

1 The Executive Council recommends this resolution be sent to a committee of the General Synod.

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3 **A Resolution on Responsible Meeting Practice**  
4 **A Prudential Resolution**

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6 **Submitted by:** The Hawaii Conference

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8 **Summary**

9 Meetings of our church can be deeply reflective and teachable moments with a profound impact  
10 on the communities in which we gather. This resolution builds on the robust policies of the  
11 United Church of Christ regarding environmental, economic, and social justice stewardship to  
12 create implementable, educational, and just stewardship (e.g., sustainable) practices for church  
13 meetings.

14 Just and responsible practices are foundational to all discussions of sustainability today. The  
15 classic definition of sustainability as a practice that balances social, economic, and  
16 environmental opportunities is found in the Brundtland Commission Statement of 1987: “To  
17 meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet  
18 their own needs.” A more spiritually-focused description is: “To live wisely within God’s  
19 creation by way of conservation, compassion, and co-creation, honoring the generations that  
20 have gone before and those that will follow.”

21 **Biblical and Theological Rationale**

22 The Bible begins with the assertion that God created the world as it was intended to be, for “God  
23 saw everything God had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31a).

24 The Psalmist reminds us that the earth belongs to God, for “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is  
25 in it, the world and those who live in it, for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on  
26 the rivers” (Psalm 24:1-2).

27 The prophet Isaiah tells us of God’s restorative nature for humanity and for the world: “For I will  
28 pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your  
29 descendants, and my blessing on your offspring. They shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like  
30 willows by flowing streams. This one will say, ‘I am the Lord’s’ (Isaiah 44:3-5a).”

31 The Book of Acts encourages us to ask for forgiveness so we and our environment may be  
32 refreshed: “Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of  
33 refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed  
34 for you, that is, Jesus, who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God  
35 announced long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:19-21).

36 The prophet Micah reminds us of our responsibility to the creation and as the created: “God has  
37 told you, O mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to  
38 love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

39 General Synods of the United Church of Christ have repeatedly articulated these biblical  
40 understandings of profound interconnectedness and inseparability and have called the churches  
41 to creation care and social justice.

42

43 **Resolution**

44 **WHEREAS** the Tenth General Synod (1975) affirmed a “shalom” call to “wholeness, integrity,  
45 social justice and reconciliation” by being “responsible custodians of the natural order and  
46 prophetic witnesses for social justice”; and,

47 **WHEREAS** the Fourteenth General Synod (1983), echoing the biblical image in Genesis  
48 chapters one and two of service to, and care of, all that God has created, proclaimed our  
49 covenantal responsibility “to understand the world as God’s creation [and therefore,] to  
50 understand our responsibility as God’s stewards, and our accountability to God as tenants”; and,

51 **WHEREAS** the Seventeenth General Synod (1985) identified as a priority concern for six years  
52 “to address in a major, all-church effort a crucial concern of our time,” the Integrity of Creation,  
53 Justice and Peace, which affirmed “that the biblical vision of shalom—justice and peace and  
54 integrity of creation—is central to the Christian identity of members of the United Church of  
55 Christ,” and called for an “intentionally collaborative effort to address the Priority”; and,

56 **WHEREAS** the Twenty-second General Synod (1999) resulted in the UCC becoming one of the  
57 first denominations to recognize the crisis of global warming and affirmed the biblical mandate  
58 of stewardship and kinship, and recognized that the response to such a mandate must emanate  
59 from “addressing our own lifestyles (institutional and personal)”; and,

60 **WHEREAS** the Twenty-fifth General Synod (2005) embraced the connection between the  
61 common good for all peoples and responsible environmental stewardship by recognizing “that  
62 the integrity of creation and the health and sustainability of ecological systems is the necessary  
63 foundation for the well-being of all people and all living things for all time”; and,

64 **WHEREAS** the Twenty-sixth General Synod (2007) affirmed that irresponsible human actions  
65 have created not only a “profound sense of urgency” for God’s creation, but also an  
66 unconscionably disproportionate “impact on those living in poverty, the least developed  
67 countries, the elderly and children and those least responsible for the emissions of greenhouse  
68 gases,” and “urge[d] all segments of the Church to address global warming in their decisions and  
69 investments and in their educational and advocacy efforts”; and,

70 **WHEREAS** as people of faith we are privileged to be partners both as individuals and as faithful  
71 bodies (local churches, associations, conferences, and General Synod) with Jesus Christ, the  
72 firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15), in the good work of reconciling in justice and love the  
73 entire creation that it may again be one and whole; and,

74 **WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ has a history of responding powerfully to issues in  
75 which social justice and creation care are intertwined and inseparable, such as the apology to  
76 Native Hawaiian people, which emanated from the challenge issued forth at the Ecumenical  
77 Conference on Tourism in Hawaii in 1989, for the complicit role of our antecedent bodies in the  
78 overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893; and

79 **WHEREAS** every day new practices and products emerge that reuse more resources and have  
80 the potential to reduce the amount of waste, pollution, and degradation we create, and provide  
81 new and just opportunities in an economy oriented towards creating a sustainable future for all  
82 that God has created; and,

83 **WHEREAS**, our choices of meeting venue can bear prophetic witness to a community, as  
84 exemplified by the Executive Council’s decision to change the venue of the Twenty-sixth  
85 General Synod in commitment to be in solidarity with striking workers at our original venue  
86 despite the inconvenience it caused; and,

87 **WHEREAS** we seek to be biblical people whose very actions reflect a life of true faithfulness;

88 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Twenty-seventh General Synod of the United  
89 Church of Christ urges its churches and members to consider adopting personal, congregational,  
90 and community habits that reflect the interconnectedness and inseparability of creation care and  
91 social justice; and,

92 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Synod encourage all expressions of the  
93 United Church of Christ (local church, association, conference, and all national expressions) to  
94 plan and hold meetings, events, and programs in such a way that the interconnection and  
95 inseparability of creation care and social justice, as appropriate for the venue or location, are  
96 modeled; and that consideration is given to issues such as energy and water consumption, food  
97 origin, labor relations, waste and waste stream minimization, material re-usage and recycling,  
98 and minimization of travel; and that education be offered to meeting attendees, local community  
99 members, and vendors on all these issues where possible and practical; and,

100 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Justice and Witness Ministries develop a document that  
101 offers guidelines and suggestions for responsible meeting practices to be made available to all  
102 expressions of the UCC; and,

103 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that expressions of the United Church of Christ that adopt this  
104 resolution commit to its practice and implementation, at a minimum, in all meetings within their  
105 settings; and,

106 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Twenty-eighth General Synod in 2011 shall attempt to  
107 integrate this planning mechanism into its process, procedures, and execution.

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109 **FUNDING**

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111 Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall  
112 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

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115 **IMPLEMENTATION**

116 Justice and Witness Ministries is requested to implement this resolution.