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**SUPPLEMENT TO**

**CLIMATE JUSTICE**

A CALL TO HOPE AND ACTION

**PAT WATKINS**



United  
Methodist  
Women

FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

*Supplement to Climate Justice: A Call to Hope and Action*  
by Pat Watkins

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# United Methodist Women Purpose

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

## The Vision

Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world.

## Living the Vision

We provide opportunities and resources to grow spiritually, become more deeply rooted in Christ and put faith into action.

We are organized for growth, with flexible structures leading to effective witness and action.

We equip women and girls around the world to be leaders in communities, agencies, workplaces, governments and churches.

We work for justice through compassionate service and advocacy to change unfair policies and systems.

We provide educational experiences that lead to personal change in order to transform the world.

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# Introduction

The 2016 study *Climate Justice: A Call to Hope and Action* begins with an image of earth as seen from the moon. It connotes a very finite planet, one in which resources are limited, not inexhaustible nor infinite. It is an image that speaks to the fragility of planet earth.

Chapter 1 begins the study with a biblical theology of creation care, followed by a vision in Chapter 2 of what the world would look like if we took seriously our call to restore climate justice everywhere. Chapter 3 asks the question, “Why is climate justice a religious issue?” In other words, why should Christians care about climate justice? Chapter 4 goes back in history to examine how we got ourselves to the place of climate injustice in which we currently find ourselves. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the consequences of climate injustice on the planet and its ecosystems and humanity. Chapter 7 challenges us to figure out what needs to happen to restore God’s creation to a place of climate justice, and Chapter 8 challenges us to see ourselves as capable leaders who can not only make a difference, but also transform our world into one that seeks climate justice.

Climate injustice occurs when our attitude is something other than cognition of the finiteness and fragility of earth. When we perceive the earth as belonging to us to use, exploit, and do with as we please, the earth’s ecosystems and the earth’s people suffer. Our greed, our desire for convenience, our overconsumption all cloud our vision, so it becomes much harder to focus on the common good. Our perceptions of the creation, the Creator, and our role in creation are all very crucial in whether or not we contribute to climate injustice or to climate justice.

## CHAPTER 1

# Bible Study

The Book of Job begins with Job having one perception of God, the creation, and his role in it, and ends with him having quite a different perception. For Job, his understanding was radically changed.

At the beginning Job believed that if he played by the rules, God would reward him with material success. He was an honest man of absolute integrity. Job feared God and avoided evil. He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 pairs of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and lots of servants. In Job's view, God had rewarded him with the fruits of creation. Creation existed for him, for those who lived by the rules. Creation existed for his success and happiness.

But Job's perception was forced to change very rapidly. By the end of the first chapter, he had lost his children, animals, and servants. In Chapter 2, he lost his health. Job was miserable. It wasn't supposed to work this way for a man of such integrity as Job.

Job learned rather quickly that his perceptions of the creation and the Creator were flawed. His view of the creation was that it provided him with all those animals that in turn made him wealthy and happy. His view of the Creator was of one who would reward him with material success in exchange for living according to the rules. But this understanding was wrong.

According to Job's worldview, his suffering could not possibly be the result of his sins, because he was blameless. That's why Job takes his case directly to God; he needs God to defend God's self in the face of his suffering. What he demands from God is an honest accounting. "Let me be weighed in a just balance," he says to God because Job knows that justice is on his side (Job 31:6). I think at this point, Job would really like to hear God admit to having made a mistake in the case of Job's suffering.

Instead of offering Job an apology, defense, or even an explanation, God spends four chapters assaulting Job with questions, fifty-two to be exact, all but three having to do with God's creation and Job's lack of knowledge and control of it. These questions challenge Job in his understanding of God, God's creation, and Job's role in it. These questions are designed to broaden his worldview, to put him in his rightful place.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" asked God (Job 38:4). "Who determined its measurements? . . . Who stretched the line upon it? . . . Who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? . . . Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth

in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children? . . . Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? . . . Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions? . . . Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? . . . Do you observe the calving of the deer?"<sup>1</sup> On and on and on God continues with relentless questions for Job.

Previously, Job viewed creation through the prism of his own success, in which the world is a just place; or he viewed creation through the prism of his own misery, in which the world is an unjust place. Now, God is forcing him to take a much wider and more honest and more all-encompassing view of the universe. God didn't create all of this just for Job. He is not the center of God's universe. Job is simply one creature among all creatures. God is saying to Job under no uncertain terms, "I am in charge of creation!"

Without a proper understanding of the creation, we make improper assumptions about the character of our own lives, our role in God's creation, and even the character of the God who made us.

God goes to great lengths describing the love and care that are required to fashion and maintain the natural processes that are necessary for life to exist on earth. God describes a beauty and sublimity of creation that Job cannot comprehend because he's always believed that creation existed for him.

The questions worked because Job responds, "See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth" (40:4). After another exchange with God, Job replies again, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . .therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:2-3; 6).

Talk about discovering your place. Formerly, Job's knowledge of God was based on what other people said about God. Now, after hearing the Creator of the universe issue a torrent of questions that Job cannot answer, Job sees God and gains a deeper understanding of his place in the universe and God's greatness. This leaves Job accepting of his place in dust and ashes. No longer does Job need nor want to be the center of the universe. Satisfaction for Job comes from knowing his place within the greater context of God's creation.

