

## Responsible stewardship of God's creation

1. This proposal is brought to the 2018 General Assembly by Presbytery Central.

2. The proposal is:

a. That the Church express its mission of care for creation in achievable and manageable acts of waste reduction, recycling, conscious consumerism, and educational awareness.

b. That the Church acknowledge the efforts made by congregations, church schools, and social service agencies with a connection to the Presbyterian Church who are already committed to caring for God's creation, by celebrating stories of success across the denomination.

c. And that the Church celebrate resources at its disposal for raising awareness about caring for creation.

3. The reasons for the proposal are:

a. The Church, in its mission to make Jesus Christ known, has committed itself to five 'faces' of mission, one of which is caring for God's creation. (GA 1995)

i. "The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand believes it is called by God to work with others to make Jesus Christ known through care for creation."

b. The Church is already committed to "a sustainable and zero carbon economy," expressed in the "We Say Yes!" statement, adopted in 2016 at Assembly.

i. "We say yes to a sustainable and zero carbon economy: we say no to policies and practices that contribute to unsustainable growth such as dependence on fossil fuels and excessive lifestyles. Therefore we advocate movement towards clean and sustainable energy and action to limit destructive human impacts on the environment.

c. While we are hopeful for the conversations that the "We Say Yes!" statement encourages within the local church, this proposal aims to translate the statement into achievable and measurable actions.

d. God gave people stewardship over the works of God's hands. We are therefore called to be responsible stewards of God's creation (Genesis 1:28, Genesis 2:15, Psalm 8:6-8, etc.)

e. We desire every congregation, church school, and social service agency with a connection to the Presbyterian Church to implement achievable and manageable change that better reflects our roles as responsible stewards of God's creation.

f. While we understand that cost can often be associated with change, we have sought to offer suggestions that mitigate cost both short-term and long-term.

g. We see that our congregations, church schools, and social service agencies with a connection to the Presbyterian Church have a responsibility to be leaders in our communities as we adapt our practices to better reflect our Church's commitment to being responsible stewards of God's creation.

h. In committing ourselves to become more responsible stewards of God's creation, we hope our actions will cause a ripple effect inspiring individuals within congregations and in the wider society.

4. The following list of sustainable changes would be sent to all congregations, church schools, and social service agencies with a connection to the Church.

- a. Eliminate the use of disposable, single use items such as Styrofoam cups and plastic straws, cups, and cutlery. Encourage the use of resources already owned by the congregations, church schools, and social service agencies, such as crockery and cutlery.
- b. Adopt the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products, soaps and dishwashing liquids.
- c. Make recycling bins readily available, clearly labelling what can and cannot be recycled.

5. Further possible changes:

- a. Commit to purchasing Fair Trade and other ethically, and sustainably sourced goods, such as tea, coffee, and sugar.
- b. Establish a culture of composting.
- c. Explore sustainable alternatives to hand towels. E.g. hand dryers in churches, schools, and social agencies with the appropriate facilities.
- d. Compare different power companies and where they source their electricity. Discuss the possibility of moving to 100% renewable energy.

ADDENDUM:

Assembly decided to expand the list of actions in section five (above) of the Responsible Stewardship of God's creation proposal to include:

- e. reduce transport related atmospheric carbon inputs by encouraging participation in local congregations and sharing together in the revitalisation of congregations,
- f. promotion of cycling by the public provision of cycle stands,
- g. use church land (or make it available to community groups) for community gardens and/or restoration plantings.

Assembly agreed that this expanded list of actions be sent to every congregation, church schools, and social service agencies with a connection to the Church to report on their progress of implementation.