

We Are Still In: A Resolution to Fight Climate Change

Submitted to the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, 116th Convention, 2017

Sponsored by: The Social Justice Commission and the Missioner for Creation Care

Resolved, that the 116th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts affirms the leadership of Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church, The Most Reverend Michael Curry, in his June 1, 2017, response to President Trump’s decision to pull out of the 2015 Paris Climate Accord; and be it further

Resolved, that the 116th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts praises the “We Are Still In” declaration, in which hundreds of signatories pledge support of the goals of the Paris Climate Accord; and be it further

Resolved, that the 116th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts joins with the United Church of Christ in living out the principles of the Paris Climate Accord by committing our time, financial resources, and prayers to:

- call on our congregations and every person of faith to set a moral example by making decisions of integrity in our energy choices and holding our leaders accountable to likewise reduce carbon emissions;
- call on our clergy and lay leaders to speak from the pulpit about our moral obligation to protect God’s creation; and
- call on our communities of faith to be bold and courageous in proclaiming the urgency of the climate crisis in the public square and at the local, state, and federal levels.

Explanation: The scientific evidence continues to be overwhelming that climate change is real and caused by humans. Its effects are already manifest in the severity and frequency of extreme weather events around the world that disproportionately affect the poor. Almost all scientists agree that we must stabilize the global mean temperature increase to 2° Celsius to avoid catastrophe by instituting significant reductions in global levels of carbon emissions.

In his June 1 statement, The Most Reverend Michael Curry calls on the Episcopal Church to continue to take bold action to address the climate crisis, reminding us that we are all trustees and stewards of God’s good creation.¹ The Diocese of Western Massachusetts has been a leader within the Episcopal Church in its urging Church Pension Fund, the Investment Committee of the Executive Council, and the Episcopal Church Foundation to divest financial resources from fossil fuel companies and to re-invest in carbon-free sources of energy. The diocese passed such a resolution at its 113th Convention, “Eliminating Fossil Fuel Holdings and Investing in Clean Energy.” The Trustees of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts also voted in 2014 to align their investments more

¹ Genesis 1:26-31

closely with their faith and values by reducing their exposure to fossil fuels and to invest in renewable energy projects as objectives for the portfolio going forward.

The Diocese of Western Massachusetts has also taken leadership in the Episcopal Church by creating in 2014 a diocesan-level position, Missioner for Creation Care, a position that has since become ecumenical. Starting in 2014 the diocese began observing an annual Season of Creation (October 4, the Feast of St. Francis, through the end of November), which encourages preaching and prayer, sacrificial acts of generosity, and bold public witness to strengthen our Christian response to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Annually, the Creation Season webpage provides resources to ACT, ADVOCATE, LEARN, and PRAY. These resources include tools for implementing this resolution.

So far, the “We Are Still In”² declaration in support of the Paris Accord has been signed by the mayors of more than 200 American cities, governors of numerous states, leaders of hundreds of American companies, and many university presidents. They pledge to “pursue ambitious climate goals, working together to take forceful action and to ensure that the US remains a global leader in reducing emissions.”

On June 2, 2017, Bishop Doug Fisher of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, the Rev. Dr. Jim Antal (Conference Minister and President, United Church of Christ in Massachusetts), and the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas (Missioner for Creation Care, Diocese of Western Massachusetts and Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ) also condemned President Donald Trump's decision to abandon the Paris Climate Accords by signing a statement, “An Opportunity for which the Church Was Born.” This ecumenical statement, which was also passed by the national leadership of the United Church of Christ, affirms, “Our Judeo-Christian heritage teaches that the Earth and its web of life are precious in God’s sight, that the Earth belongs not to us but to God, and that we are entrusted with loving the Earth as God loves it.³ As followers of Jesus, we are committed to God’s mission of reconciling people with each other and with the whole of creation.” The statement declared, “[The President’s] decision is scientifically, economically, medically, politically and morally wrong. With heartache we recognize the devastating toll of suffering that will be exacted by this Administration’s refusal to address the climate crisis. We are appalled by the Administration’s unwillingness to join with other nations in protecting and stabilizing the atmosphere upon which our species – and so many other forms of life – depend.” We fully concur.

We must, therefore, in the three-fold challenge of the document, “An Opportunity for Which the Church Was Born,” and of the analogous statement from the United Church of Christ, “accept the mantle of moral leadership,” strive to “incarnate change,” and “proclaim the truth [of climate change] in the public square.” The alternative is devastating to contemplate.

2 www.WeAreStillIn.org

3 Genesis 1-2:3, Psalm 24, and Genesis 2:15