What a transformation for Job; from one who understood God as one who rewards us for keeping the rules, to knowing God more deeply through this amazing description of the natural world. God's description of creation in these chapters of Job is a description that is not found anywhere else in scripture. It is a description of a wild and chaotic creation and of a God who delights in it. Creation has an integrity all its own because God is its creator; it does not exist solely to benefit us. And when Job comes to *this* understanding, he could actually *know* God.

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1. Job 38:4-7; 32; 34; 39 and 39:1.

## CHAPTER 2

# Voices of Communities Involved in Climate Justice

In this supplement, we focus on stories from around the world and voices within The United Methodist Church that share visions of climate justice with us. These stories give new lenses through which we can understand our place in and our responsibility to God's creation.

These stories are stories of hope. They will elicit in all of us a renewed perception of God, creation, and our role in it, such that we can perceive ourselves as leaders in this climate justice movement.

### A VOICE FROM ZIMBABWE:

Shamiso Mupara, Environmental Scholar  
with the General Board of Global Ministries

Growing up in Marange village in eastern Zimbabwe, the only source of energy was firewood. This means we would gather firewood for all of our domestic needs: cooking, construction, making hot water, and heat during the cold winter. The problem was we never replaced the trees. As trees became scarce we had to walk long distances to get firewood. Our normal day used to start at four in the morning with two hours to and from the mountains to collect firewood and still make it to school by seven. Immediately after school at two in the afternoon, we would go again to the mountain to collect firewood. As the distance became longer it became a painful task but we had no option; collecting firewood was seen as a task for children. This job often left us tired and we never had time or energy to study, resulting in lower grades and higher dropout rates.

In my fourth-grade classroom there was a poster that asked, *Ko dzamangwana dziripi?* (Where is tomorrow's supply?). The picture on the poster was of a rural woman carrying firewood on her head and a malnourished baby on her back. The firewood she was carrying consisted mostly of small twigs. Her surroundings were bare, lacking ground cover except for a few shrubs. There was evidence of wind and water erosion with a deep gully slicing the terrain in half.

For a long time, it was just a poster in my fourth-grade classroom. When I went to high school and started studying geography as a major, I realized the magnitude of the effects of deforestation and then the poster made perfect sense.

Deforestation is widespread in most rural areas of Zimbabwe where residents depend on trees for firewood, medicine, lighting, and building material. Also, trees are cut for commercial uses like furniture and roasting bricks, with the fibrous bark being used to make bags, mats, and blankets. Commercially, trees are exploited for timber, paper, construction, landscaping, furniture, food, and the extraction of useful chemicals.

In Zimbabwe, the economic collapse of 2008, coupled with the scarcity of electricity in the Southern African Development Community region (SADC encompasses fifteen countries in southern Africa), has forced urban dwellers to depend on trees also for firewood. South Africa has been the major producer of electricity in the region and cannot fully meet the demand. The situation in Zimbabwe is compounded by its economic problems because the country has not purchased sufficient electricity to meet the country's needs. As a result, people throughout Zimbabwe (rural and urban) are now cutting down trees for firewood. Forests were under stress before the electricity crisis, but now they are at a point of suffocation or extinction.

Deforestation in Zimbabwe continues to increase. A face-to-face meeting with top personnel from the Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe on December 21, 2016 revealed that, between 1992 and 2008, the country lost more than 5 million species of trees. Between 1992 and 2008, natural moist forests and forest plantations increased because they are in protected areas, but almost 4,521,472.7 hectares of woodland was lost to deforestation.

One has to ask:

1. What are the effects of deforestation, both short-term and long-term?
2. What are the socioeconomic and the environmental effects?
3. Who is really benefiting from deforestation on a large scale?
4. Who is mostly affected by deforestation?

In trying to answer these questions, I realized that if we exploit all the resources we have now without replacing them, then what will be left for the generations to come? It is on this basis that I realized we need to do something and this gave birth to Environmental Buddies. Environmental Buddies is a nonprofit organization that is fighting environmental degradation. In 2012, my cousin and I started an afforestation project in Chigonda, the village where I live. We are responsible for tree nurseries and the community is responsible for planting trees at their respective homes, schools, churchyards, etc. We incorporated schoolchildren in the project and they are responsible for picking seeds. We mainly focus on indigenous trees because they are the ones mostly targeted for firewood, and fruit trees to supplement the rural diet. To date, the Chigonda tree project continues.<sup>1</sup>

A VOICE FROM OKLAHOMA AND STANDING ROCK:  
Dr. David Wilson, Conference Superintendent, Oklahoma Indian  
Missionary Conference, and Member of the Choctaw Nation

Never before has an issue brought together so many tribes and indigenous peoples from across the United States and other parts of the world. That issue is the preservation of water that has been put up against a pipeline in North Dakota financed by a Texas oil company named Energy Transfer Partners.

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe of North Dakota first learned about the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2014, through indirect contact with other entities. The nearly 1,200-mile pipeline would cut through the Standing Rock treaty lands and through their ancestral burial grounds, according to Standing Rock Tribal Council Chairman Dave Archambault II.

