



Investing in a Green Future: A Vision for a Renewed Creation

An action of the 225th General Assembly (2022)



Approved by the 225th General Assembly (2022)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Developed by
The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)
of the General Assembly Mission Council/Presbyterian Mission Agency
www.pcusa.org/acswp or www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/acswp



GENERAL ASSEMBLY POLICY MANY PREPARED BY ACSWP
THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL WITNESS POLICY

RESTORING CREATION FOR ECOLOGY AND JUSTICE (1990) HAZARDOUS WASTE, RACE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT (1995)
HOPE FOR A GLOBAL FUTURE: TOWARD JUST AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (1996)
OVERTURE: ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE PERSISTENCE OF ITS CAUSES (1999) THE POWER TO
TO CHANGE (2008) GUIDE TO GOING CARBON NEUTRAL (2008) TAX JUSTICE (2014) PCUSA COLLABORATIVE
AGENDA ON ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP (2016) "CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION" G 1.0304 (2016) THE PRECAUTIONARY
PRINCIPLE (2018) OVERTURE: THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, NOT OURS TO RUIN (2018) BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH (1991)
OVERTURE: ON RESPONDING TO ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (2018)

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY

PEACEMAKING CONFERENCE - MAKING PEACE WITH THE EARTH (1990) FIRST ENVIRONMENTAL
PEACEMAKING TRIP - TO THE AMAZON (1993) FIVE YEARS AFTER RESTORING CREATION CONSULTATION (1995)
GHOST RANCH- FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PRESBYTERIANS FOR EARTH CARE AND INITIAL

TRAINING FOR STEWARD OF CREATION ENABLERS (1995) ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OFFICE (1988) ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE (2000)
CHURCH AND SOCIETY: WHILE THE EARTH REMAINS (1990), ECO JUSTICE (1996), ENERGY IN GOD'S WORLD (2004)
CF INDUSTRIES SHAREHOLDER RESOLUTION ON SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING PASSED 69% OUTSTANDING SHARES (2013)
EARTH CARE CONGREGATIONS (2010) MRTI METRIC GUIDELINES FOR SHAREHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (2018)

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CARBON OFFSETS FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY (POST 1995)
RECYCLING AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY PC-BIZ FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY - PAPER REDUCTION (2006)

PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION

LOAN FOR SOLAR PROJECT IN PALESTINE (2015-2016)
FOSSIL FUEL FREE INVESTMENT OPTIONS - COMMON FUND (2016)
NEW COVENANT FUNDS ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE POSITIVE SCREENING (2014)
ALLOCATED \$7MILLION TO CLEAN ENERGY INVESTMENTS IN THE ENDOWMENT FUND (2016)

BOARD OF PENSIONS

FOSSIL FUEL-FREE PAX GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FUND
ADDED TO RETIREMENT PLAN INVESTMENT OPTION (2017) BALANCED INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO
FUNDED FOSSIL FUEL FREE GLOBAL EQUITY PORTFOLIO WITH IMPAX WITH \$100MILLION (2017)

PRESBYTERIAN PUBLISHING

101 WAYS TO HELP THE EARTH (1990)
CHERISHING GOD'S CREATION (1998) 50 WAYS TO HELP SAVE THE EARTH, REBECCA BARNES (2008)
AND THE LEAVES OF THE TREE ARE FOR THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS (1997)
THE THOUGHTFUL CHRISTIAN DOWNLOADABLE STUDIES (2009)

GOD OF EARTH, KRISTIN SWENSON (2016) DEVELOPING A GREEN ACTION PLAN FOR YOUR CONGREGATION (2010)

INHABITING EDEN, PATRICIA TULL (2013) PRESBYTERIAN INVESTMENT AND LOAN

RESTORING CREATION LOAN (2015)

OTHER RESOURCES

FOSSIL FREE PCUSA (2014)
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ECO-JUSTICE WORKING GROUP/
CREATION JUSTICE MINISTRIES (1983) LIVING WATERS FOR THE WORLD (1993)
PRESBYTERIANS FOR EARTH CARE (1995) ECO-STEWARDS (2007)
SOLAR UNDER THE SUN (2009-10)
BLESSED TOMORROW PARTNERSHIP (2018)

**OVER
50 YEARS OF
PCUSA
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY**

CURRENT RESOURCES: [JUSTICEUNBOUND.ORG/50-GREEN-YEARS](https://justiceunbound.org/50-green-years)



Recommendations

The 225th General Assembly (2022) commemorates the 32nd anniversary of *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, approved by the 202nd General Assembly (1990), and provides a discussion of the intersections of environmental justice, environmental racism and economic justice, by making the following recommendations for the church's mission and witness:

Approve the study and recommendations titled "Investing in a Green Future: A Vision for a Renewed Creation," which commemorates the 32nd anniversary of *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, approved by the 202nd General Assembly (1990) and provides a discussion on the intersections of environmental justice, environmental racism and economic justice.

