

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

A RESOLUTION URGING PLANNING FOR AND IMPLEMENTING ELECTRIFICATION

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by Mayflower United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, Minnesota; United Church of Christ in New Brighton, New Brighton, Minnesota; Robbinsdale Parkway United Church of Christ, Robbinsdale, Minnesota; St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ, St. Paul, Minnesota; St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Saint Paul, Minnesota; Macalester Plymouth United Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota; First United Church of Christ, Northfield, Minnesota; First Congregational United Church of Christ, Grand Marais, Minnesota; First Congregational Church of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota; First Congregational Church, UCC, La Crosse, Wisconsin; Union Congregational United Church of Christ, Saint Louis Park, St. Louis Park, Minnesota

1 **Summary:** This resolution calls on United Church of Christ congregations and individuals to
2 actively plan for and promote electrifying space heating and cooling equipment, appliances, and
3 machines when old ones fail or become outdated as one of the ways to protect God's earth and
4 its people from climate change emissions, and to become role models for just and equitable
5 electrification for individual members and the broader community.
6

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

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8

9 When we fully ground ourselves in God's word, we understand that this is God's earth that
10 scientists are talking about when they warn about climate change—God's earth that could be
11 catastrophically impacted by the climate change we are causing.
12

13 Genesis tells the origin story, and we know the story well: God separating light from dark within
14 the formless void through calling forth all manner of vegetation, fish, birds, and other animals,
15 and on to the creation of humankind. At each step God stepped back, reviewed what God had
16 created and assessed it as good.
17

18 Some have said that the creation of humanity in God's image with a commission to rule over the
19 animal kingdom carries a license for ecological irresponsibility. But the Bible portrays humanity
20 not as the owner of nature but as its steward, strictly accountable to its true owner. Leviticus 25:
21 23-24 makes the point clearly. In God's words, "the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the
22 land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you
23 shall provide for the redemption of the land."
24

25 Some have said that redemption referred only to a claim from prior owners. But in its discussion
26 of sabbatical years and the every-fifty-year jubilee year, Leviticus makes it clear that the jubilee
27 year is the year in which the land is redeemable by God, the true owner. The phrase, "you are
28 but aliens and tenants" emphasizes the transitory nature of human land ownership. We humans

29 occupy the earth only for our lifetime. God remains. God’s word as set out in Leviticus leaves no
30 doubt about what is required of a steward, to care for God’s land while in our temporary tenancy.

31
32 The gospels of Mathew, Mark, and Luke each tell us a story using almost identical words about a
33 lawyer or scribe who was questioning Jesus. The lawyer asked “which commandment is the first
34 of all?” Jesus uncharacteristically did not answer with a parable, but directly, “you shall love the
35 Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all
36 your strength” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”—loving God with all our heart,
37 soul, mind and strength is taking care of the animals and plants and other living things that God
38 created and called good, and doing so with ALL of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

39
40 God calls on each of us and all of us together in community to act prophetically, to be role
41 models, to be the Moses of our time in the care of creation.

42
43 In a major 2018 report the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that we must
44 reduce carbon emissions 50% by 2030 in order to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate
45 change.¹ This is a widely accepted benchmark. ²And it is a huge lift.

46
47 Around 40% of the United States’ emissions causing climate change come from residences and
48 the vehicles we drive.³ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that 13% of U.S.
49 greenhouse gas emissions come from businesses and homes, and arise primarily from burning
50 fossil fuels.⁴

51
52 Structural change is now creating a path forward. Electricity is getting cleaner with the addition
53 of very inexpensive wind- and solar-generated electricity. And electricity will continue to get
54 even cleaner as expensive coal-fired electric generation is retired.⁵ The Inflation Reduction Act
55 strongly supports clean electricity with significant funding.⁶

56
57 But that structural change is not enough. We must use the cleaner electricity. Our actions matter.
58 Switching everything possible in our lives to be powered by electricity will go a long way toward
59 lowering our emissions and reducing the impact of climate change.⁷

60
61 Electrifying everything for congregations and individuals means replacing any heating and
62 cooling equipment, appliances, and machines in our churches, homes and garages that currently
63 burn fossil fuels. And it might also mean installing new electric devices, like solar panels and
64 home storage batteries. This doesn’t have to be done all at once. Congregations and individuals
65 can make plans to replace fossil fuel heating and cooling equipment, appliances and machines
66 when they become outdated or fail, or replace outdated or failing electric heating and cooling
67 equipment, electric appliances and electric machines with the new far more efficient electric
68 ones.

69
70 Modern heating and cooling equipment, appliances and devices are so much more efficient they
71 will immediately have lower total carbon emissions than burning fossil fuel directly.⁸ Plus, as the
72 electric grid switches to renewable sources, emissions will continue to drop.

