

This is a resolution proposed for consideration by Thirty-Fourth UCC General Synod. Prior to Synod consideration, this resolution must meet the General Synod Standing Rules for resolution submission. The Resolution Review Team and the Subcommittee on Disposition both have responsibility for determining conformity and next steps as this process progresses.

1                   **A RESOLUTION URGING PLANNING FOR AND IMPLEMENTING**  
2                                           **ELECTRIFICATION**

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4                                           **A Resolution of Witness**

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6                   Submitted by Mayflower United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Church B, City,  
7                                           State; Church C, City, State;  
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9                   **Summary:** This resolution calls on United Church of Christ congregations and individuals to  
10 actively plan for and promote electrifying space heating and cooling equipment, appliances, and  
11 machines when old ones fail or become outdated as one of the ways to protect God’s earth and  
12 its people from climate change emissions, and to become role models for just and equitable  
13 electrification for individual members and the broader community.  
14

15                   **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

16  
17                   When we fully ground ourselves in God’s word, we understand that this is God’s earth that  
18 scientists are talking about when they warn about climate change—God’s earth that could be  
19 catastrophically impacted by the climate change we are causing.  
20

21                   Genesis tells the origin story, and we know the story well: God separating light from dark within  
22 the formless void through calling forth all manner of vegetation, fish, birds, and other animals,  
23 and on to the creation of humankind. At each step God stepped back, reviewed what God had  
24 created and assessed it as good.  
25

26                   Some have said that the creation of humanity in God’s image with a commission to rule over the  
27 animal kingdom carries a license for ecological irresponsibility. But the Bible portrays humanity  
28 not as the owner of nature but as its steward, strictly accountable to its true owner. Leviticus 25:  
29 23-24 makes the point clearly. In God’s words, “the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the  
30 land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you  
31 shall provide for the redemption of the land.”  
32

33                   Some have said that redemption referred only to a claim from prior owners. But in its discussion  
34 of sabbatical years and the every-fifty-year jubilee year, Leviticus makes it clear that the jubilee  
35 year is the year in which the land is redeemable by God, the true owner. The phrase, “you are  
36 but aliens and tenants” emphasizes the transitory nature of human land ownership. We humans  
37 occupy the earth only for our lifetime. God remains. God’s word as set out in Leviticus leaves no  
38 doubt about what is required of a steward, to care for God’s land while in our temporary tenancy.  
39

40                   The gospels of Mathew, Mark, and Luke each tell us a story using almost identical words about a  
41 lawyer or scribe who was questioning Jesus. The lawyer asked “which commandment is the first  
42 of all?” Jesus uncharacteristically did not answer with a parable, but directly, “you shall love the

43 Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all  
44 your strength” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”—loving God with all our heart,  
45 soul, mind and strength is taking care of the animals and plants and other living things that God  
46 created and called good, and doing so with ALL of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

47  
48 God calls on each of us and all of us together in community to act prophetically, to be role  
49 models, to be the Moses of our time in the care of creation.

50  
51 In a major 2018 report the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that we must  
52 reduce carbon emissions 50% by 2030 in order to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate  
53 change.<sup>1</sup> This is a widely accepted benchmark. <sup>2</sup>And it is a huge lift.

54  
55 Around 40% of the United States’ emissions causing climate change come from residences and  
56 the vehicles we drive.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that 13% of U.S.  
57 greenhouse gas emissions come from businesses and homes, and arise primarily from burning  
58 fossil fuels.<sup>4</sup>

59  
60 Structural change is now creating a path forward. Electricity is getting cleaner with the addition  
61 of very inexpensive wind- and solar-generated electricity. And electricity will continue to get  
62 even cleaner as expensive coal-fired electric generation is retired.<sup>5</sup> The Inflation Reduction Act  
63 strongly supports clean electricity with significant funding.<sup>6</sup>

64  
65 But that structural change is not enough. We must use the cleaner electricity. Our actions matter.  
66 Switching everything possible in our lives to be powered by electricity will go a long way toward  
67 lowering our emissions and reducing the impact of climate change.<sup>7</sup>

68  
69 Electrifying everything for congregations and individuals means replacing any heating and  
70 cooling equipment, appliances, and machines in our churches, homes and garages that currently  
71 burn fossil fuels. And it might also mean installing new electric devices, like solar panels and  
72 home storage batteries. This doesn’t have to be done all at once. Congregations and individuals  
73 can make plans to replace fossil fuel heating and cooling equipment, appliances and machines  
74 when they become outdated or fail, or replace outdated or failing electric heating and cooling  
75 equipment, electric appliances and electric machines with the new far more efficient electric  
76 ones.

77  
78 Modern heating and cooling equipment, appliances and devices are so much more efficient they  
79 will immediately have lower total carbon emissions than burning fossil fuel directly.<sup>8</sup> Plus, as the  
80 electric grid switches to renewable sources, emissions will continue to drop.