1. Approve the study and recommendations titled "Investing in a Green Future: A Vision for a Renewed Creation," including the list of resources on environmental justice, environmental racism and eco-stewardship, to fulfill the direction of the 223rd General Assembly (2018), which requested a comprehensive updating of energy policy.
2. Give thanks to God for the historic witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 32 years ago when the 202nd General Assembly approved *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, providing vision and guidance for Presbyterians and all people to participate in God's redemption of the creation. The policy called the church to make the 1990s a "turnaround decade" for ecological restoration. Additionally, it defined eco-justice as "The well-being of all humankind on thriving earth." It provided the church a vision that all is interconnected and inclusive so that our concept of justice is comprehensive, and cannot be complete when one element, be it economic, racial, social or environmental, is missing.
3. Confess that we have not sufficiently "responded to the cry of creation" and hereby recommit to a "turnaround decade" for restoring creation. We have failed to place the intrinsic value of God's creation above the idols of the world, such as wealth, power, acquisition and status. We have failed to embrace fully the principles of stewardship and sustainability, of God's concern for those experiencing poverty and their participation in processes and policies, of accepting for our own lives that which is sufficient (rather than the constant accumulation of more), and of solidarity with all creation. We recommit our energy, our treasure and our vision to a future in which God's creation is restored, the human family lives together in balance and justice with each other, and the social and ecological destruction that our society inflicts on the world is reversed and repaired.
4. Work toward a goal of 100% renewable energy in congregations, mid councils and agencies in the PC(USA) by 2030 by practicing energy efficiency, purchasing our power from renewable energy sources and investing in the development of renewable energy.
5. Affirm that the work of restoring creation not only includes establishing a right relationship between humans and nature, but also promoting economic justice for the human family and racial justice for our society. In our culture, this means dismantling the white supremacy that permeates our lives and institutions, and making reparations for centuries of harm. That harm has often combined environmental, racial and economic injustice.
6. Urge individuals, congregations, mid councils and other governing bodies of the PC(USA) to make use of the extensive resources about eco-justice available from the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Creation Justice Ministries and other partners. A resource list with links can be found in the attached



Appendix. In particular, the 225th Assembly commends for use *The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming*, approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008), which provides a comprehensive treatment of global climate change and the steps that must be taken to address this looming human-caused catastrophe, which must necessarily be part of the response to the issues raised here.

7. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency to make restoring Creation (including environmental justice, racial justice and economic justice) a key priority in its Matthew 25 programming and in its advocacy.
8. Concerning the church's public witness with respect to policies that will affect these goals:
 - a. Affirm our belief in the human right to clean water and air.
 - b. Support policies and regulations that rigorously reduce air pollution, not only carbon pollution, but also particulate matter and other carcinogenic air pollutants that disproportionately affect low-income, vulnerable communities of color living near regulated facilities and power plants.
 - c. Express our conviction that a just solution ought to address environmental racism.
 - i. Ensure that communities affected by environmental racism are included at the table and have the opportunity to provide leadership in the movement to find solutions to the current ecological crisis.
 - ii. Acknowledge the seriousness of local pollution in specific communities as a systemic problem.
 - iii. Affirm that those who suffer most have the strongest moral claim in shaping restorative policy and practice.
 - d. Support policies that improve water quality and that stop the ongoing pollution of U.S. waterways, ground water, etc.
 - i. Preemptively stop or suspend fracking and other fossil fuel extraction that endangers local communities with dangerous, toxic wastewater that is frequently dumped in streams or other water supply sources.
 - ii. Halt the construction of fossil fuel pipelines. Not only must we transition our energy infrastructure away from fossil fuels, but these pipelines are also hazardous to the communities in which they are built.
 - iii. Protect and increase investment in public lands that not only preserve pristine wilderness for posterity, but also provide natural filters, carbon sinks and eco-systems that clean and restore water systems and soils. Recognize that public lands may include some unique rights for Indigenous and native communities to maintain culturally appropriate and historical access to foraging, hunting or fishing, where appropriate.
 - iv. Ensure that toxic waste sites and other environmental hazards are not located near people's homes, nor new housing built near such sites; in particular, the low-income communities of color that are regularly targeted for these sites because they lack the wealth and political power to oppose them effectively.
 - v. Ensure that existing toxic waste sites, wherever they are, receive proper maintenance and lining to prevent seepage and protect against the contamination of the water supply.



