



Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

Proposed legislation to be considered at the 2025 World Conference

A-3 No Preambles

From the First Presidency

Resolution

Resolved, That resolutions submitted for consideration by a World Conference not include preambles (“Whereas” statements); and be it further

Resolved, That the First Presidency define what additional information, such as background and supportive statements may be submitted with proposed resolutions and make provision for the publication of said information with the proposed resolutions.

Background Statement

The church’s parliamentary authority, the latest edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, states: “It is usually inadvisable to attempt to include reasons for a motion’s adoption within the motion itself. To do so may encumber the motion and may weigh against its adoption—since some members who approve of the action it proposes may dislike voting for it if it states reasons with which they disagree.” It goes on to say, “In general, the use of a preamble should be limited to cases where it provides little-known information without which the point or the merits of a resolution are likely to be poorly understood, where unusual importance is attached to making certain reasons for an action a matter of record, or the like.” (Robert, Henry M. *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th edition (p. 180–181).) The proposed resolution provides for the latter situation.

In general, preambles or “whereas” statements share background information and/or information that would explain a proposed resolution or promote its adoption. The proposed resolution includes a method when a resolution is being considered by a World Conference for sharing a printed background statement with this type of information, as well as a support statement in which ideas supporting adoption of a resolution can be shared. (The form developed for submitting proposed resolutions for the 2025 Conference includes examples of such items.) Additionally, such information and ideas can be shared by speakers during consideration of a resolution.

Support Statement

“Whereas” statements (referred to as preambles in *Robert’s Rules of Order*) generally provide background information or arguments for adoption of a given resolution. “Whereas” statements are not actionable, unlike the resolved statements. At times in the past, “whereas” statements in resolutions to World Conference have created real or potential difficulties when considering a resolution and/or after its adoption. The Presidency, in consultation with the Conference Organization and Procedures Team (COPT), believes restricting “Whereas” statements in resolutions proposed to World Conference will

help the Conference focus on the actionable resolved statements and efficiently accomplish the business of the Conference.

This resolution was drafted by the First Presidency with the support and approval of the World Conference parliamentarian and the COPT.

The First Presidency has revised resolution D-2 on the World Church Budgeting and Audit Process, reducing the finance board by 12 world church leaders. The original item D-2 is withdrawn, and the revised D-2a will replace it. The updated resolution is available on the church's website and included in this Herald with other World Conference resolutions. This change aligns with WCR 1290, which requires proposed legislation to be submitted one year before a World Conference but does not specify the timeline for the First Presidency providing final versions to the church. The revision minimally affected the translation queue and has been provided to allow sufficient time for the church's review.

D-2a World Church Budgeting and Audit Process

From the First Presidency

Resolution

Resolved, That World Conference Resolution 1315 be amended to read as follows (proposed deletions are indicated using the strike-out feature, and insertions are shown in **bold**):

World Church Audit and Budget-development Policy

1. The World Conference shall establish a World Church Finance Board responsible for annually reviewing and approving the World Church audit, ~~approving~~ the annual Worldwide Mission Budget, **and special appropriations.** ~~and making recommendations to the World Conference concerning special appropriations. The board shall present projections to each World Conference for annual budgets for the next inter-Conference period. These projections shall be based on the best estimates of potential church income and expenses, but they shall not bind the World Church Finance Board in developing and approving annual Worldwide Mission Budgets should circumstances change or income vary. The World Conference shall discuss these projections, and the input gained shall be considered by the World Church Finance Board in forming and approving these annual budgets.~~
2. The World Conference may establish parameters for the World Church Finance Board in developing and approving annual Worldwide Mission Budgets.
3. The World Church Finance Board shall be presided over by the First Presidency and shall be composed of up to ~~fifty five~~ **forty-three** (~~55~~ **43**) members as follows:
 - First Presidency (3)
 - **Members of the** Council of Twelve Apostles (~~12~~ **3**)
 - Presiding Bishopric (3)
 - ~~President, High Priest Quorum~~ (1)
 - ~~Senior president of seventy~~ (1)

- ~~Presiding evangelist (1)~~
 - Four (4) bishops elected by the Order of Bishops at World Conference to represent the order, with each elected ~~for to serve~~ a six-year term **or until their successors are elected**. Terms would be staggered so two (2) will be elected at each World Conference.
 - Thirty (30) members elected by the World Conference to represent the church at-large, with each elected ~~for to serve~~ a six-year term **or until their successor is elected**. Terms would be staggered so fifteen (15) would be elected at each World Conference.
4. The First Presidency is authorized to appoint board members when vacancies occur between World Conferences. These appointments must follow the same criteria for the vacancy being filled.
 5. The bishops elected by the Order of Bishops as members of the World Church Finance Board shall be church members in good standing, may be current employees of Community of Christ in local or World Church jurisdictions, and may not serve more than two (2) consecutive full ~~(six-year)~~ terms without a three-year break in service. A term completed by a person appointed to fill an inter-Conference vacancy is not a full term.
 6. Individuals elected by World Conference as members of the World Church Finance Board shall: ~~be church members in good standing, shall not be current employees of Community of Christ in local or World Church jurisdictions, and may not serve more than two (2) consecutive full terms (six years) without a three-year break in service. A term completed by a person appointed to fill an inter-Conference vacancy is not a full term.~~
 - be church members in good standing,
 - not be current employees of Community of Christ in local or World Church jurisdictions, **except that, where an employee of the church in a multi-nation jurisdiction is nominated for election, the First Presidency may accept such a nomination,**
 - not serve more than two (2) consecutive full terms without a full-term break in service,
 - understand that a term completed by a person appointed to fill an inter-Conference vacancy is not a full term.
 7. The Worldwide Mission Budget shall provide funds to cover travel expenses as requested by World Church Finance Board members.
 8. The First Presidency, in consultation with the Presiding Bishopric, shall make nominations to the World Church Finance Board for election by the World Conference. In addition, each World Conference shall allow nominations from the floor. These nominations shall occur early enough to allow biographical sketches of the nominees to be available to the World Conference before the election. In the nomination process, attention shall be given to balanced representation, including factors such as vocation, geographic residence, age, gender, church leadership experience, and church jurisdiction. The First Presidency shall form the specific procedures to conduct voting, including use of prevailing technology as appropriate. The fifteen (15) individuals receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected. The First Presidency shall provide the specific procedure in the event of ties.
 9. The First Presidency shall appoint a team to handle preliminary preparation of the budget. This committee shall be composed of World Church personnel responsible for church programming, finance, and field ministries.

10. The annual audit and budget shall be made available on the church website. ~~The *Herald* shall publish an annual report on the audit and budget, and a~~ A summary report shall be **printed annually in the *Herald*** and made to each World Conference.

