

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP COVENANT** **of University United Methodist Church**

Our relationships with God, others and all Creation are intrinsically interconnected. Not only were we created from earth (Genesis 2:7), but God put humans "...in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it" (Genesis 2:15b, CEB). The earth and all creation are God's (Psalm 24:1). We praise God's creation, yet see the Earth is in dire peril. We are witnessing the destruction of the environment necessary to earthly life for all God's family. The window for action is closing.

We embrace God's call as stated in the ***United Methodist Social Principles*** to serve as caretakers of God's creation. The section on the Natural World reminds us: "All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect." (from *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2016*. Copyright © 2016)

As members of University United Methodist Church, we hear God's call to deal justly with one another and the Earth. We respond to God's call by vowing to pursue specific goals to protect God's earth and to be caring stewards of Creation.

1. Our **worship and discipleship** will celebrate God's grace and glory in creation and declare that God calls us to cherish, protect and restore this earth.
2. In **education (discipleship/nurture)**, we will seek learning and teaching opportunities to know and understand the threats to God's creation and the damage already inflicted. We will encourage and support each other in finding ways of keeping and healing the creation in response to God's call to earth-keeping, justice and community.
3. Our **facilities and grounds** will be managed, maintained and upgraded in a manner that respects and cherishes all creation, human and non-human, while meeting equitably the needs of all people. In our buildings and on our grounds we will use energy efficiently, conserve resources, and share what we have in abundance so that God's holy creation will be sustainable for all life and future generations.
4. Our **outreach (missions and community)** will encourage public policy and community involvement that protects and restores the vulnerable and degraded earth as well as oppressed and neglected people. We will be mindful that our personal and collective actions can positively or negatively affect our neighborhood, region, nation and world. We will seek to achieve **environmental justice** through coalitions and ecumenical partnerships.

Affirmed by: University United Methodist Church Chapel Hill, NC Date: 9/26/23

The following is the resolution the 2023 NC Annual Conference approved.

For examples of actions local churches can take, and to supplement the information in this resolution, [follow this link](#).

## CREATION CARE TEAMS IN LOCAL CHURCHES

**Whereas, Scripture** proclaims God created all, nurtures all, and orders all creation in harmony—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, relating to each and all in self-giving love. Scripture also proclaims God called humans to be caretakers of creation (Genesis 1–2), bearing God’s image by relating to creation in a godly manner, nurturing it and maintaining it in harmony. 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; and

**Whereas, 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 needed amid the cascading crises that are harming 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 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.” At their November 2021 meeting, the Council of Bishops made a statement to “Encourage and support action on climate change at the annual conference level, including support for moving toward net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.” In 2021, The Conference Board of Trustees committed the North Carolina Conference to a 50% emissions reduction by 2030 and 100% reduction by 2050 [1]; and

**Whereas, 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 poisoning 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 [2]. Our reasoning capabilities are also informed by the examples of indigenous peoples whose traditional wisdom and practices honor living in harmony with nature. Globally, humans can understand the damage and ways of

mitigating the effects. They can discern what is needed and how to carry out their specific plans in their local situations; and

**Whereas, Experience** is honored by United Methodists as a way of recognizing lifetime gains of knowledge, understanding, perspectives, and practices of diverse, unique individuals. Functioning as a team, they become stronger in their efforts, taking heart from one another in these critical times (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Experience is also honored in the varied ways in which humans encounter God through nature and society. As we age, we grow ever more aware of our creaturely mortality. Such awareness is divinely intended to grow us in empathetic wisdom and spur our action. Such senior wisdom is honored by all ages. Youth and young adults, aware of how much the crisis will affect them and their descendants, have armed themselves with knowledge and ardent empathy. Wise elders respect, honor and encourage our far-seeing younger colleagues, fostering them as leaders in our common calling.

**Now, therefore, be it resolved**, the North Carolina Annual Conference urges every local church **to create a Creation Care 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; and weekly confessing our failure to be godly stewards of God’s creation.

One or more educational opportunities, held within and for the congregation and/or community, related to some aspect of creation care and justice.

One or more positive changes in the practices of the church’s life and/or to the church building or grounds, for the purpose of meeting the 2021 emission goals quoted above [1].

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; and

**Be it further resolved**, the North Carolina Annual Conference urges every local church to **lift up creation care and justice in all areas of ministry and mission**, including preaching, liturgy, communications, education, outreach, and advocacy. In liturgy, weekly prayer of Confession could include words like, “We have not heeded the groaning of creation,” (Romans 8); and

**Be it further resolved**, the North Carolina Annual Conference urges every local church to **exchange ideas and offer inspiration** throughout the connection; and

**Be it further resolved**, the NC annual conference **will continue its ongoing work of assisting churches by means of the conference creation care team, and through the new District creation care teams**, under the guidance of the district superintendents.

1. “Joint statement from the Creation Care Committee and Conference Board of Trustees,”

September 20, 2021. [Joint statement from the Creation Care Committee and Conference Board of Trustees | Creation Care \(nccumc.org\)](#) See also:

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/global-ministries-commits-to-net-zero-emissions-by-2050-adv>

- [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/>](#)

See also: [Project Drawdown: Climate Solutions](#)

[101 <https://drawdown.org/news/insights/new-drawdown-lift-report-advancing-climate-solutions-can-help-alleviate-extreme> poverty.](#)

Approved by the Annual Conference of NCCUMC, June 17, 2023