

## Presbyterian Church, USA

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#### Past Denominational Statements

##### Resource Use, 1951 (PCUSA)

[The General Assembly called upon members to use all resources for the good of all human beings. It asked for] . . . a great demonstration of genuine concern and friendship and skillful aid, to meet the needs of hungry, despairing, desperate men and nations. . . .” [The General Assembly also warned against the use of resources] . . . for any selfish purpose, to control either the economy or the moral or political autonomy of the people we seek to assist. . . .

##### Natural Resources, 1954 (PCUSA)

Great natural resources have been entrusted to our nation by Almighty God. We call upon the Christian conscience to recognize that our stewardship of the earth and water involves both a land-use program which recog-

nizes the interdependence of soil, water and man and the development of a responsible public policy which will resist the exploitation of land, water, and other natural resources, including forests, for selfish purposes and maintain intelligent conservation for the sustenance of all living creatures through future generations.

### **Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal, 1971 (UPCUSA)**

#### C. A New Order of Values

While the ecological crisis threatens catastrophe, it also offers unprecedented opportunity for social reconstruction, protection of nature, and more rewarding life styles. A new order of values comes into view, shaping an “eco-ethic” which can displace the present technocratic ethos. The new order of values revolves around a turning away from the amassing of physical power and consumer goods, and a movement to nurture deeper and unifying, but fragile, qualities of life. The “eco-ethic” involves recovery of a sense of God’s time, an awareness of the history of man in nature. This in turn may curtail the space-conquering-and-filling lust of modern Western man. A cluster of related political and personal values will emerge as a part of the new order.

1. *Rights of Life over Property Rights.* People and all other living things are to be valued above rights of property and its development. Growing assent to this proposition does not automatically make it operational. The structures of modern society and the priorities of contemporary politics seem to work in the opposite direction. Our laws and customs often function to give precedence to property rights over the rights of people and other life.

2. *Technology as Servant, not Master.* A second imperative of the “eco-ethic” is to tame technology. Technological development must be guided and evaluated according to the criteria of shalom, rather than the dictates of “progress.” A humanizing vision is making us conservative about new techniques for the history of pesticides and the consequences of internal combustion engines teach us the distinctly mixed blessings of technological developments.

Responsibility requires, as often as not, the rejection of ecologically untested processes and products. Previously, industrial society placed the burden of proof upon those who questioned the advisability of public and private undertakings made possible by new technological expertise. Those who warned of potential environmental dangers were required to prove their case beyond doubt. It is time to shift the burden.

3. *A New Ethical Life Style.* The social and ecological costs of affluent living have been staggering, even though they do not show up on conventional economic balance sheets. We can no longer afford an ethic of abundance which justifies prodigal styles of consumption and polluting systems of production. Affluent living becomes grotesque under conditions of extreme social inequity and ominous ecological deterioration.

4. *New Modes of Corporate Decision.* One of the promising signs of renewal is the stirring of public demand for corporate accountability and widespread opposition to any concentration of power insulated from broader human values. There is also healthy skepticism about the reliability of environmental control steps under the present system of “corporate protectionism” on the part of public regulatory agencies.

However, to get at the source of many environmental problems, corporate enterprises themselves, whether public or private, will have to change their decision-making habits. Decisions made by these organizations have enormous and long-term effects upon the global ecosystem. It will be tragic for everyone if they continue to operate in ways that rapidly or cumulatively damage the environment, while professing to be ecologically careful.

Confessing that individually and collectively we have sinned against our environment; and

Believing that in God’s design, human beings and their organizations are called to care for fellowmen, other life, and the whole of nature, exercising wise stewardship of natural resources, for the good of the many now and in the future; and

Recognizing that the environment is a highly intricate system which includes physical elements of air, water, plants, animals, land, solid waste and litter as well as the social components of population centers, economic enterprise, and political units; and that

Achieving a quality environment is a non-controversial goal but a conflict laden process; and

Learning how pervasive can be the effects of human technology on the community of nature, both its living and non-living parts;

While, in the name of progress, man continues to waste natural resources and pollute the biosphere, adding to human deprivation and threatening life unborn; and

The Christian community only dimly discerns how nature groans in travail, and here and there still justifies its exploitation and devastation, but also has some contributions to make to environmental renewal; and

Concluding that a reversal of ecocidal development requires a fundamental revolution of the imagination with careful restructuring of political, economic, social, and religious institutions;

The 183rd General Assembly (1971) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America:

1. Commits itself to participate in the preservation and rehabilitation of the household of man in nature, and to seek *shalom* (wholeness) which requires an equitable, hospitable environment for all life and envisions a revitalized human community.
2. Affirms the priority of human values such as: physical health and cultural heritage, rights of life over property rights, taming of technology in order to enhance quality of life, restraint in consumption, equitable distribution of resources, and modes of corporate decision accountable to the public and to existing communities.
3. Urges individuals, Christians especially, to discipline themselves as consumers.
5. Urges corporate enterprises, governmental agencies, and community groups to decide what to do and what to leave alone on the basis of the human priorities stated above, in dialogue with ecologists and the people most affected, keeping in mind that the key to responsible stewardship of the environment is anticipation of potential hazards before they become critical.
6. Urges the President and Congress to ensure more rigorous monitoring of environmental conditions and their social costs, adequate funding of research to develop benign products and production systems, phase out of wasteful or toxic technologies, testing of potentially dangerous substances or implements before their introduction into commercial use, and authority to ban those which are not "eco-safe."

### **Wilderness Protection, 1975 (UPCUSA)**

. . . The committee recommends to the 187th General Assembly (1975) that it affirm advocacy of the protection of wilderness areas and parklands.

### **Energy, 1979**

But concern for the future cannot allow us to withhold care for "the least" who live now. We have no right to choose who lives and who dies in order to serve current economic ideologies or a privileged posterity. We have no right to squander the world's energy resources for short-term self benefit. We are called to live simply and share liberally, while advocating the common good of all.

