

## **Resolution 1001. Energy Policy Statement**

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Humankind enjoys a unique place in God's universe. We are created in the very image of God, with the divine Spirit breathed into us, and entrusted to "take charge of" God's creation (Genesis 2:7; 1:26, 28; see Psalm 8:6). Yet, we are simply one of God's many finite creatures, made from the "topsoil of the fertile land," bound in time and space, fallible in judgment, limited in control, dependent upon our Creator, and interdependent with all other creatures. We are simultaneously caretakers with all creation and, because of the divine summons, caretakers with God of the world in which we live.

### *The Values Involved in Energy Policy*

The decisions that humans make will either enhance or degrade the quality of life on the planet. We live in an era of energy interdependence. Confronting global issues such as climate change, energy inequity, and pollution will require international solutions based upon the values of justice and sustainability.

Scripture provides an imperative for our action and lays the foundation for the values that we seek to realize. These values underlying the policies we advocate are justice and sustainability.

1. *Justice*. As God's covenant people, with Noah, Abraham, Jacob and the prophets, we bear a special responsibility for justice.

"Let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24)

is a cry echoed in hundreds of contexts throughout the Old and New Testaments. Biblical righteousness includes a special concern for the least and the last: the poor, the prisoner, the oppressed (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1-2). As people of the Christian covenant, we support energy policies that seek to actualize the multifaceted biblical vision of justice. Just energy policies: close the gap dividing wealth and poverty, rich nations and poor; liberate and do not oppress; fairly distribute the benefits, burdens, and hazards of energy production and consumption, taking into consideration the living and those not yet born; and give priority to meeting basic human needs such as air, water, food, clothing, and shelter.

2. *Sustainability*. We recognize that creation entails limits to the resources entrusted to us as stewards of the earth. While God has created an economy of abundance with sufficient resources to meet all human need, our inclinations toward greed and overuse too often have transformed sufficiency into scarcity. In addition, we recognize limits to nonrenewable fuel sources available for our consumption and limits to our environment's capacity to absorb poisonous wastes. Energy policy decisions must be measured by sustainability as a criterion in addition to justice. In terms of energy policy, sustainability means energy use that will: ensure adequate resources and opportunity for present and future generations to enjoy a healthy quality of life; enhance local environmental and

economic vitality while minimizing impacts on the health of both human and non-human creation; and promote social and intergenerational equity.

Technological advances have created an increasingly sophisticated and industrialized world community. As we pursue an energy policy that is just and sustainable, it is not a realistic option to ask all global citizens to return to an era where wood and candles provided the only sources of heat and light. Also, we should be aware of the tragic effects that steadily increasing energy costs will have, especially upon the aged and those living in poverty. Furthermore, some cleaner energy options available to wealthier nations are not available to peoples in all parts of the world; hence, we should endeavor to develop just and equitable energy policies.

We must creatively explore all sustainable energy options available to us. There are environmental and social problems connected with certain energy options. We believe that the economic, environmental, and social implications of each energy source should be fully assessed.

Today, the leading source of global energy consumption is fossil fuels including oil, coal, and natural gas. From extraction to end-use, the life cycle of energy produced from fossil fuels has led to severe strain on both the local and global environment.

Underground mining of coal, in addition to operational accidents, causes disabling illness or death from black lung. Stripmining and mountaintop removal despoil lands and ruin them for further use if restoration measures are not practiced. Hydraulic fracturing, commonly called "fracking," has opened vast new deposits of oil and gas for exploration but with serious consequences for communities' water quality and geological stability. Deep sea extraction presents consequences and risks we do not yet fully understand, including destruction of aquatic ecosystems and pollution from leaks and spills. The burning of fossil fuels causes large-scale pollution and seriously alters the environment by increasing the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

In addition to fueling regional instability, the use of oil resources poses significant environmental dangers. Tankers and offshore wells have created spills that have devastated seacoast areas often with long-lasting or permanent ecological damage. The emissions produced from the use of oil as fuel are a leading source of air pollution, particularly in centers of dense population.

Hydroelectric dams, particularly those in areas with considerable seismic activity, pose dangers to nearby communities and the environment. Furthermore, the building of hydroelectric dams and reservoirs destroys communities, wildlife habitats, and natural scenic beauty.