Background Statement

World Conference Resolution (WCR) 1315 establishes the World Church Audit and Budget-development Policy. The budget projections approved and submitted to the World Conference by the World Church Finance Board in accordance with WCR 1315 are estimated projections, and the World Conference approval does not bind the Finance Board in developing and approving the annual Worldwide Mission Budget or special appropriations. Thus, having these projections approved by the World Conference unnecessarily takes up legislative time that can be better utilized by the body. This amendment eliminates the requirement to have these estimated projections approved by the World Conference. **This amendment reduces the total membership of the board by reducing the number of world church leaders who serve by 12 positions.** Additionally, the parliamentary authority (Article VIII of Community of Christ Bylaws) suggests including a phrase in sections that relate to terms of office to accommodate situations such as the inability to hold elections at normally scheduled dates. This phrase was not included in WCR 1315 as approved, and this amendment adds this phrase. Finally, this amendment allows the First Presidency to accept nominations of employees of the church who serve in multi-nation areas to ensure adequate representation on the board. Finally, the amendment provides clarification that a summary of the audit and budget will be printed in the *Herald* and reported to the World Conference with the full reports being provided on the church's website.

G-1 Increasing Access to Creative Works Copyrighted by Community of Christ

From the Kentucky-Indiana USA Mission Center

Resolution

Resolved, That the appropriate team or presiding officers, in consultation with other World Church leaders, consider the possibility of applying Creative Commons licenses to some or all of the creative works currently copyrighted by all corporations associated with the World Church.

Background Statement

Copyright is an important legal tool that allows individuals and organizations to claim credit for and control over creative works that they produce. An organization that owns the copyright over creative works can ensure that they are not distributed or modified without its consent. In the United States, copyright generally lasts for seventy years after the author's death or ninety-five years after publication. Community of Christ and associated corporations (such as Herald Publishing House and Community of Christ Seminary Press) collectively hold the copyrights over many creative works of contemporary and historical importance to the church, including histories of the church, worship helps, formation resources, hymns, and even Community of Christ scriptures.

This legislation is inspired by questions about how current trends affect the ability of the World Church to continue both producing contemporary creative works and providing access to historical creative works. For example, delegates to the 2023 World Conference voted down a resolution that

could have provided digital access to the scriptures, partly because it would redirect World Church employees and resources from other priority efforts. Earlier at the 2023 World Conference, the First Presidency noted the need for creative responses to financial constraints and for decentralization and flexibility in church operations.

The nonprofit International Creative Commons organization was founded in 2001 with the goal of facilitating access to creative works and allowing individuals and organizations to build on the creative works created by others. An organization that applies a Creative Commons license (instead of traditional copyright) to a creative work retains the right to be recognized as the original creator of the work; however, it also grants the right to others to copy and distribute that work so that others may have access to it. The organization may also allow others to modify and update that work within certain constraints.

Support Statement

Throughout the history of Community of Christ, the World Church and individuals within it have created a large number of works that support our Mission Initiatives. Worship helps make it possible to Experience Congregations in Mission; formation materials help Develop Disciples to Serve; scriptures, hymns, and works of theology Invite People to Christ; and many other publications teach us how to Pursue Peace on Earth, Abolish Poverty, and End Suffering. These creative works have helped welcome seekers to Community of Christ, strengthen the faith of those already in the church, and share our identity with the world. Most of these creative works are copyrighted by the World Church or by an associated corporation, such as Herald Publishing House. These copyrights allow the World Church to prevent others from inappropriately copying, modifying, or distributing these works.

Growing financial and other constraints limit the World Church's ability to continue producing, creating, translating, and localizing creative works that it has copyrighted. Among the members of Community of Christ throughout the world, there exists the time, talent, treasure, and testimony to update, adapt, and produce some of the creative works that we have traditionally counted on the World Church to provide for us. Imagine a group of bilingual church members translating excerpts of the three-volume English-language history *Journey of a People* to share our sacred story in French. Imagine a congregation that puts together a study edition of recent sections from the Doctrine and Covenants so that seekers can learn our scriptures and the context these scriptures came from. Imagine a youth minister who rewrites older lesson materials to adapt them for the new generation that they are teaching. The World Church may no longer have the resources to complete all of these tasks, but we, collectively, as members of that church still do. Indeed, the financial constraints on the church provide new opportunities for us to generously respond as disciples; however, the World Church's copyright on these works may serve as a barrier to our doing so.

This resolution invites the appropriate team or presiding officers to consider applying a Creative Commons license to some or all of the material currently copyrighted by the World Church and associated corporations. Using Creative Commons licenses would allow Community of Christ to assert itself as originally responsible for these creative works while granting others (including members, congregations, and mission centers) explicit rights, within limitations, to copy, modify, and distribute those works, thereby continuing our commitment to our Mission Initiatives throughout the world. This may be more appropriate for some works than others, and this resolution does not recommend any specific decisions. Nonetheless, sharing works copyrighted by the World Church with

the world would not only be an act of tremendous generosity but also give us flexibility to adapt to the future of our faith.

Additional Information

Daily Prayer for Peace + Time with the First Presidency: 2023 World Conference [Youtube.com/watch?V=Z6d8z1I17pM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6d8z1I17pM)

Creative Commons: [Creativecommons.org](https://creativecommons.org)

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G-2 Affirming an Inclusive Zion in the Holy Land

From the World Church Peace and Justice Team

Resolution

Be it Resolved, That Community of Christ opposes any use of scripture that promotes an end-times theology that misunderstands and misstates God’s plan for restoring Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, such as that proposed by Christian Zionism, and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ rejects Christian Zionism’s presumption that ethnic Jews have priority to inhabit the Holy Land, ignoring human worth and God’s love for all its inhabitants and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ restates and reaffirms its belief in the inestimable worth of all persons.

Background Statement

The Peace and Justice team submitted the first resolution about Israel and Palestine in 2016, which became WCR 1311. This resolution declared the church’s belief in the love of God for Muslims and Jews and denounced all Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. It resolved to join with other Christian, Jewish, Muslim, ecumenical, and secular peace movements in the call for peace in Israel and Palestine, the right of the State of Israel to exist in secure borders, the cessation of Israeli military occupation and illegal settlements in the West Bank, and for the recognition of the State of Palestine. The Peace and Justice team recommended Community of Christ join with Churches for Middle East Peace. This occurred in 2022.

Christian Zionism is defined by local heads of churches in Jerusalem as “a modern theological and political movement that embraces the most extreme ideological positions of Zionism, thereby becoming detrimental to a just peace within Palestine and Israel. The Christian Zionist programme provides a worldview where the Gospel is identified with the ideology of empire, colonialism and militarism. In its extreme form, it places an emphasis on apocalyptic events leading to the end of history rather than living Christ’s love and justice today.”

The Peace and Justice team recognizes several incompatibilities between the theology of Christian Zionism and Community of Christ’s understanding of Zion. Unlike our understanding,

Christian Zionism embraces a God engaged in favoritism through ethnic ties, who ignores the equal worth of all people, and removes Christ's invitation to all people to be a part of the kingdom of God.

Other Christian groups are opposed to Christian Zionism. In 2016, the World Council of Churches called on its members to renounce Christian Zionism as a form of Christian fundamentalism that endangered indigenous Palestinian Christian communities. In 2020, Palestinian Christians issued *Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action*, asserting that "... Christian support for Zionism as a theology and an ideology that legitimizes the right of one people to deny the human rights of another is incompatible with the Christian faith and a grave misuse of the Bible."

