

Episcopal Church Eco-Justice Resolutions

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The Episcopal Church has worked for decades to guide its own actions, investments, and members to prioritize the responsible stewardship of God's creation. Through resolutions of the General Convention and Executive Council the Church has sought to live out this work through daily actions, such as restricting bottled water use ([2009-A045](#)), as well as institutionally through including financial investments. In multiple cases, including [2013](#) and [2012](#), to utilize its role as an institutional investor to vote in favor of shareholder resolutions that support environmental justice and sustainability. A critical component of the Church's mission with respect to the care of creation is the issue of "eco-justice."

The terms eco-justice or environmental justice are broad and can include such sub-issues as environmental racism, food sustainability, rights of indigenous people, employment and job transition, and our responsibility to consider the needs and rights of future generations. The Church, through General Convention and Executive Council, has passed many resolutions touching on these critical issues.

As recently as the 78th General Convention, the Church has reaffirmed its commitment to oppose environmental racism ([2015-C013](#)). The General Convention defines environmental racism as "the locating of extraction, production, and disposal industries where they disproportionately harm neighborhoods inhabited by people of color and low income communities." This resolution renewed the spirit of a resolution in the 73rd General Convention ([2000-D005](#)) which also included specific calls to action around mountain top removal and other destructive mining practices. Both resolutions highlight the disproportionate location of industries that emit dangerous pollutants in minority and poor neighborhoods. As a Church, we recognize the need to care for creation while also attending to the human needs and communities that often depend on industries that threaten clean air and clean water for all of us. We are in a position support efforts to make industrial extraction, emissions, and disposal operations not harmful to their communities in ways that would not require the dislocation of employment opportunities within minority and poor communities.

Food security is another major area within eco-justice that the Church has been active, and a major area of overlap with public health, care of children, and anti-poverty measures. Answering a clear Biblical call to feed the hungry, food security and sustainability cross many issues in an interconnected, and interdependent, world. Among the areas addressed is the need to ensure charitable acts do not have greater negative repercussions, such as donating such quantities of food that local producers and economies are disrupted ([2000-A002](#)). Many other resolutions focus on broad aspects of food security, such as food sovereignty ([2012-B023](#)), the environmental relationships across food systems ([2015-A091](#)), and support traditional hunting rights of indigenous people ([2015-C053](#)). In addition to the rights of indigenous people to continue their traditional hunting practices, eco-justice includes a number of other issues unique to these groups.

Through resolutions the General Convention has called for the Church and its members to support community food programs, such as one led by the Navajoland Area Mission, that practice and pass on traditional, and sustainable, food production and preparation techniques ([2015-A091](#)). Other resolutions have called broadly for the inclusion of nutrition and food needs in community development efforts within and in partnership with native communities ([2012-A086](#)). A critical aspect of the Church's eco-justice mission, with respect to native peoples, is our support for the native peoples of Alaska. Since

the early 1990's the Church has officially opposed drilling within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge ([1991-D125](#)). This has been supported through extensive engagement with the Gwich'in people and the Office of Government Relations has worked extensively on behalf of the Church independently as well as through ecumenical and inter-faith partnerships. Finally, in pursuit of eco-justice, the Church has articulated its support for the self-determination of indigenous tribes ([2012-B023](#)) and renounced the Doctrine of Discovery ([2009-D035](#)) in both its political and theological applications.

As part of the Church's work to ensure the responsible and sustainable use of God's creation, the Church has called for significant efforts to transition the world, our nation, and the economy away from fossil fuels. Recognizing that such changes will have adverse side effects for those currently employed in these legacy industries, the Church must work to support their transition. No commitment to eco-justice can be complete without advocating for those, who no fault of their own, will be harmed by the transition to renewable and clean energy. This issue is addressed indirectly through a resolution focused on job-creation ([2012-D087](#)).

A common theme across all of the challenges and policies discussed is the intersectionality of issues that are part of eco-justice and the Church's broader mission. While issues such as drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge represent clear threats to the caribou herds and Gwich'in people without any significant negative societal side effects by not drilling, many eco-justice challenges present challenges even within solutions. These conflicts can be seen within questions about the treatment of animals, preservation of natural habitats and plants/forests, and the need to produce ever larger amounts of food for human consumption. Children are a particularly vulnerable population as they are often most susceptible to even small amounts of pollution, run off, and toxic waste. The care of children presents a critical area of interconnectedness within many sub-issues as children are often among the most vulnerable to the negative side effects of the status quo; however, they are also dependent for their care on families that, directly or indirectly, often rely on the status quo. The intersectionality of challenges and solutions to eco-justice issues offers a unique opportunity to leverage a broad coalition of the Church's assets, strengths, and experiences, highlighting the best of the Church's mission and members.