

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ, affirming the dignity and worth of all people, deplors the practice of “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy” that denies LGBTQ+ youth, children, and adults the opportunity to experience the blessings of love and human integrity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod strongly urges parents and guardians, caregivers, and authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ to protect those in their care from any practice or program that purports to “cure” their sexual orientation or gender identity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod strongly urges congregations and all other settings of the church to advocate for state and federal laws protecting youth, children, and adults from “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy” by banning the practice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Third General Synod encourages congregations and other settings of the church to work with ecumenical and interfaith partners to raise awareness of the harms of “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy” and to advocate for banning the practice; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod strongly urges congregations and other settings to strengthen their efforts to reach their LGBTQ+ neighbors, especially youth and children, with the Good News that their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are gifts from God.

FUNDING: The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

8. “WHO WILL SPEAK FOR THE TREES?” A RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

This Resolution was submitted by the New Hampshire Conference. Moderator Lowes called on Michael Vollbrecht (Kansas-Oklahoma Conference) to introduce the resolution Who Will Speak for the Trees?, a Resolution on the Rights of Nature, as amended. Suzanne E. Schwarz-Green (Penn Southeast) moved that the Thirty-third General Synod adopt the Resolution Who Will Speak for the Trees? and recommended its approval as amended. Michael Vollbrecht spoke to the Resolution.

Discussion:

Edwin Perez, Jr. (Southern New England Conference and HUGS delegate) spoke in support
Alison Buttrick Patton (Southern New England Conference) spoke in support

21-GS-36 VOTED: The Thirty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ voted to adopt the Resolution Who Will Speak for the Trees? A Resolution on the Rights of Nature.

MOTION CARRIED (Vote: 518 Yes; 18 No; 1 Abstain)

**“WHO WILL SPEAK FOR THE TREES?”
A RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHTS OF NATURE
A Resolution of Witness**

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS all rights, human and the more than human lives, depend on the flourishing and vital natural cycles of life, and healthy Earth living systems. We are all interconnected to all living beings, and when we diminish or fail to recognize the rights of the natural world, we diminish our own life. Humanity and nature are interconnected, The Rights of Nature recognizes a reciprocal and responsible human relationship with Nature;

WHEREAS The UCC has a long history of creation-care, starting with the recognition of environmental racism in the 1980s, its studies on toxic pollution (1987, 2007, 2020), responsibly and the campaign of the Three Great Loves: Neighbor, Children, and Creation (2017), programs on Green and Creation Justice Churches, and the formation of Environmental Justice Teams. The United Church of Christ Synod has passed resolutions that directly express concerns for Earthcare;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ boldly proclaims in the public square that:

- Humans need a dramatic shift from the point of view that the Earth and all her resources are available for our sole benefit.
- Nature is not ours for enslavement but was created as a mutually sustaining ecosystem, which is not to be destroyed or abused. People of faith are stewards of the land in our care. We proclaim publicly, “The Earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (PS. 24:1).
- The Earth is an original gift to sustain all life.
- We are indebted to the leadership and witness of Indigenous Peoples and the labor of generations of those who have actively been engaged in the conservancy and stewardship of the earth as central to their being.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ listens to the cries of the Earth, adopts this “Rights of Nature” resolution, and takes the following prophetic actions:

- Promote compassionate care, foster love, and co-live responsibly with the Earth Community of Life. Safeguard the common goods, space and shared resources of the Earth, for humanity and biokind. Uphold the rights of ecological integrity, biodiversity, and healthy bioregions. Advocate intergenerational responsibility for the biotic community of the Earth and gratitude of the natural world as divine gift. Promote the value of interdependence of humans and Nature as fundamental to sustainable life on Earth. Affirm that co-living with Nature involves distributive justice, a fair sharing and responsible participation of natural resources.
- Uphold the ecological principle that the Rights of Nature supersedes harmful and destructive property rights, for the balanced cycles of the natural world must be protected as a common good for the present and future generations of human life and biokind. Advocate for EPA regulations and protections that promote the Rights of Nature. Promote economies of life rather than unregulated extractive economies that exploit resources. Seek financial reparations and restoration to the habitats when corporations and/or government projects harm and damage habitats.
- Support the Earth Charter, the Nature Rights movement, and the movement of Indigenous Peoples to grant legal standing to nature. Urge all corporate and/or governmental land and water projects to perform environmental impact studies on minimizing damage to habitats (waterways, lands, atmosphere) and wildlife. Promote the right of local communities or environmental organizations to represent the unheard voices and cries of Nature.
- Foster respect and gratitude for Nature as a divine gift. Combat attitudes that relegate Nature to mere capital for profit or a dumping ground for toxic waste.
- Promote the Rights of Nature to be free from human harm, including the right to healthy habitats, the right to species flourishing, the right to a fair share of the bio-region and its goods, and the right to fulfil their ecological potential without human infringements.
- Prioritize renewable energies over fossil fuels and prioritize the economies of life - such as the Green New Deal - over extractive and unbridled economies that pollute and damage the Earth.
- Encourage organic farming and regenerative agriculture. Encourage the reduction of pesticides and insecticides that negatively impact the soil, aquifers, and other life. Support family farming and local farmers' markets. Work for food justice and security for all people.
- Support the upholding of all treaties with indigenous nations, respecting their lands and kinship natural relations. Ally with and support Indigenous Peoples in their decolonization of Nature, protecting their kinship rights and access to sacred lands.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on all settings of the church to respond to the Rights of Nature by taking intentional actions such as:

- Participating in the Season of Creation for September Sundays; incorporating creation care into each liturgical season (Tenebrae, Easter sunrise service outdoors, and Earth Day); preaching often on Earth Justice; celebrating outdoors or bringing the outdoors into the church.
- Ritualizing environmental grief by observing occasions such as International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22), Remembrance Day for Lost Species (November 30); starting environmental grief support groups.
- Fostering love of God’s creation, organizing walks in botanical gardens and wilderness areas, planting trees, taking nature hikes, and attending summer camps.
- Studying and implementing “A Kairos Call to Action”, a 10- year mobilization plan on climate change and inequality.
- Becoming a Creation Justice Church and green church.
- Subscribing to the UCC Environmental Justice newsletters and environmental newsletters, sharing webinars, and reading and studying about creation care and climate change, as spiritual practices to equip us for creation care.
- Working for the Green New Deal (the transition to renewable energies) and the Blue New Deal (protection and restoration of oceans and waterways); advocating for the Rights of Nature and taking part in climate strikes and non-violent protests.
- Organizing locally by partnering and building community networks with conservationist and environmental groups, and finding common ground to restore damaged environments.
- Being creative and imaginative in defense of the Rights of Nature.

FUNDING: The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Moderator called upon the Chief Financial Operator, Tami Marinella, to offer our financial report.

The Financial Report is included in the Appendix of these minutes.