The attitudes and beliefs of citizens influence their governments. In the context of the Middle East, religion and scripture are more likely to influence the decision-making process for governments weighing whether to wage war or pursue peace. To help usher justice and peace into this conflicted region, Community of Christ advocates for a responsible reading of scripture and opposition to the approach of Christian Zionism.

A resolution opposing the theology of Christian Zionism will clarify Community of Christ's understanding of scripture, theology, and practice of Zion and how it differs from Christian Zionism. There is no anticipated financial cost to the church.

Finally, and most importantly, this resolution will provide a foundation for everyone who wants to pursue a just and equitable (Zionic) peace in the Middle East.

Support Statement

"Seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:3a) was the clarion call of the early Restoration. Zion is referenced in nearly half of the first one hundred revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. Zion was variously described as a place (Doctrine and Covenants 57:1b); a process of preaching, faith, repentance, and keeping Christ's commandments (Doctrine and Covenants 6:3a); and a condition "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, dwelling in righteousness; and there were no poor among them"; (Doctrine and Covenants 36:2h-i). Thus, Zion was initially an inclusive vision to which all people were called.

Today Community of Christ understands Zion is a "global family" (Doctrine and Covenants 161:6b) of "communities of generosity, justice and peacefulness" (Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a). Our mission initiative to Pursue Peace on Earth includes working for Christ's mission of justice and peace in the Holy Land.

It is unjust to read any passage of scripture to "diminish or oppress races, genders, or classes of human beings." (Doctrine and Covenants 163:7c). Thus, for us, Zion in the Holy Land is inclusive, not exclusive.¹ Zion is a society that is just, peaceful, generous and holds the equal worth of all persons in

¹ "Inclusive theology refers to a theological approach that seeks to understand and interpret religious teachings in a way that is inclusive of all people, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, ability, social status, or other characteristics. It often involves re-examining traditional religious doctrines and practices to address biases and exclusionary interpretations that have historically marginalized certain groups. Inclusive theology aims to create a religious understanding that embraces diversity and promotes equality and justice for all members of the community. This approach is particularly relevant in contexts where religion has been used to justify exclusion or discrimination." Dave Anderson

all places, including the Holy Land. Christian Zionism betrays this idea of a just Zion. Its interpretation of the Bible is misguided.

In a world of widely divergent views about politics, religion, the Holy Land, chosen people, militarism, peace, and end times, this resolution clarifies Community of Christ's scriptural interpretation of Zion.

Additional Information

- Statement by Heads of Churches in Jerusalem
Globalministries.org/mee_advocacy_the_jerusalem_declaration_on_chr
- Statement by World Council of Churches:
Archived.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2016/statement-on-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-and-peace-process.html
- Kairos Palestine Cry for Hope: *Cryforhope.org*
- Statement by the Reformed Church
Rca.org/synod/statements/#zionism
- Statement by the Alliance of Baptists
Palestineportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Confronting-Christian-Zionism-Alliance-of-Baptists.pdf
- United Church of Christ 33rd General Synod Declaration for a Just Peace between Palestine and Israel
Globalministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/General-Synod-2021-Resolution-I-P.pdf

G-3 Resolution Concerning the Sacred Stewardship of the Temple and the Auditorium in Independence, Missouri, and the Principle of Common Consent

From the Canada East Mission Centre

Resolution

Resolved, That the Temple and the Auditorium in Independence, Missouri, be declared essential for the enduring mission of the church, and as such, any or all decisions regarding the sale or mortgage of the Temple and/or the Auditorium must be made in keeping with the principle of Common Consent by means of direct authorization by the World Conference of the church.

Background Statement

Members of the Toronto Congregation were shocked by the news that the World Church Leadership Council had made the decision to sell the Kirtland Temple and other properties and items related to the church's sacred identity, heritage, and mission without specific authorization by the World Conference of the church.

The Presiding Bishopric justified the sale of the Kirtland Temple under the general authorization given in World Conference Resolution 866. The bishopric's report to the 2016 World

Conference indicated that “historic assets and other noninvestment properties” would only be sold if they are deemed non-essential to mission. Because the World Leadership Council took upon itself the authority to determine whether the Kirtland Temple was essential to the church’s mission without consulting the World Conference, it has they have created the negative precedent that might lead to the sale of the Temple in Independence by arbitrarily declaring it non-essential to mission.

The members of this congregation feel that if the Temple in Independence is to ever to be declared non-essential to the church’s mission, the principle of Common Consent must be applied, and that the decision must be made by direct and specific authorization of the World Conference. This motion was passed by the Toronto Congregation March 14, 2024, and brought before Canada East Mission Centre for their consideration at the April 2024 conference and was approved.

Support Statement

Doctrine and Covenants 25:1b instructs that “all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith,” which is reiterated in Doctrine and Covenants 27:4c, and which is affirmed as a principle in Doctrine and Covenants 147:6b and 162:2c. The principle of Common Consent requires broad participation of members in decision-making and is exercised at the highest level of the church through the authorization of the World Conference. The principle of common consent also allows opportunities to address not only legal and financial concerns, but also to embody the spiritual, ethical, theological, relational, pastoral, and sacred dimensions.

The Temple in Independence, Missouri, was built by the church after many decades of preparation and sacrifice in response to the divine commandment given in Doctrine and Covenants 57:1 and reiterated in Doctrine and Covenants 83:2a, 149:6a, and 156:3–6. Likewise, the Auditorium was built with great sacrifice by members of the church over many decades in preparation to fulfill these commandments and today is an integral component of the Temple complex.

World Conference Resolution 866 states that the Presiding Bishop shall have the authority and right to accept, take, hold, mortgage, and convey title to property. The Presiding Bishopric’s report to the 2016 World Conference states that selling historic assets and other noninvestment properties that are not essential for the church’s mission is one way we are rebuilding the church’s financial position. The Temple complex is more than just a historic asset or noninvestment property; it was built by the church in response to commandments, which form the law of the church, in order for the church to fulfill its core mission, Christ’s mission in the world.

G-4 Establishment of a Bylaw Committee to Review and Revise Community of Christ Bylaws with a Focus on Governance

From the Canada East Mission Centre

Resolution

Whereas, Community of Christ is working its way through several governance-related transitions, including non-geographic congregations operating on social-media platforms, the establishment of some policies applicable only within certain national churches, the cultural shift of moving from a people with a prophet toward being a prophetic people, and the increased use of

technology to allow for remote participation for conferences, as well as sophisticated polling tools to allow for consensus-building practices within conferences. Therefore, be it

Resolved, That this Conference authorize the creation of a Special World Church Committee to investigate and propose recommendations for updated bylaws and governance models, to better meet current and anticipated future needs of an international church with multiple national jurisdictions, all the while upholding common consent as an important principle of our governance heritage; and be it further

Resolved, That this Committee provide a report to the 2028 World Conference.

