

CREATION COVENANT OF UNITED CHURCH OF CHAPEL HILL

From the earliest times God's people have born faithful witness to the goodness of God's creation, the integral relations of God, humans, and nature, and God's continuing creativity and care. Recognizing that we live in an evolutionary universe and stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, we reflect anew on our role in the ongoing creative process.

The Bible begins with the creation story and the special role of humans. The Hebrew Scriptures teach an ethics of care for the land: The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24). We are tenants of God's creation (Leviticus 25). The Christian Scriptures teach, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being" (John 1). Throughout history the church has affirmed that the created world and the spiritual world are not two orders of existence, one being lesser and different from the other. Christian mystics have sensitized us to God's presence in creation. St. Francis of Assisi is remembered as the patron saint of animals.

We no longer think of creation as simply being God's gift to us, for creation is also our responsibility. Earth's life systems are in peril and many species face extinction. Present and future generations, especially the poor, will suffer from ecological degradation. Further as Pope Francis wrote, "We are faced not with two separate crises, [one social and the other environmental,] but rather with one complex crisis. . . . Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (*Laudato Si'*, Par. 139)"

With this in mind, we acknowledge and confess our ecological sin, we humbly pray for God's guidance and strength, and we covenant and declare:

1. We LOVE and will care for God's beautiful, complex, wild, and dynamic creation, upon which we are dependent.
2. Being especially cognizant of structural racism, the plight of the poor, and species extinction, we commit to bringing about JUSTICE for all of God's people and all of God's creatures.
3. We will nurture a deep AWARENESS of the world around us and recognize its beauty and its growing vulnerability.
4. We pledge to preserve the HEALTH of our planet for our children and the children of all species for many generations to come.

We also endorse and affirm the Creation Justice Covenant of the United Church of Christ.

Our vision is that United Church of Chapel Hill will be a living witness to care for the larger community of life through intentional and innovative management of our physical campus, and energetic and explicit inclusion of both human and Earth justice in our ministry, mission, education, theology, and worship. Demonstrating that we can be agents of change, we will take courageous action in addressing the complex ecological and social challenges of the 21st Century and beyond.

This Creation Covenant was adopted by the congregation of the United Church of Chapel Hill on June 11, 2019.

Alecia Brower, Church Moderator

CREATION JUSTICE COVENANT OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

In affirming the divine gifts of creation and in affirming our connection to God, each other, and the world around us, we unconditionally commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to the intertwined responsibilities of caring for creation and seeking justice for the oppressed.

With purposeful resolve, we commit ourselves with an awareness of how the abuses of creation inevitably cause human suffering and of how factors such as race, class, and global inequality inevitably cause some to suffer more than others.

Furthermore, as humanity confronts the current and future crisis of damage to our climate, we commit ourselves with an urgent sense of calling.

We desire that these deeply felt commitments be reflected in all the dimensions of our congregation's life.

We desire that we launch ourselves beyond the walls of this church to make good on our promises to God our Creator, to Jesus the Redeemer of Creation, and to the Holy Spirit the Sustainer of Creation."