There are considerable concerns with regard to the nuclear energy option. The destructive potential of a catastrophic accident involves a great risk of irreversible damage to the environment and all living species. Nuclear waste remains active and dangerous for thousands of years. Additionally, the development of nuclear energy possibly has masked ambitions for nuclear armament.

Today, cleaner alternatives to traditional energy sources are available and increasingly cost-competitive. Harnessing solar and wind power can produce energy with far fewer net emissions. Facing increased global demand for energy resources and ever-increasing strain on the global

environment, we must chart a new course rooted in our shared principles of justice and sustainability. To this end:

1. We support strenuous efforts to conserve energy and increase energy efficiency. A transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will combat global warming, protect human health, create new jobs, and ensure a secure, affordable energy future. Economists have concluded that a greater increase in end-use energy can be gained through conservation and energy efficiency than through any single new source of fuel. Furthermore, conservation is nonpolluting and job producing. We include under conservation: insulation, co-generation, recycling, public transportation, more efficient motors in appliances and automobiles, as well as the elimination of waste, and a more simplified lifestyle. The technology for such steps is already known and commercially available; it requires only dissemination of information and stronger public support, including larger tax incentives than are presently available.
2. We will be models for energy conservation. United Methodists, including churches, annual conferences, general boards and agencies will model energy conservation by doing such things as: installing dampers in furnaces, insulating adequately all church properties, heating and lighting only rooms that are in use, using air circulation, purchasing energy efficient appliances, and exploring alternative energy sources such as solar energy. Local churches, camps, and agencies are urged to become involved in programs such as the Energy Stewardship Congregation and Interfaith Power and Light programs, thereby witnessing our shared values of justice and sustainability.
3. We will model sustainable and just energy values. United Methodist Church programs and mission projects must model our sustainable and just energy values. We particularly urge the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) to support and fund renewable and energy efficient mission projects; and we urge the Church Architecture Office of the General Board of Global Ministries to make energy conservation and the use of renewables a prime design feature in new building design and renovations.
4. We support increased government funding for research and development of renewable energy sources and elimination of fossil fuel subsidies. We encourage the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies and government incentives to speed the application of the resulting technologies to our energy needs. The greatest national and international effort should be made in the areas of conservation and renewable energy sources.
5. We support local, regional, and national efforts to provide transition assistance for communities currently dependent on old energy fossil fuel economies. Honoring the contributions and sacrifices these communities and workers have made, often for generations, The United Methodist Church commits to being in ministry with and supporting these individuals, families, and communities as we seek a healthier and more equitable energy future.
6. We encourage international lending institutions and aid agencies to promote sustainable and just energy policies.

7. We oppose any energy policy that will result in continuing exploitation of indigenous peoples' lands. Oil exploration, hydroelectric projects, the mining of coal, and the milling of uranium despoil indigenous peoples' lands and increase health and socioeconomic problems.

8. We support national energy programs that do not increase the financial burden on the poor, the elderly, and those with fixed incomes. Energy policies must guarantee universal service to all consumers, protecting low-income and rural residents.

9. We support full cooperation of all nations in efforts to ensure equitable distribution of necessary energy supplies, the control of global warming, and rapid development and deployment of appropriate technologies based on renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, and water energy generation.

10. We urge transparency in global energy market transactions. Market manipulation can disrupt pricing and access causing harm, particularly to poor and marginalized countries and communities.

11. We exhort The United Methodist Church at all levels to engage in a serious study of these energy issues in the context of Christian faith, especially the values of justice and sustainability.

**ADOPTED 1980**

**AMENDED AND READOPTED 2000, 2008, 2016**

**RESOLUTION #1001, 2008, 2012 *BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS***

**RESOLUTION #5, 2004 *BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS***

**RESOLUTION #6, 2000 *BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS***

*See Social Principles, ¶ 160B.*

## **Resolution 1033. Caring for Creation: A Call to Stewardship and Justice**

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### *Our Call to Stewardship and Justice*

Our covenant with God calls us to steward, protect, and defend God’s creation. The psalmist proclaims, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1) reaffirming our charge to care for creation as a trustee of God’s handiwork (Genesis 1:28). We are to delight in and praise God for the abundance and diversity of creation (Psalm 148) and honor God’s covenant established with all living creatures (Genesis 9:9).

