

RESOLUTIONS

*Graceful
Hospitality*

2023 SESSION OF
OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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INTRODUCTION

Every year, members of the North Carolina Annual Conference meet to fellowship and address the business of the Conference, the United Methodist congregations throughout 56 counties in eastern North Carolina. Part of that business takes the form of considering resolutions. Resolutions deal with issues affecting the lives of members of the Conference, along with the lives of our neighbors. They also can address issues that relate to the global United Methodist Church. By passing a resolution, we are able to communicate to the media, elected leaders, and the General Conference the will of the majority of delegates from the churches of the North Carolina Annual Conference. For more information and resolution composition guidelines, visit <https://nccumc.org/ac2023/resolutions/>.

Resolutions also give the Annual Conference members a chance to grow in awareness of important issues and to wrestle theologically with each other and God in a spirit of love and trust. When developing and considering resolutions, the Annual Conference expects to encounter God through the means of grace that is Holy Conferencing and claim the chance to work ever towards doing God's will on earth as it is in Heaven. Churches are encouraged to review and study these resolutions, working to implement them within their local congregations and communities.

1 – CREATION CARE TEAMS IN LOCAL CHURCHES

Whereas, Scripture proclaims God created all, nurtures all, and orders all creation in harmony—from Earth’s hospitable atmosphere, mighty seas, abundant forests and other plants to nutrient-rich soil, from majestic whales to the tiniest microbes and all sentient and non-sentient beings in between, relating to each and all in self-giving love. Scripture also proclaims God called humans to be caretakers of creation (Genesis 1–2), bearing God’s image by relating to creation in a godly manner, nurturing it and maintaining it in harmony. Jesus declared the Greatest Commandments are to love God and to love neighbor, especially the most vulnerable (Luke 10:25-37). Persons living in poverty, persons of color, and indigenous people in this country and throughout the world are harmed first and most by the degradation of creation, and these same groups have the fewest resources to recover from that harm. Care for creation is clearly a matter of justice. Creation, including all people, is already or will be affected by the current and coming level of danger from climate change and its consequences that intersect with multiple expressions of injustice. It follows that loving God, the Creator, means loving God’s Creation and that loving neighbors in distress requires stopping harm and righting wrongs, in other words, working for justice; and

Whereas, Tradition for United Methodists includes John Wesley’s Three Simple Rules for living faithfully: First, do no harm; second, do all the good you can; and third, stay in love with God. Our proposed 2020 Social Principles begin with “The Community of All Creation,” outlining the care and justice work needed amid the cascading crises that are harming God’s creation and our neighbors. The 2009 Pastoral Letter of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, *God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action*, pledges leadership in the work of renewal. The 2016 *Book of Discipline* (Paragraph 254) includes an Earth Advocacy ministry group as a way “to fulfill the mission of the local church.” At their November 2021 meeting, the Council of Bishops made a statement to “encourage and support action on climate change at the annual conference level, including support for moving toward net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.” In 2021, the Conference Board of Trustees committed the North Carolina Conference to a 50% emissions reduction by 2030 and 100% reduction by 2050¹; and

Whereas, Reason is a God-given gift. Our reasoning capabilities are informed by modern scientific research and practices. The scientific community has given clear warning that creation is under tremendous strain due to the poisoning of air, water, and land; habitat destruction; the unsustainable consumption of earth’s finite resources; and the rapidly accelerating extinction of species. Scientists have sounded the alarm of catastrophic harm to creation if global warming and associated climate change are not halted and reversed. They point to how rising temperatures have already intensified wildfires, hurricanes, drought, and sea-level rise throughout the world with devastating impacts². Our reasoning capabilities are also informed by the examples of indigenous peoples whose traditional wisdom and practices honor living in harmony with nature. Globally, humans can understand the damage and ways of mitigating the effects. They can discern what is needed and how to carry out their specific plans in their local situations; and

¹ “Joint statement from the Creation Care Committee and Conference Board of Trustees,” September 20, 2021. <https://nccumc.org/creation/2021/09/joint-statement-from-the-creation-care-committee-and-conference-board-of-trustees/>; also: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/global-ministries-commits-to-net-zero-emissions-by-2050-adv>