- vi. Support comprehensive infrastructure replacement programs that replace lead pipes, retrofit sewer systems, and repair or replace other sources of toxicity in water. The water crisis in Flint, Michigan, is dire and must be addressed comprehensively, but it is not the only community afflicted with poisonous water contamination from aging and outdated infrastructure.
- e. Affirm the “polluter pays” principle. Ensure that the economic burden of conversion to a new economy rests on those who have the ability to pay, including corporations, private investors and the government. Further, ensure that local, state and federal governments raise new revenue to address these challenges using progressive taxation, rather than through flat, regressive taxes that will disproportionately burden lower-income taxpayers.
 - i. Require polluters to pay for their own mitigation and cleanup without passing costs on to consumers.
 - ii. Support capping executive compensation, stock buybacks and shareholder profits in order to ensure that polluters bear the social and environmental costs of their own businesses.
 - iii. “Green taxes” must serve to internalize the social and environmental costs of doing business, so that the true costs, including safety and environmental regulatory compliance, industry and building retrofitting, research and development, and mitigation of past pollution, are incorporated into the price for all items, from energy to food, transportation, building/housing and health care.
 - iv. “Green taxes” should be used to raise revenue to invest in a variety of priorities, including aforementioned investments in a new economy, pollution mitigation and cleanup, adaptation efforts, protection of land and species from degradation and extinction, and cost offsets for people who are unable to bear the increased prices for goods and energy.
- f. Reiterate that the goal of a “green economy” cannot be limited strictly to ecological concerns or environmental policy, but must address concerns of racial and economic justice in the marketplace, including a living wage; access to safe, affordable housing, health care and food; rigorous regulation of high-polluting sectors and industries; programs to replace and retrofit aging buildings and infrastructure; access to jobs and job training in sustainable industries; and workforce development programs for workers who will transition from the fossil fuel industry to sectors with renewable and sustainable practices. Recognize that economic justice is important especially for women, who bear the brunt of many climate impacts.
- g. Affirm the economic principle of “sufficiency” as a guiding factor in our economic decisions, as opposed to “excess,” which currently guides the U.S. economy. We believe that people are more important than profits and that God has provided abundance in creation. Whatever the mixture of market and government protection or provision, no person should live in abject poverty while others enjoy heedless excess. God has provided resources sufficient for all people and creatures to have what we need.
- h. Urge the U.S., state and local governments to:
 - i. Prioritize investment in low- and zero-emissions industries and products.



- ii. Provide incentives/disincentives (tax, subsidy and regulatory) for all sectors of the economy, including private citizens, to switch to low- and zero-emission products, transportation, buildings, food, etc.
- iii. Invest in appropriate-scale renewable energy production, ramping up large-scale renewable technologies that are already available, such as solar and wind, while avoiding displacement by large-scale hydroelectric projects.
- iv. Avoid commitments to energy production and technologies that continue to produce toxic waste, such as nuclear energy, or that provide only short-term or provisional solutions to long-term problems.
- v. Support programs that provide training for workers in all sectors, and in particular those who will necessarily leave the fossil fuel industry. Provide or support economic development for the regions and communities that depend on fossil fuel for jobs and livelihoods.
- vi. Invest in housing and building retrofitting, especially in communities affected by environmental racism, in order to reduce and clean up unhealthy environments, improve efficiency, reduce emissions and conform to the best practices available.
- vii. Incentivize a shift away from fossil-fuel and chemical intensive industrial agriculture and invest in regenerative and agroecological farming, which have the added benefit of sequestering from the atmosphere large amounts of carbon into the soil.
- viii. Invest in food system conversion to help communities form thriving local food systems, which make healthy food more accessible and reduce the use of fossil fuels in the fields and in the transportation of food from farm to table.
- ix. Partner with states, providing adequate funding for the conversion of the transportation sector to renewable energy sources, including expanding current and building new mass transit and investing in the infrastructure necessary to make low-carbon or non-carbon vehicles practical, such as electric charging stations.
- i. Encourage congregations, mid councils, and agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to invest in the renewable energy industry.
- j. Direct ACSWP, in consultation with relevant entities of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, to study and report back to the 226th General Assembly (2024) on the impacts of lithium mining and other types of mining activities, with particular attention on Indigenous lands and communities in South America and the Western United States.
- k. Direct the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee to engage with insurance companies and banks to cease insuring or lending to new fossil fuel projects.
- l. Recognize that those who are most affected by climate change, both in the U.S. and around the globe, are the least equipped to handle its effects. The U.S. must allocate significant resources to mitigate cost increases for historically underserved communities in the U.S. and for international adaptation for the most vulnerable communities in the world.
- m. We recognize that moving toward “green” products has its own environmental costs. Therefore, the GA directs ACSWP, in consultation with relevant entities of the PMA, to study and report back to the 226th General Assembly (2024) regarding the life-cycle stewardship of alternative



