

1 The Executive Council has recommended this resolution be referred to the implementing bodies named in “A
2 Resolution on Climate Change,” as voted by the Twenty-sixth General Synod (07-GS-16).
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4 5 **Earthwise Congregation: A Resolution on Mediating Climate Change**

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7 (A Prudential Resolution)
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11 **Submitted By:** The Minnesota Conference
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13 **Summary Statement of Intent of the Resolution:** Affirms the United Church of Christ as an
14 environmentally conscious entity and provides a framework for individual congregations and the UCC as
15 a whole to show unity and solidarity in mediating climate change and advancing justice through
16 sustainability.
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18 **Background and Supporting Statement:** The Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of
19 Christ called on the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ, specifically Wider Church
20 Ministries and Justice and Witness Ministries, to address the severe nature of this global warming crisis as
21 one of the most urgent threats to humankind and, indeed, all of God’s precious planet earth and that Local
22 Church Ministries develop materials to help churches “green” their buildings.
23

24 In Genesis 2:15, God took the first human into the garden and gave instructions to “till and care for it.”
25 Genesis 9:15 reminds us that God is in a covenantal relationship with all beings: “I will remember my
26 covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind.” When people today despair it is too
27 late to save life on Earth, the Gospels remind us where to place our hope. In Mark 10:26-27, the disciples
28 asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not
29 with God; all things are possible with God.’
30

31 **Text of the resolution:** 32

33 **WHEREAS**, the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ admitted Christian
34 complicity in the damage human beings have caused to the Earth’s climate system, urges responsible
35 stewardship of God’s creation, and expresses profound concern for the pending environmental, economic
36 and social tragedies threatened by global warming;
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38 **WHEREAS**, the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ urged all segments of the
39 Church to address global warming in their decisions and investments and in their educational and
40 advocacy efforts;
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42 **WHEREAS**, the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ called on the Covenanted
43 Ministries of the United Church of Christ to address the severe nature of the global warming crisis as one
44 of the most urgent threats to humankind;
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46 **WHEREAS**, United Church of Christ congregations have successfully brought about culture change
47 through church identification with significant community issues, via designations such as “Open and
48 Affirming” or “Peace with Justice”.
49

50 **WHEREAS**, congregations have begun to take action addressing climate change, and demonstrated the
51 need for a cohesive and meaningful framework for action which will promote the change of culture
52 necessary to transform and heal our current environmental crisis.

53
54 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Twenty-seventh General Synod creates a new congregation
55 designation, the Earthwise Congregation, thus answering the Twenty-sixth General Synod's call for
56 environmental stewardship. The Earthwise Congregation will be a body of action and a voice of hope,
57 grounded in faith. The following statement defines the parameters for an Earthwise Congregation.

58 **Earthwise Congregation**

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61 Addressing the charges set forth by the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ,
62 selecting and adapting guidelines set forth by the community-based U.S. Mayors Climate Protection
63 Agreement, and adding pertinent church-based guidelines, our congregation commits to the following
64 actions and ideals:

- 65
66 A. We will strive to meet or exceed meaningful targets for reducing global warming pollution by
67 taking immediate actions, where possible, in our own operations, beginning with:
- 68 1. Promoting transportation options such as walking, bicycling, car pooling and public transit;
 - 69 2. Making energy efficiency a priority through building improvements, retrofitting facilities with
70 energy efficient lighting and urging employees to conserve energy;
 - 71 3. Purchasing only Energy Star equipment and appliances for church use, including but not limited to
72 refrigerators and freezers, dishwashers, dehumidifiers, room air conditioners, heating and cooling
73 systems, audio and video, and office equipment.
 - 74 4. Maximizing recycling rates in church operations and promoting recycling in the community;
 - 75 5. Engaging in tree planting to increase shading on church property and to absorb CO₂, and
76 promoting tree planting and urban reforestation elsewhere.

77
78 B. Our congregation will establish an Earthwise Congregation committee which will complete the
79 following tasks:

- 80 1. Conduct periodic energy audits of church facilities with the purpose of identifying a
81 comprehensive, whole-church approach to improving energy efficiency and comfort, while
82 helping to protect the environment.
- 83 2. Conduct an annual review of new standards and new technologies, with the goal of maintaining
84 meaningful greenhouse-gas reduction objectives and identifying effective ways of meeting those
85 objectives.
- 86 3. Create an annual Earthwise Congregation action-plan which identifies specific and meaningful
87 steps the congregation can take in protecting the environment, and is individualized to the
88 congregation's needs and strengths.
- 89 4. Disseminate information to the congregation which is received from the Energy and Climate
90 Working Group of the United Church of Christ, the Environment and Energy Task Force, the
91 Justice and Witness Ministries, and related bodies.

92
93 C. Our congregation will actively urge our local, state, and national governments, as well as
94 businesses and industry, to respond to global warming with great urgency and firm leadership such as
95 by:

- 96 1. Supporting measures that reduce the absolute amount of green house gas emissions, and in
97 particular emissions of carbon dioxide, to levels recommended by nationally and internationally
98 recognized and respected scientific bodies,
- 99 2. Supporting sustainable policies for international trade and investment,

- 100 3. Investing in energy conservation, specifically in sustainable, renewable and affordable systems of
101 transportation,
102 4. Supporting sustainable and renewable systems of land use,
103 5. Calling on business and industry to lead in responses to global warming through increased
104 investments in efficient and sustainable energy technologies which are economically accessible
105 and just.
106

107 D. Our congregation will be a voice of hope in the climate crisis, grounding our action in faith:

- 108 1. Engaging in biblical study, theological reflection, prayer, and Christian education that celebrate
109 God's creation, emphasize our role as stewards for creation, and lift up concerns about the impact
110 of climate change on our global community.
111 2. Creating new opportunities to connect faith and the care of the earth through worship and common
112 life.
113 3. Promoting a public dialogue around environmental issues that emphasizes our interconnectedness,
114 casts a bold and urgent vision, and empowers communities to pursue change.
115 4. Building relationships with other churches and organizations interested in pursuing environmental
116 protection to share information and efforts.
117 5. Acting as a resource for the dissemination of current and useful information on the topic of
118 environmental stewardship to the community and its individuals.
119

120 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Twenty-seventh General Synod of the United Church of Christ
121 endorses the Earthwise Congregation designation and by its adoption urges congregations from across the
122 denomination to join this effort.
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124 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Justice and Witness Ministries is requested to assume the
125 responsibility of consolidating and disseminating information to congregations seeking to address climate
126 change.
127

128 **FUNDING**

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130 Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall
131 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.
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133 **Implementation:** The Justice and Witness Ministries and local congregations are requested to be the
134 primary implementers of this resolution by voting to become Earthwise Congregations, and by following
135 the guidelines set forth in the resolution.
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