The church especially should evaluate all energy policy choices in terms of their impact on the poor and powerless, as well as their impact on future generations, and insist that governments and institutions observe this basic principle of justice. The needs of the poor have priority over the comfort of the rich.

We are a community of hope in God's kingdom; in light of where history is going, we can help to evaluate and reorient energy production and consumption. A less energy-intensive way of life is consistent with the values of the Kingdom; reduced material consumption may actually enhance an abundant life. The Bible envisions a peaceful world of people with claims and needs satisfied, living amiably in the community of creation and in communion with the Creator (Is. 11:69, Hos. 2:18-23, Rev. 21:2-4). A faithful response involves creative action."

### **Toxic Chemicals, 1980, (PCUS)**

[In response to growing concern about toxic chemicals and their effect on the environment, the General Assembly of the PCUS voted]:

[That the Mission Board]: (1) develop and make available to the church educational resources which from a biblical, theological, and ethical point of view, reflect on the adverse impact which careless technology has on the environment and which, in its ripple effects, confronts us with the fundamentally religious questions of our guardianship of the physical integrity of those yet unborn; (2) instruct the Board's Investment Committee to ascertain, in concert with other denominations, what is its corporate responsibility regarding manufacturers of herbicides of the dioxin class.

### **Drinking Water and Sanitation, 1981 (UPCUSA)**

Therefore, the 193rd General Assembly (1981):

1. Pledges its support of the activities of the United Nations Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade, 1981-1990.
3. Urges continued strengthening and enforcement of United States clean water standards to insure clean drinking water and adequate sanitation in the coming decades for all of our residents.
6. Calls upon all Presbyterians,
  - a. to support the International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade's activities;
  - b. to seek, through their elected representative, a strong United States commitment to the Decade;
  - c. to develop lifestyles that are consistent with the necessity to conserve water.

### **Speaking Truth to Power (Energy), 1981**

As servants of the Truth, the truth we discern about present energy choices and our responsibility as Americans and Presbyterians can be summarized with deceptive simplicity. The era of cheap and abundant energy is over.

The urgent goal and task of providing an equitable distribution of sufficient and sustainable energy for basic human needs mandates changed social and personal priorities. In the developed countries change implies a reduction in waste, restraint of total energy demand, the decreased consumption of depletable energy resource, and the prioritizing of supplies for basic needs. Also implied is an increase in the use of renewable energy resources and improved efficiency. Less appreciated but equally important is a transfer of capital and depletable energy resources to poorer countries of the world that they may begin building sustainable and human societies. Finally, the goal implies strict enforcement of environmental laws to protect forms of life from irreversible damage and a commitment to the peaceful solution of energy related disputes.

To bring about these changes and to reach this goal there must be a sense of hope and urgency, a willingness to participate in international planning forums which respond to the poor and impacted along with the powerful and inventive, and openness to innovation and sharing, and new perspectives based on an ethic of ecological justice.

The speaking and doing of truth in our congregations are more than finding ways to stay afloat in the food of rising energy prices. Prudential actions, such as lower thermostat settings, are an important agenda, but alone they only begin to realize the rich possibilities of the present energy situation. The moment is ripe with new life. The ethic of ecological justice offers imaginative ways of thinking about the gospel, human communities, and the rest of creation. Living frugal lives of energy sufficiency opens up new possibilities for the human spirit. Finding alternatives to fossil fuels gives us the opportunity to realize new forms of community and to express solidarity with the poor and with the rest of creation.

God's call to a new ethic of ecological justice must not only be expressed by the community of faith but also find its way into the hearts of individual believers. Our response to this call is easily diverted by claims for national supremacy, institutional rigidities, and selfish individualism. We must, therefore, heed the Holy Spirit's working within us, reordering our priorities, bringing us to repentance, and empowering us for participation in the new era.

This participation will manifest itself in concern for justice, in responsible consumption, and in sharing within community.

God calls Christians living in affluence to develop a lifestyle of frugality which assists fulfillment while releasing scarce resources for use by the poor.

## **I. Social Policy**

Expedited movement through the transitional period will require the best dynamic mix of energy systems, social policies, and methods of implementation. No system, policy, or means of implementation can satisfy all the guidelines or guarantee a risk free transition. Recognizing our own limits in discerning the truth and aware of great ambiguity in a constantly changing situation, we support and recommend to all the people of Christ in the Presbyterian churches:

- A. Legislation, programs, and international agreements which prepare Americans for energy emergencies and make provision for just and peaceful solutions to sudden disruptions in energy supplies.
- B. A social commitment to accelerate the period of transition including policies, programs, and laws designed to decrease waste, energy demand, and consumption of depletable resources; to increase efficiency in the use of resources; and to expand the practical application of appropriate technologies based on renewable energy resources.
- C. Increased social investment in conservation, and the efficient use of energy in ways which increase employment opportunities.
- D. Measures to assure access of the poor to sufficient energy at affordable prices.
- E. Significantly increased levels of private and public development assistance of the kind which incorporates principles of participation and appropriate technology and is selectively targeted to meet the basic human needs of poor nations and the poor within nations.
- F. The enforcement of rigorous environmental and human safeguards in the production and use of all forms of energy.
- G. Increased efforts to educate the public about energy systems.
- H. Accelerated investment in mass transportation, and more efficient motor vehicles.
- I. The prioritizing for public and private funding of conservation, appropriate solar, and other renewable energy systems.
- J. Modification of the market solution to the pricing of oil and natural gas. Laws to ensure competition within energy industries must be enacted and enforced.
- K. Research and development of safe and environmentally sound methods of extracting oil from shale and tar sands.
- L. Dependence on nuclear fission for energy production involves unresolved political issues of social and economic impact, ecological damage, and potential risks to human life. Thus, development of nuclear generating capacity should involve careful consideration of nuclear power and its alternatives. Current dependence on nuclear generation using present technology should be phased out as quickly as possible as better sources of energy are developed and measures to promote conservation and efficiency become effective. Rigorous controls for the operation of nuclear systems and public commitment to safe storage and disposal of radioactive material.
- M. Publicly-funded research into the feasibility and consequences of energy from nuclear fusion should be continued.
- N. The controlled use of coal with the protection of strict environmental and human safeguards.

