greenhouse-gas reduction objectives and identifying effective ways of meeting those objectives.

3. Create an annual Earthwise Congregation action-plan which identifies specific and meaningful steps the congregation can take in protecting the environment, and is individualized to the congregation's needs and strengths.
4. Disseminate information to the congregation which is received from the Energy and Climate Working Group of the United Church of Christ, the Environment and Energy Task Force, the Justice and Witness Ministries, and related bodies.

C. Our congregation will actively urge our local, state, and national governments, as well as businesses and industry, to respond to global warming with great urgency and firm leadership such as by:

1. Supporting measures that reduce the absolute amount of green house gas emissions, and in particular emissions of carbon dioxide, to levels recommended by nationally and internationally recognized and respected scientific bodies,
2. Supporting sustainable policies for international trade and investment,
3. Investing in energy conservation, specifically in sustainable, renewable and affordable systems of transportation,
4. Supporting sustainable and renewable systems of land use,
5. Calling on business and industry to lead in responses to global warming through increased investments in efficient and sustainable energy technologies which are economically accessible and just.

D. Our congregation will be a voice of hope in the climate crisis, grounding our action in faith:

1. Engaging in biblical study, theological reflection, prayer, and Christian education that celebrate God's creation, emphasize our role as stewards for creation, and lift up concerns about the impact of climate change on our global community.
2. Creating new opportunities to connect faith and the care of the earth through worship and common life.
3. Promoting a public dialogue around environmental issues that emphasizes our interconnectedness, casts a bold and urgent vision, and empowers communities to pursue change.
4. Building relationships with other churches and organizations interested in pursuing environmental protection to share information and efforts.
5. Acting as a resource for the dissemination of current and useful information on the topic of environmental stewardship to the community and its individuals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ endorses the Earthwise Congregation designation and by its adoption sends this Resolution to General Synod 27, urging congregations from across the denomination to join this effort.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Justice and Witness Ministries shall be charged with the responsibility of consolidating and disseminating information to congregations seeking to address climate change.