energy products created to enable a greener environment, such as lithium batteries. We direct that this study includes the entire life cycle, through consumer use and disposal, along with reuse and restorative practices.

- n. Recognize that Indigenous peoples have been particularly harmed by environmental racism. Ancestral lands and traditional practices may be tied to specific locations. These sacred grounds are seized and dumped on, destruction of Indigenous culture. By supporting Indigenous peoples in their efforts, we attempt to honor the broken and unenforced treaties that ultimately led to the environment's neglect.
- o. Recognize that Indigenous peoples carry the traditional knowledge and practices that protect and sustain the majority of the planet's biodiversity, including the protection of forests and the essential needs for human life.
- p. Affirm the need for well-funded research agencies and regulatory agencies.
 - i. While most of the climate research was first sponsored by private companies, those companies were not obligated to share findings with governmental agencies or the public. Corporations that give their investors information on the climate effects of their operations that differs from the conclusions of their internal research should be fined or otherwise punished. We need to invest in the work of independent scientists who will guide the development of regulation, regardless of profit.
 - ii. It is not sufficient or realistic to expect the market to correct itself without government regulation. In order to protect vulnerable communities, in particular communities of color who have consistently been on the receiving end of environmental pollution, toxic waste disposal and failing infrastructure, any method of assessing the cost of carbon, through a tax or market-based approach, must be coupled with rigorous regulation in order to protect these communities specifically.
 - iii. Regulatory agencies need to be well-funded and staffed, so as to have the capacity to enforce needed, rigorous regulation independent of political appointee and industry conflicts of interest.
 - iv. Further, neither the White House nor Congress should be permitted, based on partisan politics or ideologies, to meddle in the work of science-based regulation. The system of checks and balances must ensure that no elected leader is allowed to subvert science to serve a political end.
- q. Affirm the scientific consensus, stated in the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Reports and the Fourth National Climate Assessment, that global climate change is real, is human-caused and has already caused significant harm to humans, wildlife and natural ecosystems. The U.S. must take immediate, swift and effective action to reduce carbon emissions to prevent catastrophic climate change, mass species extinction, hazardous sea level rise, mounting risks to human health, and increasingly erratic and dangerous weather patterns. All U.S. policy remedies must set climate goals and emissions reductions targets based on the best available climate science and commensurate with international agreements and goals.
- r. Denounce the failure of the United States to engage in good faith with the international



community as it seeks to craft a global response to climate change. In particular, the U.S. must engage in international negotiations pursuant to the Paris Agreement, the Silesia Declaration and the Glasgow Climate Pact, making and meeting commitments to our global partners.

9. Recognize that transitioning to a more just, restored and sustainable world will be difficult, and acknowledge that there will be trade-offs, but this is possible and necessary. While it is hard for us to imagine a low-carbon/zero-carbon economy without fossil fuels, where environmental care comes before profit, in which racism and poverty are functionally eliminated, we must do all of these things. Instead of focusing on the difficulties or expense, we must lift up our vision and actions to create a revived environment, better health outcomes, employment opportunities that provide a living wage, clean air and water, wilderness preserved for its own sake, universal access to healthy food and the reconciliation of broken relationships.
10. As the church celebrates that earlier theological and ethical work, the Assembly encourages every pastor, every congregation, and all the teachers and professors in the church to contribute to the work of creation care theology, to understand God’s presence and purposes in nature and the cosmos of which we are part, and to defend the tree of life in all its forms, from the cross of Jesus Christ to the tree of nation-healing leaves.
11. Direct agencies and representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to utilize this paper in their advocacy and policy work and commend this paper to governing bodies and congregations, urging that it be used as a basis for study, action and advocacy.

