

On Lifting up the “Call to Restore the Creation.”

Approved by the 219th Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly (2010)

RECOMMENDATION

The Presbytery of Charlotte overtures the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

1. Lift up the “Call to Restore the Creation,” originally adopted as part of *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* by the 202nd General Assembly (1990) in recognition of its continuing importance, and the crucial work remaining on its 20th anniversary.

“Call to Restore the Creation

“Creation cries out in this time of ecological crisis.

“—Abuse of nature and injustice to people place the future in grave jeopardy.

“—Population triples in this century.

“—Biological systems suffer diminished capacity to renew themselves.

“—Finite minerals are mined and pumped as if inexhaustible.

“—Peasants are forced onto marginal lands, and soil erodes.

“—The rich-poor gap grows wider.

“—Wastes and poisons exceed nature’s capacity to absorb them.

“—Greenhouse gases pose threat of global warming.

“Therefore, God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to

“—respond to the cry of creation, human and non-human;

“—engage in the effort to make the 1990s the “turnaround decade,” not only for reasons of prudence or survival, but because the endangered planet is God’s creation; and

“—draw upon all the resources of biblical faith and the Reformed tradition for empowerment and guidance in this adventure.

“The church has powerful reason for engagement in restoring God’s creation:

“—God’s works in creation are too wonderful, too ancient, too beautiful, too good to be desecrated.

“—Restoring creation is God’s own work in our time, in which God comes both to judge and to restore.

“—The Creator-Redeemer calls faithful people to become engaged with God in keeping and healing the creation, human and nonhuman.

“—Human life and well-being depend upon the flourishing of other life and the integrity of the life-supporting processes that God has ordained.

“—The love of neighbor, particularly “the least” of Christ’s brothers and sisters, requires action to stop the poisoning, the erosion, the wastefulness that are causing suffering and death.

“—The future of our children and their children and all who come after is at stake.

“—In this critical time of transition to a new era, God’s new doing may be discerned as a call to earth-keeping, to justice, and to community.

“Therefore, the 202nd General Assembly [(1990)] affirms that:

“—Response to God’s call requires a new faithfulness, for which guidance may be found in norms that illuminate the contemporary meaning of God’s steadfast love for the world.

“—Earth-keeping today means insisting on sustainability—the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together—which requires human beings to practice wise, humble, responsible stewardship, after the model of servanthood that we have in Jesus.

“—Justice today requires participation, the inclusion of all members of the human family in obtaining and enjoying the Creator’s gifts for sustenance.

“—Justice also means sufficiency, a standard upholding the claim of all to have enough—to be met through equitable sharing and organized efforts to achieve that end.

“—Community in our time requires the nurture of solidarity, leading to steadfastness in standing with companions, victims, and allies, and to the realization of the church’s potential as a community of support for adventurous faithfulness.

“On the basis of these findings and affirmations the 202nd General Assembly (1990)

“—recognizes and accepts restoring creation as a central concern of the church, to be incorporated into its life and mission at every level;

“—understands this to be a new focus for initiative in mission program and a concern with major implications for infusion into theological work, evangelism, education, justice and peacemaking, worship and liturgy, public witness, global mission, and congregational service and action at the local community level;

“—recognizes that restoring creation is not a short-term concern to be handled in a few years, but a continuing task to which the nation and the world must give attention and commitment, and which has profound implications for the life, work, and witness of Christian people and church agencies;

“—approaches the task with covenant seriousness—‘If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God ... then you shall live’ (Deut. 30:16)—and with practical awareness that cherishing God’s creation enhances the ability of the church to achieve its other goals.” (Minutes, 1990, Part I, pp. 646–47)

2. Commend the faithful congregations, Presbyterian church-related institutions, and church members who have responded to God’s call to cherish and protect God’s creation, and urge perseverance in the tasks of restoring God’s creation.

3. Urge congregations, Presbyterian church-related institutions, and church members to adopt institutional and individual lifestyles reflecting greater stewardship of resources, particularly in energy consumption.

4. Affirm that concern for God's creation is, for every Christian, an essential way of living faithfully in Christ's world that will necessitate personal study of, attention to and engagement with emerging and new environmental concerns that are persistent, acute, and pressing.

5. Affirm that the best available science should inform our care for God's creation, shaping the direction of responsible programming and policy, especially with respect to public witness concerning emergent environmental issues such as global climate change, desertification and access to potable water, and wetlands/coastal erosion.

6. Affirm that all living creatures require potable water to live; that water, being essential to life, is a human right that must be accessible to all people.

RATIONALE

Twenty years ago, the 202nd General Assembly (1990) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) overwhelmingly adopted the comprehensive policy *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*. This policy built upon the historic General Assembly policy base reflecting the determination that the protection of the environment is an essential part of the Christian faith. Subsequent General Assemblies provided additional guidance in environmental education and advocacy efforts for all councils and offices of the church.

The *Book of Order* (W-7.5001) states that “God calls the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s work of creation and preservation...” In W.-7.5003, it reminds us that we are “... stewards of God’s creation who hold the earth in trust ...”

Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice called the 1990s the “turn-around decade,” and indeed generated new and renewed efforts by the church at all levels to respond to the ecological crisis and its impact upon the poor and vulnerable with focused strategies, deeper theological and ethical reflection, and institutional and individual commitment. Yet, more work needs to be done. On the 20th anniversary of the General Assembly’s adoption of this comprehensive policy, it is fitting to reaffirm its findings, celebrate what it has spawned in the life of the church, and recommit ourselves to the calling that remains as valid and necessary today as it was in 1990.

See Committee and General Assembly Action on this item at

<http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3023>