## **II. Church Responsibility**

Two measures of the Presbyterian response in this moment are a willingness to move beyond a “staying afloat” mentality and the fruition in the ministries of the church of these new and hopeful ways of thinking and doing. The ministries of the Presbyterian churches in the present situation and our recommendations within each ministry are:

- A. Education - to probe, clarify, and communicate a theological and ethical framework for evaluating energy issues. . .
- B. Example - to set an example of responsible energy consumption in church buildings, meeting patterns, member

households, and the work place.

C. Local Community - to cooperate and participate in local community efforts to implement conservation measures, renewable energy technologies, and related new patterns of community life

D. Stewardship of Money - to foster creative uses of money in the production and use of energy.

E. Solidarity - to enlarge the social bond with the poor and vulnerable who are affected by energy production and pricing.

F. Advocacy - to initiate and support changes in public policy and corporate behavior consistent with the values, criteria, and social policy recommendations of this report.

### **III. Personal Responsibility**

We support and recommend to all the people of Christ in the Presbyterian churches:

A. Periods of prayer and biblical study focusing on the implications of ecological justice as it applies to energy questions.

B. Personal study of energy systems, their social and environmental impacts, and technical and social policy alternatives.

C. A personal and household energy consumption audit and plan to reduce waste and increase efficiency.

D. A commitment to reduce consumption of energy and to use the savings for increased giving.

E. Representation and advocacy in local communities, on the job, in the church and in public forums of policies to hasten the period of transition to the new era.

### **Presbyterian Church USA Policy Statements**

#### **Acid Rain, 1984**

[The 196th General Assembly (1984)]:

7. Calls upon the Congress of the United States promptly to enact legislation that will reduce the emissions of sulphur dioxide and the oxides of nitrogen to a level necessary to protect the health of most sensitive environments and individuals and that will distribute the costs of cleanup fairly among corporations, governments, and consumers, with specific safeguards against adding to the burden of the poor.

8. Calls upon the Government of the United States to resume negotiations with the Government of Canada on the problem of acid rain and to establish with Canada a joint acid rain control program to bring the pollutants responsible for acid depositions down to the level necessary for safeguarding environmental and human health.

### **III. Our Theological Understanding**

2. God as Deliverer acts to protect, restore, and redeem the earth and its creatures. These have become co-victims with all humanity, victims of the sinful pride and greed that seek unwarranted mastery over the natural and social orders, and the sinful sloth and carelessness that refuse responsibility for understanding and serving God's world.

#### **Stewardship, 1984**

5. Human stewardship is not a dominion of mastery. It is a dominion of unequivocal love for this world. It is to be exercised with respect for the integrity of natural systems and for the limits that nature places on economic growth and material consumption. As stewards:

- We seek a political economy directed to the protection of the poor and to the sufficient and sustainable sustenance of all people;

- We accept the responsibility of using political processes to check the abuses of power that would otherwise continue to victimize the earth and the poor;

- And we insist that the costs of restoring the polluted environment and structuring sustainable practices and institutions be distributed equitably throughout our society.

## **Population, 1984**

Therefore, the 196th General Assembly (1984), aware of the increasing size of the world's population and conscious of the potential consequences of unlimited growth, of resource limitations, of insufficient public responses, and of unmet population needs:

Reaffirms its belief in the sanctity of life, the inestimable worth of every individual in the sight of God, the rights of individuals to be, to belong, to share, to act.

Affirms the work of the many agencies and organizations related to the United Nations that in multiple ways seek to assist nations to develop and implement population planning policies and serve the needs of the growing population and population congestion.

Calls upon the United States government to participate fully in the International Conference [on Population] and to give generous and continuing financial and logistical support to United Nations programs designed to address specific population needs.

## **Nuclear Waste, 1987**

4. Therefore the 199th General Assembly (1987) Urges the United States government to:

- a. Pursue diligently the search for geologically acceptable, permanent high-level nuclear waste disposal sites, meeting the requirements set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- b. Consider carefully the objections raised against the selection of Hanford, Washington, Deaf Smith County, Texas, and Yucca Mountain, Nevada, as prospective sites for such a permanent depository because of the potential risk of contamination of the Columbia-River Basin and Oglala Aquifer, areas of great human and economic significance;
- c. In the light of the inadequacy of existing water pond facilities to provide for temporary storage of spent nuclear fuel, develop intermediate storage facilities for high-level nuclear waste until the question of a permanent nuclear waste disposal is settled in its scientific and political terms, but not to consider such monitored retrieval storage (MRS) facilities as permanent solution to the problem or simply a way of meeting the mandate of the NWPA [Nuclear Waste Policy Act] and thereby postponing the difficult decisions of a permanent repository; and
- d. Establish a formula for allocating the decommissioning costs of presently operating nuclear power plants, so that the costs and benefits will be distributed justly among utility customers, taxpayers, and utility investors.

## **Pesticides and the Health of Farmers and Rural Residents, 1987**

[Therefore, the 199th General Assembly (1987) urges each Presbytery and local church to]:

2. Encourage and support community efforts to improve the health and safety of farmers and farm workers, rural residents, and consumers through educational and advocacy activities;
3. Seek out and offer support to rural residents who have become victims of pesticide poisoning through accidental sprayings, pesticide drift, and contaminated drinking water and to work with these people at the community level to cause local officials to clean up or correct the source of the problems;
5. Encourage increased research and development of alternative means of pest control, other than toxic pesticides.

## **Exxon Spill, 1989**

[In response to the Exxon tanker spill in Prince William Sound in 1989, the General Assembly called] for clean-up, recovery, and remedial costs to be the major responsibility of the polluter rather than the taxpaying consumer public [and called upon the Federal Government] to strengthen regulations and enforcement regarding the transport of oil and hazardous substances, and vessel construction.