Rationale

In 1990, the 202nd General Assembly approved *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, which included a “Call to Restore Creation.”

Therefore, God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to

- Respond to the cry of creation, human and nonhuman;
- Engage in the effort to make the 1990s the “turnaround decade,” not only for reasons of prudence or survival, but because the endangered planet is God’s creation; and
- Draw upon all the resources of biblical faith and the reformed tradition for empowerment and guidance in this adventure.

Giving thanks to God for the historic witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 32 years ago, we confess that we have not “responded to the cry of Creation.” We have failed to place the intrinsic value of God’s Creation above the idols of the world, such as wealth, power, acquisition and status. We realize that, despite the church’s comprehensive report on ecological crisis 32 years ago, we have not done enough to heed the call and avert catastrophe. The 1990s were not a “turnaround decade” for God’s creation, so the 225th General Assembly joins with previous Assemblies (1971, 1981, 1990, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2018) in recommitting our energy, our treasure and our vision to a future in which God’s Creation is restored, the human family lives together in balance and justice with each other and the rest of the Creation, and the social and ecological destruction that our society inflicts on the world is reversed and repaired.



This sin that we confess is not limited to environmental degradation, but rather encompasses the full spectrum of environmental injustice, racial injustice and economic injustice. The forces of greed, indifference and white supremacy have combined to paint a picture of our environmental, economic and communal future that is more dire than we could have predicted 32 years ago. This call to renewal and investment in our future must be centered on eco-justice, including anti-racism and an ethic of economic sufficiency.

Environmental Racism: Starting Where the Need Is Greatest

In today's political and social climate, environmental advocacy is varied and diverse, but specific to the church's witness is a special concern for the intersection of ecological degradation and racism — environmental justice (EJ). Church statements since the 1970s have recognized the need for participation of vulnerable and poor communities in solutions, but the ongoing intractability of the current situation in the U.S. requires extra intentionality. These recommendations seek to bring together the multiple strains of ecological concern, to fill in gaps in social witness policy and to view these issues through the lens of environmental injustice, as called for by the previous General Assembly.

Today's environmental activism can be characterized by two separate groups. The first is a largely white activist community whose concern is the “big picture” and whose strategies will embrace any and all public policy solutions that begin to address the very real ecological disaster that humans have created on earth. The other is the EJ community, which is largely disadvantaged communities — Black, Latinx and Native American communities whose priorities are more local, though no less urgent.

EJ communities feel that “big picture” climate advocacy fails to address their concerns. The New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, one EJ voice, argues that regulation is better than market mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions because regulating polluting facilities “would ensure that climate change mitigation policy would not only combat climate change but also help to reduce the disproportionate amount of pollution that is frequently present in EJ communities, i.e., communities of color and low-income communities, including those located in New Jersey.”^[1]

As we recommit to God's call to restore creation, we must ensure that EJ and low-income communities' needs are included in the discussion and that members of these disadvantaged groups not only benefit from new policies, but also help to lead the movement to find solutions that are comprehensive, effective and just. It is important that we, as the church, stand in solidarity with and behind those communities that have been systemically and historically subjected to pollution and poison in their very homes, schools, workplaces and recreation spaces.

Society Bears the Burdens, Rather Than the Polluters

In today's market economy, the true environmental and social costs of goods and services are not included in the price that consumers pay. Just as the federal government subsidizes large, wealthy retailers by allowing them to pay their employees poverty wages, making full-time workers eligible for public services, such as SNAP and Medicaid,^[2] multinational energy corporations obtain permits to pollute air and water,



emitting greenhouse gases and other pollutants with impunity, while society bears the burden of the impacts and the cleanup.

In contrast, ethical regulations should require corporations to bear the cost of their business and its cleanup. It is unacceptable that our society permits unfettered profit at the expense of workers in poverty-wage jobs, communities whose water and air are poisoned, and the bare minimum of pollution mitigation and prevention. These costs — living wages, pollution mitigation and cleanup, retrofitting, clean technology development, etc. — must be borne by corporations as a cost of doing business.

In keeping with the principle of sufficiency, confident in the belief that God has provided enough for everyone, company executives and shareholders must accept a more reasonable profit so that some of the market-based earnings can pay the true cost of doing business. Taxpayers should not be required to bear the burden of corporate cleanup when corporation profits are more than ample to provide the necessary funds.

