

Eco-Justice Resolutions from the Episcopal Church

Carbon Footprint

**Passed by the Executive Council of the Episcopal church, USA,
February 2008**

RESOLUTION adopted by the Executive Council February 11-14, 2008 in Quito, Ecuador

TITLE: [to be obtained when available from Executive Council]

RESOLVED, that the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, recognizing the challenge of global warming and our need to do our part in reducing carbon emissions, directs appropriate staff of the Office of the Treasurer and Advocacy Center to obtain bids to calculate our "carbon footprint," and be it further

RESOLVED, that this examination should include the full range of church operations, including the Episcopal Church Center and its regional offices and program operations, the Executive Council, the General Convention and all CCABs and all travel involved in the operations of the national Church, and be it further

RESOLVED, that these bids also include what it would cost to reduce carbon emissions by at least 15-20 percent by the year 2020 (or sooner), and at least 80 percent by the year 2050 (or sooner), including strategies of behavioral and technological changes, and carbon offsets, as well as a clear understanding of the short term costs/savings and long term costs/savings, and be it further

RESOLVED, that Council encourage the Church Pension Group, as part of its recent endorsement of Church policy on environmental sustainability and its planned evaluation of business practices for improved environmental impact, to join in a coordinated determination of its current carbon footprint and in setting carbon reduction goals, so that we might provide a model to share with dioceses interested in setting such goals for themselves, and be it further

RESOLVED that the House of Bishops be encouraged to ask its Theology Committee, in consultation with knowledgeable Episcopalians, to issue a pastoral letter on global warming including its adverse effect on vulnerable populations, both domestically and abroad, that would provide the spiritual and ethical grounds for our collective response to these, and be it further

RESOLVED, that Council commends the Presiding Bishop for her commitment to environmental justice and global warming stewardship, and gratefully acknowledges all those working in the church who have helped organize our ministry and witness through environmental stewardship initiatives, domestic

policy analysis, and corporate responsibility, and be it further

RESOLVED, that because the challenge of global warming cannot be met without a national policy, we support federal legislation that will achieve a 15-20 percent reduction in U.S. carbon emissions by 2020 and an 80 percent reduction in U.S. carbon emissions by 2050, and be it further

RESOLVED, that we are ever mindful that the burden of achieving these reductions must be borne equitably by all those around the world who contribute to the problem and not at the expense of the most vulnerable, who have little to do with causing the problem and are least able to cope with it.

BACKGROUND:

The Episcopal Church USA is on record in support of global warming solutions "at every level" (Resolution B002 of the 2006 General Convention) and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including MDG #7 on environmental sustainability, as a stated mission priority (D022 of the 2006 General Convention).

Our Presiding Bishop has done much to help us understand how global warming threatens the world's most vulnerable, and how it thus threatens our mission to alleviate global poverty and meet our Millennium Development Goals, further underscoring our moral responsibility to address both global warming and global poverty simultaneously as we pursue a more just and sustainable world.

The percentages we are talking about (15-20 percent by the year 2020, and 80 percent by the year 80 percent) are consistent with what the world's leading scientists state is required to help heal our atmosphere in the recently released report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, co-recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Committee on Social Responsibility in Investments is asking the Executive Council's approval for corporate conversations and shareholder proxies that would set "carbon neutral" goals in some companies whose stock we own, consistent with other corporations leading the way in eliminating most of their greenhouse gas emissions produced and offsetting the rest, in accordance with standards acceptable in the scientific community and third-party verification.

Many American cities, as well as Episcopal congregations and households, are already calculating their "carbon footprint" and reducing their carbon emissions, and Pope Benedict has announced a goal for Vatican City to become the first "carbon neutral" state.

Therefore, as we focus corporate attention through our "carbon neutral" proxy resolutions, it only makes sense to set a good example for our dioceses and congregations, and demonstrate that we are already engaged in global warming solutions.

There are three steps in becoming Carbon Neutral:

(1) Calculating our carbon footprint involves assessing our buildings and program operations to determine the annual volume of heat-trapping greenhouse gases we emit that are accumulating in the upper atmosphere and contributing to global warming. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the primary greenhouse gas emission, a by-product of burning coal, oil and natural gas to produce energy for transportation, electricity, heating and cooling.

(2) Once our carbon footprint has been determined, plans are developed year by year to reduce our emissions to the lowest level possible through conservation, better efficiency, and substitution with clean energy from renewable sources like wind, solar, etc.

(3) After putting in place measures to reduce our own emissions annually – the primary task -- we can then look at ways to offset or neutralize a portion or all of what remains of our emissions. We can join others in supporting policies and programs that help the U.S. and the world community, including us, transition to sustainable resource use. In either case, such measures might include using clean energy systems that reduce or eliminate emissions (e.g. through wind power or solar power), and capturing and storing greenhouse gases (e.g. through efforts to preserve existing forests and prairies and planting new ones). Carbon offset investments should always be subject to third-party verification, in accordance with standards acceptable in the scientific community.