Located just a half-mile from the reservation boundary, the oil pipeline would cross the Missouri River, which provides drinking water for millions of Americans and irrigation water for thousands of acres of farming and ranching lands, putting all these communities at risk.

Since they first learned of it, thousands of tribal people from all over the world have gathered at Cannonball, ND, at a campsite known as the Prayer Camp. In addition, individuals from at least forty countries have traveled to the camp to support the efforts of the Standing Rock tribe, as well as the other six tribes in North and South Dakota who are known as the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires). It is estimated that 2,000 people have camped at the site and plan to stay throughout the winter of 2016–2017 as a physical and spiritual presence to oppose the pipeline coming through or close to the Missouri River. (*Note: To learn about recent developments, follow the story in the news.*)

When I first visited last August 2016, there was much going on. Lakota spiritual leaders would greet visitors and offer prayers throughout the day in various languages and also through the smoking of the pipe. People of all ages are at the camp. School is held throughout the week for the children. Youth are playing basketball and volleyball. Kids are swimming in the river. People of all ages are racing horses in the back of the camp. It is truly a beautiful site of solidarity through community. All have gathered for one purpose—to protect the water.

Three of us from the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference came to see firsthand what was going on since the mainstream press has given little coverage to this historic event. We brought supplies for the camp that is feeding thousands of people each week. We listened to stories of the people and were moved by those who are insistent and committed to sticking with this until the end. The people were anxious to share their stories and were so pleased to have visitors at the camp.

I felt it was important that a conference made up of native churches should be present to offer support and to be in solidarity with the people. Time after time those speaking would remind those listening that this issue of protecting water is not an issue just for Standing Rock. It is an issue for all people up and down the Missouri River. It is an issue for the farmers and ranchers who would lose fertile land to the pipeline. It would ultimately affect all Americans.

Standing Rock is a reminder of one of the values of native peoples; we are all connected around the world and we have a responsibility to each other.<sup>2</sup>

A VOICE FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.: The Rev. Dottie Yunger,  
Former Pastor at the Metropolitan Memorial  
United Methodist Church in the District of Columbia

About six years ago, when I was the Anacostia River Keeper—one of the public advocates for the river—I noticed folks fishing along the river and taking home what they caught. The Anacostia River flows through Maryland and Washington, D.C., to the Potomac River. Contaminants enter the river through releases from waste sites, storm water, combined sewer overflows, runoff, and tributaries. So the river is one of three Chesapeake Bay Program Regions of Concern and the focus of a multi-agency cleanup.

For many years, people fishing along the Anacostia River noticed that brown bullhead catfish often had fleshy red bumps along their lips. . . . Clearly, fish caught in the Anacostia River shouldn't be eaten. I started talking to the anglers about what they caught and what they ate, discovering that no one knew how many folks were eating out of the river. . . .

Conservatively, 17,000 people living along the Anacostia watershed were catching fish from the river to put food on the table. So I thought we needed a messaging campaign. If people knew that they shouldn't be eating the fish, surely they would stop.

Nevertheless, the anglers I talked to said: "You tell me that I might get cancer in twenty years—but what do I put on the table today?"

Very quickly I realized that what we needed was more food here in Ward 7. There are eight wards in the District of Columbia, and Ward 7 is one of the poorer ones. Ward 7 has only four full-service grocery stores—approximately one grocery store for every 23,000 people.

Listening to local residents, I realized that we needed more food in the community, especially more healthy food options. But in the year 2000, I couldn't see any way to achieve that.

Several years later, after I'd been through seminary and sought ordination, I found myself appointed to the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church. It had a robust food-recovery program, saving food from commercial food operators that would otherwise have gone to waste. The food wasn't bad; it just hadn't been sold. Since new food was arriving, it was cheaper and easier for the food operators to throw the leftover food away. . . .

Then I remembered the need for food in Ward 7. So we started partnering with congregations there to take the healthy food to the churches that served community meals. By partnering with Ward 7 churches, we were able to do ministry with people instead of ministry to people or for people. Churches serve as community bases in their neighborhoods. They opened up their doors and served the nutritious meals, which helped the church members meet local people where they lived and build relationships. That allowed us to do community organizing in the Ward 7 neighborhoods and to find out the extent of the need there for healthy food, sustainable jobs, and an end to violence. All of these things were listed by the neighbors as what they needed.

Along the way, one member of Metropolitan Memorial UMC was hired by the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) to serve as dean of the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES). CAUSES developed the Urban Food Hub, a highly efficient food-production system comprising food production, preparation, and distribution, along with waste reduction and recycling. This concept has the potential to improve food security while also creating jobs and increasing sustainability in an urban environment. Today, UDC CAUSES, Metropolitan Memorial UMC, and a number of other partners have come together to create the East Capitol Urban Farm.

The East Capitol Urban Farm is being created on three acres in the middle of the nation's capital city. . . .

At one end of the farm, a farmer's market will be built so that we can sell fresh food to our neighbors in this community at a reasonable price—an important advantage, especially for people living in the affordable housing complex across from the farm. Originally, Walmart was going to build a store across the street from the farm, but it pulled out of the deal. So this farmer's market will be the place where people can come to get fresh, affordable food. Some of the community farmers will also be able to sell their produce there.

