NEW HAMPSHIRE CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST PROPOSED
RESOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN WITNESS

TITLE: CREATION CARE FOR OUR CONFERENCE CHURCHES
PARTNERING WITH OUR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

SOURCE: The Environmental Stewardship Mission Group of the NHC-UCC
Note: This resolution is also being submitted to the Peace and Justice Ministry with a request that this body also recommend the adoption of the resolution by the NH Conference.

SUBMITTED ON: August 22, 2017

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SUMMARY: This resolution follows the action of the 31st General Synod of the United Church of Christ in July, 2017 in Baltimore, Maryland, which adopted an emergency Resolution of Witness that reads in part: “God’s great gift of Creation – the context in which all life seeks fulfillment – is in crisis. Driven by material aspiration, humanity’s use of fossil fuel since the Industrial Revolution has broken Creation’s balance. The scale of Creation’s demise is dramatically expanding beyond our comprehension. Never has the earth and the climate changed so quickly. While the leaders of every country in the world recognize this reality, our current Administration ignores science, defunds the Environmental Protection Agency, and withdraws from the Paris Climate Accord. As people of faith, recognizing that the earth is the Lord’s, it falls upon our generation to embrace the imperatives set forth in this resolution – imperatives that constitute a new moral era. We view the current climate crisis as an opportunity for which the church was born.”

EMERGENCY STATUS: This resolution merits status as an Emergency Resolution for two reasons. Recent actions by Administration officials, including the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency, rolling back critical protections against climate change, have necessitated responses and witness from communities of faith. The General Synod passed an Emergency Resolution of Witness which calls for a response from the Conference and local levels, and the time to take action is now.

BACKGROUND STATEMENTS: The national setting of the UCC has also initiated a two-year program entitled Three Great Loves with the following purpose, mission and vision statement:

We will love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength; and our neighbor as ourselves. (Purpose)
United by the Holy Spirit and inspired by God’s grace we love all, welcome all, and seek justice for all. (Mission)
A just world for all. (Vision)
One of the Three Great Loves is Love of Creation, which has been expressed for years by UCC members and congregations, through participation in such events as the protests against the Keystone (tar sands) pipeline and the Kinder Morgan (fracked gas) pipeline, participation in collective actions such as the People’s Climate March, participation in and support of the Water Protectors of Standing Rock, and countless other acts of witness and stewardship.

The UCC is now making it possible for local congregations to declare themselves Creation Justice Churches, collectively discerning their high calling to care for creation and seek justice for the oppressed. The UCC has recently announced a pilot project to build a partnership with 350.org, the well-regarded earth stewardship organization which has already provided UCC churches and members the opportunity to learn, collaborate, and speak truth to power.

Through all of these developments, and particularly following the resolution from General Synod, local Conferences and churches are being called upon to prayerfully engage in a number of imperatives, including:

* Clergy accepting the mantle of moral leadership
* Incarnating the change we long for, setting a moral example through our words and actions.
* Proclaiming the truth in the public square, with courage to address the greatest moral challenge that the world has ever faced.

THE RESOLUTION RATIONALE:

Whereas, Psalm 24:1 reminds us that "The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it";

Whereas, the 31st General Synod of the UCC, 2017, approved an emergency "Resolution of Witness" entitled "The Earth is the Lord's-Not Ours to Wreck; Imperatives for a New Moral Era" that views the current climate crisis as an opportunity for which the church was born, calling on communities of faith to address the greatest moral challenge the world has ever faced by committing to resist all expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and demanding new sources of renewable energy that are accessible to all communities...

Whereas, the national setting of the UCC has created a new partnership with 350.org, and created new opportunities for churches to identify themselves as Climate Justice Churches, and identified Care of Creation as one of the Three Great Loves…

Whereas, the struggle of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and its allied water protectors against the Dakota Access Pipeline exposed the trampling of indigenous rights and treaties, the desecration of sacred land, the endangerment of the Missouri River which is the source of water of the Standing Rock Reservation, the building of fossil fuel infrastructure that would accelerate climate change, and the militarized response of law enforcement to peaceful acts of protest...

