

RESOLUTION OF WITNESS ON RENEWABLE ENERGY

Submitted by the Justice and Witness Team

Illinois South Conference

United Church of Christ

2017 ISC Annual Meeting

Summary Statement

The Illinois South Conference calls upon its congregations and members to use renewable resources for our own energy needs as a matter of faithful stewardship to our loving God who has blessed us with an abundant life.

Biblical and Theological Background

In Genesis 1, God proclaims all creation to be “very good.” Humans, created in God’s image, are given “dominion over” the good created order. Yet when Adam and Eve try to consume more of creation’s gifts than they need, in Genesis 2 and 3, their environment becomes uninhabitable and they are moved elsewhere.

Psalm 24 reminds us that the earth and all its bounty belong to God.

In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul notes that creation still waits “with eager longing” for humans to live into their identity as “children of God.”

Jesus spoke of “birds of the air” and “lilies of the field” as not under the control of anxious spirits of humankind in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

Since humans are created in the image of God, our dominion over creation must reflect God’s rule over us with hope for abundant life for all.

Humans are not entitled to use the gifts of creation in ways that abuse its goodness. We must act responsibly towards creation’s goodness. As stewards, we are blessed with opportunities to manage God’s gifts of creation, for the sake of sharing them with generations to come.

As a people who love God, we are a powerful force in preserving creation.

Historical and Social Context

Since the Industrial Revolution, fossil fuels have served as valuable sources of energy that have enriched the lives of people around the planet. However, we have come to learn that these benefits have come with increasing environmental costs.

Coal places grave health risks upon the lives of its miners and pollutes the atmosphere. Hydraulic fracturing (fracking), makes natural gas readily available, but produces permanently undrinkable water; pumping that water back into the ground causes earthquakes.

Accidents in drilling, pumping, and transporting petroleum have led to environmental disasters in water and on dry land.

Most scientists believe that use of fossil fuels is the primary cause of worldwide dangerous climate change.

Recent innovations in technology make solar and wind energy more promising options. These technologies currently employ many more than the fossil fuel industry.

Current state, federal, and utility company incentives make solar and wind installations economically advantageous for individuals and also for organizations, both for-profit and non-profit.

The Illinois South Conference and many of its congregations find themselves needing to

dip into investment accounts to meet their expenses. Many traditional vehicles of financial investment are providing very little income growth at this time; however, investing in renewable energy programs has the potential of significantly increasing returns, while at the same time benefitting our neighbors.

United Church of Christ Proclamations and Actions

The United Church of Christ has a long history of advocacy for environmental concerns. In 1959, the United Church of Christ passed a resolution calling for Christian Action in Society, which included encouragement for conservation and the development of the Earth's resources for the benefit of all people now and in the future.

In 1987, the UCC passed a resolution concerning the Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace, which called for the creation of a sustainable environment that balances full human development with the protection of the eco-system.

General Synods in 1999 and 2007 passed resolutions urging faithful stewardship of creation in light of climate change.

General Synod in 2013 urged divestment of fossils from retirement funds.

In 2015, General Synod advocated a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources by 2040.

The Resolution

Whereas solar and wind technology employees are in great demand in Southern Illinois, and solar and wind offer safer employment than in fossil fuel industries, and these jobs are clean, well-paying, and open to miners, veterans, and people of varying racial and ethnic origins; and

Whereas costs for solar and wind for individuals and churches are now affordable; and

Whereas a variety of programs are available or soon-to-be-available to allow non-profit organizations to invest in renewable energy programs that that will benefit their neighbors while also potentially benefiting their investment portfolio; and

Whereas solar and wind are abundant, renewable resources that cannot be depleted, but are safe, clean ways to reduce carbon and methane, and aid in alleviating climate disruption, and they preserve clean air, water, land and environment, as well as rural life and community cultures;

Therefore be it resolved that congregations and members of the ISC pledge to promote the use of renewable energy in their churches, businesses, and homes;

Be it further resolved that they will encourage legislators to pass legislation supporting the use of renewable energy, and they will encourage legislators to prioritize clean jobs' initiatives and programs that aid immediate use of renewable energies;

And be it further resolved that they will encourage divestiture of investments in fossil fuels and investment in renewable energy technologies by the ISC, its congregations, its institutions, and its members.

Financial Impact on the Conference: \$0