Green Taxes

The 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted an extensive report, *Tax Justice: a Christian Response to a New Gilded Age*. In addressing the question of green taxes, the Assembly approved the following public policy recommendation: “Work to adopt taxes and tax expenditures that encourage responsible stewardship and protection of God’s creation. ‘Green’ taxes, generally speaking, incorporate a product’s social and environmental costs (often called ‘externalities’) into the costs of consumption, paying for remediation or innovation in some cases and reducing consumption or use that carries undesirable consequences.” It is notable that green taxes can serve three purposes. The first is to provide necessary revenue needed to invest in the economic conversion to a sustainable economy. The second is to incentivize certain behaviors, whether at the personal or corporate level, and the third is to disincentivize other behaviors.

Should the federal government pursue the mechanism of placing a price on carbon, which might entail a carbon tax, a cap-and-trade system, or some other market mechanism to price carbon, it must be designed in such a way that ensures the carbon price is high enough to be effective at lowering carbon emissions, while also generating the revenue that will be required to invest in jobs, infrastructure, industry conversion, building retrofit and most importantly to mitigate the increased costs to those who are economically vulnerable.

In particular, low-income communities must be held harmless from the increased costs. Communities that are affected by systemic, environmental racism are rightly skeptical of any price on carbon that relies on the market to correct polluting behavior. These communities know from experience that the market fails them with shocking regularity. Without significant government intervention and oversight, any market-based “solution” will lead to the exacerbation of already harsh economic situations.^[3] Any price on carbon must be paired with rigorous regulations that curb the pollution that affects these communities most severely and be crafted so as to cause the least economic hardship.



Affirming the Need for Regulation and Research

It is clear that the market alone will not regulate itself. It is further evident that for-profit corporations will not regulate themselves at the expense of their profit margins. Because corporations have not made decisions for the good of the whole at the expense of shareholder profits, we need strong regulatory and research bodies at the federal level that will not only perform their own research, but also enforce regulations and ensure that profits do not come before people.

Precautionary Principle

The 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved a statement on the precautionary principle, which states that “when an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not yet fully established scientifically. In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof.”^[4]

In light of this call for caution, activities such as fracking and the construction of pipelines should immediately be halted. The industry has failed to prove that fracking is a safe procedure by which to extract natural gas from the earth or that pipelines provide a safe, spill-proof conveyance through which to transport fossil fuel. In fact, there is significant evidence to the contrary — that these procedures are indeed not safe.^[5] Therefore, federal and state agencies must cease issuing permits for pipeline construction and fracking and require affirmative evidence that these activities can be done safely, without contaminating ground water or otherwise degrading the environment, before allowing these processes to continue.

Addressing Global Climate Change and Investing in Our Future

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) powerfully addressed the need to address global climate change through its policy recommendations in *The Power to Change: US Energy Policy and Global Warming*. This and many Assemblies since have spoken eloquently on the need to address climate change,^[6] so it only needs to be added that the situation of carbon pollution has grown significantly more dire in the 14 years since the statement. Global climate change requires immediate, swift and effective action to reduce carbon emissions in order to prevent catastrophic climate change, mass species extinction, mounting risk to human health, and increasingly erratic and dangerous weather patterns.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) also needs to consider its investments regarding climate change. *Power to Change* urged individuals and families to “invest personal funds in the renewable energy industry and also in companies that demonstrate concern for the well-being of their workers, their communities and the environment.” It is time for all levels of the church to discern their call regarding investments in caring for Creation. Additionally, the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee should use its seat at the table to engage with banks and insurance companies to cease from lending to or insuring new fossil-fuel development projects.



International Cooperation

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) also urges the United States to engage in good faith with the international community in the negotiations to address global climate change. For decades, the community of nations has been meeting and slowly negotiating benchmarks for salvaging a sustainable future. The Paris Agreement set forward global benchmarks that nations must meet in order to avert catastrophic climate change. The U.S. must commit to meetings its pledges to the Glasgow climate pact at the most recent COP 25 (2021).

The U.S. has not signed the “Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration,” which was developed at the COP24 United Nations Climate Change Conference (2018) in Katowice, Poland.^[7] This document outlines the social and political ramifications of addressing climate change and commits to a climate transition that invests in “decent work and quality jobs,” and emphasizes the ongoing need for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty, with a special concern for the most vulnerable and economically poor people in the world.^[8]

It is time for the U.S. to stop playing partisan games with the future of our global community. The U.S. government must engage with our international partners to ensure the future safety of the planet we share.

