



Heartland Presbytery
Mission and Social Justice Division

Overture. _____ overtures the 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:

- 1. Reaffirm the statements of the 183rd, 187th, 192nd, 193rd, 195th, 196th, 199th, Bold entire paragraph 201st, 202nd, 204th, 205th, 206th, 208th, 210th, 211th, 213th, 215, and 216th General Assemblies (1971, 1975, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003. 2006) reflecting the determination of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that protection of the environment is an essential part of the Christian faith.**
- 2. Direct the Director of the General Assembly Mission Council to endorse "A Fifty Year Farm Bill" which is related to perennialization of crops and biodiversity with the goal of social and ecological sustainability. Also, direct the Stated Clerk to correspond with members of Congress on our position.**

RATIONALE:

The Fifty Year Farm Bill is a program that uses five-year farm bills as mileposts. Each bill will add larger, more sustainable end goals to existing programs.

This overture is a plan to perennialize the landscape so it will be sustainable for future growth. The goal is to gain social stability and ecological sustainability in secure food supplies. The 50-Year Farm Bill (50YFB) can be seen in its entirety at www.landinstitute.org.

By using this over-all plan, conservation will be a positive result of production, and our food producing land will grow and flourish, as will our producers and our agricultural communities. This bill will help us care for God's creation and increase the health of the people of the world and sustain the resources of the earth. It will help turn around many of the problems that are causing the erosion of our renewable natural resources, and help to save what is remaining

The 50-Year Farm Bill has effective plans for following areas:

- *Protect soil from erosion
- *Cut fossil fuel dependence to zero
- *Sequester carbon
- *Reduce toxics in soil and water
- *Manage nitrogen carefully
- *Reduce dead zones
- *Cut wasteful water use
- *Preserve or rebuild farm communities

Scripture proclaims, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." (Psalm 24: 1) "And as for you oh my flock, thus says the Lord GOD....Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you tread down with your feet the good pasture—and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet?"..... Therefore says the Lord GOD to them, "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep." (Ezekiel 34:17-20) Our God is concerned with all of creation that we share and care for.

In a time when long-term food security is an issue and there is a need to guarantee sustainable agricultural production in the future of our plains states, we support the proposal of a 50-Year Farm Bill. This bill is being proposed by The Land Institute of Salina, Kansas in cooperation with five land grant universities and thirteen conservancy, trade and watershed organizations in the US (see Appendix I). This is at a time when soil fertility is declining, soil erosion is increasing, land is being poisoned by pesticides, and there is more biodiversity loss in our food producing land. These research groups have completed studies that demonstrated this bill's ability to make a positive change in our ecosystem.

This farm policy will create a positive economic transformation. It will bring people back to the family farm to use the improved technology and increase the long range productivity of the land. The inventions and techniques have already been developed and are continuing to be improved upon. It will bring new health to the earth, clean up the sea's "dead zones" and stop the erosion of the good soil that is going seaward.

The Book of Order (W-7.5001a) states that *God calls the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God's work of creation and preservation.* In (W-7.5003), it reminds us that we are *stewards of God's creation who hold the earth in trust..* In (W-7.5003b) it asks that we *develop technological methods and processes that work together with the earth's environment to preserve and enhance life.* (W-7.5003d) states we should *use and shape earth's goods to create beauty, order, health, and peace in ways that reflect God's love for all creatures.*

Organizations that partnered to develop this plan are: Green Lands Blue Waters Coalition, University of Illinois, Iowa State University (the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture), Louisiana State University, the University of Minnesota, North Dakota State University, the University of Wisconsin, The Audubon Society, the Illinois Stewardship Alliance, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, The Land Institute, The Land Stewardship Project, the Minnesota/Iowa Farmers Union, The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, Practical Farmers of Iowa, and the Rural Advantage and Agricultural Watershed Institute.

We in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have of a long history of supporting actions that would protect the environment.

Historical References

In 1954, the Presbyterian Church stated:

We call upon the Christian conscience to recognize that our stewardship of the earth and water involves both a land-use program that recognizes the interdependence of soil, water and man and the development of a responsible public policy which will resist the exploitation of land, water, and other natural resources, including forests, for selfish purposes and maintain intelligent conservation for the sustenance of all living creatures through future generations (PCUSA, 1954, p. 198).

This stewardship commitment has been repeated and reaffirmed by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessors, as follows:

1967 The Confession of 1967 stresses the justice of sharing resources and the interdependence of resources and living creatures.

1971 The 183rd General Assembly accepted the Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal statement that calls for a new order of values based on an "eco-ethic" and a Statement on Environmental Renewal. (UPCUSA, 1971, pp. 578-583)

1975 A recommendation is made to the 187th General Assembly to affirm advocacy of the protection of wildlife areas and parklands. (UPCUSA, 1975, p.59)

1980 The 192nd General Assembly votes to (1) develop educational resources on the adverse impact that careless technology has on the environment and health of the unborn; (2) instruct the Board of Investment Committee to review corporate responsibility regarding manufacture of dioxins. (PCUS, 1980, p.56)

1981 The 193rd General Assembly pledges support of the United Nations Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade, 1981-1990, calling upon Presbyterians to develop lifestyles that are consistent with the necessity to conserve water. (UPCUSA, 1981, p. 254)

1983 The 195th General Assembly urges the session of each congregation in the Presbyterian Church (USA) to consider making a "Commitment to Peacemaking" that included "making peace with the earth -- involve the congregation in efforts to protect and restore the environment."