81  
82 Protecting God’s earth also protects God’s people. Natural gas, a fossil fuel, burned inside a  
83 church or residence has more pollutants than just carbon dioxide. Burning natural gas also emits  
84 nitric oxide (NOx), sulfur oxides (SOx), particulate matter (PM), and formaldehyde (CH<sub>2</sub>O).<sup>9</sup>

85  
86 Multiple peer-reviewed studies tell us that when natural gas is burned without proper ventilation,  
87 gas cooking can generate levels of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide inside homes that  
88 exceed federal and state standards for air quality.<sup>10</sup>

89  
90 EPA recently concluded that long-term exposure to Nitrogen dioxide is linked to the onset of  
91 asthma in children.<sup>11</sup> Asthma is a leading cause of children missing school.<sup>12</sup>  
92

93 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**  
94

95 WHEREAS the major 2018 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change told us  
96 that we must reduce carbon emissions 50% by 2030 in order to avoid the most catastrophic  
97 effects of climate change, a widely accepted benchmark;<sup>13</sup> and  
98

99 WHEREAS when we fully ground ourselves in God’s word, we understand that this is God’s  
100 earth that scientists are talking about, and the Twenty-Sixth General Synod has recognized that  
101 the earth belongs to God;<sup>14</sup> and  
102

103 WHEREAS God’s earth could be catastrophically impacted by the climate change we are  
104 causing and the Twenty-Sixth General Synod has recognized that the earth is affected by climate  
105 change;<sup>15</sup> and  
106

107 WHEREAS protecting God’s creation also protects all God’s people by reducing air pollutants  
108 and sickness;<sup>16</sup> and  
109

110 WHEREAS, because air pollutants from burning fossil fuels are especially harmful for children,  
111 the elderly, rural and under-resourced communities, and people of color<sup>17</sup> protection measures  
112 must be just and equitably available; and  
113

114 WHEREAS God’s word as set out in Genesis, Leviticus, Mark, Mathew, and Luke leave no  
115 doubt about what is required of a steward, to care for God’s land while in our temporary tenancy;  
116 and  
117

118 WHEREAS about 40% of the United States’ emissions causing climate change come from the  
119 places we live and the vehicles we drive and those emissions are increasing<sup>18</sup> and  
120

121 WHEREAS our electricity is getting cleaner with the addition of very inexpensive wind- and  
122 solar-generated electricity and electricity will continue to get even cleaner as expensive coal-  
123 fired electric generation is retired<sup>19</sup>; and  
124

125 WHEREAS the Inflation Reduction Act strongly supports clean electricity with significant  
126 funding and strongly supports and funds electrification, storage, and solar for low and middle  
127 income people,<sup>20</sup> and  
128

129 WHEREAS God calls on each of us and all of us together in community to act prophetically, to  
130 be role models, to be the Moses of our time, and  
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132 WHEREAS our church communities can lead the way to protect to protect God’s earth and its  
133 people by electrifying and helping our members and neighbors electrify;  
134

135 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that, as one of the ways to protect God’s earth and  
136 its people from climate changing emissions, the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages United  
137 Church of Christ congregations to actively plan for and promote electrifying fossil-fueled space  
138 heating and cooling equipment, appliances and machines when old ones fail or become outdated  
139 or replacing outdated or failing electric space heating and cooling equipment, appliances and  
140 machines with new far more efficient electric ones, and to become role models for electrification  
141 for individual members and the broader community; and

142  
143 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod urges United Church of  
144 Christ congregations to actively promote electrification as one of the ways to protect God’s earth  
145 and its people and, with environmental justice in mind, help our members and neighbors  
146 electrify; and

147  
148 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod requests Conferences and  
149 Associations of the United Church of Christ to gather and distribute information and guidance  
150 for their local congregations and individual members necessary and helpful to implement  
151 electrification, thereby becoming role models for the broader community.

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153 **FUNDING:** Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with  
154 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.”  
September 20, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> FACT SHEET: President Biden Sets 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target Aimed at  
Creating Good-Paying Union Jobs and Securing U.S. Leadership on Clean Energy Technologies. April  
22, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 2.; Fresh Energy. “Buildings  
for a healthy future.” December 2021.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

<sup>5</sup> Fresh Energy. “Our accomplishments of 2021 and what we are looking forward to in 2022: Further  
changes to coal plant operations secured & Otter Tail Power begins to exit coal and increase renewables.”  
January 24, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/13/upshot/whats-in-the-democrats-climate-health-bill.html?name=styln-domestic-policy-bill>

<sup>7</sup> Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg, Rewiring America, page 2.; Fresh Energy.  
“Buildings for a healthy future.” December 16, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 4.

<sup>9</sup> “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, page 6; Fresh  
Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, pages 6 & 7; Fresh  
Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, pages 7 & 8, 4, 2021;  
“Clean energy brief: natural gas in Minnesota,” prepared by Melissa R. Parton on behalf of Fresh Energy,  
February 2020.

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<sup>12</sup> Children’s Minnesota, “Managing asthma for students.”

<sup>13</sup> Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.”

September 20, 2019. [https://exponentialroadmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ExponentialRoadmap\\_1.5.1\\_216x279\\_08\\_AW\\_Download\\_Singles\\_Small.pdf](https://exponentialroadmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ExponentialRoadmap_1.5.1_216x279_08_AW_Download_Singles_Small.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://uccfiles.com/pdf/gs26minutes.pdf>, pages 15-16

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy,” City of Berkeley, California, 4, 2021, pages 6 & 7; Fresh Energy, “What’s Up With Natural Gas in My Home,” February 24, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Stanford Earth Matters. “A roadmap to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2030.” September 20, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Electrify Everything in Your Home. Joel Rosenberg. Rewiring America, 2.; Fresh Energy. “Buildings for a healthy future.” December 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Fresh Energy. “Our accomplishments of 2021 and what we are looking forward to in 2022: Further changes to coal plant operations secured & Otter Tail Power begins to exit coal and increase renewables.” January 24, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/13/upshot/whats-in-the-democrats-climate-health-bill.html?name=styln-domestic-policy-bill~>