## **Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice, 1990**

### Call to Restore the Creation

Creation cries out in this time of ecological crisis.

- Abuse of nature and injustice to people place the future in grave jeopardy.
- Population triples in this century.
- Biological systems suffer diminished capacity to renew themselves.
- Finite minerals are mined and pumped as if inexhaustible.
- Peasants are forced onto marginal lands, and soil erodes.
- The rich-poor gap grows wider.
- Wastes and poisons exceed nature's capacity to absorb them.
- Greenhouse gases pose threat of global warming.

The church has powerful reason for engagement in restoring God's creation:

- God's works in creation are too wonderful, too ancient, too beautiful, too good to be desecrated.
- Restoring creation is God's own work in our time, in which God comes both to judge and to restore.
- Human life and well-being depend upon the flourishing of other life and the integrity of the life-supporting processes that God has ordained.
- The love of neighbor, particularly "the least" of Christ's brothers and sisters, requires action to stop the poisoning, the erosion, the wastefulness that are causing suffering and death.
- The future of our children and their children and all who come after is at stake.
- In this critical time of transition of a new era, God's new doing may be discerned as a call to earth-keeping, to justice, and to community.

Therefore, the 202nd General Assembly affirms that:

- Response to God's call requires a new faithfulness, for which guidance may be found in norms that illuminate the contemporary meaning of God's steadfast love for the world.
- Earth-keeping today means insisting on sustainability—the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together—which requires human beings to practice wise, humble, responsible stewardship, after the model of servanthood that we have in Jesus.
- Justice today requires participation, the inclusion of all members of the human family in obtaining and enjoying the Creator's gifts for sustenance.
- Justice also means sufficiency, a standard upholding the claim of all to have enough—to be met through equitable sharing and organized efforts to achieve that end.
- Community in our time requires the nurture of solidarity, leading to steadfastness in standing with companions, victims, and allies, and to the realization of the church's potential as a community of support for adventurous faithfulness.

## 2. Area Two: Water Quality

### A. Basic Policies in Support of Water Quality

1. Increased federal, state, local, and private funding for the investigation of air, water, and ground contamination . . .
2. The pursuit of a three-pronged strategy — education, regulation, and economic incentives — to combat environmental pollution.
4. Placing the burden of proof that water quality is not degraded on those who discharge or introduce potentially harmful substances to the environment.

### B. Implementation of Policies

1. The vigorous protection of remaining wetlands through the enforcement of existing laws.
3. Tighter restrictions on point sources of water pollution and illegal dumping.
4. Increased efforts to address the problem of pollution from urban and rural runoff.



5. Research on methods of preventing and controlling ground water contamination.
7. Continued study and greater control of acid rain and airborne contaminants that enter surface water, in coordination with air quality authorities.
8. Increased federal funding for national estuary planning and action.
9. The upgrading of municipal water systems.

### 3. Area Three: Wildlife and Wildlands

#### A. Basic Policies in Support of Wildlife and Wildlands, Consistent with the Spirit of the Following Aphorisms

- Keep wildlife wild and free.
- Avoid irreversible change.
- Protect and expand remaining public wildlands.
- Optimize natural diversity; optimize natural stability.
- Increase options for experiencing natural history.
- Do not “discount” the future value of the environment.
- Respect life, the more sentient the more respect.
- Think of nature as a community, more than a commodity.

#### B. Implementation of Policies

1. Preserve wildlands in all the diverse kinds of American ecosystems, including wildlands near urban areas; and restore degraded wildlands, reintroducing all the original native fauna and flora where possible.
4. Stop cutting remaining pristine forests on public lands.
5. Provide interpretation and economic support for those persons whose lives and jobs must be altered in the interest of long-range environmental quality.
7. Support Native American efforts to retain and restore wildlands and to maintain a sustainable relationship with wildlife.
8. Prohibit trade in endangered wild animals and endangered plants, or products derived from them.
9. Stop indiscriminate killing of wild animals.

### 4. Area Four: Reducing and Managing Our Wastes

#### A. Solid Waste

- a.1. The federal government should assert leadership to develop a comprehensive national policy, coordinated with state and local initiatives, to conserve the resources that are now expended wastefully by
  - (a) reducing as much as possible the amount of garbage requiring disposal;
  - (b) giving clear definition to the roles of each level of government in meeting the solid waste challenge;
  - (c) setting appropriate standards for solid waste facilities and operations; and
  - (d) ensuring that the financial and environmental costs of carrying out this strategy are distributed equitably.

#### B. Hazardous Waste (and Other Toxic Threats)

- a.1.d. Support the development of public policies that result in reducing the generation of hazardous wastes and reduction in the use of hazardous substances. Techniques include (a) substituting non-hazardous for hazardous substances used in production processes, (b) changing end-products so fewer hazardous substances are required, (c) modifying or modernizing production lines, (d) better housekeeping practices during production, and (e) recycling hazardous substances and other materials within the production process.

### 5. Area Five: Overcoming Atmospheric Instability — Global Warming and Ozone Depletion

#### A. Ecumenical Participation and International Participation

1. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declares its serious concern, in concert with ecumenical partners, that the global atmospheric warming trend (the greenhouse effect) represents one of the most serious global environmental challenges to the health, security, and stability of human life and natural ecosystems . . .

## B. Policies on Global Warming

1. The United States, as consumer of nearly a quarter of the world's energy, must take the lead in reducing its own combustion of fossil fuels and shifting to renewable sources of energy which do not contribute to the atmospheric buildup of carbon dioxide.
3. The United States should work through the United Nations and appropriate diplomatic channels to reach firm international agreements for steady and substantial reduction of the gases causing climate change, and for halting deforestation and promoting reforestation. . . .
8. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should act promptly to strengthen fuel economy and emission standards for automobiles, buses, and trucks by mandating and consistently enforcing a schedule of energy efficiency improvements, leading to a substantially higher standard of efficiency with a few years. . . .
9. Comparable standard-setting and incentive-generating measures should be advanced by the U.S. Bureau of Standards with respect to efficiency improvements in lighting, heating, air-conditioning, appliances, building construction, the weatherization of existing buildings, and the cogeneration of heat and electricity (with legislation as necessary where the bureau's powers do not apply). . . .
10. Public Policy should encourage alternatives to private automobiles. Alternatives include municipal mass transit, railroads, bicycles, and walking.

