

Resolution to the 2024 Delegate Body of Mennonite Church Manitoba

Submitted by the MCM Climate Action Working Group (CAWG)ⁱ

PREAMBLE

CAWG has, as its mandate: *To ignite the imagination of Mennonite Church Manitoba (MCM) congregations in generating personally and societally transformative actions in response to the climate crisis. The CAWG will serve as a network and resource for congregational engagement in public policy and capacity building work toward a Just Transition here in Manitoba.*

In addition to facilitating Faithful Climate Conversations in our congregations and our ongoing work on “Living More with Less”, the CAWG has agreed to, and signed, the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.ⁱⁱ As outlined below, CAWG is asking that MCM sign the open letter from faith leaders around the world calling governments to develop and implement a non-proliferation treaty on future fossil fuel production.ⁱⁱⁱ

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS:

- We as followers of Jesus are called to care for humanity and the earth and participate in God’s redemptive work within creation;
- The biblical call for peace embraces healing, reconciliation, and well-being in relationships with God, among human beings, among nations, and with creation;
- In keeping with our peace tradition, we understand that our ultimate allegiance is to God, and that elected governments rarely act according to the full scope of God’s justice and peace in the world. Nevertheless, we have a moral and spiritual responsibility to urge the powers towards peace, justice, and a more equitable distribution of resources;

- We are in a climate emergency that threatens the health of the life-sustaining ecosystems of our planet, primarily due to the emission of CO₂ and caused by the burning of fossil fuels;
- Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of hot extremes, heavy precipitation events, drought, and fire weather; deteriorating ecosystem structure and function; reducing food and water security; adversely affecting physical and mental health; compromising key infrastructure; and contributing to humanitarian crises;^{iv}
- The International Panel on Climate Change, the UN, and many other credible scientific, political, and spiritual bodies have urged governments worldwide to commit to a binding treaty to end new fossil fuel expansion and rapidly phase out fossil fuels in a fair and equitable way while ensuring a global just transition to renewable energy;
- Mennonite Church Canada has previously made the following resolutions on climate change and the care of creation:
 - 1977 Christian Stewardship of Energy Resources^v
 - 1989 Stewardship of the Earth: Resolution on Environment and Faith Issues;^{vi}
- In 2007, the delegates of Mennonite Church Canada approved an affirmation statement entitled *Caring for Creation is the Will of God*,^{vii} from which the following excerpt was taken: “We believe that God longs for the well being and health of the whole world, for all of creation is bound together and belongs to God, who creates, preserves, and redeems all things. Therefore we are called to commit ourselves to be good stewards of the earth. Our concern for faithfulness and discipleship should lead us to care for creation.”;

- In 2014 a resolution was brought to MC Canada called “Implications of the Gospel for Action on Anthropogenic Climate Change” which resulted in the following recommendation: “That MC Canada General Board establish a volunteer working group made up of constituents of MC Canada (including people with some expertise on the subject, both financial and scientific, as well as people on both sides of the issue) to study the issue of divesting from the fossil fuel industry and present a recommendation to MC Canada delegates at Assembly 2016.”;^{viii}
- In their 2022 document *Taking Action on Climate Change: The Eco-Mission of the Church in a Critical Time*,^{ix} the Executive Ministers of Mennonite Church Canada and its five regional churches - Mennonite Church Alberta, British Columbia, Eastern Canada, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan - called the church to act urgently on climate;
- In December 2023, Mennonite World Conference endorsed the FFNPT through its Creation Care Task Force;^x
- An equitable transition to renewable energy has the opportunity to provide additional benefits to all levels of society including cleaner air, better access to public transportation, more secure access to food, healthier democracies, a reduction in wasteful consumption, more ecologically sustainable energy futures, and meaningful livelihood opportunities in the renewable energy economy;
- A truly just transition would be decolonial, would be grounded in Indigenous knowledge, and would respect Indigenous rights. A just transition would incorporate principles of degrowth rather than the unlimited growth prescribed by capitalism. We know that fully transitioning to clean energy will be a challenge. However, the speed at which technologies are evolving—including technologies that allow us to reduce our overall energy consumption—and the increasing availability of financial resources to make this transition are encouraging signs.^{xi} We also know that the transition to clean energy will require the extraction of metals and rare earth minerals. In order to mitigate the need for more destructive extractive projects, it will be essential to transition to societies and lifestyles in which we are using less energy altogether.;
- Advocating to governments is but one way of acting in response to climate change and the exploitation of the earth. We also have a responsibility to take individual and collective action;
- Article 16 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* encourages churchly discernment and polity: "Decision making by consensus is a way of coming to unity in the church (see Acts 15:22). Consensus means that the church has together sought for the unity of the Spirit. The church listens carefully to all voices, majority and minority. Consensus is reached when the church has come to one mind on the matter, or when those who dissent have indicated that they do not wish to stand in the way of a group decision. Consensus does not necessarily mean complete unanimity." We must act collectively with love, without having to agree on every detail;

BE IT RESOLVED:

With prayer and conviction, we (Mennonite Church Manitoba) join other faith bodies around the world in signing the open letter of faith leaders calling on governments to develop and implement a binding Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

ⁱ Members of the CAWG: Marta Bunnett Wiebe (co-chair) – Home Street Mennonite Church; Kenton Lobe (co-chair) – Charleswood Mennonite Church; Carla Bergen – Springstein Mennonite Church; Nate De Avila – Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church; Doug Dyck – Covenant Mennonite Church; Marilyn Houser Hamm – Altona Mennonite Church; Aria Klassen – Grace Mennonite Church

(Steinbach); Josiah Neufeld – Hope Mennonite Church; Sandy Plett – Pembina Mennonite Fellowship; Chris Regehr – Hope Mennonite Church; Matthew Wiens – St Julian’s Table; Michael Pahl – MCM staff liaison.

ⁱⁱ www.fossilfueltreaty.org

ⁱⁱⁱ Open Letter from Faith Leaders (<https://fossilfueltreaty.org/faith-letter>):

As leaders across diverse religious and spiritual communities around the globe, we call on governments to develop and implement a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We have been granted a gift, an earth created in all its diversity, vitality, and abundance, for which we are called upon to be stewards. But **this role of stewardship has been overshadowed by neglect, exploitation, and unsustainable consumption that threaten the natural balance, social harmony, and existence of life on earth.**

Too many coal mines and oil and gas wells are already under production, setting the world on course to fail to meet the Paris Agreement’s goal of 1.5°C. To avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis, we must hold ourselves, our neighbors, and our governments accountable and collectively act.

For too long, government action has been painstakingly slow and catered too much to the reckless and deceptive fossil fuel corporations, preventing meaningful and timely climate legislation. There is a glaring disconnect between countries’ approvals for continued fossil fuel expansion and their rhetoric proclaiming long-term ‘net zero’ targets, a dangerous veil to evade responsibility, delay action, and rely on unproven technologies.

The burning of coal, oil, and gas is responsible for 86% of CO2 emissions in the past decade, according to the IPCC. Just 100 companies account for more than 70% of emissions. With these emissions also come the costs of local pollution, environmental degradation, and health impacts associated with extracting, refining, transporting, and burning fossil fuels.

These costs are disproportionately paid by those who are most vulnerable to, and least historically responsible for, the consequences of climate change - lives lost, homes and farms destroyed, and millions of people displaced. It is our moral imperative to protect those most in need and to uphold the human rights of future generations by employing clean and sustainable sources of energy.

The science surrounding the most urgent danger facing humanity is undeniable: **to be good caretakers of our common home, we must act and phase out the production of fossil fuels.** Several faith institutions around the world have already divested from fossil fuel companies, now we take the next step in calling on governments to plan a global just transition.

The current scale of the climate crisis requires a cooperative global solution that addresses the fossil fuel industry directly. **We call on governments to urgently commence negotiations to develop and implement a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, laying out a binding global plan to:**

1. **End expansion of any new coal, oil or gas production** in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme;
2. **Phase-out existing production of fossil fuels in a manner that is fair and equitable**, taking into account the respective dependency of countries on fossil fuels and their capacity to transition;
3. **Ensure a global just transition to 100% access to renewable energy globally**, support dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels, and enable all people and communities, not least the Global South, to flourish.

We hail from many faiths and beliefs, but together we can remedy the decades of negligence to safeguard our coexistence with this earth. Just as our beliefs are entrenched in religious and spiritual teachings, our response to the climate crisis must be deeply rooted in science and equity to heal the planet and people alike.

^{iv} Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Sixth Assessment Report, Summary for Policymakers, February 2022.

^v[https://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Christian Stewardship of Energy Resources \(General Conference Mennonite Church, 1977\)](https://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Christian_Stewardship_of_Energy_Resources_(General_Conference_Mennonite_Church,_1977))

^{vi}[https://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php/Stewardship of the Earth: Resolution on Environment and Faith Issues \(General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Church, 1989\)](https://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php/Stewardship_of_the_Earth:_Resolution_on_Environment_and_Faith_Issues_(General_Conference_Mennonite_Church,_Mennonite_Church,_1989))

^{vii} <https://www.commonword.ca/ResourceView/82/9578>

^{viii} This study was completed in 2016 and is available from Mennonite Church Canada on request.

^{ix} <https://www.commonword.ca/ResourceView/82/25290>

^x <https://mwc-cmm.org/en/stories/mwc-calls-global-energy-transition>

^{xi} For instance, Manitoba's Road to Resilience outlines a clear pathway to a fossil fuel-free future (<https://climateactionmb.ca/road2resilience/>). We know that our main obstacle to a wide-scale renewable energy transition is not the lack of will, technologies, or resources, but the resistance thrown up by the fossil fuel industry in its hunger for increased profits and the unwillingness of governments to stand in their way. Canada continues to subsidize the oil and gas industry with billions of dollars, money that could be spent on developing clean energy alternatives (https://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2023/04/G7-Public-Finance-Briefing_OCI_April2023.pdf).