Many partners have come together to create the East Capitol Urban Farm. The D.C. Housing Authority leased this land to the University of the District of Columbia to build the farm. The Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Metropolitan Memorial UMC, and a local nonprofit that employs disadvantaged youth and teaches them green jobs—all came together over the last several years to build this farm.

When do that many agencies and groups and organizations ever come together around a common goal? It was the Holy Spirit that was leading the way and putting us in each other's paths—and that was only after we had listened to community members to discover what their needs were.<sup>3</sup>

A VOICE FROM CAMBODIA:  
Sotico Pagulayan, Member of the General Board of Global  
Ministries Global Creation Care Ministry Team and  
Staff Member of the Community Health and Agricultural  
Development Mission in Cambodia

Climate change affects both poor and rich. The rich can adapt due to their financial capacity but the poor are left vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Many development initiatives like food security and nutrition, health access and education are being threatened by the devastating impacts of flooding and drought in Cambodia. Currently funding seems to focus on adaptation strategies of more wealthy countries, rather than on poorer countries like Cambodia.

Empowering women is one of the strategic approaches of my work in Cambodia to increase the resilience of rural Cambodian communities to climate change. Women are becoming the center of development and are creative in identifying alternative sources of income other than rice farming, enabling many families to reduce their vulnerability to flooding and drought.

This approach allowed project members from Integrated Farming System (IFS) projects to have an additional \$40 to \$50 income from chicken and fish raising, home gardening, and a mini rice mill. Moreover, they were able to reduce their daily food expense by up to \$1.25 because vegetables and meat were readily available in their backyards.

Grassroots advocacy and capacity-building initiatives among communities that experience the effects of climate change will help them be prepared for future climate crises.<sup>4</sup>

A VOICE FROM ALASKA:  
Fran Lynch, Church and Community Worker Serving as  
the Executive Director for Willow Church and  
Community Ministry in Willow, Alaska

About three years ago a local woman asked me if there was something that the food pantry needed. She was in charge of a bank account that had funds in it left over from former Willow recycling programs that had petered out. She wanted to use the funds for something in the

community. Of course, there were many things the food pantry needed, but what if we talked about reactivating recycling instead? We were already giving all the families who came to the food pantry cloth bags in which to bag their groceries. We encouraged them to use the bags anywhere and everywhere. If they came back to the pantry and brought their bag they would receive an extra food item. At that time over 50 percent of the families brought their bags with them on each visit to the pantry.

So, the woman and I talked recycling. Past recycling programs had died out due to the lack of volunteers and a structure to keep them going. We identified six other folks in Willow who we knew recycled by taking their things to Valley Center for Recycling Solutions in Palmer, over thirty miles to the south. We got these folks together at Willow UMC. The building was busy that day and the only place for us to meet was in a circle of chairs in the front of the sanctuary at the foot of the cross; for me, an appropriate place in which to talk about our responsibility for the stewardship of God's creation.

We partnered with the Valley Center for Recycling Solutions in Palmer and with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (where Willow is located) and became part of their combined effort to provide recycling at local transfer sites that feed into the borough dump. We now have a firm program with equipment located at the Willow Transfer Site and volunteers to staff the sites twice per month. Over 600 households have participated in the past few years and we average sixty-plus households each day. Folks are excited. Here are some of the benefits: One, they don't have to throw everything away, thus filling up the landfill. Two, getting rid of the trash is cheaper since recycling is free and people are charged a fee for using the borough dump. Three, Willow UMC is happy to have been a part of the rebirth of Willow Recycling. The number of volunteers has grown so that folks are only working once or twice a year. We are part of a larger organization connected to the above two agencies as well as three other transfer sites in the borough. With the growth of this program, we found that it was to our advantage to become lodged within the local Willow government organization, Willow Area Community Organization (WACO). So, now we are an official program of WACO, reporting to their board, receiving funds to help purchase equipment, and we have great public relations, as there is a monthly update expected and provided by Willow Recycling. We are also working with the local Willow Elementary School and Willow Community Center to develop additional recycling programs. Several businesses in the area are also recycling.

We may not talk church in our recycling efforts, but it was because of the understanding of church folks from several denominations that had a heart for stewardship of God's creation that we were able to rebirth Willow Recycling.<sup>5</sup>

A VOICE FROM PERU:  
Annie Solis, Member of the Bishop's Task Force on  
Climate Justice for the Peruvian Methodist Church  
and Former Global Ministries Mission Intern

The city of Lima was established in the middle of a vast number of hills, which are fog- and mist-fed ecosystems found in a very arid region of the Peruvian coast. They are home to wild fauna such as foxes, deer, owls, vizcachas, and other animals that live in cliffs and rock formations, and flora such as the mythical flower of Amancaes. Additionally, these hills provide water for the north coast of Lima. However, urban sprawl, mining and property ownership issues affect these ecosystems. Many inhabitants of Lima are unaware of the significance of the hills that surround them.

