

Siblings in Christ,

Presbytery meetings are always interesting! I have been to more than a couple of presbytery meetings during my time in ministry and have seen meetings conducted in many different ways and addressing many different issues. Sometimes presbytery meetings address wonderful joyous events such as the chartering of a new congregation or a new mission opportunity. Other times, presbytery meetings wrestle with difficult decisions, such as closing an aging congregation or dealing with conflict. I have seen colleagues engage in theologically sound, respectful, and thoughtful debate and I have seen colleagues respond poorly out of anger, hurt, or fear.



I have even been to meetings that are dull and boring and seem like they will never end. I'm sure we have all been to meetings where most, if not all the business, is routine, administrative, or redundant. Meetings that after four hours, you look for the exit, only to realize that it has only been fifteen minutes. Meetings where you wonder if anything we discuss or vote on will have any tangible effect on you, your ministry, or your congregation. When I find myself in those meetings, there is one thing I tell myself – we are doing Holy Work.

Anytime the church gathers and tries to discern God's will, we are doing Holy Work. Anytime we come together to pray, to worship, or make decisions, we are doing Holy Work. When we are talking about big, exciting ministry ideas, we are doing Holy Work. When we are deciding to close a diminishing congregation, we are doing Holy Work. When we are voting for a slate of nominees, grateful that we are only serving on two committees this year, we are doing Holy Work. Even when the discussions and motions are routine and dull, we are still doing Holy Work.

I was reminded of that in reading January's meeting evaluations (see – we do read and pay attention to each, and every evaluation filled out!). Many people expressed gratitude for the thoughtful and moving prayer and devotion, led by COM. A few of them mentioned they did not think it was enough. We needed something more to remind us that we are doing Holy Work. In response to this, we will be offering a brief prayer before we vote on each motion to remind us why we are doing this work and who we are doing it for.

There is a story that I have often heard but have never verified. I know Mother Teresa can be problematic, but the story goes that a young nun came to her saying she wanted to do great things. Mother Teresa supposedly responded "Do you want to be great? Pick up a broom and sweep the floor." This story has always stuck with me. It is a reminder that our faith demands action. It is also a reminder that God is found in the great and the mundane, the big and the small, the earthquake and the still, small silence. If we are furthering God's mission on Earth, we are doing Holy Work.

Yes, sitting in committees discussing the budget is Holy Work. Yes, filling out the [Landscape](#) (if you haven't yet – go do so!) is Holy Work. Yes, debating if we should or shall do something is Holy Work. Yes, celebrating a new congregation is Holy Work. Yes, setting up chairs before a potluck is Holy Work. And yes, when we meet in March, we will be doing Holy Work and I look forward to working alongside you.

Colossians 3:17: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through him."

Faithfully,

Chris Deacon

Moderator, National Capital Presbytery

**Stated Meeting
National Capital Presbytery
March 19, 2024
6:00PM via Zoom
We Gather in Community**

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| 6:00 | CALL TO ORDER | Rev. Dr. Chris Deacon, Moderator |
| | OPENING PRAYER AND DEVOTION | |
| | FORMATION OF THE ROLL, DOCKET, OMNIBUS MOTION (p. 3) | Rev. David Baer, Stated Clerk |
| 6:10 | TRANSITIONS / PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION | Rev. John Molina-Moore, General Presbyter |
| 6:20 | INTRODUCING THE LANDSCAPE SURVEY | Rev. Tara Spuhler-McCabe |
| 6:35 | COMMISSION ON MINISTRY (pp. 4 & 5) | Rev. Carla Gorrell & Rev. Juli Wilson-Black, Co-Chairs |
| 6:45 | COMMITTEE ON BILLS AND OVERTURES (p. 6) | Elder Mark Eakin, Chair |
| 7:00 | NEW BUSINESS | Rev. Dr. Chris Deacon, Moderator |
| | CHARGE AND BLESSING | Rev. Dr. Chris Deacon, Moderator |