Background Statement

Membership of the community is decreasing, and there needs to be a new way for members to take direct responsibility in designing and then governing the programs focused on reversing this process. This will require grassroots-up, community-development governance model. It is hoped that the congregation and Canada East Mission Centre (CEMC) can work together to continue the dialogue toward a better understanding of how Canadians can contribute to helping forward “the journey of a people” that was begun so long ago in such a different time and context. We are inviting the World Church to join us in this dialogue.

This resolution was approved March 10 by the Gathering Place Congregation of the CEMC, congregation. It was reviewed and revised several times after input from the Canada East Mission Centre Presidency Team and the World Church Resolutions Review Team. After feedback from CEMC pre-legislative sessions, a member of the Standing High Council provided further input, and the final version was presented to the CEMC conference and approved April 13, 2024, with the intent that it be forwarded to the 2025 World Conference.

It affirms that by direction of revelation (Doctrine and Covenants sections 25:1b, 27:4c, 147:6b, and 162:2c) and historical practice the governance principle of Community of Christ is one of common consent among the membership, with conferences authorized to “do whatever Church business that is necessary,” operating on “the principle of ‘common consent.’ This ‘consent’ is more than ‘assent,’ and this fact places obligation on both the leaders and the body.” (President F. Henry Edwards, as cited by Dale E. Luffman, *Commentary on the Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants Volume 2: The Reorganization—Community of Christ Era*, 274.)

It observes that present bylaws and governance discussions are difficult for most members to find and understand, especially related to the governance of National Church Corporations. National bylaws must include corporate “members” who elect a corporate board of directors. The World Church Bylaws need to provide guidance as to who shall be considered as members of the corporation: every church member resident in each country, or some other subset of church membership elected or appointed. Currently, in countries such as Canada, there is no visibility into or conference action available to the membership at-large, since the members of the Canadian Corporation are appointed by World Church officers.

As Community of Christ moves toward establishing more national churches, and as new models of mission result in more non-geographical and online jurisdictions, there is a need for simplified, updated, and clearly understood bylaws, models of governance, and methods for achieving common consent at all levels of the church.

Support Statement

Doctrine and Covenants 25:1b, 27:4c, 147:6b, and 162:2c, as well as Article 3, Section 4 of Church Bylaws, affirm that the basic principle of decision-making within Community of Christ is common consent.

Community of Christ is working its way through several governance-related transitions, including non-geographic congregations operating on social-media platforms, the establishment of some policies applicable only within certain national churches, the cultural shift of moving from a people with a prophet toward being a prophetic people, and the increased use of technology to allow remote participation for conferences as well as sophisticated polling tools that facilitate consensus-building processes within the conferencing model used by the community.

Through a comprehensive review and clarification of the governance roles of all bodies within the church, as well as the parliamentary consensus-building tools used within Community of Christ and other organizations, there is an opportunity to create a unique set of consensus parliamentary procedures that can bless this church and be a part of our missional offering to the world at-large.

One of the transitions facing both the leaders and the people is: How is governance practiced in a highly decentralized approach to organizational structure? This motion will initiate a church-wide dialogue on the issue of governance. It may result in the members through their present three levels of conferring, clarifying, and expanding the governance role of members' councils at all three organizational levels. Community-development principles require that people have a sense that they can organize community-building activities and enterprises that express the identity of Community of Christ in their place. Community-development principles require a sense that people control their own identity, their own resources, as well as their own destiny. In the context of a worldwide prophetic people, this requires a new dialogue, which this motion on governance initiates.

The mission of the Community has been stated as being a people of the Temple in the pursuit of peace. Developing consensus parliamentary processes is one way of bringing a more peaceful dialogue into the conferencing process itself. If we are to pursue peace, we should begin with ourselves. We have done some excellent work in this respect, and this motion will encourage further exploration of how to make it part of our governance practices.

G-5 Climate Emergency—Fossil-Fuel Reduction

From the Greater Pacific Northwest USA Mission Center

Resolution

Resolved, That Community of Christ join with others to call for an accelerated, just transition to renewable energy in a fair and inclusive manner that benefits all peoples instead of the few while supporting countries and communities most vulnerable to the impacts of the climate emergency; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ join with others and call for the expansion of fossil-fuel infrastructure to cease and support an immediate and urgent demand to transition away from all fossil-fuel-based energy production; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ call upon its members, congregations, and jurisdictions to declare our intent to divest from fossil-fuel investments, following the process that the World Church is modeling: that is, to research, educate ourselves, and divest from companies that continue to invest in and promote fossil fuels; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ declare its support for a just and responsible Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Background Information

Use of fossil fuels and fossil-fuel byproducts is a primary cause of the current climate emergency. The fossil-fuel industry's own records reveal climate degradation from burning gas, oil, and coal was well known decades ago. Continued extraction, exploration, and burning of fossil fuels will continue to overheat our planet and destroy the very environment and ecosystems critical for life as we know it.

In WCR1325, Community of Christ joined with others in declaring a climate emergency.

Roughly 1,500 of these “other” institutions have pledged to divest from fossil fuels fully, partially, or regarding certain subsets, such as coal. Faith-based organizations comprise the largest group at about 35 percent of the total (Yale, 2022).

In Doctrine and Covenants 150:7 Community of Christ is cautioned: “The land is being desecrated by the thoughtless waste of vital resources,” and we are advised to “be in the forefront of those who would mediate this needless destruction while there is yet day.”

The act of drilling, mining, and extracting oil, gas, and coal denudes vast stretches of land, poisons waterways and groundwater, and emits harmful toxins and pollutants into the air long before they are burned.

Institutional oppression ensures these environmental hazards are disposed disproportionately in areas of minority or impoverished communities and countries around the world. Vulnerable populations worldwide are forced to endure existence in the toxic and hazardous byproducts of oil, gas, and coal. This directly impacts many of our Community of Christ jurisdictions around the world, such as places where fossil-fuel corporations are polluting the waters in drought-ridden lands.

Community of Christ proclaims the “Worth of All Persons” as an Enduring Principle with the added admonition that we should be, “challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.”

Recognizing that a just transition challenges social, cultural, and economic systems that perpetuate injustice, the Enduring Principles also call us to “Responsible Choices,” not “convenient choices.”

Support Statement

Community of Christ proclaims, “Sacredness of Creation” as an Enduring Principle with the admonition, “We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.”

Doctrine and Covenants 163:3b calls us to “Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God.” And 163:4c says: “Prepare new generations of disciples to bring fresh vision to bear on the perplexing problems of poverty, disease, war, and environmental deterioration.”

Community of Christ in WCR 1325 has declared a climate emergency and calls members to scrutinize our personal consumption habits and take responsibility to reduce our personal and organizational carbon emissions.

However, “do no further harm” is insufficient to restore God’s creation. If we are to join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation, we must find the courage to challenge the powerful forces that are intent on unraveling the tapestry of creation to satisfy short-term greed, often at the expense of the “least of these.”