One of the goals of the Working Group on Climate Justice of the Methodist Church of Peru is to raise environmental awareness and stewardship of God's creation among the members of the Methodist Church of Peru. For this reason, in 2016 we started organizing gatherings of Methodists to reflect on the beauty and preservation of God's creation in Lima and surrounding areas and to discuss the challenges that would be involved in truly making a difference in Peru. Our Working Group on Climate Justice is chaired by our bishop and includes several leaders from our annual conference. There is a great commitment among our Methodists, both in terms of the leadership as well as the grassroots.

Read additional voices in the May/June 2016 issue of *New World Outlook*.

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1. Shamiso Mupara, environmental scholar, General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, e-mail interview with author, October 9, 2016.
  2. David Wilson, conference superintendent of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, e-mail to author, October 11, 2016.
  3. Excerpt from: Dottie Yunger, "The East Capitol Urban Farm—in the Heart of DC," *New World Outlook*, May/June 2016, [www.umcmmission.org/find-resources/new-world-outlook-magazine/2016/may/june/0707heartofdc](http://www.umcmmission.org/find-resources/new-world-outlook-magazine/2016/may/june/0707heartofdc). Used by permission. Yunger is currently serving as lead pastor at Solomons United Methodist Church. At the time of this article, she was an associate pastor at Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church in Washington, DC.
  4. Sotico Pagulayan, "Climate Change and Women Empowerment," *Care Takers of God's Creation—Asia Initiative*, October 2016 issue. Used by permission. Pagulayan is a member of the General Board of Global Ministries Global Creation Care Ministry Team. He is a staff member of the Community Health and Agricultural Development mission in Cambodia (CHAD).
  5. Fran Lynch, Global Ministries Church and Community Worker serving as the executive director of Willow Church and Community Ministry, e-mail interview with author, September 28, 2016.

## CHAPTER 3

# Strategies and Solutions for a Responsible Transition to Climate Justice

This chapter provides information about various United Methodist programs and resources available to individuals, communities, and groups and how they can be involved in making a transformative difference in our work for climate justice.

### WHAT INDIVIDUALS CAN DO

We're all familiar with lists like "10 Things You Can Do to Save the Earth." They include actions such as recycling, using your own shopping bags, changing your lightbulbs, etc. Below is another list that was presented at the West Ohio Mission u in 2016 that recognizes some of the complexities of earth care. It includes care for God's people as well as for creation, because we can't do one without the other.

1. Educate and raise awareness about environmental concerns.
2. Dispel myths and ask questions about what we think to be true.
3. Engage in advocacy.
4. Use less energy.
5. Buy less and do not waste what you buy.
6. Buy used items.
7. Work with the poor to increase their access to quality food.
8. Teach others what you know about caring for creation.
9. Be willing to learn from others about their experiences.
10. Study and become an expert on the biblical and United Methodist theology of caring for God's creation.

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN BE JUST. BE GREEN. 13 STEPS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental degradation, pandemic poverty and disease, the proliferation of weapons and violence, economic injustice, racial injustice, and gender injustice are all related! And until we understand the complex interconnections of these justice issues, we will not be as effective as we can possibly be in transforming the systems of injustice in our world. The 13 Steps to Sustainability address these myriad forms of injustice and enable us to make some of these connections directly through how we organize our events and meetings. You can implement these 13 steps in your individual units, congregations, districts, and annual conferences.

Visit the United Methodist Women website for more information on how you can make these steps a reality as you move forward toward sustainability: [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice).

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

### **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN BE JUST. BE GREEN. JURISDICTIONAL GUIDES**

Jurisdictional Guides for the Be Just. Be Green. initiative are trained to educate, connect, and advocate for climate justice. They work alongside United Methodist Women to make meetings across the country more sustainable and just. More information is available online: [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice/guides](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice/guides).

### **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN NEW GENERATIONS CLIMATE JUSTICE PILOT PROJECT**

The New Generations Climate Justice Pilot Program 2016 began as a training platform for younger generations of United Methodist Women members to come together to build on our knowledge and skills to advocate and act to end the injustices of environmental and social degradation. Throughout the ten-week online course and subsequent pre-Mission u retreat, we were guided through a learning experience designed to train, encourage, and develop new leaders within the fight for environmental justice.

During our time together, twelve participants focused on four topics: the basics of climate justice; the movement, the community, your role; effective solidarity work and organizing; and teaching at Mission u and educating others. Overall, the aim was to build the necessary skills to teach the Mission u climate justice study in 2017 and receive support in continued work as God-centered environmental actors within our communities through learning, engaging, and acting.

## **Learning**

This group was built in order to bring together young women from diverse backgrounds into a community of women seeking justice and faith in God. Our learning consisted of training, planning, and engaging in sessions that expanded our understanding of climate justice work.

## **Engaging**

We were able to engage with other activists in the climate justice movement by scheduling conversations with local organizations fighting for climate justice in our own cities. We engaged with one another through prayer, song, and conversation, making connections with young women our own ages who see climate change through a lens of faith. Our follow-up work will entail engaging within our own communities, where we will educate other United Methodist Women and continue to fight for climate justice.