73

74 Protecting God’s earth also protects God’s people. Natural gas, a fossil fuel, burned inside a
75 church or residence has more pollutants than just carbon dioxide. Burning natural gas also emits
76 nitric oxide (NOx), sulfur oxides (SOx), particulate matter (PM), and formaldehyde (CH2O).⁹
77

78 Multiple peer-reviewed studies tell us that when natural gas is burned without proper ventilation,
79 gas cooking can generate levels of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide inside homes that
80 exceed federal and state standards for air quality.¹⁰
81

82 EPA recently concluded that long-term exposure to Nitrogen dioxide is linked to the onset of
83 asthma in children.¹¹ Asthma is a leading cause of children missing school.¹²
84

85 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

86
87 WHEREAS the major 2018 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change told us
88 that we must reduce carbon emissions 50% by 2030 in order to avoid the most catastrophic
89 effects of climate change, a widely accepted benchmark;¹³ and
90

91 WHEREAS when we fully ground ourselves in God’s word, we understand that this is God’s
92 earth that scientists are talking about, and the Twenty-Sixth General Synod has recognized that
93 the earth belongs to God;¹⁴ and
94

95 WHEREAS God’s earth could be catastrophically impacted by the climate change we are
96 causing and the Twenty-Sixth General Synod has recognized that the earth is affected by climate
97 change;¹⁵ and
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99 WHEREAS protecting God’s creation also protects all God’s people by reducing air pollutants
100 and sickness;¹⁶ and
101

102 WHEREAS, because air pollutants from burning fossil fuels are especially harmful for children,
103 the elderly, rural and under-resourced communities, and people of color¹⁷ protection measures
104 must be just and equitably available; and
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106 WHEREAS God’s word as set out in Genesis, Leviticus, Mark, Mathew, and Luke leave no
107 doubt about what is required of a steward, to care for God’s land while in our temporary tenancy;
108 and
109

110 WHEREAS about 40% of the United States’ emissions causing climate change come from the
111 places we live and the vehicles we drive and those emissions are increasing¹⁸ and
112

113 WHEREAS our electricity is getting cleaner with the addition of very inexpensive wind- and
114 solar-generated electricity and electricity will continue to get even cleaner as expensive coal-
115 fired electric generation is retired¹⁹; and
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117 WHEREAS the Inflation Reduction Act strongly supports clean electricity with significant
118 funding and strongly supports and funds electrification, storage, and solar for low and middle
119 income people,²⁰ and

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121 WHEREAS God calls on each of us and all of us together in community to act prophetically, to
122 be role models, to be the Moses of our time, and
123
124 WHEREAS our church communities can lead the way to protect God’s earth and its people by
125 electrifying and helping our members and neighbors electrify;
126
127 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that, as one of the ways to protect God’s earth and
128 its people from climate changing emissions, the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages United
129 Church of Christ congregations to actively plan for and promote electrifying fossil-fueled space
130 heating and cooling equipment, appliances and machines when old ones fail or become outdated
131 or replacing outdated or failing electric space heating and cooling equipment, appliances and
132 machines with new far more efficient electric ones, and to become role models for electrification
133 for individual members and the broader community; and
134
135 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod urges United Church of
136 Christ congregations to actively promote electrification as one of the ways to protect God’s earth
137 and its people and, with environmental justice in mind, help our members and neighbors
138 electrify; and
139
140 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod requests Conferences and
141 Associations of the United Church of Christ to gather and distribute information and guidance
142 for their local congregations and individual members necessary and helpful to implement
143 electrification, thereby becoming role models for the broader community.
144
145 **FUNDING:** Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with
146 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.
147
148 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
149 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.”
September 20, 2019.

² FACT SHEET: President Biden Sets 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target Aimed at
Creating Good-Paying Union Jobs and Securing U.S. Leadership on Clean Energy Technologies. April
22, 2021.

³ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 2.; Fresh Energy. “Buildings
for a healthy future.” December 2021.

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁵ Fresh Energy. “Our accomplishments of 2021 and what we are looking forward to in 2022: Further
changes to coal plant operations secured & Otter Tail Power begins to exit coal and increase renewables.”
January 24, 2022.

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/13/upshot/whats-in-the-democrats-climate-health-bill.html?name=styln-domestic-policy-bill>

⁷ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg, Rewiring America, page 2.; Fresh Energy.
“Buildings for a healthy future.” December 16, 2021.

⁸ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 4.

⁹ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, page 6; Fresh Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

¹⁰ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, pages 6 & 7; Fresh Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

¹¹ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, pages 7 & 8, 4, 2021; “Clean energy brief: natural gas in Minnesota,” prepared by Melissa R. Parton on behalf of Fresh Energy, February 2020.

¹² Children’s Minnesota, “Managing asthma for students.”

¹³ Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.”

September 20, 2019. https://exponentialroadmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ExponentialRoadmap_1.5.1_216x279_08_AW_Download_Singles_Small.pdf

¹⁴ <https://uccfiles.com/pdf/gs26minutes.pdf>, pages 15-16

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, pages 6 & 7; Fresh Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

¹⁷ Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.” September 20, 2019.

¹⁸ Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 2.; Fresh Energy. “Buildings for a healthy future.” December 2021.

¹⁹ Fresh Energy. “Our accomplishments of 2021 and what we are looking forward to in 2022: Further changes to coal plant operations secured & Otter Tail Power begins to exit coal and increase renewables.” January 24, 2022.

²⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/13/upshot/whats-in-the-democrats-climate-health-bill.html?name=styln-domestic-policy-bill~>