Meeting Leaders

Rev. David A. Baer, Stated Clerk

Rev. Dr. Chris Deacon, Moderator

Elder Lou Durden, NCP Vice Moderator

Elder Mark Eakin, Bills and Overtures Committee Chair

Rev. Carla Gorrell, Commission on Ministry Co-Chair

Rev. John Molina-Moore, General Presbyter

Rev. Tara Spuhler McCabe, Director of Congregational Development and Mission

Rev. Juli Wilson-Black, Commission on Ministry Co-Chair

*This document, the Packet, contains the **action items** for the Stated Meeting.
Please refer to the additional reports posted on the NCP web site
for important information about the work of our officers and committees.*

OMNIBUS MOTION FOR THE MARCH 19, 2024, PRESBYTERY MEETING

From the Stated Clerk

- The Stated Clerk recommends the **APPROVAL** of the minutes of the January 23, 2024, NCP meeting.
- The Stated Clerk recommends that the Presbytery **ACCEPT** the resignation of the Rev. Grace Woodward from the Commission on Preparation for Ministry.
- The Stated Clerk recommends that, in accordance with Book of Order G-2.0404, the Presbytery **GRANT** a waiver of the limitation of terms to the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church to allow Elder Carole Banks, who has served for six years on the session, to be installed to an additional term.
- The Stated Clerk reports that the following commissions have carried out their responsibilities and recommends that they be **DISMISSED** with thanks:
 1. The Commission to Ordain and Install Samuel Sarpong as Designated Associate Pastor at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church on February 10, 2024.
 2. The Commission to Ordain and Install Robert D’Orazio as Associate Pastor at Patuxent Presbyterian Church on February 17, 2024.

ACTION ITEMS FOR MARCH 19, 2024 NCP MEETING

ACTION ITEM #1

Commission on Ministry

The Coordinating Commission of the COM **MOVES** that the Presbytery **AMEND** its “Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action In Calling Church Leadership” policy as follows (text to be removed is ~~struck through~~, text to be inserted is *italicized*):

Affirmative Action Program

1. The COM and its liaisons with PNCs will ~~advise~~ *assist* in finding qualified ~~women, persons of color, and persons with disabilities~~ *candidates of a diversity of ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, genders, and worldly conditions. (Book of Order F-1.0403 and F-1.404).*
2. Each ~~PNC must include, hear preach, and interview at least one woman among its final candidates unless granted an exception by COM.~~ *A PNC is required to include and interview candidates that represent diversity among its final candidates as defined in #1.*
3. Any exception must be requested and granted prior to interviewing final candidates, and only after a PNC has made diligent efforts to find *diverse* qualified persons ~~of both genders and diverse race, ethnicity, and with disabilities~~ *as defined in #1.*

Rationale for the change: The current policy language was approved in 1998, and the COM has received feedback about the policy being outdated. The COM felt that incorporating language addressing diversity from the Book of Order would provide a more expansive description of the openness we are called to express as a church, as well as give appropriate guidance to PNCs that interview candidates who may not identify as either men or women.

ACTION ITEM #2

Commission on Ministry

The Coordinating Commission of the COM **MOVES** that National Capital Presbytery **ESTABLISH** an Administrative Commission for Litchfield Presbyterian Church, in accordance with *Book of Order* G-3.0109(b):

The Administrative Commission shall have the following powers and responsibilities:

1. To visit with the session of the church, if extant, and inquire into the congregation's life and ministry. The commission shall report to the presbytery at the earliest opportunity if it determines that the church is unable to continue as a congregation of the PCUSA, and may request that the presbytery grant the commission such additional powers as may be needed.
2. To obtain or compile a membership roll for the church, providing for the pastoral care of its members.
3. To review the adequacy of the church's insurance coverage for its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers (G-3.0112), and to provide for such coverage in the event it has lapsed.
4. To review all existing facilities use or lease agreements for the property held by the church, referring them to the presbytery's Administrative Commission on Congregational Property for approval as needed.
5. To assume original jurisdiction from the session of the church, if it determines that the session cannot exercise its authority, following the procedural safeguards in G-3.0303(e).

There shall be five members of the commission, divided as equally as possible between teaching and ruling elders. The Moderator of the Presbytery shall have the authority to name the members of the commission, including the chair.