## **Acting**

For many of us, this effort is not easy. There is a lot of work to do both in and out of the church in striving toward justice and reconciliation with God's creation. We struggle even within our global denomination about what this work looks like and what is valued. But God calls us all to this plight and offers strength. The New Generations Climate Justice Pilot Program experience brought a group of young women together to learn with and from one another for ten weeks. We are reminded that it is within these relationships with other women, in which we support and build one another up in the light of God, that we can then go out and continue our important work.

This is not a choice or a niche ministry for only those who "like being outdoors." As lovers of God, we must take responsibility for how we interact with all life. United Methodist Women has amazing resources on ways to go about living responsibly within and among God's Creation as individuals and as a church body. These include a Bible study, climate justice interactive simulations, the 13 Steps to Sustainability, a "Practical Planning Guide for Sustainable Meetings," and further reading suggestions.<sup>1</sup>

Are you a young woman interested in climate justice? Contact Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee to get connected with others who are working on climate justice: [elee@unitedmethodistwomen.org](mailto:elee@unitedmethodistwomen.org).

## **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN CLIMATE JUSTICE SIMULATION EXPERIENCE**

The climate justice simulation experience is a course available to United Methodist Women units. It is based on real situations faced by three U.S. communities in their struggles to contend with and organize around environmental injustices. Through the course of the role-playing simulation, participants will:

1. Gain knowledge about the local conditions that aggravate climate change.
2. Move toward more informed advocacy in solidarity with local communities.
3. Be introduced to the work of three community organizations addressing these particular climate justice issues.

Visit the United Methodist Women website for information on how your unit can obtain the Climate Justice Simulation Experience materials: [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice/simulation-experience](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice/simulation-experience).

## HOW UNITED METHODIST WOMEN AND MEMBERS ARE LIVING OUT CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

- Five United Methodist Women members have been trained to act as jurisdictional guides to implement the 13 Principles of Sustainability in the life of their annual conferences and communities.
- The jurisdictional guide in the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference is studying and working to address toxic flooding of the Southern Ute tribe's reservation.
- A Be Just. Be Green. team in the Holston Annual Conference has started intentionally sharing and working to follow the 13 Steps to Sustainability across the annual conference.
- United Methodist Women has partnered with young women (21–38 years old) to form the New Generations Climate Justice Group. They began a five-month home study of climate change issues in order to begin working more intentionally on these issues with the support of their local community.
- The United Methodist Women Be Just. Be Green. initiative encourages United Methodist Women members to actively resist prevailing popular and public opinion, as well as corporate power justifications, and challenges our own economic and social power in order to listen to the voice of God, using intentional decisions and lifestyle changes to begin the movement towards a new way of life.
- United Methodist Women actively engaged in advocacy efforts in regard to the crisis in Flint, Michigan. The organization and its members called out injustices such as popular calls for tax breaks, particularly for the wealthy, which meant austerity programs for everyone else; state government authority for emergency management strategies that

neglected and silenced the voice of the people; higher utility rates to cover the problems created by corporate polluters; and structural racism that perpetuates injustices as seen in underfunded schools, lack of public transportation, high rates of maternal and child mortality, and now lead poisoning.

- United Methodist Women members are urged to join the Color of Change campaign to restore funding to the Center for Disease Control’s Healthy Homes/Lead Poisoning Prevention Program for fiscal year 2017.
- United Methodist Women members are urged to look at the issue of safe drinking water in their own community and how it may disproportionately impact communities of color and call for state and federal accountability for communities facing toxic drinking water.
- A United Methodist Women Call to Prayer and Self-Denial Grant has enabled women’s groups in rural Uganda to purchase seeds and tools, and learn new methods to improve women’s status in their communities. <sup>2</sup>

## UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

### **WESPATH BENEFITS AND INVESTMENTS**

*The following is information on how Wespith (formerly General Board of Pension and Health Benefits) manages investments:*

Wespith Benefits and Investments has been managing investments on behalf of clergy, lay employees, and UMC-affiliated institutions for over a century. Wespith’s consideration of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors when making investments helps create long-term value for participants while positively impacting the environment and the world around us.

Wespith believes there is an urgent need to address the adverse consequences of climate change and also support a lower-carbon economy.

A transition to a lower-carbon economy is underway as public policies (like the landmark Paris Climate Agreement, entered into force on November 4, 2016), corporate activities, and personal behaviors intersect to mitigate climate change. Wespith’s “Avoid–Engage–Invest” framework guides in supporting this transition while identifying investment risks and opportunities that arise from climate change.

“Avoid” refers to the exclusion of companies in the thermal coal sector. As the most carbon-intensive fuel source, this sector has been the most negatively affected by public policy relating to climate change.

“Engage,” the heart of Wespath’s climate change–related activities, refers to ongoing dialogues with global policymakers and public companies. For over twenty years, Wespath has persuaded companies to improve operational energy efficiency, increase the use of renewable energy, and set greenhouse gas reduction goals. But there is more work to do.

Wespath is engaged in meaningful discussions with the world’s largest publicly traded oil and gas companies about their role in hastening the transition to a lower-carbon economy. Fossil fuels permeate the lives of much of the world’s population—lighting homes, providing heat, and powering transportation; Wespath believes oil and gas companies can use their capital and technical expertise to provide climate solutions. Wespath is not working alone—many of the world’s largest investors join us in these engagements.