## C. Policies on Ozone Depletion

To a large extent the kinds of policies needed for reducing the emissions of chlorofluorocarbons and other ozone-destroying gases parallel the policies required for reducing the buildup of the greenhouse gases. The CFCs, which are the leading cause of ozone depletion, also add significantly to the greenhouse effect. To protect the ozone shield, there clearly is need for international action through

1. leadership by the United States, which is the largest contributor to the problem;
2. a longer-term and global frame of reference, with improved foresight capability by governments and international agencies;
3. strong international agreements and cooperative arrangements; specifically, firm adherence to the Montreal and Helsinki agreements on phasing out the production of the CFCs by the end of the century and discontinuing the other ozone-destroying chemicals as soon as possible, with continuing efforts to bring additional nations into the pact; . . .

With respect to the middle-governing bodies and local congregations, the 202nd General Assembly (1990) recommends:

11. That synods and presbyteries assess their current work, witness, and resourcing capability with regard to their response to the eco-justice crisis and the call to restore creation and that they explore and undertake concerted initiatives to strengthen and go beyond what they now are doing. . . .
  - designate responsibility to provide focused leadership for eco-justice concerns and environmental stewardship;
  - provide and promote resource materials as well as educational opportunities, including continuing education for clergy, to develop eco-justice awareness and expertise;
  - develop public policy and advocacy efforts on local, regional, and national issues of eco-justice and environmental stewardship;
  - join in and support collaborative and coalitional work with ecumenical partners and with social justice and environmental organizations;
  - include in grant-making and mission funding more support for regional and community-based organizations that address eco-justice concerns and specific cases of eco-injustice; and
  - in guidelines for construction and renovation of church buildings, and in the criteria for grants or loans for such purposes, sets specific standards for fuel conservation and energy efficiency; and in counsel and advice pertaining to church property encourage ecologically sound land use and a responsible relationship to the natural environment.
12. That local sessions and congregations give serious consideration to their role in restoring creation as this may pertain to worship and preaching; education of children and adults; ministry to the community, including actions to

ensure that the church is involved in local efforts to deal with such eco-justice concerns as waste management, pollution problems and threats, recycling programs, energy conservation, land-use planning . . . with special attention to impacts upon poor people . . .

### **Recycled Paper, 1992**

The 204th General Assembly [directs] all future General Assemblies, beginning with the 205th General Assembly (1993), to

1. print all official reports on recycled and recyclable paper, including those printed by outside contractors; and
2. direct all related bodies (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation, Board of Pensions, Central Treasury Corporation, Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association) to use recycled and recyclable paper in all reports and publications, beginning as soon as possible after the 204th General Assembly (1992).

### **Colored Paper, 1992**

[The 204th General Assembly (1992):]

1. direct[s] the manager of Assembly Arrangements, Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Louisville, to minimize the use of colored paper at General Assembly meetings; and
2. direct[s] the national Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to minimize the use of colored paper in its offices and in its mailings. [O]

### **Reaffirm Call to Restore the Creation, 1993**

. . . the 205th General Assembly (1993)

1. reaffirm[s] the “Call to Restore the Creation” adopted by the 202nd General Assembly (1990) . . .
2. receive[s] the document entitled “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity” as a prophetic word to the church and world in our time . . .
7. commend[s] President Clinton for having announced his intention to sign the Biodiversity Convention produced at the Earth Summit;
8. urge[s] President Clinton, the Senate, and the House of Representatives to follow new policies of support for Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit . . .
9. direct[s] the Social Justice and Peacemaking Ministry Unit, in cooperation with appropriate advocacy networks, to seek the adoption by the United States of the “Alternative Non-Governmental Agreement on Climate Change” that . . . contains specific targets and timetables for reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

ACSWP Commentary

### **Hazardous Waste, Race, and the Environment, 1995**

That The 207th General Assembly (1995) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approve the following policy resolution and background document on “Hazardous Waste, Race, and the Environment,” and that it be used as a basis for decisions in developing programs, guidelines, and advocacy for appropriate entities of the General Assembly.

That the 207th General Assembly (1995) do the following:

1. Commend “Hazardous Waste, Race, and the Environment” to governing bodies and congregations, urging that it be used as a basis for study, action, and advocacy on matters of hazardous waste and race.
2. Direct the Stated Clerk to distribute this resolution to all congregations and governing bodies.
3. Amend Section “A. Basic Policies on Hazardous Waste” of the policy statement entitled “Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice” that was adopted by the 202nd General Assembly (1990)

[The background to the report, “Hazardous Waste, Race, and the Environment,” appeared in Reports to the General Assembly 34.1055-.1095, and was also approved by the 207th General Assembly. The text of the section of the policy statement amended by the 207th General Assembly is in *Minutes*, 1990, Part I, pp. 667-668,

paragraphs 40.817-.826; it is also available as the booklet Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice, 1990, pp. 53-54, Items A.1.-A.10. The following is the text in its entirety [bracketed paragraphs indicated those sections which were adopted by the 202nd General Assembly (1990)]:

#### A. Basic Policies on Hazardous Waste

1. Support the development of public policies that result in reducing the generation of hazardous wastes and reduction in the use of hazardous substances. Techniques include (a) substituting nonhazardous for hazardous substances used in production processes, (b) changing end-products so fewer hazardous substances are required, (c) modifying or modernizing production lines, (d) better housekeeping practices during production, and (e) recycling hazardous substances and other materials within the production process.]
2. Support the development of public policies that result in the elimination of the disproportionate risk born by the poor and people of color, and that encourage industries to engage in clean-up activities.
3. Support policies that reward companies for being environmentally responsible in their production and disposal processes.
4. Support public policies that utilize demographic data to promote sustainable management of natural and human resources and assess risk factors associated with where people live.
5. Advocate environmental justice concerns through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office on behalf of the poor and people of color; and that the Washington Office assist congregations and individuals in their advocacy efforts.
6. Support hazardous waste source reduction public policies, and only as a last resort, public policies that rely on incineration, other treatment technologies, and land disposal.
7. Support just solutions to the selection of hazardous waste disposal sites. Incorporate social justice considerations into the criteria for siting waste-producing or handling facilities, recognizing the grievous impact hazardous wastes have had on poor and racial ethnic communities.
8. Support policies that require full public disclosure and involvement of all potentially affected groups in communities where waste sites are under consideration.
9. Assist poor and racial ethnic communities in identifying and acquiring technical and legal expertise on environmental issues and risk factors.
10. Profess our solidarity with workers and communities feeling the impact of poor hazardous substance use and disposal practices by supporting policies that (a) encourage the development of consistent environmental regulations across the U.S. and in other nations, (b) provide understandable information to workers and the general public on workplace and community toxic hazards, (c) locate dangerous production facilities away from population centers, and (d) identify and inform those who in the past have been exposed to hazardous substances.
11. Urge this nation to examine how its use of resources and methods of production and consumption jeopardize the well-being of the United States and developing nations.
12. Urge Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to address issues of domestic and transnational corporations with regard to the production and disposal of hazardous substances. This includes the exporting of hazardous waste to developing nations.
13. Support policies with economic disincentives to pollute and create hazardous wastes. Support policies with strong incentives for all producers and consumers to move quickly toward the production and use of nontoxic alternative products and to ensure safe collection and recycling of the wastes.
14. Encourage revision of the pricing of consumer products to reflect the total costs associated with production and disposal, including but not limited to worker health costs, disposal costs of the non-recyclable byproducts of production, and disposal costs for the product when it is no longer useful or needed.
15. Ensure that, as far as possible, those responsible for creating toxic and hazardous pollution bear the cost of cleanup and safe disposition.
16. Encourage public policies that address under-regulated aspects of the hazardous waste problem, such as agricultural application of pesticides, storm and irrigation runoff, and the household use of hazardous substances.
17. Support the development of policies that discourage or prohibit federal, state, and private agencies from storing nuclear waste, if there is no effective infrastructure for dealing with accidents or regulating storage sites.
18. Support policies that require mining industries to clean up hazardous and radioactive residue from mining on

Indian reservations and in other areas.

19. Encourage full participation in the decision-making process by all who are affected by the siting or cleanup of hazardous waste sites in their communities.

20. Since economic deprivation mitigates against due process, churches should work ecumenically to make it possible for economically deprived affected citizens to obtain the technical assistance and expertise needed to build credible cases about environmental hazards and health effects. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Fund for Legal Aid and Intercultural Justice can be used to help achieve this goal.

21. Support efforts being made to develop participatory mechanisms and structures at the federal, state, and local levels that will ensure affected residents, including the poor and people of color, are involved in problem definition, establishing criteria, and selection of alternative solutions.

22. Support the development and strengthening of policies that place the burden of proof about production, storage, and disposal methods upon industry instead of upon affected communities.

23. The church should assist with advocacy training and education on public policy issues and community organizing for the poor and racial ethnic persons adversely affected by the production, storage, and disposal of hazardous substances.

24. Educate citizens regarding personal responsibilities for hazardous and solid waste problems through examples of environmentally sensitive individual and institutional decisions.

[In an additional action the 207th General Assembly (1995) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):]

1. Approve[s] a commitment to help communities affected by the emplacement of disposal facilities to recover their equilibrium and sense of community and

2. [Requests] that the concept of a ministry to such communities be referred to the appropriate body within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for developing a specific strategy for the promotion of healing.

### **Hope for a Global Future, 1996**

[The 208th General Assembly (1996) adopted the paper Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development as policy for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)]

Just and sustainable human development is the comprehensive enhancement of the quality of life for all, present and future; it necessarily involves the integration of economic, social, political, cultural, ecological, and spiritual dimensions of being.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks just and sustainable human development because the church believes that God wills the fullness of life for all people.

**PRINCIPLES:** Human life and well-being depend upon the flourishing of other life and the integrity of the life-supporting processes that God has ordained [and] Environmental sustainability requires agricultural sustainability, which is necessary for human survival and well-being, now and for the long term future.

[Excerpts from this policy appear below. For the complete policy Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development, see PC(USA), 1996, pp. 524-587.]

[The 208th General Assembly (1996) of the Presbyterian Church (USA):]

a. calls to the attention of General Assembly divisions and entities, middle governing bodies, congregations, and individual Presbyterians to the continuing urgency of the Call to Restore Creation by the 202nd General Assembly (1990) . . .

b. calls particular attention to the 202nd General Assembly (1990)'s recommendation on global warming . . .

c. encourages the United States government to take steps toward incorporating environmental damage and depletion into "full-cost pricing" and to call upon other governments to join in discussions to achieve this kind of pricing.

d. urges all citizens and policy makers of the United States to acknowledge that even with full-cost pricing, very

efficient technologies, and an accelerated shift to renewable energy sources, just and sustainable human development still requires moderate consumption by the affluent and good stewardship of the planetary ecosystems.

e. recognizes the formidable problems that substantially reduced consumption in the north would pose for an economy geared to growth . . .

h. urges the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United States government in all its policies that relate to development around the world to give high priority to research, promotion, and assistance to increase agricultural yields . . .

i. urges full United States cooperation with and financial support for the work of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the World Food Program in the global efforts to provide food security . . .

### **Kyoto Protocol, 1998**

[The 210th General Assembly (1998) addressed the complicated and significant issue of global climate change by approving Commissioners' Resolution 98-5 which called for the United States] to ratify the protocol negotiated in Kyoto which seeks to have the U.S. and other industrialized countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and urged all nations to develop policies on renewable energy, energy and fuel efficiency, and reforestation which will reduce their emissions. [This resolution reminded the Assembly of the 1990 policy statement, "Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice," and pointed to issues raised at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the commitment on scheduled reductions of greenhouse gasses negotiated in Kyoto, Japan in 1997.]