In accordance with **Book of Order G-3.0109(b)**, the Commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings for incorporation into the records of the Presbytery. The Commission shall report its decisions to the Stated Clerk, who shall report them to the Presbytery at its next stated meeting.

Rationale: On February 16, the Rev. David Baer, NCP Stated Clerk, received a communication from the last known clerk of session stated that the membership of Litchfield Presbyterian Church had dwindled to the point where the church could no longer afford regular pulpit supply. There is no installed pastor of the church, and no appointed moderator of the session.

The *Book of Order* assigns to the presbytery the responsibility to "coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community," and accordingly grants presbyteries the authority to "counsel with a session concerning reported difficulties within a congregation ... [and] assume original jurisdiction in any situation in which it determines that a session cannot exercise its authority" (G-3.0303d,e).

ACTION ITEM #4

Committee on Bills and Overtures

1. The Committee on Bills and Overtures MOVES that the Presbytery CONCUR with Overture 002, “On Amending D-7.0501 Regarding Minors.”
2. The Committee on Bills and Overtures MOVES that the Presbytery CONCUR with Overture 013, “On removal of investments in and subsidies for fossil fuels.”
3. The Committee on Bills and Overtures MOVES that the Presbytery CONCUR with Overture 014, “On Becoming Free from Plastic Pollution”

The text and rationale for each of these overtures is provided below:

[OVT-002] On Amending D-7.0501 Regarding Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Source: Presbytery

Committee: Unassigned

Event: 226th General Assembly (2024)

Sponsor: Genesee Valley Presbytery

Type: General Assembly Full Consideration

Recommendation

On Amending D-7.0501 Regarding Minors and Vulnerable Adults

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the *Book of Order* to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall D-7.0501 in the *Book of Order* be amended as follows:

(Text to be added is [in brackets and italics]. Text to be deleted is ~~struck through~~.)

“When a clerk of session or the stated clerk of a presbytery receives an allegation, without undertaking further inquiry, that clerk shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the [person] accused or the nature of the alleged offense[. *In a case in which the person identified as having been harmed is a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity, the clerk shall disclose to the council the nature of the alleged offense and the name of*

the person accused.] and [The council shall] refer the statement of allegation promptly to an investigating committee, which shall conduct an inquiry as defined below.”

The full text of D-7.0501, if the proposed amendment is approved, will read:

“When a clerk of session or the stated clerk of a presbytery receives an allegation, without undertaking further inquiry, that clerk shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the person accused or the nature of the alleged offense. In a case in which the person identified as having been harmed is a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity, the clerk shall disclose to the council the nature of the alleged offense and the name of the person accused. The council shall refer the statement of allegation promptly to an investigating committee, which shall conduct an inquiry as defined below.”

Rationale

1. The context for D-7.0501 is the procedure by which submission of a formal accusation of a disciplinary offense prompts the council of a church or presbytery to form an investigating committee and commence the disciplinary process of the *Book of Order*.
 2. In a case which alleges that the person harmed was a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity, D-7.0501 presently requires the clerk to withhold this critically relevant demographic information. The possible negative consequences are serious. Withholding relevant information is an omission which prevents the council from exercising its ability to act, e.g., temporarily suspending a volunteer leader of a youth group, warning parents whose children may be at risk, informing legal authorities of potential statutory violations, or simply seeking consultation. If the case has possible civil or criminal law implications, failure to initiate reasonable risk management actions at this stage may expose the council to legal liability.[\[1\]](#)
 3. By knowing the nature of the alleged offense and the name of the person accused, a council would be able to exercise its power of discernment and appoint members to an investigating committee who do not have personal ties to people involved in the case or who are able to bring specialized knowledge, expertise, or skills to a sensitive matter. Without knowledge of the relevant information, the council has an incomplete baseline from which to decide whether its investigating committee appointees are well-qualified or will face conflicts of interest.
 4. A two-part moral and polity framework in the *Book of Order* supports this overture. The first part originates in G-4.03, the dedicated confidentiality section. G-4.0301 unequivocally declares: “Confidentiality should not be an excuse to hold secret the knowledge or risk of harm, especially when related to the physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity.” We regard preserving confidentiality as secondary and prioritize protecting vulnerable people.
- Disclosing relevant information as our primary moral obligation follows in G-4.0302, the Mandatory Reporting provision. Here is the explicit mandate to take positive action to protect vulnerable people by disclosing information to authorities. It reiterates the primary moral value which prioritizes protecting people at risk. G-4.0302 makes clear the substantive basis for disclosing: “...knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to

the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity...” Knowledge is essential to being able to act preventively.