Whereas, the UCC Council for American Indian Ministries called for Active Solidarity with Standing Rock in 2016...
Whereas, the Standing Rock Movement has a successful tactic in divesting banks that fund pipelines.…

Whereas, a central point of focus for the clergy who gathered at Standing River was the Repudiation of the "Doctrine of Discovery" which authorized Christians to kill non-Christians and possess their land and resources.…

Whereas, the Justice and Witness Ministries of the UCC presented its major social justice award called the "Movement Makers Award" at the 2017 General Synod, to the International Indigenous Youth Council that launched a Movement at Standing Rock.…

Whereas there is evidence that actions of witness and education and protest have made a difference in affecting the actions of politicians and civic and corporate entities, and that communities of faith have a clearly-defined moral responsibility to take a leadership role at such a time as this,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ join its brothers and sisters within the UCC Environmental Justice Ministries in prophetic witness locally and nationally to advocate for the healing of the earth, our home and God’s gift for all living things.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference, with the leadership of the Environmental Stewardship Mission Group and its partners in ministry, support local congregations in their efforts of identify as Climate Justice churches, and participate fully in the Three Great Loves initiative, and the 350.Org partnership…

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Annual Meeting of the NHCUCC demonstrate its Love of God's Creation by engaging in the following practices to protect all of God's Creation, including the members of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and its allied Water Protectors:

a-Encourage our clergy to preach about our moral obligation to protect God's Creation;

b-Provide the impetus for our congregations to form Green Teams or Environmental Stewardship Ministries and to learn about our personal and communal responsibility to care for the earth;

c-Charge those responsible in our homes, churches, and communities to actively practice conservation of energy, to decrease our need for fossil fuel, and to encourage the use of renewable energy;

d-Actively advocate for citizens, especially those from the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and their allied Water Protectors, who are struggling to protect their land and their precious water resources, a necessity of life;

e-Participate in the Standing Rock Movement to divest from fossil fuel and from the banks that fund gas pipelines that pollute the rivers and aquifers which are their sources of drinking water;
Give moral and financial support to the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and its Water Protector allies in their battle against the Dakota Access Pipeline from the North Dakota Bakken Fields, that risks polluting their drinking water and that of many in the Mid-Western States.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Hampshire Conference will support the partnership between the Environmental Stewardship Mission Group and the Faith Formation Ministry to plan and promote an Environmental Justice youth event in the Spring of 2018.

PLAN OF ACTION IMPLEMENTING BODY: The Environmental Stewardship Mission Group of the NH Conference, United Church of Christ will be responsible for supporting and advising the Conference in the implementation of this resolution and in undertaking the plan of action noted below.

ANTICIPATED COSTS: Although implementing this Resolution will depend in large measure on volunteer labor, there are several anticipated expenses. These include several NH Conference-wide mailings, expenses associated with promoting the film by Jehann at the Annual Meeting and beyond, and expenses associated with the Environmental Justice Youth Event in 2018, with a ceiling of $1,200 for all items.

PLAN OF ACTION: The Environmental Stewardship Mission Group will work with the NHCUCC staff to maximize the exposure of the Standing Rock film at the Annual Meeting and beyond, and establish partnerships to support the further editing and showing of this film; The Environmental Stewardship Mission Group will work with the Faith Formation Ministry to plan for a Spring 2018 Environmental Justice Youth Event; The Earth Stewardship Mission group will continue its regular communication with the UCC Minister for Environmental Justice, The Rev. Brooks Berndt, to support the work of local congregations to identify as Climate Justice Congregations and to partner with 350.Org; The Environmental Stewardship Mission group will seek partners in working with the national setting of the UCC as they promote and support the Three Great Loves initiative.