

**Free from Plastic Pollution**  
A Resolution of Witness

**TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS** the scriptures (Genesis 1:1-2:6, Psalm 24:1, Isaiah 24:3-6, Jeremiah 4:23-26) hold us responsible for the way we co-live and use God’s creation, the Earth, and

**WHEREAS** plastics resist degrading for hundreds of years, and they break down into microplastic beads; and animals, birds, fish, and humans consume microplastics<sup>1</sup> to the detriment of their health, and

**WHEREAS** United Church of Christ General Synods have passed environmental resolutions The Earth is the Lord’s<sup>2</sup> (2017), The Use of Plastic Foam<sup>3</sup> (2019), and The Rights of Nature<sup>4</sup> (2021), and

**WHEREAS** plastic pollution is an environmental justice concern of the UCC,<sup>5</sup> and

**WHEREAS** plastic pollution disproportionately impacts vulnerable communities, including low income people and people of color, and must be addressed from production to waste,<sup>6</sup> and

**WHEREAS** plastics are made from harmful petrochemicals that impact the health and well-being of biological life and planetary ecosystems, and the production of toxic petrochemicals disproportionately harms those living in close proximity,<sup>7</sup> and

**WHEREAS** the United Nations has called upon global faith communities to work against plastic pollution,<sup>8</sup> and

**WHEREAS** current attempts, locally, nationally, and internationally to manage plastic pollution are woefully inadequate, and

**WHEREAS** local cleanups of plastic litter have limited impact and recycling is not effective for most plastic items.<sup>9</sup>

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ is called to speak truth to power against plastic “de-creation” (an academic and theological term that may refer to desacralizing, destroying or undoing that which is whole or has been whole in nature, the Earth, plants, animals, forests, and pollution, even when it is inconvenient or difficult), and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all our settings to commit to changing from a disposable culture to a reusable, sustainable one, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages education within our congregations and in our communities to advocate for alternatives to single use plastics, whether through mitigation efforts and campaigns or by supporting local and state bans on single use plastics, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all settings of the Church to determine the best pathway forward for strategies and actions to mitigate plastic pollution, using as examples the following resources:

- The Story of Plastics, (95-minute documentary)<sup>10</sup>
- Sierra Club Solutions to Plastic Pandemic<sup>11</sup>
- Ten Towns –Ten actions Toolkit of New Hampshire.<sup>12</sup>
- National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF): Join the Fight for Reducing Plastic Pollution<sup>13</sup>

51 • Break Free Plastics: resources, articles, list of the worst corporate polluters and suggestions for  
52 actions.<sup>14</sup> and

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54 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages Conferences,  
55 Associations, Congregations, Synods and all settings of the United Church of Christ to reduce the use of  
56 single-use plastics and packaging, and

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58 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod commends all settings of the  
59 church to join in possible opportunities for participation in addressing plastic pollution including the  
60 following:

- 61 • Encouraging all settings of the Church to commit to change from the throwaway and disposable  
62 culture and consumptive practices to reusable and compostable products.<sup>15</sup>
- 63 • Encouraging replacement of single use plastics with bioplastics, reusable, or compostable  
64 substitutes.
- 65 • Preaching on ecological sustainability principles articulated by Sallie McFague on responsible  
66 use of ecological resources<sup>16</sup> and the sustainable goal of mitigating single-use plastics.
- 67 • Educating on the importance of mitigation of single-use plastics and plastic straws as well as  
68 plastic bottles at our churches, their events, and gatherings.
- 69 • Educating on the toxicity of plastic pollutions and microplastics to the health of our  
70 environment, to our own health, and the health of non-human life.
- 71 • Educating on policies and practices of local recycling and composting services and advocating  
72 for better practices.
- 73 • Organizing low or zero waste events in collaboration with local organizations and  
74 infrastructures.
- 75 • Supporting businesses that use sustainable practices such as reusable containers and reusable  
76 bags.
- 77 • Participating in public cleanup of God’s creation, including all bodies of water, parks, and  
78 beaches.<sup>17</sup>
- 79 • Installing fountains for water bottles in church campuses, wherever possible.
- 80 • Actively supporting and lobbying for local, state, national, and international legislation and  
81 policies that align with the intention of this resolution including bans of or fees on single use  
82 plastics, and

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84 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Thirty-Fourth General Synod acknowledges that  
85 accommodations in expectations need to be made for certain impacted groups such as those who are  
86 disabled or unhoused, and

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88 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT** the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all settings to speak  
89 truth to the public square against plastic pollution of the planet.

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91 **Funding:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution be made in accordance with overall  
92 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

93 **Implementation:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities  
94 within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

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<sup>1</sup>The environmental impacts of plastics and micro-plastics use, waste and pollution: EU and national measures, Study Requested by the PETI Committee, European Parliament,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658279/IPOL\\_STU\(2020\)658279\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658279/IPOL_STU(2020)658279_EN.pdf)  
<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ucc.org/wpcontent/uploads/unitedchurchofchrist/pages/9126/attachments/original/1499204117/UCC\\_Synod\\_2017\\_Climate\\_Resolution\\_-\\_FINAL\\_as\\_passed.pdf?1499204117](https://www.ucc.org/wpcontent/uploads/unitedchurchofchrist/pages/9126/attachments/original/1499204117/UCC_Synod_2017_Climate_Resolution_-_FINAL_as_passed.pdf?1499204117)

<sup>3</sup>GS32-Minutes.pdf (uccfiles.com) page 48

<sup>4</sup>Approved\_UCCB-21-10-04-Minutes33rdGeneralSynod\_10.15.2021w-App.pdf page 42

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<sup>5</sup> Both the Florida UCC Conference and the New Hampshire UCC Conferences have passed resolutions at the 2022 Annual Gatherings.

<sup>6</sup> Picking Up Litter: Pointless or Powerful Tool in the battle of plastic pollution?" UN Environmental Program, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/picking-litter-pointless-exercise-or-powerful-tool-battle-beat-plastic-program>

<sup>7</sup> 'Do Plastics Make Us Sick?' " Plastics Health Coalition, <https://www.plastichealthcoalition.org/>

<sup>8</sup> UN Calls Upon Faith Communities to work against Plastic Pollution, Crux, February 22, 2022, U.N. wants faith groups to help work against plastic pollution | Crux (cruxnow.com)

<sup>9</sup> "More Recycling Won't Solve the Plastics Pollution," Scientific American,

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/more-recycling-wont-solve-plastic-pollution/> 15

[https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senatebill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20(03%2F25%2F2021)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20forth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials.)

[congress/senatebill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20\(03%2F25%2F2021\)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20forth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senatebill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20(03%2F25%2F2021)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20forth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials.)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-plastic-documentary-film/how-to-watch/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/zero-waste/story-of-plastic>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.10towns.org/resources/plastic-pollution-book-list>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.neefusa.org/nature/water/join-fight-reduce-plastic-pollution>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/>

<sup>15</sup> See Yes Magazine The Solving of the Plastics Issue, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/solvingplastic> Also see eco-friendly alternatives, Eco-Friendly Alternatives for Disposable Plastic Water Bottles | Cedar Springs Blog (cedarspringswater.ca)

<sup>16</sup> McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*

<sup>17</sup> See Green Peace, <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaign/toolkit-plasticfree-future/>