The second part of the moral and polity framework is our obligation which is implicit in Chapter 7 of the *Book of Order* Disciplinary Process. D-7.0201a. and D-7.1501b. both address accountability in circumstances when a person “knew, or reasonably should have known of the reasonable risk of sexual abuse of another... [and] failed to take reasonable steps to minimize the risk.” The moral commitment in Chapter 7 is that we are responsible for recognizing a risk and that once we know, we are obligated to act to reduce the possibility of harm.

5. The unconditional language of D-7.0501 contradicts the letter and spirit of both G-4.0301 and G-4.0302, provisions which affirm that preserving confidentiality is not an absolute when withholding the truth enables the commission of abuse, neglect, or harm. By prohibiting disclosure, D-7.0501 devalues protecting vulnerable people and perpetuates their risk for sake of a secondary priority. Our Church’s compelling interest to safeguard people engaged in our mission and ministry justifies overriding D-7.0501’s imposition of concealment. This overture ensures that our moral responsibility and positive duty embodied in existing provisions of G-4 and D-7 are honored and upheld by the procedure of D-7.0501.

6. Since the 1990s when the offense of “sexual abuse of another person” was added to the disciplinary section of the *Book of Order*, experience throughout the PC(USA) teaches us that it is very difficult to maintain the high degree of confidentiality required by D-7.0501. It’s not realistic to think that confidential information about the alleged harm of a child or a person without mental capacity will be long-contained in a congregation. Anecdotal evidence teaches us that it is more realistic to expect that a council’s ignorance of available but concealed facts regarding a risk to vulnerable people will be experienced as leaders’ failure to fulfill their core responsibilities and a betrayal of trust.^[2]

7. This overture utilizes the phrase, “adult who lacks mental capacity.” This is a consistent application of the wording used in both G-4.0301 regarding confidentiality and in G-4.0302 regarding mandatory reporting.

^[1] In Ezekiel 33:6, the community’s sentinel is held accountable for failing to sound the trumpet and warn the people of imminent danger.

^[2] In Ezekiel 34:10, the shepherds are held accountable for the well-being of God’s sheep.

Concurrence

Utica Presbytery

Great Rivers Presbytery

[OVT-013] On removal of investments in and subsidies for fossil fuels.

Source: Presbytery

Committee: Unassigned

IOB Link: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001144>

Event: 226th General Assembly (2024)

Sponsor: Susquehanna Valley Presbytery

Type: General Assembly Full
Consideration

On Removal of investments in and subsidies for fossil fuels.

The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

1. Declare that continued support of the exploration, development, funding, and exploitation of fossil fuels through investment of PC(USA) funds, violates the equitable welfare of all life and our biblical charge as humanity to care for creation, and is irretrievably incompatible with the mission and goals of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
2. Declare that all publicly traded companies whose primary source of income is derived from the exploration, development and production of fossil fuels are to be placed on the General Assembly's list of prohibited securities.
3. Strongly encourage all congregations, presbyteries, synods, the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Foundation, as well as Church-related educational institutions and individual church members, to align their investment decisions with this declaration with all due speed and diligence.
4. Call on all PC(USA) members and institutional investors to seek out investments in clean renewable energy companies.
5. Request reports from the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Foundation and other investing entities at the next General Assembly on the steps taken to align their investment decisions with the intent of this overture.
6. Call on the U.S. government to end all subsidies for the development and production of fossil fuels.

Rationale

Our Values: Past General Assemblies have repeatedly stated the vocation of earth care as an essential mark of Christian discipleship and the Church's mission and ministry. Our responsibilities as a faith institution are clear: God created the earth, and it is sacred. The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. We are a part of and not independent of the created order and are meant to be caretakers and protectors of creation and our neighbors.