Wespath has been asked to sell these companies’ shares as a more effective way to encourage change. Wespath firmly believes that doing so would result in The United Methodist Church losing an influential voice defending its interests and mission. When we leave our “seat at the table,” the resulting silence or absence has no effect; no chance to influence; no opportunity to create positive change and address this great risk.

Wespath chooses instead to engage.

“Invest” refers to using the assets Wespath manages to help transition the world toward a cleaner, more sustainable future. In 2016, Wespath invested \$300 million in companies providing low-carbon products and services such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, and pollution control. Wespath also continued to invest in sustainable forestry and low-emission leaders.

The “*Avoid—Engage—Invest*” framework provides a comprehensive approach for addressing climate change. Wespath believes that engaging companies and simultaneously deploying capital in support of low-carbon products and services reduces investment risk while promoting the long-term sustainability of the funds managed on behalf of those we serve.<sup>3</sup>

## **UNITED METHODIST GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES EARTHKEEPERS PROGRAM**

Earthkeepers is a Global Ministries program that seeks to commission 500 United Methodists who sense a vocational call to care for the earth, based on their faith as Christians. Earthkeepers are keenly aware of the ecological challenges in our world today and feel called to be a part of a movement to transform the world. Earthkeepers work with their congregations and communities in many different ways—creating community gardens in urban “food deserts,” advocating for renewable energy policies, working for environmental justice by cleaning up toxic waste sites in and near their communities, etc. They understand that caring for the earth is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

For more information about the Earthkeeper's program or to receive an application, e-mail Pat Watkins: [jpatdenise@mac.com](mailto:jpatdenise@mac.com).

## **FOSSIL FREE UMC**

Despite clear scientific evidence of the dangers of business as usual, the fossil fuel industry continues to invest in exploration and new infrastructure while blocking policies that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and obscuring the facts about climate change. In situations when an industry causes massive harm while intractably resisting calls for change, many faith communities make the decision to move beyond education, engagement, and advocacy to divestment.

The Fossil Free UMC campaign called General Conference 2016 to add fossil fuels to The United Methodist Church's socially responsible investment screens. Global Ministries and eleven annual conferences supported this legislation, along with more than six dozen United Methodist scholars and theologians. They agreed that because of the grave threat of climate change and the fossil fuel sector's unyielding refusal to change, the church must stop profiting from companies that are creating ecological destruction and human suffering on a massive scale.

While the legislation did not pass, it had an incredible impact within and beyond the church. In a year when much of the church's focus was on human sexuality and schism, climate change broke through as a key issue for discussion on the floor of General Conference. Just weeks after General Conference, the New York and Pacific Northwest Annual Conferences made decisions to divest. Perhaps most importantly, a new wave of United Methodists have found their voices as they discover how to articulate the connections between the values of the church and the climate crisis they see unfolding all around them.

As one of the largest global denominations in the world, The United Methodist Church has a crucial role to play both in lifting up the ways in which climate change is impacting communities everywhere and in casting a vision for a hopeful future—one in which God's creation is habitable and all people have access to clean, renewable energy. Fossil fuel companies know United Methodists have an important moral voice in the world. That's why the American Petroleum Institute wrote a blog post celebrating the decision to maintain the church's financial stake in the fossil fuel industry. Hundreds of institutions (including more than one hundred religious institutions) already committed to divesting trillions of dollars in assets from fossil fuels. As the Paris Climate Agreement enters into force, it is clear that a major energy transition is underway. Many United Methodists continue to boldly call for the hastening of that transition, so that God's creation and God's people will be spared the worst impacts of climate change. <sup>4</sup>

## **UNITED METHODIST GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) provides resources and networking opportunities to put our faith into action as caretakers of creation and climate justice advocates.

Join the Environmental Justice Network and learn more at: [http://action.umc-gbcs.org/signup\\_page/joinnetworks](http://action.umc-gbcs.org/signup_page/joinnetworks).

GBCS's "Faith and Facts" cards explore issues through the lens of our biblical call, United Methodist social teachings, examples of current facts, and ideas for engagement as individuals, churches, and communities. The cards are available for free through the resources section of the GBCS website and cover a wide range of issues including sustainability, clean water, and climate justice.

Community awareness and advocacy are critically important in calling attention to the suffering of people and the natural environment surrounding them.

Given the injustices faced by the community of Jean Charles, what role should they have in being a part of the solution? How could a local United Methodist Church on the Isle de Jean Charles contribute to the solution for this community?

Thinking of this example and the sessions so far, along with your biblical knowledge, begin to make a list of what constitutes justice.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Use these questions individually or in a group to examine how you can work for environmental justice.

1. In your United Methodist Women unit, congregation, annual conference, community, etc., how can you communicate the global stories presented in this supplement, and other stories, to a much wider audience of United Methodists in order to raise our awareness of the effects of climate change on our sister and brother United Methodists all over the world?
2. How can you implement United Methodist Women's Be Just. Be Green. principles, not only in your meetings, but also in your daily life and the life of your congregation, annual conference, etc.?
3. What are some global policies and strategies designed to implement climate justice throughout the world that you have become knowledgeable about? How can you use this knowledge and be a positive influence that leads your United Methodist Women unit, congregation, annual conference, etc. to support these policies and work to overturn policies that continue to exploit and abuse God's creation and God's people?
4. Does your annual conference have a creation care ministry team? If so, think about what you may have to offer such a team and get involved. If not, think about starting a team along with the other members of your climate justice class.