The story of the garden (Genesis 2) reveals the complete and harmonious interrelatedness of creation, with humankind designed to relate to God, one another, and the rest of the created order. God’s vision of “shalom” invites all of creation to know wholeness and harmony, and the good news that we are called to proclaim includes the promise that Jesus Christ came to redeem all creation (Colossians 1:15-20).

Violating the integrity of our relationship with creation is sinful. Our failure to serve as faithful caretakers of creation has local and global consequences. Our inability to share the abundance that God has entrusted to us has given rise to ecological crises and extreme poverty. Our unchecked consumption and unsustainable patterns of development have exacted a toll on creation and are increasing inequality of opportunity around the world.

Confronted with the massive crisis of the deterioration of God’s creation and called to a ministry of reconciliation between God, humankind, and creation, we ask God’s forgiveness and commit ourselves to a new way of being that integrates environmental, economic, and social justice. As United Methodists we therefore are called to participate in God’s healing of creation through acts of personal, social, and civic righteousness. Proclaiming and modeling a new lifestyle rooted in stewardship and justice we work toward the day when all God’s children respect and share in the goodness of creation.

### *Our Methodist Tradition and Witness*

John Wesley taught a holistic view of salvation that included the deliverance of the created world in the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

In the sermon “The New Creation” (#64) Wesley speaks imaginatively about what the new heavens and the new earth will be like, imagining into the scriptural promises of an end to death and suffering (Revelation 21:1-7), and an end to present environmental catastrophes like storms, polluted water, and animal suffering. This is all part of the promise of God’s “greater deliverance” from sin. “And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion

with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three—One God, and of all the creatures in him!”

Early Methodists worked toward this hoped-for view by addressing environmental concerns, such as open sewers, impure water, unplanned cities, and smoke-filled air. In response to squalor and filth in the mines and mills, Methodists advocated for a wider knowledge of concepts of basic health. The substantial decline in the death rate in England from 1700 to 1801 can be traced to this work.

Wesley’s eschatological vision for the deliverance of all creation led him to respect and care for the created world here and now. “They may encourage us to imitate him whose mercy is over all of his works. They may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord cares for them. It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures to reflect that, as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven... . Yea, let us habituate ourselves to look forward, beyond this present scene of bondage, to the happy time when they will be delivered there from into the liberty of the children of God” (Sermon 60, The Great Deliverance).

### *Our Vision*

We believe clean air is a basic right and necessity for all life. Air pollution puts at risk the health of our communities and threatens to forever alter the climate. To ensure that future generations inherit a legacy of clean air:

We advocate the adoption and strict enforcement of adequate standards to control both indoor and outdoor air pollutants. These standards must be developed to protect vulnerable populations including children and the elderly. We advocate measures to prohibit smoking and the provision of adequate ventilation for indoor facilities as well as ambitious standards to limit harmful emissions from stationary and non-stationary sources.

We support efforts to protect our shared atmosphere by reducing emissions that contribute to ozone depletion, acid rain and climate change. Through bilateral and international frameworks, we advocate ratification and enforcement of agreements to reduce harmful emissions with particular emphasis and accountability by the most developed and historic emitters.

We believe water is a sacred gift from God. We further believe water is a basic human right and not a commodity to be traded for profit. To ensure that water remains pure and available to all: We support the right of native peoples to the first use of waters on their lands.

We advocate integrated, sustainable management to reduce or eliminate factors contributing to limited water quantity and poorer water quality. We call for measures to preserve groundwater sources, to address polluted runoff that threatens water quality and safety and for effective enforcement against illegal pollution.

We support the public’s right to know that water is safe for drinking, swimming, and fishing and disclosure of any pollutants discharged by industries and municipalities.

We are to tend God’s land and care for all creation’s creatures as faithful trustees with a commitment to preserve its goodness and diversity for future generations.

We encourage economic and agricultural practices that conserve and promote the improvement of land resources, production of healthful foods, and preservation of a clean environment.