Our Reality: We are in the midst of a climate crisis that is primarily caused by the production and burning of fossil fuels which release greenhouse gases, such as methane and carbon dioxide that are warming the planet. The scientific consensus, established over many years and with increasing levels of certitude, is that the warming of our atmosphere beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial temperatures will undermine the entire web of life on the planet with catastrophic consequences.

The Solution: In order to avoid this, the Intergovernmental (scientific) Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in March 2023, that the nations of the world must cut our carbon emissions by 48% from 2019 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, but last year, as in previous years, these emissions continued to climb. And while the U.S. has recently taken action to bring down its own emissions, we now produce and export more fossil fuels than ever in history. The U.S. also subsidizes the fossil fuel industry with estimates ranging from \$10-50 billion per year, while our northern neighbor, Canada and several other fossil fuel producing countries have announced that they are ending their subsidies.¹

The world has to change the path it is on, but it requires two huge changes. The most critical change is a “fast, full and fair” phase out of fossil fuel production and usage. The second is the rapid expansion of sources of renewable energy. The church’s investments have power and influence which can contribute to these changes and bear witness to the world that we acknowledge the climate crisis, the suffering it is causing and its link to the burning of fossil fuels.

The Denomination is Responding to the Climate Crisis: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has long recognized its obligation to take actions as faithful stewards of God’s Creation to respond to climate change. The General Assembly actions in 1981, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2022 acknowledge the realities of global warming and its effect on the “least of these” throughout our world.

The Mission Agency has raised the importance of earth care to a matter of high priority for every part of its programming and the work of our Presbyterian Hunger Program and Earth Care Congregations program are exemplary in their efforts to inform and lead the church in the fulfillment of its mission. In addition, our Office of Public Witness became a sponsor of an initiative, to be called the Fossil Fuel Non-proliferation Treaty, launched by the governments of several South Pacific island nations (among the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters). This initiative is calling for the phase-out of both new and existing sources of fossil fuels.

The Denomination’s Response is Inconsistent: Such educational and advocacy efforts on behalf of our denominational commitment to earth care are undermined by institutional strategies which continue to seek profit from investment in the fossil fuel industry. This practice is hypocritical at a minimum and potentially endangers our evangelistic message and leadership within the ecumenical community of church bodies. While the percentage of total investments is small, (3.4% for The Foundation [1] as of December 2023), the dollar value is in tens of millions of dollars. MRTI has begun a company by company divestment review, but the climate crisis is getting worse faster than our actions can bring about significant change.

Further, these PCUSA directed entities not only have a fiduciary duty to conserve and protect the church's assets and return an increase through the investment process, but are also obligated to duties of loyalty and obedience to our mission and established values to the extent allowed by secular law related to such.

Existing Policy Provides Option for Removal of Funds from an Entire Class of Firms: The original founding document from 1984 upon which our Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) is based, "Divestment Strategy: Principles and Criteria", clearly states that divestment of holdings can be in a particular "firm or class of firms" and that this is both part of the normal management of funds and potentially an occasion for Christian witness to God's call for justice and renewal of society. (Paragraph 25.202) It also states that divestment is a conscious decision to dispose of any current financial stake in an enterprise or 'class of enterprise' because of policy or practice in regard to a social issue and to prohibit future stake so long as the offending situation holds. (Paragraph 25.261) [emphasis and quotation marks added]"

Existing Policy also Provides for Proscription of a Class of Firms: Furthermore, that document identifies that there are some classes of investments which should not be considered because of their nature which is fundamentally and irretrievably incompatible with the nature and purpose of the church. Thus, there is a list of such classes of economic activity which are excluded or "proscribed". This list excludes from our investment portfolio, investment in companies whose primary activity is in production of tobacco products, nuclear weapons, for-profit prisons and a few others.

The Presbyterian Foundation is Moving in the Right Direction: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a long history of aligning our corporate investment decisions with our values and enabling our members to do so. In fact, according to our Presbyterian Church Foundation's New Covenant Trust Company's website description for their "Fossil Free Strategy" they have established an instrument specifically "[f]or investors concerned with fossil fuel emissions and climate impact" which "can be configured to exclude the entire energy sector and other firms with a high carbon footprint."