G-6 Threat of Confiscation of Monies in the AIP Accounts

From the Cedar Valley Nauvoo USA Mission Center

Resolution

Whereas the World Church has frozen field assets in the Affiliate Investment Pool (AIP) system and indicated that they would borrow, at 0% for an indefinite time any funds they needed to satisfy their retirement obligations, and

Whereas, this has made field stewards reluctant to put more funds in AIP accounts, and those stewards have been thereby damaged by not having available an option to invest wisely, and

Whereas, in the past, the World Church promised that funds deposited in the AIP pool would always be available to the depositors, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the World Church will operate the financial pool known as the AIP system to invest funds wisely from various field organizations and to provide that those funds will always be available to the field organizations that deposited them, or if the depositor organization cannot act or no longer exists, then the funds will be at the disposal of the next-higher administrative organization.

Background Statement

No background statement submitted.

Support Statement

The idea that World Church leadership owns all money and resources seems to be a new vein of thought. Monies in the AIP accounts were to be investment opportunities for the individual congregations and campgrounds to grow their savings. Yes, World Church leadership, if they were able to provide gains would be due a management fee, similar to any financial or investment planner. No one expects them to work for free. I have heard no one claim all money invested was given to the World Church leadership to use as they deemed necessary. World Church leadership has the fiduciary responsibility to invest and recommend how to maximize saving, but not to convert money rightfully belonging to the membership.

G-7 Unilateral Authority Not Given by Church Membership

From the Cedar Valley Nauvoo USA Mission Center

Resolution

Whereas the World Church has declared that they have the unilateral authority to take and or to sell any property held in the name of Community of Christ at any level of administration of the church, and

Whereas this has not been the historical practice of the church, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the World Church in their role as trustee of the entire church will give priority in property decisions to the interests of the primary stewards, those responsible for the preservation and protection of church property. This includes not selling property without the consent of the primary stewards or in the case where the primary stewards are unable to act, then the consent goes to the next higher administrative level of stewards, and be it further

Resolved, That the net proceeds of any sale of property should stay with the current primary steward, or if that current steward no longer exists or is unable to act, the net proceeds will go to the next higher steward in the administration.

Background Statement

No Background Statement submitted.

Support Statement

There is widely held dissatisfaction on account of the World Church's focus on money. This has accelerated as the general membership has been gradually excluded from the decision-making making, and the procedures have moved from encouraging donations to declaring absolute. Ownership over everything in the field and taking what they say need. We have a long tradition of expressing our intent as donors by donating separately to local and World Church. World Church should find a way to live within their assets, rather than taking local assets to avoid the reality of living within their own income. The idea that World Church leadership owns and controls all resources and properties that bear the church name seems to be a relatively new vein of thought. The claim is the church may sell or trade any and all properties without consent of the membership.

Many believe that the World Church in just a few short years will be in a similar and even more desperate situations. And the question becomes what church or campgrounds they will it sell next without approval? Or what money in AIP accounts will be confiscated? The impact of the sale of the historic properties, and how the Bridge of Hope was dealt with has damaged World Church reputation, confidence, and trust by most in this region.

This resolution reinforces that the World Church needs to be more transparent and talk with the membership about the actual needs before it just confiscates.

G-8 Bicentennial Doctrine and Covenants

From the Midlands USA Mission Center

Resolution

Whereas, Community of Christ embraces the Enduring Principle of Continuing Revelation, and
Whereas, Continuing revelations are compiled and published in the Doctrine and Covenants,
and

Whereas, Concerns expressed as in Section 116 brought before the 2023 Conference emphasized the need for clarification of historical and cultural contexts in which documents were received as scripture, and

Whereas, The Conference action removing some sections to an Appendix, and a later Resolution 1215 (1990) removed the Appendix leaving unexplained gaps in the book (sections 107, 108A, 109, 110, and 123) and related issues, and

Whereas, A book can be expected to pay for its publication by its sales, and

Whereas, The digital (searchable) edition of the Doctrine and Covenants provided in 2023 adds significantly to our scriptural repository, and

Whereas, A new edition celebrating our bicentennial in 2030 would have a revitalizing effect, therefore be it

Resolved, That this Conference request the First Presidency consider preparing a bicentennial edition of the Doctrine and Covenants to include: historical and cultural contexts of revelations to facilitate understanding, clarifying our appreciation of scripture, and celebrating our heritage; and be it further

Resolved, That the First Presidency consider making it available in multiple languages online at no cost, while at the same time being available bound for purchase.

Background Statement

Section 116 came before the 2023 Conference to be moved to historical reference. Clarification of the history and cultural context demonstrated the change of word choice “Negro” in 1865 when given, and today when the word no longer is appropriate, allowed the valued declaration that men (people of color) of all races can be called to minister. The initial effort to compose a resolution to clarify by expanding the preamble to each section of the Doctrine and Covenants became unwieldy since volumes can be written (Dale E. Luffman, two-volume set). To borrow from that work in briefly explaining the nature of scripture in Community of Christ and pay for it by sale of the hard copies while making it available online as a benchmark of 200 years of the restored gospel makes a bicentennial celebration the better option.

Support Statement

To celebrate our open canon of scripture, highlight the principle of Continuing Revelation, clarify the Community of Christ's understanding of the nature of scripture, and to prevent further attempts to remove sections like 116 from the body of our scriptural heritage, we ask the First Presidency to consider publishing a bicentennial edition of the Doctrine and Covenants with expanded historical and cultural preludes to sections which merit special attention. Issues of vocabulary changes over time, issues significant in a particular culture at a particular time, and explanation for why some sections have been removed will be a gift to the world as Community of Christ presents a more readable presentation and explanation of materials presented by our prophets and accepted by our people.

Resolution 1215 (1990) removed the historical Appendix containing sections which had been moved there by Conference action.

Resolution 1115 (1973) says a resolution in the appendix must come before the president and Conference before being placed back in the body of the Doctrine and Covenants.

G-9 Divine Insights Calling Us!

From the Midlands USA Mission Center

Resolution

Whereas, Community of Christ offers scripture unique and instructive to the world, and
Whereas, Section 163 invites us to become a prophetic people sharing our sacred journey, and
Whereas, From the beginning, God has spoken to humanity through many sources including truth and knowledge, hymns, personal revelation, arts, and sciences in every culture representing divine insights, and

Whereas, Great religions share commonalities with the gospel of Christ, therefore be it

Resolved, That the First Presidency consider a compilation-abridgment of God's insights to the modern world be prepared by qualified volunteers appointed to this mission by the First Presidency to highlight counsel, inspiration, and support for the Enduring Principles from the world's cultures, and be it further

Resolved, That the First Presidency consider making this edition available in multiple languages online at no cost to the consumer. (However, it may also be bound and sold), and be it further

Resolved, That the First Presidency consider making a draft of this compilation-abridgment available in 2028 to the joint council and a refined copy be prepared for the bi-centennial celebration of the Book of Mormon and establishment of the Church in 2030.

Background Statement

While the Doctrine and Covenants includes God's word to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ and Community of Christ, it also includes a good deal of administrative business not of particular interest to the seekers wanting an introduction to our modern scripture. This abridgement would select with particular focus upon the instruction of the Divine for the good of mankind. The resolution began as an abridgement of the Doctrine and Covenants and has expanded in consultation with Midlands USA Mission Center members into a larger effort to recognize the ministry of the Christ to "other sheep" with whom He shared the gospel.

