



December 10, 2015

Dear Fellow Earth Care Congregations.¹

As the chair of the Creation Care Team at The Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church located 40 miles north of Houston, Texas, I am writing to provide information on alternatives to PC(USA) divestment in fossil fuel industries. As you know, in 2014, the General Assembly delegated to the Mission Responsibility Through Investment committee (MRTI) the task of considering whether the PC(USA) should divest itself of all investments in fossil fuel industries. Recognizing that such an action would not achieve the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and would cause concern among faithful Presbyterian members who work in fossil fuel industries and churches located in regions where the fossil fuel industry is important to the local economy, the Synod of the Sun developed a Consultation Document and sponsored a symposium to consider constructive and faithful alternatives to such divestment. The Presbytery of New Covenant recently approved three such overtures that were developed in response to the symposium.

The three overtures share several common themes, which is a reflection of their shared origin. All acknowledge the reality of excessive greenhouse gas emissions and the necessity of lowering those emissions. They also reflect the view that blanket divestment from the fossil fuel industry is not an adequately faithful response to the issue of climate change. Among the arguments is the observation that divestment doesn't actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions—there is no causal connection between the solution proposed by the divestment movement and the climate change problem that they highlight.

The three overtures also reflect the differing points of emphasis highlighted by the three sessions that submitted the overtures. Two focus on alternatives that would be more faithful, in part because they would be more likely to actually accomplish the goal. The alternative highlighted in both as most likely to have a material effect is the encouragement of a mechanism to price greenhouse gas emissions.

The **All Encompassing Alternatives to Divestment** overture includes many things that we can and should be doing individually and collectively. This overture also describes our historical stewardship of community and creation as “self-centered and sinful” and calls for repentance.

The **Emphasizing Carbon Fee and Dividend as an Alternative to Divestment** overture focuses on pricing carbon and provides a detailed approach. While it is not the only mechanism for pricing greenhouse gases, the Carbon Fee and Dividend that Citizens' Climate Lobby advocates is presented as an example of an effective method..

¹ The contact email list for Earth Care Congregations was graciously provided on a one-time basis by Rebecca Barnes, US(PCA) Environmental Ministry.

The **Emphasizing Criteria for MRTI as an Alternative to Divestment** overture shares many of the fundamental themes of the other two and has the distinctive feature of providing further guidance to MRTI and investors on the circumstances in which targeted divestment might be appropriate.

These overtures must have concurrent approval by other presbyteries before they can be submitted to the General Assembly at its 2016 meeting. We would be grateful if your session would consider approving one or all of these overtures for submission to your presbytery.

The three overtures and a Consultation Document prepared for the Symposium are available on the home page of The Presbytery of New Covenant by clicking on the Faithful Alternatives to Fossil Fuel Divestment box under the title, 'What's Happening':
<http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org/>

Another website is also available, Faithful Action on Climate Change, <http://www.faithfulactioncc.org/> which contains the Consultation Document and information from the symposium, including the video presentation by Dr. Katherine Hayhoe, a prominent climate scientist, http://www.faithfulactioncc.org/?page_id=3190.

To learn about one mechanism to price greenhouse gas emissions, see the Citizens' Climate Lobby website, <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/> and click on Carbon Fee and Dividend. Citizens' Climate Lobby is a fast growing organization that is creating the political will for real action to address Climate Change. This bipartisan organization has just started a Presbyterian Action Team to provide an avenue for Presbyterians and CCL to coordinate efforts to promote Greenhouse Gas Pricing in general and specifically a Carbon Fee and Dividend. CCL also has over 300 chapters. You can find your local chapter at <http://citizensclimatelobby.org/about-ccl/#chapters>.

If you have questions or comments, please let me know. I am interested in your views.

Cinda Hitchcock
Creation Care Team
The Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church
281.363.2723
cctx@att.net