

“Who will speak for the Trees?” A Resolution on the Rights of Nature

Brief Summary

This resolution, submitted by the New Hampshire Conference, calls for a change in the relationship between humans and nature, from one of separation and exploitation to interdependence and becoming citizens of the web of life on earth. Psalm 24:1 states: “The Earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” Matthew 5:5 reads “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” The meek understand the Earth as a divine gift to be used with respect, reverence and gratitude. We are all interconnected to all living beings. Since humanity and nature are interconnected, The Rights of Nature recognizes a reciprocal and responsible human relationship with Nature.

The UCC has a long history of creation care, beginning with the recognition of environmental racism in the 1980s. This Penn Central Conference has submitted or endorsed four Creation Care / Climate Justice resolutions to General Synod since 2013, and we encourage the endorsement of this one.

This resolution calls for prophetic action to listen to the cries of the Earth and boldly proclaims the following principles:

- 1/ Promote compassionate care, foster love, and share responsibility with the Earth Community of life.
- 2/ Uphold the ecological principal that the Rights of Nature supersedes harmful and destructive property rights. The Rights of Nature counters corporate rights to exploit and violate Nature.
- 3/ Support the Indigenous peoples, the Earth Charter, and the nature rights movement to grant legal standing for Nature as corporations have legal rights.
- 4/ Foster respect and gratitude for nature as divine gift.
- 5/ Promote the rights to Nature to be free from undue human harm.
- 6/ Prioritize renewable energies over fossil fuels, and the economies of life over extractive and unbridled economies that pollute and damage the Earth.
- 7/ Respect all treaties with indigenous nations. Protect their kinship rights and access to sacred lands.

This resolution calls upon individual churches to respond to the Rights of Nature by taking the following actions:

- 1/ Participate in the Season of Creation for September Sundays. Include Creation care during each liturgical season.
- 2/ Ritualize environmental grief.
- 3/ Foster love of God’s creation.
- 4/ Study and implement the Kairos Document, a 10 year call to action.
- 5/ Become a Creation Justice Church.
- 6/ Subscribe to the UCC Environmental Justice newsletters and environmental newsletters.
- 7/ Work for the Green New Deal, and advocate for the Rights of Nature.
- 8/ Organize locally, partner and build local community networks.
- 9/ Be creative and imaginative in our defense of the Rights of Nature.