

# Emergency Synod Resolution | FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS Let Justice Roll Down -- Declaring Support For The Green New Deal and Affirming the Intersectionality of Climate Justice with All Justice Issues

UCC General Synod 32 – June 2019 | Submitted by: the VT Conf. UCC and the Pacific NW Conf. UCC

## GUIDELINE TO THE FAQ'S:

**1-2: Questions about process**

**3-12: General Questions About the Green New Deal and About This Resolution**

**13-16: Questions About Implementing This Resolution**

Please distribute this document as a PDF file so that the links to the sources will be clickable.

**FAQ DRAFT #6**

## QUESTIONS ABOUT PROCESS

### 1. What is an “Emergency Synod Resolution”?

It's a resolution that addresses an issue that could not have been anticipated by the deadline for regular resolutions. This resolution addresses [the Green New Deal Resolution](#)<sup>1</sup> (H. Res. 109) released by Congress on February 7, 2019, more than a month after that deadline. To qualify as a synod resolution, it must meet all of the requirements of the Standing Rules of the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Synod.

### 2. The following UCC entities are either among those submitting or endorsing this resolution:

- 1) The VT Conference UCC
- 2) The Pacific Northwest Conference UCC
- 3)
- 4)

## GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GREEN NEW DEAL AND ABOUT THIS RESOLUTION

### 3. [The Green New Deal Resolution](#)<sup>2</sup> (H. Res. 109) released by Congress on February 7, 2019 is a “resolution.” What's the difference between a congressional “resolution” and congressional “legislation?”

By passing a resolution, Congress makes a public, on the record commitment to the principles and declarations stated in the resolution. Once Congress passes a resolution, it's up to Congress to develop, propose and vote on laws that would put the commitments made in the resolution into effect.

### 4. Some politicians and some media portray the Green New Deal as one of the most controversial proposals Congress has ever considered. What about the American public? What do the people think about the Green New Deal?

[Yale researchers say](#) 81% of voters they polled support a Green New Deal to create jobs and work toward renewable energy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/26/green-new-deal-climate-change-democrats>

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### 5. Why is the UCC being asked to take a stand in support of a proposed Congressional resolution that is merely aspirational?

Because [the Green New Deal Resolution](#)<sup>4</sup> (H. Res. 109) marks the first time Congress has been presented with an opportunity to act on climate change by taking a vote that recognizes:

- the **scope** of the challenge,
- the **urgency** of the crisis,
- the **intersectionality** of the numerous justice issues that are amplified by climate change,
- the opportunity to act on climate in a way that **also addresses racial injustice, economic injustice**, and the need to create clean, healthful and family-supporting **jobs** that heal our planet, and
- the opportunity to deploy solutions that address all of these moral challenges.

As for the fact that the Green New Deal Resolution is a declaration of aspirational commitment and is not legislation – because the UCC relies heavily on covenant, we may have valuable insights as advocates for this Congressional resolution. If humanity has any hope of providing our children with a livable home, each and every country must do all it can to transition from fossil fuel to sustainable energy as fast as possible. Countries will only undertake this transition if they have reason to trust that virtually all other countries are doing likewise. In other words, when it comes to addressing climate change, the norm of national autonomy must give way to covenantal trust. This is an area where the UCC can make a valuable contribution.

### 6. What additional resolutions has the UCC passed over the years having to do with climate change and the environment?

2017: [The Earth Is The Lord's – Not Ours To Wreck Imperatives For A New Moral Era](#)

2015: [Transition From Fossil Fuels To Renewable Energy](#)

2015: [Resolution Urging Socially Responsible Investment Practices](#)

2013: [Resolution Urging Divestment – Along with Other Strategies -- From Fossil Fuel Companies to Address Climate Change](#)

2013: [Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining in Appalachia](#)

2009: On the Urgency for Action on Climate Change

2009: Earthwise Congregation: On Mediating Climate Change

2007: [A Resolution on Climate Change](#)

2005: [Call for Environmental Education and Action](#)