Support Statement

A gift to the world celebrating 200 years of the gospel restored through Joseph Smith Jr. will highlight significant messages from the Divine compiled and abridged from around the world. The Great I AM of the ages continues to speak, urging use of the golden rule, hospitality, respect, listening, and love. The task will be in the hands of qualified volunteers appointed by the First Presidency. They will compile and abridge from the international body of scripture, giving special emphasis to the Enduring Principle of Continuing Revelation, therefore messages to and through the Community of Christ.

G-10 Earth Stewardship Affirmation

From the World Church Earth Stewardship Team

Resolution

Resolved, That the Earth Stewardship Team be directed to continue to address the issues of climate and environmental concern by producing resources for study and exploration with focus on issues worldwide; and be it further

Resolved, That requirements be in place for any new construction of church facilities to adhere to eco-friendly practices regarding energy usage and sustainability; and be it further

Resolved, That World Church jurisdictions and individual households be encouraged to evaluate the need to upgrade, renovate, and innovate in order to maintain existing properties and facilities and to recognize good energy practices and use of vital resources; and be it further

Resolved, That every Apostolic Field and Jurisdiction be encouraged to organize and conduct peace colloquia to focus on environmental issues unique to their locality; and be it further

Resolved, That projects be organized that promote strategies for care of Earth's resources specifically designed to involve children and youth and which consider the use of campgrounds and church facilities as sites to demonstrate and model good stewardship practice; and be it further

Resolved, That the Earth Stewardship Team and church officers explore ways to support research and innovations that mitigate environmental degradation and contribute to a healthy Earth; and be it further

Resolved, That World Church officials explore opportunities to be involved in discourse with organizations and movements that speak to the plight of vulnerable and at-risk populations of the world, addressing the consequences of climate change as a matter of justice.

Background Statement

In 2016 the First Presidency commissioned the Earth Stewardship Committee/Team to address the “concerns of global poverty, deforestation, ocean health, soil degradation, energy, clean air, economies, climate issues, preservation of flora and fauna, and access to healthy food and clean water.”

The sheer number of the issues listed emphasizes how expansive and complicated the totality for Earth Stewardship becomes. It is important that the Conference recognize there are no simple solutions and in the interest of brevity, may ultimately have to choose among numerous priorities in responding to the health and well-being of people in all of the Earth.

The Earth Stewardship Team is composed of a group of extremely well-qualified individuals who are working to seek Earth Justice as a matter of peaceful living and to sustain life and hope for vulnerable populations in so many places.

The Team has responded to its mission of education by producing study lessons as an Earth Stewardship Curriculum now available at Herald House. The lessons include Climate Issues, Poverty and Social Justice, Water for a Thirsty World, It's a Plastic World, Toward a Healthy Ocean, and 'Til

the Hungry are Fed. A lesson on deforestation is in process. In addition, the Team was a major contributor to the 2024 Reunion Text, *Heal the Earth: A Restoration Imperative*.

Unfortunately, much has been said about the causes of the crisis, with much less production of viable solutions to mitigate the problem. The fact is, there is hope to be had. Science and Technology experts across Europe, Asia, and the US are working tirelessly in multiple arenas to create solutions for new forms and sources of energy, development of synthetic fuels, sequestration of pollutant emissions, alternatives to plastic, environmentally sound building materials, creative ways to grow and produce food using less space and water, etc. We need to find ways to support these efforts. Stewardship is often viewed in limited ways, but perhaps we need to recognize and cultivate a stewardship of support for ideas, innovation, creativity, and inspiration that explores and develops solutions for climate justice and crisis.

The intent is to motivate and involve the membership at large in creating a culture of vital action as a way of life. It has the potential for impacting persons and jurisdictions worldwide. There is no direct financial impact for implementing this resolution. However, a concomitant cost is to be recognized for jurisdictions and individuals in implementing some functions related to addressing environmental impacts locally.

It is important to note that the impacts of climate are not the same in all parts of the world. Environments and climates are different due to a variety of factors. For that reason, flexibility in assignment of directives to the resolution must be recognized. Actions appropriate to one culture or geographical location may not be effective or appropriate in other locales.

Support Statement

The Earth is in the midst of an environmental/climate crisis, and the cause is complicated and multi-faceted. Climate change is real. It is happening. It has been a constant since Earth was formed. It is also, now more than ever, due to the human population factor with its wants and needs. A global population of eight billion people is putting extreme pressure on Earth's resources and, in the process, creating a carbon footprint that contributes to the presence of greenhouse gases resulting in a rapidly warming atmosphere. Immediate action is on call as a matter of stewardship and justice.

On April 25, 2023, World Conference resolution (WCR 1325) noting a Climate Emergency was enacted. This was a good first step, but the World Church Earth Stewardship Team recognizes that the overall problem is much larger. Additional considerations arise in:

- Ocean health that relates to the degradation of coral reefs that further relates to diminished oxygen supplied to our atmosphere; which in turn greatly affects food supply causing extinction of species and flooding of low-lying landforms — coast and Pacific atolls; and increase in severe weather events.
- Destruction of large areas of the world's forests resulting in diminished atmospheric oxygen-carbon dioxide cycle; increased fire events, and habitat loss threatening extinction to many plant and animal species.
- Global threats to the sustainability of food and clean water resulting in poverty, starvation, and disease, all matters of Earth justice, and largely caused by floods and droughts.
- Pollution of the air we breathe.
- Transportation, energy, and economic pressures.

- The presence of plastics and general waste management.

The mission of the Earth Stewardship Team is to speak with a prophetic voice and advocate action to mitigate the destruction of Earth's resources, a call to discipleship. Our scriptures admonish our people to awaken to the needs of people seeking a future of hope, to awaken from an illusion of independence and unrestrained consumption without consequences; to bring fresh vision to bear on the problems of poverty, disease, war, and environmental deterioration (Doctrine and Covenants 163). Further, we must recognize the plight of many who are victims of war, greed, and avarice as the land is being desecrated by the thoughtless waste of vital resources (Doctrine and Covenants 150:7).

Response to our Enduring Principles—the Sacredness of Creation and the call to Abolish Poverty and Suffering—recognizes that peace, justice, and the preservation of creation are matters of spirituality. This declaration is only a first step. Education is a vital factor. What matters most, however, is what members and friends of the Church do in response to the climate emergency.

We respond to the call to be in the forefront of those who would mediate the needless destruction of Earth's humanity and resources while there is yet day. This resolution is the next step in calling people of the church, worldwide, to be involved in relieving suffering and ensuring a presence of beauty and lifegiving resource, sacred to all of Earth's peoples. It is an opportunity to revitalize, reenergize and reconnect the membership to the task, noting the urgency of the call to stewardship.

