

Overture for Divestment from Fossil Fuel Companies

September 18, 2016

Dear Geneva Presbytery,

This past September the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca approved an overture to the 222nd General Assembly supporting fossil fuel divestment by the Presbyterian Foundation and Board of Pensions written by the grassroots organization, Fossil Free PCUSA (<http://www.fossilfreepcusa.org/>). To date 9 Presbyteries have concurred with this overture originally passed by the San José Presbytery. I presented this overture (<http://www.fossilfreepcusa.org/resources/overture-2016/> attached) at our last Presbytery meeting In November 2016. In 2014 the Geneva Presbytery concurred with 11 others from around the country on a similar divestment overture, which GA 2014 referred to the PC(USA)'s Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) for two years of study. I will provide you with further information on these overtures prior to voting at our January 30th meeting.

There are many considerations one can have when attempting to decide if the PCUSA is being-called to make such a decision at a time like this. Divestment is a tool, among many, that institutional and personal investors can use to influence the course of climate change. I hope that this year Presbyterians will join the ecumenical chorus of the UCC, Unitarians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Lutherans in denominational divestment and perhaps help make the Pope's (<https://laudatosi.com/watch>) Laudato Si' more familiar and work towards advancing the conclusions of the recent Paris climate talks.

Since the drafting of the Fossil Free PCUSA Overture an alternative viewpoint has begun to emerge and out of fairness and with due diligence I am including a letter from that group in the attachments. Interestingly, this "faithful alternative" draws its spiritual direction basically from the same tradition that gave rise the FossilFree group's genesis. I will try to explain this prior to the vote. There is scheduled time for questions and answers.

The Faithful Action on Climate Change group's video resources (http://www.faithfulactioncc.org/?page_id=3190) includes a nice introductory video by Dr. Katherin Hayhoe that goes a long way to resolve concerns about the basic ideas around climate change. This webpage also has a presentation by Rev Bill Somplatsky-Jarmin representing MRTI and their 2014 charge from GA concerning the earlier divestment Overture. One should note that that process is independent of the one that is driving the new 2016 Divestment option forward. According to Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, a change to the Standing Rules made at GA2014 (removal of Standing Rule A.3.e.2) requires a new overture to the 222nd GA.

A response from Fossil Free PCUSA to this "alternative" perspective is here - <http://www.fossilfreepcusa.org/resources/responses-to-faithful-alternatives/> I look forward to having a broad and fair conversation about this increasingly urgent social issue and welcome any questions, comments and/or criticisms. Also - attached is an FAQ on divestment from Fossil Free PCUSA.

Sincerely,

Brad McFall -Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee First Presbyterian Church or Ithaca-