We call on governments to support careful management of agricultural lands, protection of forests, and preservation of biodiversity among both plants and animals. We support national and international efforts to protect endangered species and imperiled habitats.

We believe that natural resources, outside the control of different nations, from the genes that form life to the air and outer space, are the common heritage of all humanity and therefore must be developed and preserved for the benefit of all, not just the few, both today and for generations to come. We believe God's whole earth has inherent value and our use of these precious gifts, including energy resources, must balance the needs of human development with the needs of non-human creation and future generations.

We support the concept of common heritage guaranteeing that people have the right to enough of the resources of the universe to provide for their health and well-being.

We support policies that encourage energy conservation and a shift toward cleaner, renewable sources of energy. We advocate for just and sustainable energy policies that prioritize the needs of those individuals and communities with the fewest resources.

We advocate for equivalent environmental standards among countries entering into trade agreements so that creation and communities are not sacrificed in the name of "free trade." We oppose the use of creation as a means of warfare or economic oppression and urge the abolition of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons and the cleanup of sites contaminated with the waste byproducts of militarization.

We encourage measures to minimize the use of toxic and hazardous substances, strengthen right-to-know policies so that individuals and communities can understand threats from pollution, and support policies that hold polluters responsible for the cost of cleanup and health impacts.

We acknowledge the constantly imperfect state of our knowledge regarding the impacts of new technologies and urge the development of those technologies most in accord with God's plan of wholeness for all creation.

### *Our Commitment*

As The United Methodist Church we understand our responsibility to address and our complicity in the challenges facing God's creation. We urge all United Methodists, local faith communities, agencies, and institutions to examine their roles as caretakers of creation and to study, discuss, and work to implement this resolution. Specifically, The United Methodist Church:

- Designates one Sunday each year, preferably the Sunday closest to Earth Day or World Environment Day, as a Festival of God's Creation incorporating creation care into the church's worship and study.
- Promotes an environmentally sound lifestyle mindful of consumption amid a culture that encourages over consumption and waste.

- Commits to reducing, reusing, and recycling goods and to the use of recycled and “processed chlorine free” paper by United Methodist boards, agencies, and publishers.
- Encourages all institutions to perform energy audits, improve energy efficiency, and utilize clean, renewable energy sources where available. In addition, we call for the following: Council of Bishops:
- Communicate to the denomination the urgency of reducing our individual and corporate impact on God’s creation.
- Model for the Church a “ministry of witness” by practicing “social and environmental holiness” as recommended in “God’s Renewed Creation: A Call to Hope and Action.”
- Support the efforts of annual conferences to form teams of United Methodists committed to creation care. Connectional Table:
- Request that each quadrennial report to General Conference include an evaluation of creation care efforts and steps taken by the reporting body to integrate sustainable environmental practices into its ministry. Commission on General Conference:
- Request that the meetings of General Conference model sustainable practices and report on efforts to reduce waste and consumption. General Board of Church and Society (GBCS):
- Develop resources highlighting opportunities for personal engagement and advocacy for individuals, local churches, annual conferences, and the general Church to understand and respond to our call to be caretakers of God’s creation.
- Organize teams of United Methodists to engage in concrete actions including advocacy to address locally identified challenges to creation. General Board of Discipleship (GBOD):
- Develop curriculum and programs for all ages, in consultation with GBCS, GBGM, and UMW, that emphasize ecological responsibility as a key element of discipleship. General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM):
- Join with GBCS, United Methodist Women (UMW), and other agencies in working with mission partners to participate in the ongoing global dialogue on sustainability through the United Nation’s Commission on Sustainable Development.
- Explore and implement tangible ways to incorporate creation care into the mission, ministries, training programs, operations, and administration of GBGM. General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM):
- Include a greater awareness in clergy education and training of the global ecological crises. United Methodist Communications (UMCom):
- Produce programs that stress Christian responsibility for the future of creation and include models of The United Methodist Church’s involvement in creation care. General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA):
- Assist the denomination in its effort to be ecologically responsible in its own use of resources by collecting statistics on local churches’ and general agencies’ use of energy, water, paper, local purchasing efforts, minimization of toxics, and recycling to monitor the progress of the denomination in these aspects of stewardship. General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB):
- Develop investment guidelines, in consultation with agencies, to evaluate its securities on adherence to high standards of environmental accountability as evidenced by the adoption of an environmental code of conduct and a practice of transparency in public environmental reporting. United Methodist Women (UMW):
- Develop educational, missional, and policy initiatives surrounding climate justice, and environmental health and their impacts on women, children, and youths. Local Faith Communities:

- Develop programs to incorporate the concerns of ecological justice into their work in evangelism, social concerns, mission activities, stewardship, trustees, and worship
- Endorse the Clergy Letter Project ([www.theclergyletterproject.org](http://www.theclergyletterproject.org)) and its reconciliatory program between religion and science, and urge United Methodist clergy to participate.

***ADOPTED 2016***

See Social Principles, ¶ 16

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<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/climate-change-and-the-church-s-response-1035>

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## **Resolution 1035. Climate Change and the Church’s Response**

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The natural world is a loving gift from God, the creator and sustainer, who has entrusted it in all its fullness to the care of all people for God’s glory and to the good of all life on earth now and in generations to come. The image of God in us (Genesis 1:27) is reflected in our abilities, responsibilities, and integrity, and with the power of the Holy Spirit we are called as God’s coworkers in dialogue and covenant to live and serve for the good of creation. We confess that we have turned our backs on our responsibilities in neglect, selfishness, and pride. And yet Christ’s redeeming and restoring work through his death and resurrection embraces all of creation. Even in the face of destruction and disaster, we believe that God’s vision for the world is of peace and wholeness and that God offers to us a future filled with hope (Jeremiah 29:11). This vision has a present and a future in the promise of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1-8).

One manifestation of our neglect, selfishness, and pride is our sinful disregard for creation that has given rise to the injustice of climate change. Human-induced climate change is caused by the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases, for which the strong economies of this world carry the vast responsibility. Those economies that have benefited from fossil-fuel development rightly bear the responsibility to rapidly reduce emissions and support less wealthy economies in their journey toward sustainable and climate resilient development.

Unless we change our ways, the average global temperature by the end of the twenty-first century is on course to increase by 4 degrees Celsius resulting in sea level rise, shrinking glaciers, extreme weather, droughts, and flooding. The United Nations’ World Food Program estimates that climate change will place 20 percent more people at risk of hunger by 2050.

Leaders in some developed nations continue to debate, from places of comfort and privilege, the “reality” of a changing climate in order to perpetuate their polluting ways. As the church we witness firsthand the consequences of climate disruption in our communities and in the lives of those Christ calls us to be with in ministry. Recognizing our complicity and responsibility, we seek to chart a new path rooted in economic and ecological justice. We understand climate justice not simply as an environmental or economic concern but rather as a deep ethical and spiritual concern that the Church must address so that abundant life is ensured for our children and future generations.

As we continue to call for bold leadership and advocate for policies rooted in justice and sustainability, we understand that God is calling each of us to respond and that as a denomination we cannot hope to transform the world until we change our way of being in it.

**Therefore, we call on United Methodists to: Study the pastoral letter from the Council of Bishops entitled “God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action.” Clergy and laity should use the letter**

**and accompanying resources to preach and teach on the care for creation as part of our discipleship;**

Prayerfully explore lifestyle changes as individuals and faith communities that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support a cleaner, healthier future;

Support communities impacted by climate change as well as those currently dependent on fossil fuel extraction and production as they transition to a new energy economy;

Challenge all United Methodist institutions, organizations, and local churches to incorporate climate stewardship, reducing the use of fossil fuel, into the design of facilities and reduce the carbon footprint of meetings;

Utilize resources available through the General Board of Church and Society, the General Board of Global Ministries, the General Board of Discipleship, and United Methodist Women to support locally-appropriate climate actions;

Advocate for national policies that shift resources, including subsidies, away from high-carbon development and toward alternative, cleaner energy sources; and

Advocate for a fair, ambitious, and binding international agreement to address climate change built on nationally appropriate commitments to both mitigation and adaptation.

***ADOPTED 2016***

See Social Principles, ¶ 162