The Path Forward for the Whole Denomination is Not Easy: We understand that the modern world and each of our lives are deeply intertwined with the fossil fuel industry and cannot be easily divorced from it. We live on the continuum between purity of moral conviction and the pragmatic exigencies of the current patterns and practices of the modern world. Yet we must act and act quickly, acknowledging the destructive nature of our fossil fuel investments.

In doing so, we refer the reader to the actions of our last General Assembly in support of communities where the loss of fossil fuel industry jobs will present hardship.

We Must Change: We understand and appreciate the role of our MRTI in encouraging enterprises to alter their practices to align more nearly with our values. However, we also know that there are some enterprises which are fundamentally such that no amount of change in practice will ever bring them into alignment. We feel it is past time for us to name the fossil fuel industry as one of these and existing policy provides for this.

For the sake of the integrity of our denomination's Christian witness, our purpose within the created order, the maintenance of the web of life upon which all humanity depends and our children's children, we must act

quickly to withdraw all our resources, regardless of their size, either in dollar amount or percentage of those used, from the production of fossil fuels and to identify fossil fuels as a proscribed class of investments.

[1] <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-12-09/us-opts-out-of-dutch-plan-to-end-fossil-fuel-subsidies-at-cop28?leadSource=uverify%20wall>

[OVT-014] On Becoming Free from Plastic Pollution

Source: Presbytery

Committee: Unassigned

IOB Link: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001145>

Event: 226th General Assembly (2024)

Sponsor: Susquehanna Valley Presbytery

Type: General Assembly Full
Consideration

[OVT-014]

On Becoming Free from Plastic Pollution

The Presbytery of _ Susquehanna Valley overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to commit ourselves as a church, a people of faith and a social organization embodying Christian values, to:

1. Encourage all our settings to commit to changing from a disposable culture to a reusable, sustainable one.
2. Encourage education within our congregations and in our communities to advocate for alternatives to single use plastics, whether through mitigation efforts and campaigns or by supporting local and state bans on single use plastics, and
3. Encourage all settings of the Church to determine the best pathway forward for strategies and actions to mitigate plastic pollution, using as examples the following resources:
 - a. The Story of Plastics, (95-minute documentary)[i]
 - b. Sierra Club Solutions to Plastic Pandemic[ii]
 - c. Ten Towns –Ten actions Toolkit of New Hampshire[iii]
 - d. National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF): Join the Fight for Reducing Plastic Pollution[iv]
 - e. Break Free Plastics: resources, articles, list of the worst corporate polluters and suggestions for actions[v]
 - f. The Five Actions Congregations Can Take from the United Church of Christ[vi]
 - g. Presbyterians for Earthcare webinar and resources on becoming free from plastics[vii]
4. Reduce the use of single-use plastics and packaging.
5. Commend all settings of the church to join in possible opportunities for participation in addressing plastic pollution including to:
 - a. Encourage all settings of the Church to commit to change from the throwaway and disposable culture and consumptive practices to reusable and compostable products.[viii]

- b. Encourage replacement of single use plastics such as cutlery, plates, cups, straws, lids, and bottles with bioplastics, reusable, truly recyclable (like aluminum or paper) or compostable substitutes.
 - c. Preach on ecological sustainability principles articulated by Sallie McFague on responsible use of ecological resources^{ix} and the sustainable goal of mitigating single-use plastics.
 - d. Educate on the importance of mitigation of single-use plastics and plastic straws as well as plastic bottles at our churches, their events, and gatherings.
 - e. Educate on the toxicity of plastic pollutions and microplastics to the health of our environment, to our own health, and the health of non-human life.
 - f. Educate on policies and practices of local recycling and composting services and advocating for better practices.
 - g. Organize low or zero waste events in collaboration with local organizations and infrastructures.
 - h. Support businesses that use sustainable practices such as reusable containers and reusable bags.
 - i. Participate in public cleanup of God’s creation, including all bodies of water, parks, and beaches.^[x]
 - j. Install fountains for water bottles in church campuses, wherever possible.
 - k. Actively support and lobby for local, state, national, and international legislation and policies that align with the intention of this resolution including bans of or fees on single use plastics.
 - l. Encourage the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee of the PC(USA) to engage with companies and corporations to reduce their production and use of plastics, particularly eliminating single-use plastics wherever possible.
6. Acknowledge that accommodations in expectations need to be made for certain impacted groups such as those who are disabled or unhoused.
7. Encourage people in all settings to speak truth to the public square against plastic pollution of our planet.

