

The following resolution was approved by the delegates at a plenary of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held in Indianapolis June 30-July 4, 2023.

Free from Plastic Pollution

A Resolution of Witness

1 **TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION**

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

5

6 **WHEREAS** plastics resist degrading for hundreds of years, and they break down into
7 microplastic beads; and animals, birds, fish, and humans consume microplastics¹ to the
8 detriment of their health, and

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10 **WHEREAS** United Church of Christ General Synods have passed environmental resolutions
11 The Earth is the Lord’s² (2017), The Use of Plastic Foam³ (2019), and The Rights of Nature⁴
12 (2021), and

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14 **WHEREAS** plastic pollution is an environmental justice concern of the UCC,⁵ and

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

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

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23 **WHEREAS** the United Nations has called upon global faith communities to work against plastic
24 pollution,⁸ and

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

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29 **WHEREAS** local cleanups of plastic litter have limited impact and recycling is not effective for
30 most plastic items.⁹

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

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

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

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

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- 50 • The Story of Plastics, (95-minute documentary)¹⁰
 - 51 • Sierra Club Solutions to Plastic Pandemic¹¹
 - 52 • Ten Towns –Ten actions Toolkit of New Hampshire.¹²
 - 53 • National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF): Join the Fight for Reducing
54 Plastic Pollution¹³
 - 55 • Break Free Plastics: resources, articles, list of the worst corporate polluters and
56 suggestions for actions.¹⁴ and

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

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

- 65 • Encouraging all settings of the Church to commit to change from the throwaway and
66 disposable culture and consumptive practices to reusable and compostable products.¹⁵
- 67 • Encouraging replacement of single use plastics with bioplastics, reusable, or
68 compostable substitutes.
- 69 • Preaching on ecological sustainability principles articulated by Sallie McFague on
70 responsible use of ecological resources¹⁶ and the sustainable goal of mitigating single-
71 use plastics.
- 72 • Educating on the importance of mitigation of single-use plastics and plastic straws as
73 well as plastic bottles at our churches, their events, and gatherings.
- 74 • Educating on the toxicity of plastic pollutions and microplastics to the health of our
75 environment, to our own health, and the health of non-human life.
- 76 • Educating on policies and practices of local recycling and composting services and
77 advocating for better practices.
- 78 • Organizing low or zero waste events in collaboration with local organizations and
79 infrastructures.
- 80 • Supporting businesses that use sustainable practices such as reusable containers and
81 reusable bags.
- 82 • Participating in public cleanup of God’s creation, including all bodies of water, parks,
83 and beaches.¹⁷
- 84 • Installing fountains for water bottles in church campuses, wherever possible.
- 85 • Actively supporting and lobbying for local, state, national, and international legislation
86 and policies that align with the intention of this resolution including bans of or fees on
87 single use plastics, and

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

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

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

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

¹The 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)

²https://www.ucc.org/wpcontent/uploads/unitedchurchofchrist/pages/9126/attachments/original/1499204117/UCC_Synod_2017_Climate_Resolution_-_FINAL_as_passed.pdf?1499204117

³GS32-Minutes.pdf (uccfiles.com) page 48

⁴Approved_UCCB-21-10-04-Minutes33rdGeneralSynod_10.15.2021w-App.pdf page 42

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

⁶ 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>

⁷ ‘Do Plastics Make Us Sick?’ “Plastics Health Coalition, <https://www.plastichealthcoalition.org/>

⁸ 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)

⁹ “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-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.)

¹⁰ <https://www.storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-plastic-documentary-film/how-to-watch/>
¹¹ <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/zero-waste/story-of-plastic>

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

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

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

¹⁵ 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)

¹⁶ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*

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