

**Tennessee-Western Kentucky  
Conference 2023 Resolution**

## **Green Team Formation**

**WHEREAS:**

**Theological Imperative**

**Scripture** proclaims God created all—from Earth’s hospitable atmosphere, mighty seas, abundant forests and other plants to nutrient-rich soil, from majestic whales to the tiniest microbes and all sentient and non-sentient beings in between; Scripture also proclaims God called humans to be caretakers of creation (Genesis 1–2). Jesus declared the Greatest Commandments are to love God and to love neighbor, especially the most vulnerable (Luke 10:25-37). Persons living in poverty, persons of color, and indigenous people in this country and throughout the world are harmed first and most by the degradation of creation, and these same groups have the fewest resources to recover from that harm. Care for creation is clearly a matter of justice. Creation, including all people, is already or will be affected by the current and coming level of danger from climate change and its consequences that intersect with multiple expressions of injustice. **It follows that** loving God, the Creator, means loving God’s Creation and that loving neighbors in distress requires stopping harm and righting wrongs, in other words, working for justice.

**Tradition** for United Methodists includes John Wesley’s Three Simple Rules for living faithfully: First, do no harm; second, do all the good you can; and third, stay in love with God. Our proposed 2020 Social Principles begin with “The Community of All Creation,” outlining the care and justice work that is needed in the midst of the crises upon crises that are adversely affecting God’s creation and our neighbors. The 2009 Pastoral Letter of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, *God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action*, pledges leadership in addressing the work of renewal. The 2016 *Book of Discipline* (Paragraph 254) includes an Earth Advocacy ministry group as a way “to fulfill the mission of the local church.” **It follows that** the church provides both a mandate and guidance for doing what is needed.

**Reason** is a God-given gift. Our reasoning capabilities are informed by modern scientific research and practices. The scientific community has given clear warning that creation is under tremendous strain due to the polluting of air, water, and land; habitat destruction; the unsustainable consumption of earth’s finite resources; and the rapidly accelerating extinction of species. Scientists have sounded the alarm of catastrophic harm to creation if global warming and associated climate change are not halted and reversed. They point to how rising temperatures have already intensified wildfires, hurricanes, drought, and sea-level rise throughout the world with devastating impacts. Our reasoning capabilities are also informed by the examples of indigenous peoples whose traditional wisdom and practices honor living in

harmony with nature. **It follows that**, globally, humans have the capacity for understanding the damage and danger and for stopping or mitigating the effects. Individuals and congregations have access to trustworthy knowledge and the reasoning ability to discern what is needed and how to carry out plans in their local situations.

**Experience** is honored by United Methodists as a way of recognizing lifetime gains of knowledge, understanding, perspectives, and practices of individuals, which they all bring to the work before them. Functioning as a team, they become stronger in their efforts (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Experience is also honored as the varied ways in which humans encounter God. For many people that meeting is through God's gift of the natural world. **It follows that** a group of people who care about creation and justice, working together can use their wisdom and passion to create faithful and meaningful experiences that help others love God and neighbor.

## **BE IT RESOLVED:**

**That every local church, charge, cluster, or district is invited to create a "green team" or strengthen an existing one for action** in four areas each year—Worship, Education, Practice, and Advocacy—providing children, youth, and adults of all ages with inspiration, knowledge, encouragement, and practical means for caring for creation and justice. These actions include:

One or more occasions of **worship**, celebrating God's grace, glory, and beauty in creation and connecting creation care and justice to the scriptural call to love God and neighbor. (For example, observing Earth Day (April 22); creating an outdoor worship service; integrating creation care and justice in sermons and liturgy.)

One or more **educational opportunities**, held within and for the congregation and/or community, related to some aspect of creation care and justice. (For example, facilitating nature experience events for various age groups and groupings, including walks in the woods, wildflower walks, "I spy" challenges, trip to a beach or waterway, a zoo, and so on to help people love and learn to protect creation; leading a Bible study and programs on creation care and justice; arranging for speakers with environmental expertise, especially about local issues.)

One or more positive changes in the **practices** of the church's life and/or to the church building or grounds. (For example, stopping the use of Styrofoam and plastic plates and cups for meals; adding native trees to church property; placing recycling bins where needed and visible; reducing energy consumption.)

One or more actions that **advocate** for change in systems that perpetuate injustice and harm to creation and communities either locally, regionally, nationally, or globally. (For example, researching an issue, identifying the change-makers, and communicating with

them; informing the congregation on local issues related to creation justice and encouraging them to communicate their values to the appropriate decision makers.)

**That creation care and justice will be lifted up in all areas of ministry and mission**, including preaching, liturgy, communications, education, outreach, and advocacy so that the church will become an increasingly effective witness of loving God and neighbor.

**That these actions are to be communicated as an idea exchange and inspiration** throughout the connection. They can be reported at charge conference and should be celebrated locally, in the conference, and beyond.

**That the annual conference will assist churches with resources and mentors**, as needed, particularly—but not exclusively—through the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Creation Care Ministry Team.