1984 The 196th General Assembly calls upon Congress of the United States to reduce the emissions of sulfur dioxide and the oxides of nitrogen to a level that will protect the most sensitive environment and states that human stewardship is not a "dominion of mastery" and calls us to exercise respect for the integrity of natural systems and for the limits that nature places on economic growth and material consumption. (PC(U.S.A.), 1984, p.349)

1987 The 199th General Assembly votes to urge the United States government to assure acceptable disposal sites for high-level nuclear waste. It also votes to urge each Presbytery and local church to encourage and support alternatives to pesticides and support the victims of pesticide poisoning. (PC(U.S.A.), 1987, p. 796)

1988 The Environmental Justice Office is created to study past environmental policies of the United Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States to create a combined report of environmental concerns for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Environmental Justice Office is a ministry of the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), lodged in the National Ministries Division, Social Justice Program Area, and is now actively involved in creation care and environmental justice issues.

1989 The 201st General Assembly calls for governments to strengthen regulations and enforcement regarding transportation of oil and hazardous substances, in response to the Exxon-Valdez tanker spill in 1989. (PC(U.S.A.), 1989, p. 642)

1990 The 202nd General Assembly passes "Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice" affirming "creation cries out in this time of ecological crises," calling the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to respond to this cry and engage in an effort to make the 1990s the "turnaround decade," providing the foundation for the work of the Environmental Justice Office. Also, the 202nd General Assembly calls attention to the problem of global warming and encourages the United States government to take steps toward incorporating environmental damage and depletion into "full-cost pricing." (PC(U.S.A.), 1990, p.646-670).

The Affirmation of Faith from that General Assembly noted that "Restoring Creation is God's own work in our time",...and that "The love of neighbor, particularly "the least" of Christ's brothers and sisters, requires action to stop the poisoning, the erosion, the wastefulness that are causing suffering and death.—The future of our children and their children and all who come after is at stake. In this critical time of transition to a new era, God's new doing may be discerned as a call to earth-keeping, to justice, and to community."

1992 The 204th General Assembly directs all future General Assemblies to print all official reports on recycled and recyclable paper and to direct all related bodies to use recycled and recyclable paper for all reports and publication. (PC(U.S.A.), 1992, p.846)

1993 The 205th General Assembly reaffirms the "Call to Restore Creation", receives the document "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity" as a prophetic word to the church, urges President Clinton to follow new policies from the Earth Summit and directs the Social Justice and Peacemaking Unit to advocate for policies that will reduce carbon dioxide emissions. (PC(U.S.A.), 1993, pp. 896-897)

1994 The 206th General Assembly, within the context of its "Resolution on the United States in Its Asia-Pacific Relations", listed five basic principles by which past General Assemblies have been guided related to international affairs. One of the principles, and the resolution that follow it, relates specifically to the environment. "The General Assembly has advocated new understanding of the relationship among human life, institutions, and the total stewardship and care for the planet, which is the common heritage of all peoples . ." (PC(U.S.A.), 1994, pg. 310)

1996 The 208th General Assembly adopts the paper Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development as policy for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Just and sustainable human development is the comprehensive enhancement of the quality of life for all, present and future; it necessarily involves the integration of economic, social, political, cultural, ecological, and spiritual dimensions of being.

1998 The 210th General Assembly calls upon the United States to ratify the protocol negotiated in Kyoto and urges Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations and institutions to pursue energy efficiency and conservation in their buildings and property.

1999 The 211th General Assembly again calls upon the U.S. to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, urges the United States to go beyond Kyoto targets for carbon dioxide emission reductions, directs the Presbyterian Center in Louisville and all other properties of the General Assembly to minimize fossil fuel energy (along with urging local congregations to do the same), and directs the General Assembly to promote education regarding global warming and other environmental concerns. (PC(U.S.A.), 1999, pp. 669-670)

2001 The 213th General Assembly calls to issue and disseminate the Call to Halt Mass Extinction. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calls Presbyterians, other citizens, governments, and societal institutions to face the severity of this threat and to take steps to prevent mass extinction and preserve the biodiversity essential to the flourishing of life. (PC(U.S.A.), 2001, pp. 473-475)

2003 The 215th General Assembly calls on the United States government to join the world effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to develop and enact a national emergency response, underwritten by law, with adequate financial support, and economic enforcement mechanism, to be fully functioning by 2005, with targeted reductions by that time. (PC(U.S.A.), 2003, p. 617)

2006 The 216th General Assembly asked its members to "make a bold witness by aspiring to carbon neutral lives". It was noted that "without significant changes in public policy and corporate behavior to complement actions of personal discipleship, massive and irreversible climate 2006. The 216th General Assembly asked that votes that the Church ask its changes will only accelerate over the next century." (PC(U.S.A.) Memorandum; Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Dec 4, 2006)

2010 The 219th General Assembly approved an overture from the Presbytery of Charlotte entitled "On Lifting Up the 'Call to Restore' Creation" reaffirming the Call to Restore Creation from the 1990 policy "Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice"; commends churches that are working to care for God's earth; and encourages churches, members, and institutions to "adopt institutional and individual lifestyles reflecting greater stewardship of resources, particularly in energy consumption." The overture was amended to include the affirmation that "concern for God's creation is, for every Christian, an essential way of living faithfully"; to affirm that the best available science should shape the direction of environmental programming and policy; and that access to potable water is a human right.