

December 19, 2017

RE: Presbytery of New Covenant overtures the 223rd General Assembly (2018)

Dear Presbyterian Church (USA) Colleagues:

Christmas Greetings from Faithful Action on Climate Change, a Synod of the Sun network! Our network formed in 2015 to challenge all Presbyterians as individuals, congregations, and denomination-wide to improve our stewardship of creation in a world increasingly stressed by human-caused climate change. We are especially mindful that our Reformed heritage emphasizes our responsibility to care for creation. In light of the 2015 United Nations Paris Climate Accord signed by many nations, we join many ecumenical and interfaith partners who support reducing fossil fuel consumption that contributes heavily to our warming earth, extreme weather events, and other environmental problems.

An overture proposing divestment from the fossil fuel industry has been submitted to the 223rd General Assembly (2018) by Hudson River Presbytery (authored by Fossil Free PCUSA, now a project of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship). We understand the urgency felt by our brothers and sisters to call for this drastic action because climate change is threatening to the life and wellbeing of so many. However, *we of Faithful Action believe that continuing the engagement process with corporations is also a morally defensible stand.* As Reformed Christians, we hold in tension the following beliefs:

- 1) We are complicit in the harming of God's creation by our excessive consumption of fossil fuels and must reduce our dependence on carbon-rich energy sources.
- 2) We cannot extricate ourselves completely from consuming fossil fuels, short of withdrawing from modern society.
- 3) We believe that fossil fuels have improved the life and health of many peoples and will continue to provide irreplaceable products in medicine, agriculture, and other industries while we transition to a low-carbon energy future.
- 4) We are committed to working with and on behalf of those who experience energy poverty as well as the increasing effects of climate change.

The Presbytery of New Covenant approved the enclosed overture at their stated meeting on November 18, 2017 to urge all of us to work together in transitioning from a fossil-fuel based economy to a sustainable future that reflects our commitment to God's beloved creation. We are now seeking concurrence from another presbytery to be submitted to the Office of the General Assembly before the April 17, 2018 deadline (60 days prior to the opening of General Assembly for overtures that have financial implications). *Please consider placing this overture on the docket of your next Presbytery meeting and voting to concur with New Covenant Presbytery.*

A short summary of 2016 General Assembly action:

The Presbytery of New Covenant sent 3 overtures to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) with various strategies for action on climate change.

In contrast, San Francisco Presbytery (with other presbyteries concurring) had overtured the General Assembly to divest of stocks in 200 fossil fuel companies within 3 years.

Instead of choosing divestment on the 3-year timetable, the General Assembly approved a minority report (460 yes, 91 no) that requested the Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Foundation, and Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program to diversify their investments in the energy sector, moving toward renewable and sustainable energy.

The minority report also directed the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee to continue shareholder engagement with fossil fuel companies in order to press these companies to act on climate change.

Unfortunately, however, the assembly did not strongly endorse positive strategies that would motivate individual Presbyterians and congregations to take action against the serious threat posed by climate change to vulnerable peoples around the world and non-human species on land and in the oceans. We intend for the 2018 New Covenant overture to call us to effective action on climate change.

We will update the Faithful Action on Climate Change website <http://www.faithfulactioncc.org/> periodically to reflect new information, overture concurrences, and resources for action on climate change. If we can provide additional information prior to your meeting, please let us know. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this overture.

May we all be faithful in Christ's service as we move into 2018,

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