The 210th General Assembly (1998) [of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):]

1. Urge[s] the government of the United States to ratify the protocol negotiated in Kyoto which seeks to have the U.S. and other industrialized countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and urges all nations to develop policies on renewable energy, energy and fuel efficiency, and reforestation which will reduce their emissions;
2. Urge[s] developing nations to negotiate targets and timetable for reductions of greenhouse gases;
3. Urge[s] Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations and institutions to pursue energy efficiency and conservation in their buildings and property; and
4. Commend[s] church organizations and individuals which have worked diligently since the 202nd General Assembly (1990) policy statement was adopted to promote caring for God's creation, and particularly for addressing global climate change.

### **Kyoto Protocol, 1999**

[In response to an overture from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley, the 211th General Assembly (1999) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) again urged the government of the United States to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Citing that, "the mounting gravity of the effects upon earth and people from climate change resulting from human-induced global warming has been confirmed by strong scientific consensus," the Assembly reaffirmed the action of the 210th General Assembly (1998) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) regarding greenhouse gas reductions. Further, they upheld policy from 208th General Assembly (1996), in "Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development" which called "for Presbyterians and other Christians to lead the way to a reconceptualization of the 'good life,' one that, in accordance with our Christian and Reformed heritage, is less materialistic and more frugal."]

The 211th General Assembly (1999) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

1. Call[s] again upon the United States Senate to ratify the Kyoto Protocol;
2. Urge[s] the U.S. Administration and Congress to devise, fund, and implement plans that aim well beyond the still very inadequate targets of the Kyoto Protocol;
3. Direct[s] the Presbyterian Center in Louisville and all other properties of the General Assembly to minimize their use of fossil fuel energy, and to urge all middle governing bodies and local congregations to do the same;
4. Direct[s] the Office of Evangelism and Church Development in the National Ministries Division to review and perfect, as necessary, its implementation of the 202nd General Assembly (1990) recommendation: "In

guidelines for construction and renovation of church buildings and in the criteria for grants or loans for such purposes, set specific standards for fuel conservation and energy efficiency . . .”

5. Direct[s] the General Assembly Council, through the Environmental Justice Staff Team and other program areas as appropriate, to identify, prepare as necessary, and promote educational and program materials to help Presbyterians to examine the basic spiritual and systemic causes of the nation’s failure to respond to global warming and other critical human and environmental concerns in ways commensurate with the urgency of the need, the danger, and the opportunity that these concerns represent. . . . The materials, in their educational, programmatic, and evangelistic uses, will seek to help people of faith in the following ways:

a. *Regarding ecology*: To understand the effects of mounting human numbers, affluent lifestyles, and excessive, unsustainable development upon the protective atmospheric mantle, other natural systems, and vulnerable people.

b. *Regarding lifestyles*: To appreciate and accept the imperative, the practicalities, and the satisfactions of lifestyles characterized by sufficiency and responsible frugality within communities of mutual support and sharing.

c. *Regarding idolatries*: To resist the ancient yet distinctively contemporary idolatries, such as those of power and wealth, that contradict the call of Christ to self-giving service and an ultimately loyalty to him alone.

d. *Regarding economics*: To participate in the conceptualization of, and movement toward, economic arrangements—local and regional, as well as national and international—whereby all persons may participate as able and gifted in work needing to be done and the sufficient sustenance made available, without degrading the atmosphere or otherwise undermining the integrity of God’s creation.

e. *Regarding politics*: To participate in the political arena for the revitalization of our democratic institutions to make them effective instruments for protecting against excessive concentrations of power and equitably redistributing access to the sustenance of earth intended by the Creator for all.

### **Churchwide Stewardship of Resources, 2000**

[The 212th General Assembly (2000) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) directs] the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to develop a churchwide policy governing the production and distribution of documents by all agencies so that there will be responsible stewardship of money, materials, use of recyclable paper, the least expensive and most effective production method, and increased use of electronic media.

### **Mass Extinction and Biodiversity, 2001**

[The 213th General Assembly (2001) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called for the following actions]:

1. Issue and disseminate by all appropriate means this call to halt mass extinction:

#### **Call to Halt Mass Extinction**

The Creator-Sustainer of all life wills its continuance, diversity, beauty, and interconnectedness. When human actions and inactions desecrate the natural systems ordained by God, they affront the Creator. When decisions and actions protect and restore creation’s integrity, diversity, beauty, and interconnectedness, they affirm God’s wisdom and glory and please the Creator.

The Creator-Deliverer calls human communities to work with God to rectify the abuses whereby human impacts upon the earth are leading to a mass extinction of living species. This mass extinction would fundamentally alter and undermine the life and well-being of the human and other creatures that survive. It would rob all future generations of the gifts of wholeness and diversity that God intends.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calls Presbyterians, other citizens, governments, and societal institutions to face the severity of this threat, and to take the steps in practice, policy, and systemic change that will prevent mass extinction and preserve the biodiversity essential to the flourishing of life. (For a complete text, see PC(USA), 2001 pp. 473-474.)

### **On Cleaning Up Power Plant Pollution, 2002**

The 214th General Assembly (2002) approved actions that:

1. Educate Presbyterians through PC(USA) offices and publications about the environmental and health consequences of pollution from outdated coal-fired power plants and the benefits of ensuring that these plants adhere to tighter air pollution limits, and the economic consequences of such actions.
2. Ask all Presbyterians to exercise stewardship by urging government officials to support federal policies and multipollutant legislation that will, in the most cost-efficient way,
  - a. enforce current clean air laws by federal and state governments;
  - b. resist efforts to abolish or undercut established clean air programs;
  - c. enact new clean air laws for power plants that will substantially reduce pollutants that cause smog, acid rain, respiratory disease, mercury contamination, and global warming
  - d. end the “grandfather” loophole that exempts older coal-fired plants; and
  - e. encourage federal funding of technologies that will facilitate and/or reduce the cost of implementing these recommendations.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this new policy to power companies that have outdated coal-fired plants that were “grandfathered” under the Clean Air Act.
4. Direct the Washington Office and Environmental Justice Office to incorporate these concerns into their advocacy work in environmental issues.

