

Each year, elected lay delegates from each congregation join the clergy of the church to meet in their home dioceses (there are 111 dioceses in North America, each led by a bishop and comprised of many congregations or parishes; usually the boundaries of a diocese are co-equal with the geographic boundaries of a state—in states with dense population, there is more than one diocese).

Every three years, elected lay and clergy delegates from each diocese gather in a General Convention. It is at this General Convention that resolutions and motions that have arisen at the diocesan level (or from a multi-diocese task force or committee of the church) are considered for passage. The most recent General Convention was in July of this year. Below is a list of resolutions regarding ecology/environment/Creation care. In italics are my observations.

Creation care is one of the three priorities of the Episcopal Church. The other two are evangelism and racial reconciliation and justice.

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A018: Episcopalians Participating in the Paris Agreement

“The measure resolves that The Episcopal Church will continue to fully and completely “advocate for a fair, ambitious, and binding climate treaty” and will participate in future meetings of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Individual Episcopalians, church congregations, and Episcopal institutions are encouraged to support the Paris Agreement through energy conservation, renewable energy, sustainable food practices and gardening, and other sustainable lifestyle choices.”

<https://www.wearestillin.com/>

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C049: Support Producers of Locally Grown Food

This urges the staff of Episcopal congregations, camps and conference centers, schools, and other institutions to allocate a percentage of their food budgets to procure, prepare, and serve locally grown or processed foods.

This resolution acknowledges the vital role that smaller local farmers play in creating sustainable communities and preserving biodiversity. Sourcing food locally also avoids the energy cost of interstate food transport.

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A213 HD Report #15: Promote Energy and Water Efficiency Across the Church

Allocated \$30,000 for the church to gather information on energy and water usage from Episcopal congregations, camp and conference centers, schools, and other institutions; to use the data to develop and disseminate educational materials on energy and water conservation.

One challenge in the Episcopal Church is the historic nature of many of our church buildings and the need to remodel or retrofit them to take advantage of modern energy and water efficient strategies such as heating and cooling systems, insulation, water saving restroom and kitchen fixtures, energy efficient windows, and low-water landscaping.

B025 HD Report #14: Water as a Human Right

This resolution acknowledges that access to clean and safe water is a human right, and to that end urges congregations and institutions to learn about their local aquifers and water sources and to advocate that water and wastewater systems remain public entities (i.e. not privatized). Further, this resolution urges the phase out and by 2021 a ban on the sale or distribution of bottled water in Church-related facilities and at Church events except when local water supplies are deemed unsafe.

It's astounding how ubiquitous plastic bottled water has become, and yet it's only been a part of our everyday culture since the mid-1990's. Is it possible we might shed this relatively recently acquired convenience in favor of reducing the amount of plastic waste we generate?

C063 HD Report #11: Advocate for Ocean Health

This resolution urges Episcopalians to work for the establishment of ocean preserves to protect endangered or at risk species, to prevent or mediate ocean pollution, to mitigate ocean acidification and warming, to prevent or limit adverse impacts to species as the result of offshore oil activities, to support sustainable fisheries, to prevent the migration of invasive species (for eg. on vessel hulls), and to minister to populations adversely impacted by the decline in ocean health.

This resolution (as do the other resolutions passed) offers Episcopalians direction and support as they engage in political advocacy at the local, state, and national levels.

D081: Helping Communities Affected by Change in Energy Use

This resolution acknowledges that some communities are economically and culturally dependent upon coal and other fossil fuels and it urges congregations and institutions to develop programs (and dedicate funds) to address the negative impact on communities who transition away from this dependence. It also urges the church to advocate for public policy initiatives to help ease the transition (initiatives such as vocational training and education).

The church here is acknowledging its economic and cultural diversity, and affirming the intention that as cleaner alternative energy technologies are developed, communities (the Appalachian region is mentioned by name) that have formed around the extraction of natural resources are not forgotten.

D053: Stewardship of Creation with Church-Owned Land

This resolution urges that managers of church-owned land create partnerships to use under-utilized or unutilized land “for regenerative agriculture and biodiversity conservation projects in order to sequester carbon and to mitigate climate change.” Included in this resolution are suggestions to create green burial sites and engage in habitat restoration.

X023 HB Report #8: Solidarity with the Gwich'in People of Alaska regarding ANWR

The church recognizes that for the Gwich'in people of Alaska, the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are considered the "Sacred Place Where Life Begins", and the church stands with them to oppose oil drilling in this area.

The native people of Alaska have historically been marginalized by the US Government. An Internet search of "Project Chariot" tells the story of atomic scientists in the 1950's hoping to harness nuclear energy for human good. They proposed using nuclear bombs to create a harbor on the Arctic Ocean coastline of Alaska. When that proposal generated no commercial interest, the government instead turned to using Alaska natives to study the effects of nuclear fallout on human beings and their food sources. Today, Christians oppose such gross disregard for human life and the ecosystem, and actively advocate for peoples whose voices are not being heard.

C008: Advocacy for Creation Care

"The resolution supports the adoption of a web-based carbon tracking tool being developed in the Diocese of California. Similar to popular applications that help people track what they eat and their exercise, the tool will educate and support Episcopalians in their efforts to make sustainable lifestyle choices." The new tool can be previewed at:

<http://diocal.org/climate>

http://diocal.org/sites/default/files/media/PDF%20Docs/Sustaining_Earth_Slidedeck.pdf

A010: The Planting of "Paris Groves"

"The measure commends each of the 85 camps and conference centers in The Episcopal Church to establish "Paris Groves", plantings of trees that will serve as a visible witness to the significance of the Paris Accord and do the practical work of sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere."

A030: Affirm the Work of the Episcopal Church at the United Nations

The measure encourages Episcopal Church representatives to the United Nations to make full use of their Economic and Social Council consultative status, which allows them to provide input to policy and decision makers at the U.N. The measure also encourages Episcopalians to support and advocate on behalf of the U.N. and its work.

Source sites:

<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/07/13/general-convention-reinforces-its-creation-care-stance/>

<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/pressreleases/the-episcopal-church-commits-to-paris-agreement-joins-we-are-still-in/>