2005: [Resolution on Supporting Congregations and Providing Guidance for Stewardship of God's Creation](#)

2005: [For the Common Good](#)

1999: Global Warming

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

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1993: Environmental Racism

1991: For Sustainable Community

1991: Support of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)

1989: Environment, Solid Waste and Ecologically Sound Lifestyle

1987: Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace

1983: Pronouncement: Toxic and Hazardous Waste

1983: Christian Environmental Stewardship

1979: Pronouncement: Energy - Policy and Program

1977: Christian Life Style and Ecology Report

1975: Christian Life Style and Ecology Proposal

1959: Call to Christian Action in Society

### **7. Over the years, what has been the UCC attitude towards science and technology?**

The best answer to this can be found in the pastoral letter released in January 2008: [A New Voice Arising: A Pastoral Letter on Faith Engaging Science and Technology](#)

### **8. OK – the climate is changing; but hasn't it always been changing? And how fast is it changing now? Is our "common home" in jeopardy?**

If humanity continues spewing greenhouse gas emissions at today's rates, Earth's atmosphere in 2050 will look a lot like it did 50 million years ago, in the Eocene epoch—when ice was scarce and "palms and crocodiles inhabited the Canadian Arctic," Dana Royer, a paleoclimate researcher at Wesleyan University [told Climate Central](#).

"If all other countries were to follow the United States in lowering the level of ambition and rolling back action on climate change, the world would warm by around 4°Celsius over this century, a warming rate and level not seen on the planet for 55 million years," [said Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics on March 31, 2017](#).

### **9. Haven't we already reached irreversible climate change? How will this resolution make a measurable difference?**

This resolution supports taking comprehensive action to address the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced. The quicker more people engage this issue on as broad a scale as possible, the better off our children and grandchildren will be. As shown in detail below, we already have all the solutions we need. What we need is the will to implement them as quickly as possible.

### **10. Is it actually "doable" for the US to undertake a just transition from our dependence upon our fossil fuel infrastructure and embrace 100% clean renewable energy in only a decade or two?**

YES! Using only current solar, hydro and wind technology, every state can transition to 100% renewable energy by the year 2050 or sooner. The thorough research behind this has been done by Stanford Professor Mark Jacobson (among others). This effort is called the #100by50 campaign.

<http://thesolutionsproject.org/>

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It bears mentioning that, using only solar panels (not wind, hydro, tidal, etc), if we covered only .3% of the Earth's land area (the size of Spain) we could power all of humanity's electricity needs. The cost to construct this would be 10% of world GDP (Gross Domestic Product) or about \$5 trillion (which is less than what we paid to bail-out the banks in the last recession). [Click here for Forbes article from 9/22/2016.](#)

In [an article in the New Republic \(August 15, 2016\)](#) Bill McKibben makes a convincing, detailed case that if the US were to undertake a WWII type mobilization, we could readily make this transition. All we need to do is accept what science tells us and resolve not to wreck God's creation – our common home.

### **11. Won't this cause loss of jobs?**

Ending our reliance on fossil fuels will reduce jobs in the fossil fuel sector while increasing jobs in the renewable energy sector. The renewable energy sector employs more people than oil, gas, and coal combined. Supporting the commitments of this resolution will result in a net increase of jobs in the energy sector. [As Ernest J. Moniz, Secretary of Energy under President Obama, has said](#) today's jobs and the jobs of the future will come from innovation. Agreeing with Moniz are the CEOs of hundreds of America's largest employers. [They support the Paris Climate Accord.](#) The Green New Deal explicitly commits to providing employment transition opportunities so that miners, drillers and frackers can learn new skills.

### **12. Among the many aspects of the Green New Deal, it does not mention putting a tax on carbon or adopting a fee and dividend approach. Why doesn't the Green New Deal explicitly commit to some form of putting a price on carbon?**

Although the Resolution does not explicitly mention putting a price on carbon, it says that the Green New Deal must involve "accounting for the true cost of emissions." While advocates of one or another form of carbon pricing can read pricing into that, the resolution avoids putting all its eggs in the basket of one or another approach to putting a price on carbon. As one commentator observed, "The struggle over how or whether to prioritize pricing instruments can come later; it doesn't need to be settled in advance of getting people on board with the GND."