Rationale

The 222nd General Assembly overwhelmingly agreed that “caring for God’s creation” should be part of our constitution and this received concurrence of 150 Presbyteries^[xi]. Our Book of Order now states “God sends the Church to share in the stewardship of creation, preserving the goodness and glory of the earth God has made”^[xii] and includes “caring for God’s Creation” in the commitment to participate in Christ’s mission. In keeping with this, all Presbyterians should seek to reduce the use of plastics, especially single-use plastics, in their homes, churches, workplaces, communities, states and nation.

In 2023, our sisters and brothers in the United Church of Christ (UCC) General Synod passed the overture “Free from Plastic Pollution: A Resolution of Witness”.^[xiii] We overture the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to join them. The UCC’s Rationale can be found in their Resolution.

The PC(USA) General Assembly has affirmed that creation care is a fundamental part of who we are as Presbyterians. The biblical mandate for the overture “On Amending G-1.0304, The Ministry of Members, by

Adding “Caring for God’s Creation”[xiv] by Dr. William P. Brown (William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary) applies to our need to become free from plastic pollution as well:

The fundamental biblical mandate for creation care comes from Genesis 2:15, where God places Adam in the garden to “till it and keep it” (NRSV). A better translation from the Hebrew is “to serve it and to preserve it.” In Genesis 1:26–28, God blesses humankind with dominion over the earth. Human “dominion” as intended in Genesis is best practiced in care for creation.

In Christ “all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17), and “every creature under heaven” is to receive God’s good news (v. 23). According to Revelation, God’s work in the world is “make all things new” (21:5), to bring about a new creation that does not destroy the old but transforms it, renews it. If the church is the sign of the new creation, then the church must lead the way in caring for creation.

Since the UCC General Synod passed their Resolution of Witness, further evidence of the danger of plastics to God’s Creation have been realized. Studies have found plastics in almost every food they tested, often at high levels.xv Water from disposable water bottles contains about 240,000 nanoparticles per liter.[xvi] Plastics in our bodies can have serious impacts on our health and inhaled plastics have been correlated with lung inflammation, shortness of breath and a higher risk of lung cancer.xvii These impacts disproportionately fall on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. Mary Johnson (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health) said, “Vulnerable populations are at even greater risk of the negative health impacts from the production, use and degradation of plastics”.[xviii]

Approximately 99 percent of plastic comes from fossil fuels, generating 3.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions.[xviii] Petrochemical companies have undertaken a massive increase in plastic production referred to as “Plan B for the fossil fuel industry”.[xviii] Expanded the use of plastics serves to increase demand for fracked gas.[xix] Leaked methane, the largest component of fracked gas, has 28 times as much impact on warming the climate as does carbon dioxide[xx] and is responsible for about 30% of the rise in global temperatures since the Industrial Revolution,[xxi] resulting in 2023 being the warmest year on record, by far.xxii And while governments and international bodies are trying to limit plastic production, petrochemical industries are working to weaken legislation and international treaties.[xxiii]

Currently, 430 million tons of plastic is produced yearly resulting in a production of 11 billion metric tons of plastic in the last century, surpassing the biomass of all animals on earth. Despite efforts to convince people recycling is effective, only 9% of the plastic ever produced has been recycled, and 19% has been incinerated.[xxiv] Plastics are now one of the largest environmental disasters on our planet, polluting the Earth we are passing on to our children and subsequent generations.

God placed Adam in the garden to serve it and to preserve it. It is time for the Presbyterian Church (USA) to preserve creation by becoming free from plastic pollution.

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