G-11 Climate Change Emergency Call to Action

From the World Church Human Rights Team

Resolution

Resolved, That Community of Christ identify and act on ways that it may, in socially responsible ways, respond to the climate change emergency and that it encourage its members, at an individual, congregational, and regional level, to do likewise; and be it further;

Resolved, That in keeping with its continued commitment and desire to educate, advocate and respond, the church develop and identify for its members and the global community scriptural, theological, and historical study and discussion resources pertaining to the climate change emergency and its impact on human rights; and be it further;

Resolved, That the church, as a global Christian community, declares that it supports the call for more inclusive national laws and policies and international coordination, including a treaty/treaties of the United Nations, that recognize the legitimate refugee status of persons forced to leave their homes and countries as a result of climate change; and be it further

Resolved, That the responsibility for continued response by the church to the climate change emergency be referred to the First Presidency for the adoption of further reports and/or official statements, and if deemed appropriate by the First Presidency, additional legislation to be presented to the 2028 World Conference; and be it further

Resolved, That the First Presidency direct the Temple School or another appropriate body to develop educational materials over the next three years to establish a curriculum (with components

appropriate for youth and adults) designed to raise awareness of the climate change emergency and promote ways to respond to this.

Background Statement

Climate change is a global emergency, with an expanding effect that is garnering further recognition in keeping with WCR 1325, adopted in 2023, the warmest year on the modern temperature record.ⁱ In evidence of the relatively recent sociopolitical focus on the emergency, the 1957 Refugee Convention and its later 1967 protocol do not refer to climate as a source of refugee status, and legislation in Western countries such as the USA fails to address asylum seekers whose human rights are threatened by global climate change. In contrast, the European Union's statement in 2020 concerning refugees goes beyond that of the United Nationsⁱⁱ, stating, "...there is no established global instrument that would address cross-border migration related to climate change."ⁱⁱⁱ According to the Institute for Economics & Peace, "Over one billion people live in thirty-one countries where the country's resilience is unlikely to sufficiently withstand the impact of ecological events by 2050, contributing to mass population displacement"^{iv}. Recent indicators show interrelation between climate change and human rights is coming to the fore. In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The "right to a healthy environment" has been described as "the missing jewel in the crown of environmental human rights"^v. We believe this is a fundamental, global issue affecting our present and our future. The time to raise awareness and to encourage active response to the emergency is now.

The impacts of the climate change emergency we identified are so far-reaching, The Human Rights Team struggled to limit the breadth of its focus to allow some structure within which to work effectively. Not surprisingly, a global crisis like climate change has implications for every fundamental human right. We recognize our own need for further awareness and learning across the entire scope of sure implications. We hope that this legislation and its accompanying report provide a springboard for informed discussion pertaining to the climate change emergency and its impact on all human rights.

Support Statement

In April 2023, Community of Christ adopted World Conference Resolution 1325, joining many others in declaring a climate emergency. We now call for recognizing the systemic injustice of the far-reaching, disproportionate impact of climate change on human rights. We seek to raise awareness, in keeping with WCR 1184, that states "an appropriate division of the World Church study available information and materials on universal human rights and human rights violations and make its findings and recommendations available," and WCR 1197's desire for "an ongoing committee to continue a careful but sustained exploration of how the church can respond to human rights issues around the world."

Inspired by the Mission Prayer, Community of Christ must "be fully awake and ready to respond" to the effect climate change has on human rights, including wide-reaching micro- and macro-economic crises. These include 'climate refugees,' a term not legally recognized as of May 2024 but one defined in the accompanying report. The Human Rights Team notes Community of Christ's Statement on Immigration of April 2013 does not mention 'climate refugees' or climate change and calls for this statement to be revisited.

In 2023 alone, disasters triggered 26.4 million new Internally Displaced People (IDP)^{vi}, including in many areas where IDP already result from conflict:^{vii} Nineteen countries with the highest

number of ecological threats are among the world's forty least peaceful countries.^{viii} Climate change aggravates socioeconomic difficulties: a flood on a culture reliant on agriculture may see a farmer lose their field, a worker their home, and a community a fundamental food source. WCR 1184 “affirms that all people have essential rights, including...specific cultural identities and self-determination,” rights that are under threat from climate change. The sacred nature of our planet and its ecosystem is affirmed by Doctrine and Covenants 165:1d–e: “Pursue peace on and for the Earth. Let nothing separate you from this mission. It reveals divine intent for personal, societal, and environmental salvation; a fullness of gospel witness for creation’s restoration.”

We anticipate approval of this resolution will yield action across different levels of the church; with the interconnectivity this entails. We call on individual members to implement the message of the resolution in their personal discipleship, stewardship, and social and political action. We encourage congregations to form study groups and community action opportunities. And we urge the World Church to continue to include recognition of the climate change crisis in its global mission to support human rights. Although climate change is now a common topic in political and societal debate, absent approval of this resolution, the scope of the emergency and its impact may not receive the level of attention it deserves within the church and in those communities and organizations where it is active. We also hope that this legislation and its accompanying report will act as a catalyst for further research into the critical issues pertaining to the climate change emergency.

Additional Information

ⁱ [Internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC-GRID-2024-Global-Report-on-Internal-Displacement.pdf](https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC-GRID-2024-Global-Report-on-Internal-Displacement.pdf)

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.* -- see page 4 for example

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute for Economics & Peace - Over one billion people at threat of being displaced by 2050 due to environmental change, conflict and civil unrest. 2020. Available: [Economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ecological-Threat-Register-Press-Release-27.08-FINAL.pdf](https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ecological-Threat-Register-Press-Release-27.08-FINAL.pdf). Accessed: 30 May, 2024.

^{iv} [Climate.gov/news-features/featured-images/2023-was-warmest-year-modern-temperature-record#:~:text=Details,decade%20\(2014%E2%80%932023\)](https://www.climate.gov/news-features/featured-images/2023-was-warmest-year-modern-temperature-record#:~:text=Details,decade%20(2014%E2%80%932023)), page 44

^v Climate Change and Migration – Legal and policy challenges to environmentally induced migration. European Parliament publication – available at [Europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2469ed05-39ce-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2469ed05-39ce-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en). Access: 30 May, 2024

^{vi} [Climate.gov/news-features/featured-images/2023-was-warmest-year-modern-temperature-record#:~:text=Details,decade%20\(2014%E2%80%932023\)](https://www.climate.gov/news-features/featured-images/2023-was-warmest-year-modern-temperature-record#:~:text=Details,decade%20(2014%E2%80%932023)), page 45

^{vii} Institute for Economics & Peace - Over one billion people at threat of being displaced by 2050 due to environmental change, conflict and civil unrest. 2020. Available: [Economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ecological-Threat-Register-Press-Release-27.08-FINAL.pdf](https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ecological-Threat-Register-Press-Release-27.08-FINAL.pdf). Accessed: 30 May, 2024.

^{viii} John H. Knox, *Constructing the Human Right to a Healthy Environment*, 2020

G-12 Promoting Peace by Reducing Gun Proliferation and Violence

From the World Church Peace and Justice Team

Resolution

Resolved, That Community of Christ reaffirms its commitment to WCR 1270 and calls, with urgency, for all nations in which the church is established to reexamine firearms policies to determine how best to reduce firearm availability in private hands, and be it further

Resolved, That the church calls upon nations of the world in which the church is established to adopt firearm program and regulation regimes that have been demonstrated to substantially limit gun violence, and be it further

Resolved, That the church requests the Peace and Justice Team to prepare study materials for congregations and members to use to advocate for the most effective means of reducing gun violence in local communities.