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/>

Whereas, Experience is honored by United Methodists as a way of recognizing lifetime gains of knowledge, understanding, perspectives, and practices of diverse, unique individuals. Functioning as a team, they become stronger in their efforts, taking heart from one another in these critical times (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Experience is also honored in the varied ways in which humans encounter God through nature and society. As we age, we grow ever more aware of our creaturely mortality. Such awareness is divinely intended to grow us in empathetic wisdom and spur our action. Such senior wisdom is honored by all ages. Youth and young adults, aware of how much the crisis will affect them and their descendants, have armed themselves with knowledge and ardent empathy. Wise elders respect, honor and encourage our far-seeing younger colleagues, fostering them as leaders in our common calling;

Now, therefore, be it resolved, the North Carolina Annual Conference urges every local church **to create a Creation Care Team or strengthen an existing one for action** in four areas each year—Worship, Education, Practice, and Advocacy—providing children, youth, and adults of all ages with inspiration, knowledge, encouragement, and practical means for caring for creation and justice. These actions include:

- One or more occasions of worship celebrating God’s grace, glory, and beauty in creation and connecting creation care and justice to the scriptural call to love God and neighbor; and weekly confessing our failure to be godly stewards of God’s creation.
- One or more educational opportunities, held within and for the congregation and/or community, related to some aspect of creation care and justice.
- One or more positive changes in the practices of the church’s life and/or to the church building or grounds, for the purpose of meeting the 2021 emission goals quoted above.
- One or more actions that advocate for change in systems that perpetuate injustice and harm to creation and communities either locally, regionally, nationally, or globally;

and

Be it further resolved, the North Carolina Annual Conference urges every local church to **lift up creation care and justice in all areas of ministry and mission**, including preaching, liturgy, communications, education, outreach, and advocacy. In liturgy, weekly prayer of Confession could include words like, “We have not heeded the groaning of creation,” (Romans 8); and

Be it further resolved, the North Carolina Annual Conference urges every local church to **exchange ideas and offer inspiration** throughout the connection; and

Be it further resolved, the NC annual conference **will continue its ongoing work of assisting churches by means of the conference creation care team, and through the new District creation care teams**, under the guidance of the district superintendents.

See also: **Project Drawdown: Climate Solutions 101**: <https://drawdown.org/climate-solutions-101> and <https://drawdown.org/news/insights/new-drawdown-lift-report-advancing-climate-solutions-can-help-alleviate-extreme>

Approved by the Creation Care Committee NCCUMC, May 8, 2023

Approved by majority vote by the North Carolina Conference of
The United Methodist Church on June 17, 2023

2 – AFFIRMING THE 2022 SOUTHEAST JURISDICTION’S RESOLUTIONS

Whereas, the delegates of the 2022 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference (SEJ) approved three resolutions on November 3, 2022 entitled “Leading with Integrity”³, “Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People”⁴, and “Support for a U.S. Regional Conference”⁵; and

Whereas, in reference to “Leading with Integrity,” integrity is critical to the work of our representative body, and those who will be disaffiliating from The United Methodist Church should recuse themselves from leadership roles in all areas of the church; and

Whereas, in reference to “Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People,” the North Carolina Annual Conference strives to affirm, empower, and protect LGBTQIA+ people in the life of the church; and

Whereas, in reference to “Support for a U.S. Regional Conference,” structural parity across the U.S. and global regions of The United Methodist Church allows for flexibility in ministry for our region’s particular context; and

Whereas, connectional ties and unity among the fourteen Annual Conferences in the SEJ and their corresponding congregations are increasingly important during this season of disaffiliation in our denomination; and

Whereas, the SEJ resolutions themselves specifically urge Annual Conference support;

Now, therefore, be it resolved, the 2023 session of the North Carolina Annual Conference affirms these three attached SEJ resolutions from the November 2022 session; and

Be it further resolved, we encourage all local churches and church leaders to disseminate these resolutions within their congregations.

Approved by the 2020 Delegation of the North Carolina Annual Conference to General and Jurisdictional Conferences on June 8, 2023

Approved by majority vote by the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church on June 17, 2023

³<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60f7c265bd35bd0f0845e07b/t/635f31d87d58c0223f2c9ff8/1667183064048/Leading+with+Integrity.pdf>

⁴<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60f7c265bd35bd0f0845e07b/t/635f31aa7d58c0223f2c996e/1667183018779/Queer+Delegate+Jurisdictional+Conference+Legislation+-+Southeastern+Jurisdiction.pdf> *Note: The word “Commits” in point 6 was changed by the delegates to read “Aspires.”*

⁵<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60f7c265bd35bd0f0845e07b/t/635f31e2ad70df3f1c05fd24/1667183075071/Resolution+in+Support+of+a+U.S.+Regional+Conference.pdf>