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPLEMENTING THIS RESOLUTION**

### **13. Why is it important for clergy to embrace this resolution?**

Because clergy can make a difference! A [2015 poll conducted by Yale](#) revealed that 2/3 of American voters think global warming is happening; and 2/3 of Americans rarely or never discuss it. The church should be a safe enough place for people to air their concerns. Climate change is the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced, and clergy are called to address moral challenges. In addition to being trusted communicators, clergy must become informed communicators. [Click here for an excellent guides to communicating effectively on climate change.](#)

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### 14. How can congregations go about changing America's story from a story dependent upon fossil fuel to a story grateful for God's provision of "[the 'Original' Green New Deal](#)" (aka creation)?

To respond to this question, a good place to begin is to convene a study group and read one or more of these books:

- Jim Antal's [Climate Church, Climate World](#)
- David Korten's [Change the Story - Change the Future](#)
- Diana Butler Bass' [Grounded](#) which is now in paperback.

### 15. How might congregations take action in response to this resolution?

- Write and submit an op-ed for your local newspaper telling your community about why the UCC is declaring its support for the Green New Deal and lifting up the reality that most people, regardless of their political affiliation or allegiance, support the Green New Deal because it addresses not only climate change but also numerous forms of injustice.
- Learn about the science of climate change by watching any of the [online videos featuring climate scientist and evangelical Christian Katharine Hayhoe](#).<sup>5</sup>
- Regularly incorporate into your worship service a two minute testimony focused on:
  - i. how climate change is amplifying and accelerating a specific justice issue such as homelessness or hunger or access to water or war or refugees.
  - ii. how the US already has all the technology we need<sup>6</sup> to achieve the goals of the Green New Deal;
  - iii. how federal, state and local agencies are developing and proposing new policies that impact our environment and how members can engage those agencies as advocates for policies and legislation that advance the goals of the Green New Deal, including its commitment to address the "systemic injustices" that disproportionately affect "frontline and vulnerable communities."
- Together with other congregations, organize and convene a public meeting focusing on how the Green New Deal would increase local resilience. Invite your mayor and town council so that they realize climate change is a moral issue that demands our attention and action.
- If your congregation has a disaster preparedness team, have them learn how such church teams are increasingly responding to extreme weather events as well as helping the local community become more resilient to a changing climate in the long term;

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi6RkdaEggRVKi3AzidF4ow>

<sup>6</sup> <https://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/l/100Pct-WWS-Papers.pdf> and <https://thesolutionsproject.org/> and <https://www.100.org/>

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- Identify ways your congregation can bring pressure to bear on elected officials to act with compassion and fairness by implementing a just transition for those workers and communities most dependent on fossil fuel energy so that they, too, have opportunities for clean, healthful and family-supporting jobs that heal our planet.
- [Consider affiliating with a local chapter of 350.org](#) or the Sierra Club. On July 2, 2017 the President of the Sierra Club, Aaron Mair, addressed the plenary at Synod.
- Install solar on your church roof.
- Urge your pastor to deal with climate change in his/her sermon on a regular basis.

**16. What resources are available to help congregations and clergy learn more and live out this resolution?**

**Christian Century Magazine | April 22, 2019 | From the Editors**

Why the Green New Deal needs to be so big -- We're long past the time for gradual changes.

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/editors/why-green-new-deal-needs-be-so-big>

**By Jeffrey Sachs | February 22, 2019 | CNN.com**

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/22/opinions/green-new-deal-sachs/index.html>

**By Jeffrey Sachs | The Green New Deal isn't outlandish — it's a necessity | 3/4/2019 || The Hill**

<https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/432414-the-green-new-deal-isnt-outlandish-its-a-necessity>

**The Green New Deal has reignited the climate debate – and voters support it**

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/26/green-new-deal-climate-change-democrats>