Conclusion

This vision for a renewed and restored creation is daunting in its scope, but we know that God’s abundance makes this transition possible. There is no doubt that transition to a low carbon/zero emissions economy will be difficult. Indeed, most people living today cannot imagine a society in which we have left behind fossil fuels, the internal combustion engine, and the degradation of the environment for profit, poverty and racism, but we believe that such a vision is possible. Environmental degradation and climate change cannot be addressed without also tackling the underpinning sins of racism, white supremacy and economic injustice, and so we must engage in the hard work dismantling white supremacy, starting within our own institutions. The work of anti-racism is the necessary foundation to the ongoing work of restoring creation to a right relationship.

We believe that God is calling the church to the trifold work of environmental justice, racial justice and economic justice. To those who would worry about how difficult this transformation will be or how expensive to achieve, we must lift up our vision — an environment renewed, better health outcomes, living wage jobs, clean air and water, wilderness preserved for its own sake, access to healthy food and the reparation of broken relationships.

Endnotes

1. *New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance. (2017). New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance climate change and energy policy platform. Unpublished paper. For copies, contact Dr. Nicky Sheats, newbians8@verizon.net.*
2. O'Connor, Claire, “Report: Walmart Workers Cost Taxpayers \$6.2 Billion In Public Assistance,” published by Forbes, April 15, 2014. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/clareoconnor/2014/04/15/report-walmart-workers-cost-taxpayers-6-2-billion-in-public-assistance/#6336ae7c720b>.
3. Sheats, Nicky. “Achieving Emissions Reductions for Environmental Justice Communities Through Climate Change Mitigation Policy.” Published in *William & Mary Environmental Law and Policy Review*. [Vol. 41: 377] 2017. p. 377.



4. “Item 08-03- Precautionary Principle: Managing Technological Risks to Protect Humanity and Our Planet—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.” Approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Minutes, p. 715. https://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/minutes2018.pdf.

5. “Forum: Just How Safe is Fracking of Natural Gas?” YALE Environment 360 published at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. June 20, 2011. https://e360.yale.edu/features/forum_just_how_safe_is_fracking_of_natural_gas.

6. See Appendix

7. “Just Transition Document.” Approved by 38 nations at the United Nations COP24 in Katowice, Poland. December 2018. <https://www.ioe-emp.org/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=134978&token=91237abd5b4e38c1e7c2e4364b2b8e7095d8e0fd>

Additional Resources

[50 Years Poster](#)

Appendix

Book of Order / Book of Confessions

Brief Statement of Faith (1991)	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/brief-statement-of-faith/
G-1.0304	

Policies

ACSWP Social Witness Policy by Topic	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/acswp/topics/
Ecology and Environmental Concerns	
• Restoring Creation for Ecology & Justice (1990)	
• Hazardous Waste, Race, and the Environment (1995)	
• The Power to Change – U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming (2008)	
• Report and Recommendations on Limited Water Resources and Takings with Study Guide (2004)	
• The Precautionary Principle: Managing Technological Risks to Protect Humanity and our Planet	
Economic Justice, Globalization	
• Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development (1996)	
• Tax Justice: A Christian Response to a Second Gilded Age (2014)	



Overtures

On Climate Change and the Persistence of Its Causes (1999) – calls to urge Senate to ratify Kyoto Agreement (Bill Gibson)	http://index.pcusa.org/nxt/gateway.dll/GAMinutes%2F50799%2F51113%2F52087%2F52450%2F52451%2F52452
Guide to Going Carbon Neutral (2006) [Response to the General Assembly 2006 Resolution Calling on all Presbyterians to go Carbon Neutral as a Bold Christian Witness to Help Combat the Effects of Climate Change.]	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/guide-going-carbon-neutral/
On Responding to Environmental Racism and to Promote Environmental Justice (2018)	https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000297
The Earth is the Lord's, Not Ours to Ruin (2018)	https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000298

