

Resolution from the Church Meeting of Brighthelm URC

Southern Synod is concerned about the effects of climate change on some of the world's poorest people, as well as on animal and plant life. Therefore, Synod does not wish to give financial support to the further development of the oil, coal and gas industries and calls on those with responsibility for managing its investments to implement the rapid transfer of Synod investments from fossil-fuels to the renewable energy sector. Synod requests a progress report by its meeting in October 2017.

Background

In July 2014, the World Council of Churches extended its ethical investment criteria to exclude investment in fossil fuels. In doing so, it joined a global divestment movement that has grown massively since, including Churches, Universities and philanthropic endowment funds. The WCC encouraged its member Churches to follow its lead.

The motivation is a moral one. Scientific opinion is as clear as science can be: if we are to avoid catastrophic global warming, causing major loss of life on earth, we need to limit global average temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius. To do that, carbon emissions into the atmosphere (a significant contributing factor to climate change) need to be reduced almost entirely by 2050, if not sooner. That means leaving between 60-80% of known fossil fuel reserves in the ground, unburned. (We would burn as little as possible of the remainder while we undergo a rapid transition to net-zero carbon emissions).

Shell's recent commencement of oil exploration in the Arctic ocean demonstrates that the business plan of fossil fuel companies is to find, extract and sell as much oil, coal and gas as they can. It is a business plan for the end of the world.

Christians believe in a different kind of plan for the end of the world and we believe in a different approach to life on earth in the meantime: rooted in the love of God for all creation, as seen in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is why we believe in the promotion of love, justice and the abundant life that Jesus promised.

Therefore, this resolution calls on Synod to withdraw its financial support (through investment) for the further development of the fossil fuel market. Instead, let us invest in a better world through less destructive forms of energy.

Divestment will not solve climate change, but it is an important piece of the jigsaw. For Southern Synod, the effectiveness of this step is likely to be in its prophetic symbolism as we align our financial assets with our spiritual values.

Resolution 6

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