

DRAFT RESOLUTION
Climate Change – submitted by JustEarth

This General Synod:

1. Joins with other faith communities and secular groups to advocate for the adoption by all levels of government of a comprehensive climate action plan, as a central concern of social and ecological justice, with firm targets for greenhouse gas reductions of 25-40% by 2020 based on 1990 levels;
2. Encourages dioceses and parishes to incorporate concerns about the care of creation more fully into regular liturgies and request PMEJC and FWM to provide resources to support this;
3. Encourages dioceses and parishes to join with other faith communities and secular groups in researching and providing information on the climate crisis to members of their own communities;
4. Encourages all dioceses and parishes to estimate their annual rate of greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, operations and travel, commit to stated reductions, and report annually on progress made;
5. Charges the Council of General Synod to have an estimate made of the annual greenhouse gas emissions for which the national church is responsible, commit to a stated reduction in these, and report annually on progress made.

Rationale

Since 1988 there has been a broad and growing consensus among the world's top scientists that climate change is an urgent issue demanding action. The most recent reports show that global warming has proceeded faster than anticipated, and that runaway climate change is an imminent prospect. Some scientists hold that 350 ppm carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is the maximum to avoid a global temperature change above 2 Celsius degrees. We are already at 390 ppm, and we note that African leaders have called for action to limit the temperature rise to 1 Celsius degree. Whole continents could become uninhabitable. Hunger is already the lot of many who live on marginal agricultural land. The acidification of the oceans, as a result of carbon emissions, is another emerging crisis. These new concerns join the better known, but still inadequately addressed, issues of declining biodiversity, growing water scarcity, deforestation, soil depletion, overfishing and dead zones in the oceans.

Christians, as the major promoters of the industrial revolution, and the major beneficiaries of the better standard of living it has permitted, should lead in addressing the crisis and bringing in change. Our industrial way of life is scientifically unsustainable, and it violates scriptural teachings on the care of creation. Scientists now use indicators of global temperature, carbon dioxide ppm and oceanic pH to estimate the probability of mass extinctions, those of 70% or more species. What will the "good news" mean as low-lying lands become submerged, and dry lands yield too little for their populations? What will "abundant life" mean to people who see that our material abundance was achieved at the cost of life itself for vast numbers of people and species?

The Copenhagen meetings in December 2009 failed to reach an international treaty for binding reductions and adequate assistance to developing countries for their adaptation and mitigation. The Government of Canada has yet to commit Canada reductions close to that called for by the best available science. The federal government has played a negative role in negotiations, both at Copenhagen and in its preparatory meetings. Most Canadians want stronger commitments to reductions, there is still little understanding of these very new issues. Dioceses and parishes, as places where people meet, could with expert partners help improve the level of knowledge and understanding.

We, as Christians, cannot rely on government alone to sound the warning bell and challenge us to examine our current lifestyles. The gospel calls us to radical discipleship and an ethic of care of all creation.