5. Learn how other organizations are doing work in your community in the area of caring for the earth. How can you, your United Methodist Women unit, and congregation get involved to partner with them?
6. Climate justice is about more than just “environmentalism” and recycling (as important as that is); it also involves human and ecosystem health, economic issues, racial issues, and gender issues. Caring for the earth is hard and complex and complicated. How can your own faith walk motivate you to learn the things you need to learn and connect with the people and organizations you need to relate to, so that you can help transform God’s creation into that which God intended from the beginning?
7. Oftentimes we hear that caring for the environment is detrimental to the economy; environmental regulations are too expensive for corporations to put into effect. The loss of coal jobs in Appalachia, for example, causes hardship for many. It is very difficult to weigh the loss of a person’s livelihood versus environmental destruction. Do you think it is possible to build a healthy economy, particularly in areas like Appalachia, based on industry and technology that do not have the same negative effects on God’s creation that coal does? How could United Methodist Women members in that part of the country be instrumental in such an economic shift? Refer to the video “Appalachia 2050,” listed in the “Resources” section that follows, to inform your discussion.

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1. Condensed version of published article by Carmen Francesco, Kirsten Rumsey, Kelly Schaefer, “New Generations for Climate Justice,” **response** magazine, November 2016, 39.
  2. elmira Nazombe, *Living as a Covenant Community: Leader’s Guide* (New York: United Methodist Women, 2017), 39, 43, 44.
  3. Barbara A. Boigegrain, general secretary and chief executive officer, Wespeth Benefits and Investments, e-mail interview with author, October 18, 2016.
  4. Jenny Phillips, coordinator of Fossil Free UMC, e-mail interview with author October 31, 2016.

# Resources

## BOOKS

*The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* by Theodore Runyon

*The Earth Story in Genesis* by Norman Habel and Shirley Wurst

*The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* by Norman Habel

*God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* by Terence Fretheim

*The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* by Norman Wirzba

*God of Earth: Discovering a Radically Ecological Christianity* by Kristin Swenson

*The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* by Sallie McFague

## VIDEOS

***The Last Mountain:*** Mountaintop removal coal mining is destructive to rivers, streams, ecosystems, plants, animals, and the people who live in proximity to these mines. Most of these people are poor. This documentary features efforts of the residents of Coal River Valley, West Virginia, to stop the practice of mountaintop removal. Runtime: 95 minutes. <http://thelastmountainmovie.com>

***Red Gold: An Environmental Documentary:*** The natural beauty of Alaska's Bristol Bay is the star of this 54-minute film about how the largest proposed gold and copper mine might affect the salmon runs of the area. <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/11980>

***Appalachia 2050:*** This 56-minute documentary takes a look at what has been accomplished after a half-century of the War on Poverty and what remains to be done. Eight residents of the region discuss what needs to be accomplished by 2015. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FChZNGYDY9o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FChZNGYDY9o)

***Gasland:*** Hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" has become a widespread technology used to drill for natural gas. Josh Fox, the filmmaker, was offered money by a natural gas company to lease his land for fracking. As a result of this experience, he traveled throughout the parts of the country that are being fracked to document others' experiences with this new technology. Runtime: 107 minutes. <http://one.gaslandthemovie.com/home>

***Before the Flood:*** A 96-minute National Geographic documentary featuring actor and environmental activist Leonardo DiCaprio that examines the effects of climate change that are happening in our world right now. <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/before-the-flood>

Additional videos you may want to explore include *Chasing Ice*, *The Story of Stuff*, and *An Inconvenient Truth*.

## WEBSITES AND ORGANIZATIONS

**United Methodist Women:** [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/climate-justice)

For more information:

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**Earth Ministry:** [www.earthministry.org](http://www.earthministry.org)

**Web of Creation:** [www.webofcreation.org](http://www.webofcreation.org)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:** [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

**EPA Energy Star Program:** [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

**Season of Creation:** [www.seasonofcreation.com](http://www.seasonofcreation.com)

**Evangelical Environmental Network:** [www.creationcare.org](http://www.creationcare.org)

**Caretakers of God's Creation:** [www.umccreationcare.org](http://www.umccreationcare.org)

## About the Author

**Pat Watkins** is an ordained elder and member of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. He was formerly a missionary working for the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries as the first “missionary for the care of God’s creation.” His work involved integrating care for God’s creation into the greater overall global ministry of the church. He understands the connections between poverty, disease, the environment, and violence to be intimately related. Effective mission must take place at the intersections of these issues. Watkins tries to live out his passion for God’s creation by living his life in such a way as to make a smaller footprint on God’s earth. His passion is to raise the awareness, particularly among people of faith, that there is a connection between faith and a responsibility to care for and heal God’s creation. Pat is retired and currently lives in Atlanta.