### **Takings, 2002**

On the issue of “takings,” the 214th General Assembly (2002) approved actions that:

1. Authorize and encourage the General Assembly Council, through the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Litigation, to undertake a study of “takings” in accordance with “Forming Social Policy” and, if appropriate, present to the General Assembly at a future meeting a proposed social witness policy statement regarding takings. Takings is the concept that any governmental action that restricts the private property rights of the owner of real property and thereby decreases the value of the property requires compensation under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution. Examples of such governmental actions are zoning, historic preservation regulations, and environmental laws and regulations.
2. Declare that the second paragraph of Commissioners’ Resolution 01-29, on the Klamath Basin Drought, which states that the General Assembly “Affirm[s] that the taking of water rights is taking private property and that just compensation is due” (*Minutes*, 2001, Part I, p. 503) shall be construed only to apply to the specific water rights issues of the Klamath Valley Basin.

### **Energy, 2002**

The 214th General Assembly (2002) approved actions that:

1. Address the issue of “Energy” in the light of the current national and international concern over energy production, consumption, cost, patterns of distribution, and energy security.
2. Revise our denominational policy, which was last thoroughly addressed twenty years ago in a 1981 joint policy statement, “The Power to Speak Truth to Power” by the former Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church (USA).
3. Present the results of their research and theological reflection through *Church and Society* or a similar publication, and resources read by the general population of Presbyterians [i.e. *Presbyterians Today*] and make appropriate recommendations to the 215th General Assembly (2003).
4. Suggest or develop resources to educate congregations and church organizations (including camps and denominational offices) on
  - a. the cost-effectiveness of investing in building renovation and using energy-efficient technologies, such as compact fluorescent lighting instead of incandescent lighting;
  - b. how to advise church bodies of both denominational and governmental help (such as the EPA Energy Star Congregation program); and



c. the positive benefits in terms of environmental stewardship of reducing energy consumption.

### **On Ratifying the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, 2003**

[The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved actions to:]:

1. Reaffirm the call of the 202nd, 210th, and 211th General Assemblies (1990, 1998, and 1999) for the United States to ratify the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.
2. Call on the United States government to join in the world effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to develop and enact a national emergency response, underwritten by law, with adequate financial support, and economic enforcement mechanisms, to be fully functioning by 2005, with targeted reductions by that time.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this concern to the president of the United States, and all appropriate government authorities.

### **On Concurring with the “Action for Wellness and Healing for Our Present and Future Generations of Saint Lawrence Island Yupik People,” 2003**

[The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved the following action to:]

1. Concur with the “Action for Wellness and Healing for Our Present and Future Generations of Saint Lawrence Island Yupik People,” in agreeing that the secretary of defense must formally apologize in writing to the people of Saint Lawrence Island for the damage and suffering caused by the military use.
2. Seek to make the military accountable for the responsible, complete cleanup of the formerly used military sites on Saint Lawrence Island in order to correct the environmental injustice. The lands and waters must be restored in order to protect the health and well being of the environment and health of Saint Lawrence Island Yupik people.

### **On Opposing the Free Trade Area of the Americas in its Current Form, 2003**

[The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved actions to:]

1. Support efforts to strive toward international cooperation based on fair trade, respect for diversity, and common concerns for a peaceful, just, and sustainable world.
2. Oppose multinational actions and trade agreements that elevate rights of corporations over the right of governments and indigenous peoples to pass and enforce laws that preserve the public good and protect their citizens, economies, and environments.
3. Oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in its current form.
4. Direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, as well as representatives of PC(USA) programs dealing with economic justice, hunger, and advocacy, to promptly communicate the General Assembly position to the U.S. trade representative, U.S. senators and representatives, congressional committees with trade jurisdiction, and state legislators.
  - a. Call on the U. S. trade representative to withdraw from any further negotiations on the proposed FTAA until there has been full public disclosure of its proposed text, open public debate, and a place at the negotiating table for representatives of the diverse sectors of civil society who would be affected by this agreement.
  - b. Petition the federal government to refuse to sign any new trade and investment agreements, such as the proposed FTAA, that include investor-state provisions, where corporations can directly sue governments for lost profits (“regulatory takings”).
  - c. Demand that all trade agreements incorporate workers rights, human rights, food safety, and environmental standards, and that they allow governments and sovereign indigenous peoples to regulate corporations to protect the common good.
  - d. Oppose any extension of “Fast Track” Presidential Trade Negotiating Authority, which limits the role of Congress in negotiating or amending the terms of the FTAA and other proposed trade agreements.
5. Call on presbyteries, churches, and church members to do the following:
  - a. Become educated about the FTAA, NAFTA, the South American Trade Market (MERCOSUL), and other trade agreements, and the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), and other multinational organizations in creating and enforcing globalization policies that are unsustainable

and unjust, in part, by drawing on the resources of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Joining Hands Against Hunger.

b. Advocate with state legislators and U.S. senators and representatives, urging them to oppose extending Fast Track and oppose the FTAA.

c. Join in coalitions with community groups, including other Christian denominations, who are organizing opposition to the FTAA and trade agreements with similar provisions, and to make meeting space available to such groups.

**On Assisting the Inhabitants of the Island of Vieques on the Task of Cleaning Up After the End of the Navy Bombing Practices, 2003**

[The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved action to:]

1. Urge the U.S. government to provide resources for the decontamination of the land that was used by the U.S. Navy in bombing target practice in order to ensure safe future development of that land.

2. Direct the Stated Clerk to send a letter from the General Assembly to the attorney general of the U.S. asking for the liberation of the two civil disobedients that remain in prison.