

**A RESOLUTION TO ENDORSE THE STATE OF MICHIGAN BALLOT PROPOSAL
TO ACHIEVE 25% OF OUR ELECTRICAL USEAGE FROM RENEWABLE SOURCES
BY THE YEAR 2025.**

1 **Whereas**, Genesis 1:7-28 details God creating humanity and calling people to be stewards of all
2 life and the world’s resources;

3 **Whereas**, the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ approved a resolution
4 that urged governments to respond with urgency to global warming by supporting mandatory
5 measures to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted, called for business to respond to
6 global warming through increased investment in efficient and sustainable energy technologies
7 and further called for all segments of the Church to address global warming;

8 **Whereas**, using increased wind and solar energy resources will reduce pollution and give
9 Michigan cleaner and healthier air and water reducing asthma and lung disease;

10 **Whereas**, significant technological advances have been achieved which make electricity from
11 renewable resources now possible without significantly increasing the energy price to the
12 consumer;

13 **Whereas**, numerous other states already have adopted renewable energy standards similar to
14 Michigan’s proposal and higher than Michigan’s current standard of 10% renewable;

15 **Therefore, Be It Resolved**, that the Michigan Conference United Church of Christ endorses the
16 approval of the ballot proposal to require that beginning no later than the year 2025, at least 25%
17 of each electricity provider’s annual electricity sales in Michigan be derived from the generation
18 or purchase of electricity produced from clean renewable electric energy resources;

19 **Be It Further Resolved** that the Michigan Conference United Church of Christ encourages each
20 of its associations and member congregations to pray, study & reflect on this issue in an effort to
21 discern the appropriate action(s) that God is calling them to do in response to this issue.

Resolution proposed by the Michigan Conference Prophetic Integrity-Mission Area Team.

INITIATIVE PETITION AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The following new Section 55 would be added to Article IV of the Michigan Constitution:

§ 55 Michigan's Clean Renewable Electric Energy Standard

1. It is the policy of Michigan to promote and encourage the use of clean renewable electric energy sources. Clean renewable electric energy sources, which naturally replenish over a human rather than geological time frame, are wind, solar, biomass and hydropower.
2. Beginning no later than 2025, at least 25% of each electricity provider's annual retail electricity sales in Michigan shall be derived from the generation or purchase of electricity produced from clean renewable electric energy sources. The foregoing clean renewable electric energy standard shall be implemented incrementally and in a manner that fosters a diversity of energy generation technologies. Facilities used for satisfying the standard shall be located within Michigan or within the retail customer service territory of any electric utility, municipally-owned electric utility or cooperative electric utility operating in Michigan.
3. Consumers shall be charged for electricity from clean renewable electric energy sources in the same manner and on the same basis as for electricity from other sources.
4. To protect consumers, compliance with the clean renewable electric energy standard shall not cause rates charged by electricity providers to increase by more than 1% in any year. Annual extensions for meeting the standard may be granted, but only to the extent demonstrated to be necessary for an electricity provider to comply with the foregoing rate limitation.
5. The legislature shall enact laws to promote and encourage the employment of Michigan residents and the use of equipment manufactured in Michigan in the production and distribution of electricity derived from clean renewable electric energy sources.
6. Any provision or portion of this section held invalid or unconstitutional shall be severable from the remaining portions, which shall be implemented to the maximum extent possible

Supportive Statement

- offered by Rev. Terry Gallagher

The critical need to respond to the crisis of Climate Change was recognized in a resolution passed by the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ which stressed a need for urgency in the response actions to be offered by governments, business, and industry and also by all segments of the Church.

The need to respond to impact of harmful issues caused by Climate Change was also included in a resolution approved by the Michigan Conference in 2010.

Therefore the support by the Michigan Conference for this current ballot proposal of 25% of electricity coming from renewable resources by the year 2025 would appear to be fully in line with these previous approved theological conclusions and calls for action.

To these conclusions offered from our previous work on this issue, I would also add the following facts that specifically apply to the current proposal as offered by the Michigan Energy-Michigan Jobs coalition:

- Renewable energy currently accounts for just 3.6% of the energy used in Michigan. As a comparison, Iowa already gets 23% of its electricity from renewables. (*Source: Energy Information Administration*)
- Coal makes up 60% of Michigan's energy mix, despite the fact the state has no coal reserves. (*Source: Michigan Public Service Commission*)
- Michigan consumers spend more than \$1.4 billion a year importing coal from other states. (*Source: Michigan Public Service Commission*)
- The proposal to increase Michigan's renewable energy standard to 25% will bring \$10 billion of investment to Michigan, keep our dollars here in our state and create jobs for Michigan workers in the fast growing clean energy sector. (*Source: National Renewable Energy Laboratory*)
- Studies by independent economists predict that it would cost the average Michigan household no more than \$1.25 a month, and in the long run could reduce our energy bills. (*Source: Studies use data from the Michigan Public Service Commission*)
- 31 states already have adopted renewable energy standards similar to Michigan's proposal and are higher than Michigan's current RES of 10% without significant increases in utility costs for consumers. (*Source: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory*)
- Clean energy is a growing market and this proposal will help make sure that Michigan is a leader in these new technologies. It will create good jobs now and in the future, start new businesses, and stimulate economic development right here in Michigan. Recent studies estimate that an initiative like this will create tens of thousands of new Michigan jobs that can't be outsourced. (*Source: U.N. Report June 2012 & National Renewable Energy Laboratory*)
- Using more wind and solar energy will reduce pollution and give Michigan cleaner and healthier air and water, protect the Great Lakes, reduce asthma and lung disease, and ultimately save lives. (*Source: CERES article*)

Biblical/Theological Rationale offered by Rev. Terry Gallagher

Biblical: Gen 1:26-31

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (NRSV)

Theological Rationale:

Theologian John Dominic Crossan observes:

We humans are *image* stewards of God. We are created, in other words, to run God's world with God, through God, and in God...We owe it to God to run God's world responsibly. We owe the divine Householder the conservation of the world house; we owe the divine Homemaker the consecration of the earth home. We owe God adequate care of all God's creation.ⁱ

I believe that the central theological issue that is at the root of the human induced Global Warming crisis is one of soteriology. Unlike the common use of this term, in which it is focused on salvation practices to attain eternal life, I am using the term soteriology as "envisioning the relationship between God and human beings restored to full harmony"ⁱⁱ. Simply expressed, I believe that the relationship between God & Humanity is broken over the basic issue of humans' misunderstanding of "dominion over creation" (Genesis 1:26-28, Psalm 8:3-8). The misunderstanding arises from our modern societies understanding that "dominion over" is our God given right to freely consume all aspects of creation. If we understand "sin" as those actions which separate us from being in relationship with God then it is our very act of consuming God's Good Creation which is the sin that we must repent of in order to restore a right relationship between the Creator and us.

On this issue of domination over creation, theologian Larry Rasmussen observes:

...the theology of dominion remains the reigning one where it counts most, *in practice*...Social arrangements, especially, and the busy structures of economic life, in particular, still assume the tenets of mastery and live by them: earth exists for us;...Commerce masquerading as human liberation is not the only surviving form of dominion theology, but it is the most prominent one.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rasmussen offers a correction to this theological misunderstanding of "dominion over Creation" with the observation:

If Jesus is *dominus* (Lord), then the human exercise of power should be patterned on his kind of Lordship—a servant stance in which the last are made first, the weak are made strong, and even the sparrow is cherished, so that all might be gathered into covenantal intimacy on equal terms...“Dominion” ...is humble participation with God in ongoing creation as a totally interrelated reality, accompanied with a high sense of moral responsibility for consequences. We are *shomrei ‘adama*—guardians of the earth.^{iv}

Theologian Sallie McFague states why Global Warming is an issue of significant concern to theology:

Climate change, quite simply, is the issue of the twenty-first century. It is not one issue among many, but, like the canary in the mine, it is warning us that the way we are living on our planet is causing us to head for disaster. We must change. All of the other issues we care about – social justice, peace, prosperity, freedom—cannot occur unless our planet is healthy.^v

McFague further notes:

It is precisely the false conventional views of God and ourselves that permit continuing destruction of our planet and its inhabitants. The environmental crisis is a theological problem, a problem coming from views of God and ourselves that encourages or permits our destructive, unjust actions... It is useless to censure people for their actions when the roots of those actions lie in deep, unexamined assumptions. The problem lies in our theologies and our anthropologies. The problem as many have pointed out, is a “spiritual” one, having to do with our *will* to change.^{vi}

Finally it should be noted that the Twenty-Sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ reflected upon this issue and passed a resolution in which it:

“...admits Christian complicity in the damage that human beings have caused to earth’s climate system and other planetary life systems, and urges recommitment to the Christian vocation of responsible stewardship of God’s creation...”

In conclusion, after engaging in a several year process of study & reflection, I believe that God is calling us to take immediate action to protect God’s good creation from the catastrophic effects of Climate change. The current proposal to require 25% of electricity from renewable energy is a small step in the right direction. A step that is of “good works” and we should support from a foundation that is rooted in our faith.

James 2:14-17 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? 17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. NRSV

ⁱ John Dominic Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord’s Prayer*, Harper Collins, New York, NY, 2010, p155

ⁱⁱ *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary Of The Bible*, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld Gen. Ed., Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 2009

ⁱⁱⁱ Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1996 p228

^{iv} Ibid, p231

^v Sallie McFague, A New Climate For Theology: God, the world, and global warming, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2008, p15

^{vi} Ibid, p31