PCUSA Programs and Program Resources

Six Agencies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PC(USA) Collaborative Agenda on Environmental Stewardship (2016) 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/environmental-issues/collaborative-agenda-for-environmental-stewardship/
Presbyterian Hunger Program	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/hunger/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enough for Everyone 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/hunger/enough/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Earth Care Congregations 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/earth-care-congregations/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/earth-care-congregations-guide-greening-presbyteri/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Blessed Tomorrow 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/blessed-tomorrow/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Let's Talk Faith and Climate: Communication Guidance for Faith Leaders 	https://blessedtomorrow.org/resources-category/communications-engagement/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 15 Steps to Create Effective Climate Communications 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Earth Day Sunday Resources 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/earth-day-sunday/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Eco-Justice Journey Blog 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Treading Lightly into Lent 	



Mission Responsibility Thru Investment	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/mrti/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRTI Metric Guidelines for shareholder engagement (2018) 	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-MRTI-Guideline-Metrics-with-annotations.pdf

Resources

Church & Society	
Energy in God's World (Mar/Apr 2004)	https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/7263004602/c--s-marapril-2004energy-on.aspx?bCategory=PSCS
Studies	
And the Leaves of the Tree are for the Healing of the Nations (1997, 2nd ed. 2006)	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/and-leaves-tree-are-healing-nations/
And the Leaves of the Tree are for the Healing of the Nations – Single Session Study Guide	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/and-leaves-tree-are-healing-nations-single-session/
Cherishing God's Creation (1998, updated 2010) DVD	https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/2436010002/cherishing-gods-creation-dvd.aspx?bCategory=PSSW
“Cherishing God's Earth” study guide	https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/cherishing-gods-earth-study-guide/
The Thoughtful Christian Downloadable Studies:	https://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/
Being Green at Home (2009) The Green Study Pack (2009) Being Green in Daily Life (2009) Developing a Green Action Plan for Your Congregation (2010)	
Books Published by Presbyterian Publishing Corporation	
<i>50 Ways to Help Save the Earth</i> , Rebecca Barnes (2008, revised 2016)	https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/0664262554/50-ways-to-help-save-the-earth-revised-edition.aspx
<i>Inhabiting Eden</i> , Patricia Tull (2013)	https://www.pcusastore.com/AdvancedSearch/Default-WFilter.aspx?SearchTerm=inhabiting+eden
<i>God of Earth</i> , Kristin Swenson (2016)	https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/0664261574/god-of-earth.aspx
Ecumenical / Interfaith Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Racism: A Study Guide (from National Council of Churches USA) 	https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/racial-justice/enviromentalracismecumenicalstudyguide.pdf
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty (United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries) 	https://www.ejnet.org/ej/twart-light.pdf



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States (United Church of Christ, Commission for Racial Justice) 	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1310/ML13109A339.pdf
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accra Confession (World Communion of Reformed Churches) 	http://wcrch.ch/accra/the-accra-confession

Presbyterian-Related Organizations

Living Waters for the World (1993)	https://www.livingwatersfortheworld.org/
Presbyterians for Earth Care organized (1995)	http://presbyearthcare.org/
Eco-Stewards (2007)	https://ecostewardsprogram.wordpress.com/
Solar Under the Sun (2009 – first training 2010)	https://www.solarunderthesun.org/
Fossil Free PCUSA organized (2014); Project of Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (2018)	https://www.fossilfreepcusa.org/ https://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/

Ecumenical / Interfaith Organizations and Resources

<p>Creation Justice Ministries [founded as the National Council of Churches (NCC) Eco-Justice Working Group (1983)]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation Justice Resources - Educational Resources for All Ages 	http://www.creationjustice.org/ http://www.creationjustice.org/educational-resources.html
National Religious Partnership for the Environment (1997)	http://www.nrpe.org/
Blessed Tomorrow	https://blessedtomorrow.org/

Financials and Investments

Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program	https://pilp.pcusa.org/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoring Creation Loan (2015) 	https://pilp.pcusa.org/restoring-creation-loan/
Presbyterian Foundation	https://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five-Point Approach to Address Climate Change Through Its Investments 	https://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/five-point-approach-to-address-climate-change-through-investments/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for the Environment Through Investing 	https://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/10022-PFD-Environmental-Investing-Report-F-nocrops.pdf
Board of Pensions	http://www.pensions.org/
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship (Fossil Fuel-Free Pax Global Environmental Fund added to Retirement Saving Plan Investment options 1/1/17; Board of Pensions Balanced Investment Portfolio funded fossil fuel free global equity portfolio with Impax (parent of Pax Fund) with \$100 million in May 2017) 	http://www.pensions.org/our-role-and-purpose/about-us/environmental-stewardship





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The Office of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202

*A policy statement is an excerpt from the Minutes of the
General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

