RESOLUTION ON SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE  
FOR STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S CREATION DURING THE COMING PERIOD OF 
DECLINING FOSSIL FUELS 
(Prudential Resolution: Requires majority vote for passage)  

Submitted by: Peace United Church of Christ, Duluth, Minnesota with the concurrence of  
Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Duluth MN; First Congregational UCC, Grand Marais MN;  
Peace UCC, Rochester MN; Lyndale Congregational UCC, at Minneapolis MN; Cherokee Park  
United Church of Christ, St. Paul MN, First Congregational UCC, Anoka MN; First  
Congregational Church of Minnesota UCC, Minneapolis MN; and New Brighton United Church  
of Christ, New Brighton, MN  

Summary  
This resolution is offered to initiate exploration by the United Church of Christ of the role of the  
Church in meeting economic, ecological, and consequent spiritual challenges associated with 
predicted declines in future oil and natural gas supplies. The UCC is asked to begin a long term  
program to support faith based actions to create conditions that will foster a movement to 
sustainable conditions at the individual church, conference, UCC, and broader societal levels.  

Background  
In 1959 the General Synod of the United Church of Christ called for “conservation and the 
development of the Earth’s resources for the benefit of all people now and in the future”. 
Although the United Church of Christ has had a strong commitment to environmental  
stewardship and justice since that time, attention to future consequences of past and present 
human activities which are contrary to UCC’s espoused stewardship ethic has generally been  
limited, especially with respect to fundamental problems that have diverse and wide ranging 
consequences. Exceptions include the Twenty-second General Synod adoption of a resolution on 
‘Global Warming’ which focused on the need for the U.S. to ratify the Kyoto Treaty and thus  
commit to substantive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by finding alternatives to the rapid  
burning of fossil fuels. The broader, overarching problem behind global warming is that for too 
long societies have expected perpetual growth on the basis of an assumption that God has 
provided infinite energy sources. Each year that passes without a reconsideration of this  
assumption increases the difficulty for applying Christ's teachings to help resolve the dilemma 
posed by rapid depletion of fossil fuels and associated environmental degradation. The Church 
has unique opportunity to provide a path for people to follow toward a future in which God’s  
creation is sustained, rather than degraded. In so doing the Church may provide hope and  
support faith for those who have suffered in poverty, as well as those who fear change in their  
materialistic lifestyles.  

Biblical and Theological Rationale  
While the Bible records events and the word of God as heard in a time when fossil fuels were 
unknown and humanity’s footprint on the earth was tiny in comparison to today, the words are  
still relevant. What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk  
humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8). Jesus in the sermon on the mount, before assuring that God  
provides what people need (Mathew 25: 30-33), warned that one should not store material
From earth, rather treasures stored in heaven are “where your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:17-21). That we have often taken God’s gifts for granted is most evident in the short history of the development and often unjust use of fossil fuels. The injustice is compounded by exhausting such a precious but finite gift without seeking truth for its most necessary and lasting purpose.

God is still speaking and we should be listening.

WHEREAS solar energy uniquely sustains life and has caused the earth to become rich with diversity and order while evolving at God’s pace;

WHEREAS fossil fuels, particularly petroleum, natural gas and coal, are a one time gift from God to be used wisely by humans to create sustainable and just conditions for life and society. But this gift has too often been used profligately with little regard for future generations and the cumulative degradation of the environment;

WHEREAS availability of energy is the most fundamental requirement for functioning of modern civilization, yet some uses and inequitable distributions can create injustices and destruction of life;

WHEREAS humankind presently appears to be largely unaware of the consequences of the significant depletion of non-renewable energy supplies. Exponentially increasing rates of consumption of fossil fuels have led to unavoidable increases in degradation of the environment both locally and globally as in the case of climate change;

WHEREAS rates of consumption of these finite resources are poised to exceed rates of supply. Limits to material growth continue to be ignored because they contradict the established economic models. And the lack of planning for the resource limitations of the near future magnifies the potential for catastrophic outcomes;

WHEREAS the Church has addressed peace and justice issues that are often present manifestations of energy inequities, the approaching unstable period during which more sustainable conditions must be reached requires immediate attention, regardless of present uncertainties for the exact timing of events;

WHEREAS during the coming period of declining petroleum and natural gas, the Church will be challenged as never before to advance the teachings of Christ to alleviate fear, to provide hope, and to bring people together in harmonious actions aimed at finding new, sustainable living conditions for all with justice and peace; and

WHEREAS economic and political conflicts during a period of adjusting to declining energy resources may challenge the faith of individuals and families, while disrupting communities, businesses, and governments, the Church needs to prepare a hopeful stewardship based pathway for congregations to follow with faith on this journey to create a more sustainable and just 21st century.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ engage this fundamental
long term problem by (1) encouraging and supporting a network of congregations to increase
communication on energy audits and practical steps to reduce use of fossil fuels; (2) assembling
a task force to prepare a report on the challenges to the mission of the UCC and its member
churches posed by future reductions in energy and associated resources; and (3) commissioning
the task force to report to the Twenty-sixth General Synod on its conclusions with proposals for
action to support congregations and provide guidance for promoting stewardship of God's
creation during the coming period of declining fossil fuels.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the task force be composed of clergy and laity from
member churches as well as a representative of the UCC. In addition to theological perspective,
members with expertise in relevant disciplines such as environmental science, ecology, human
behavior/sociology, economics, energy technologies, etc. would be desirable.

The implementing body responsible for developing the strategy and program to implement this
resolution is designated as the Economic Justice Ministry Team of Justice and Witness
Ministries with assistance from other ministry teams as advantageous. The local church
originators of this resolution will provide an in person briefing for the implementing body as an
essential first step towards effectively addressing this long term problem.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates at the affected
agencies and the funds available. Participation and support of local congregations is essential.

The Executive Council recommends that the resolution entitled “Resolution on Supporting
Congregations and Providing Guidance for Stewardship of God’s Creation During the Coming
Period of Declining Fossil Fuels” be referred directly to an implementing body.