Background Statement

The scientific evidence highlights that to reduce gun violence and harm, fewer guns should be in private hands. The evidence is clear: countries with higher levels of gun ownership, generally speaking, have higher gun homicide, gun suicide and death-by-gun accident rates. The United States has about 5 percent of the world's population, but 40 percent of the world's civilian-owned guns. Indeed, the US leads the world in civilian-owned guns per capita, with more than 120 firearms for every 100 people. That is more than twice the numbers in the countries next in line; Yemen with 52.8 firearms for every 100 people and Serbia 39.1 for every 100 people. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2022, more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths occurred in the US. That means 132 people died from a firearms-related injury each day. More than half of these were suicides. More than four out of every 10 were firearm homicides. From 2003-2021, unintentional injury was a leading cause of death among US children and adolescents (through 17 years old), and firearms are deemed a leading injury method.

Information is patchy, but the estimates are that 250,000 people died worldwide by civilian gunfire in 2019. The information also points to the fact that the most vulnerable inhabitants of the planet (the poor, the marginalized) are more likely than any other group to become a victim of gun violence.

Civilian Gun Numbers vs. Gun Deaths

Country	Guns per 100 population	Gun death rate per 100,000
Australia	14.5	0.88
Canada	34.7	1.94
France	19.6	2.33
French Polynesia	2.5	Not known
Honduras	14.1	29.40
Japan	0.3	0.02

Mexico	12.9	11.55
Netherlands	2.6	0.42
Nigeria	3.2	Not known
Serbia	39.1	3.23
United Kingdom	4.6	0.24
United States	120.5	12.21
Yemen	52.8	Not known
Zimbabwe	2.8	0.39

This chart shows civilian-owned gun numbers per 100 population in selected countries are compared with the gun death rate (homicide, suicide, and accident) per 100,000 population, using data, where available, across 2017-2020.

Moreover, evidence indicates gun possession does not promote security. In 2013, researchers Bangalore and Messerli (reference below) reviewed the gun death data for twenty-seven developed countries. They concluded that the number of guns per capita was a strong and independent predictor of firearm-related deaths. A year later, an analysis conducted by van Kesteren (reference below) concluded that in high-gun countries, the risks of escalation to more serious and lethal violence are higher. For this reason, he concluded, strict gun-reduction policies are a sensible means to advance the common good.

Australia provides a model of responsible firearm safety and security. In that nation, policies are in place to regulate and monitor the availability of firearms. Every firearm owner must be licensed, and every gun must be registered. A license will be refused or cancelled upon a criminal conviction involving violence. A license will not be granted to a person where there is evidence of unsuitability to possess a firearm. There are no private sales of firearms. A private citizen cannot own an automatic or semiautomatic firearm or pump-action shotgun. One cannot claim personal protection as a reason for owning, possessing or using any firearm. One cannot carry a gun anywhere in public. Tellingly, the US gun death rate is almost 14 times greater than the Australian gun death rate.

Support Statement

On April 8, 2000, the World Conference passed WCR 1270 Personal Use of Firearms. It reads as follows:

Whereas, firearms cause much death and pain worldwide, and

Whereas we are called to be peacemakers, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the church encourage in its members a thoughtful and reflective stewardship regarding the use of firearms for professional or for sports purposes; and be it further

Resolved, That the church encourage its membership to renounce the personal use of firearms for all other purposes as a response to the call to recognize the worth of all persons.

Since World Church Resolution 1270, the numbers of guns in the world has grown exponentially and gun violence around the world has escalated. The evidence is clear: gun proliferation correlates with increased gun violence. Gun violence is contrary to the church's position on peace, justice, discipleship and the principle of the worth of all persons. This

resolution asks the church to strengthen its resolve to promote more actively policies that prevent gun violence by seeking out the best means to reverse the current trend of gun proliferation across the globe.

Most of the manufacturers, distributors and purchasers of guns worldwide work and live in the nation where the World Headquarters of Community of Christ is located. *The New York Times* in 2022 reported that United States gun production had tripled in the last two decades. Four out of five of the world's major gun manufacturers are American companies. The US is the world's largest gun exporter. Its primary position appears unassailable. Since 2005, 34 US states and the federal government have passed specific legislation protecting arms manufacturers and distributors from lawsuits arising out of the harm their product causes. This specific immunity legislation is unique in the world.

From time to time, gun advocates insist that the general availability of guns in the hands of citizens makes communities safer and more secure. That is, to reduce the level of violence and crime in modern societies, greater access by the public to firearms should be facilitated. The evidence, however, is otherwise (see Background Information). Anyone advocating gun ownership as a means of lowering levels of violence and crime, and, specifically, as an effective means of personal protection is simply wrong. Gun ownership and possession correlates strongly with levels of community violence.

This resolution does not seek to ban firearms, nor is it advocating that people be barred from owning a firearm. Rather, it advocates for the freedom and security for people to go about their daily lives without the fear of becoming a victim of gun violence. That is best facilitated by people calling for limits on gun proliferation and the promotion of evidence-based policies of responsible gun ownership, storage and use. It is by these means that gun violence will be reduced. This aim is in accordance with two of our Enduring Principles: Worth of all Persons, and Pursuit of Peace (Shalom).

Additional Information

American Progress Organization 2021

Americanprogress.org/article/frequently-asked-questions-gun-industry-immunity

Apostles' Statement 2022

CofChrist.org/usa-church-news/statement-on-recent-gun-violence

Australian National Firearms Agreement 2017

Ag.gov.au/crime/publications/2017-national-firearms-agreement

Bangalore and Messerli study 2013

Pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24054955

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives 2021

Firearms Commerce in the United States: Annual Statistical Update 2021 (atf.gov)

Citizen Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice 2024

Security, Justice and Peace (geoenlace.net) (Spanish and English) Ranking the 50 most violent cities in the world.

Gun law shifts in the USA 2023-24

Usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/01/09/gun-laws-2024-ranking/72085972007

Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation 2023

Healthdata.org/news-events/insights-blog/acting-data/gun-violence-united-states-outlier

Kelly Report: A Vision for a Safer America 2024

Robinkelly.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/robinkelly.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/Kelly%20Report%20A%20Vision%20For%20a%20Safer%20America.pdf

Rick Sarre on Gun Control in Australia 2017, quoting the van Kesteren study 2014

Academia.edu/75387822/Analytical_Essay_GUN_CONTROL_IN_AUSTRALIA_A_CRIMINOLOGICAL_PERSPECTIVE

Small Arms Survey Annual Report 2022

Smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-ANNUAL-REPORT-2022.pdf

Small Arms Survey Global Violent Deaths database 2023

Smallarmssurvey.org/database/global-violent-deaths-gvd

US Centers for Disease Control 2024

Cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats

US National Violent Death Reporting System 2021

Unintentional Firearm Injury Deaths Among Children and Adolescents Aged 0–17 Years — National Violent Death Reporting System, United States, 2003–2021 | MMWR (cdc.gov)

Wikipedia 2017-20

Wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_guns_and_homicide