



Environmental Justice

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

Where Does the UCC Stand on Environmental Justice?

With UCC leaders playing a central role in the launch of the environmental justice movement in the 1980s and 90s, our denomination has long had a strong commitment to addressing interconnected crises pertaining to the environment and societal injustice. In 2026, UCC members have been deeply involved in protecting the Environmental Protection Agency from being defunded and dismantled by the current administration. Environmental justice work at the EPA has been particularly devastated and that has been a central focus for advocates.

Last year, the EPA workforce was reduced by more than 4,000 to 12,849. This reduction of 24% was more than double the job reduction rate across the entire federal government. At the EPA, the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights was dismantled with hundreds of staff laid off or reassigned. This aligned with executive orders that rescinded environmental justice directives and ended the use of environmental justice considerations in agency work.

Despite all that has transpired, advocates helped secure a victory in January when Congress rejected the Trump administration's attempt to severely cut funding for the EPA for Fiscal Year 2026 by 55%. Our struggle continues, however. For Fiscal Year 2027, the White House is seeking to cut EPA funding by 52% or \$4.6 billion. By contrast, it wants to increase the defense budget to \$1.5 trillion, a boost of 44 percent.

Prayer

Creator God, thank you for entrusting in us your most precious creations. We come to you with a spirit of lament. We have let you down. We have harmed your creation and placed ourselves above all. Allow us to move forward carrying your spirit of love for all. May we work together to fulfill our call in Genesis, working for and caring for your people and planet. Amen.

Want to learn more?

Contact Rev. Brooks Berndt, Minister for Environmental Justice, berndtb@ucc.org

Questions for Candidates

- If elected, how would you seek to not only provide robust funding for the EPA but also hold the EPA accountable to its mission of protecting the environment and public health?
- Some communities are disproportionately impacted by pollution and environmental harm such as communities of color and low-income communities. What would you do to ensure environmental justice and equity if elected?



Take Additional Action

- Join the advocacy of Climate Hope Affiliates throughout the country by checking out their monthly action sheet detailing what you can do. Then, work to help start a chapter in your community. <https://www.ucc.org/climatehopecards/>
- Sign up to join the [Justice & Peace Action Network](#) to stay informed on environmental justice opportunities.