

PROPOSED OVERTURES TO THE 222ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MOTION: The Session of First Presbyterian Church in Iowa City recommends that the Presbytery of East Iowa concur with Overture 32 from the Presbytery of New Covenant, and direct the Stated Clerk to transmit this concurrence to the 222nd General Assembly.

OVT-032 On an Alternative to Divestment from the Fossil Fuel Industry—From the Presbytery of New Covenant.

Source: Presbytery **Event:** 222nd General Assembly (2016)
Committee: No Assignment **Sponsor:** New Covenant Presbytery
Topic: Unassigned **Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration
<http://pc-biz.org/Explorerer.aspx?id=6307>

The Presbytery of the New Covenant respectfully overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to do the following:

1. Proclaim that we are called to faithfully exercise stewardship over the earth and all of its creatures. Recognize the moral mandate for humanity to responsibly use the resources of the earth in a manner that will ensure future generations of Earth's inhabitants will have long-term access to clean and sustainable energy resources. This mandate compels us to action as a denomination to implement strategies and actions that are in accordance with our responsibility to act as faithful stewards of the earth and its resources.
2. Affirm that it is both possible and practical for us to effect meaningful change that addresses the issues of climate change; urge individuals, congregations, councils of the church, and institutions (including without limitation the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation, the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Office of General Assembly, and our colleges and theological seminaries) to initiate, continue, and build upon steps to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and to continue approval of lower-carbon and zero-carbon technologies and lifestyles. We acknowledge that the changes in behaviors are difficult, but affirm that we are prepared to align our behaviors with our calling and our advocacy in any event.
3. Hold complete divestment from the fossil fuel industry in abeyance because it does not meet the denomination's long-standing process for consideration of divestment. To effect meaningful change that addresses climate change issues, specifically, we should:
 - a. Commend congregations that have committed to the "Earth Care Pledge" and encourage all congregations to consider joining the Earth Care Congregation Network of the PC(USA).

b. Request the Presbyterian Foundation, the Board of Pensions, and the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., to study ways that investments can best be leveraged to help care for God’s creation and mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

c. Request that the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., vigorously promote and expand the new program, “Restoring Creation Loans,” which provides low-interest loans that enable congregations to renovate their buildings using energy-efficient products in order to conserve energy, save on costs, and reduce carbon emissions.

d. Advocate for the reduction of greenhouse gases through the use of alternative, cleaner energy sources: natural gas, nuclear, wind, solar, and industrial-scale power storage.

e. Commend Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) for its long history of engagement with companies on issues related to climate change, and instruct MRTI to continue that engagement, applying the long-standing PC(USA) principles related to consideration of divestment. Acknowledge that industry-wide divestment does not alter the consumption or investment behaviors that support greenhouse gas emissions and that divestment is therefore not an adequate response to the problems of climate change.

4. Encourage individuals, congregations, councils of the church, and institutions (including without limitation the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation, the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and the Office of General Assembly) to:

a. Reduce or eliminate holdings in specific companies that continue to lobby against action on climate change or support organizations that distribute false information on climate change.

b. Encourage investment in corporations that have monitored and reported their greenhouse gas emissions and have implemented specific plans to reduce their emissions.

c. Encourage investment in corporations that have invested in or make use of energy sources that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

5. Direct the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, in collaboration with Congregational Ministries Publishing or The Thoughtful Christian, and working with other organizations that have parallel goals in order to maximize our effectiveness, to develop a policy paper and educational materials to assist congregations and councils of the church in understanding the impact of climate change and in taking individual and collective action to slow climate change, including: shareholder activism; investments in renewable energy; advocacy at local, state, and federal levels for policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and local efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the 2006 call for denominational carbon neutrality, and the 2008 “Power to Change” recommendations.

6. Direct the Stated Clerk of the PC(USA) to inform the denomination and the larger public of the passage and implementation of this overture.

Rationale

In 1981, our church made clear through the document, “The Power to Speak Truth to Power,” the importance of transitioning away from a fossil fuel-based economy.

It is not enough simply to speak truth to power. We must enact in our individual, congregational, and denominational lives meaningful approaches that directly address concerns about climate change and that require sacrifice. Divestment has no direct effect on climate and makes no difference in individual behaviors—and it is these behaviors that directly contribute to greenhouse gases. In addition, divestment renders a moral judgment on thousands of good, moral Presbyterians who are employed within the fossil fuel sector. Damage to our relationships with those faithful Presbyterians would do great harm to our congregations without providing any meaningful engagement with climate change. Divestment neither assures protection of the earth nor promotes the economic well-being of the disadvantaged. The PC(USA) has a responsibility to do better than divestment.

We, as Christians, have the privilege, responsibility, and obligation to speak with moral authority on issues of great importance. This is such an issue.

This overture asks us not to sever our financial ties to the fossil fuel industry, but to unite all Presbyterians in directly engaging climate change with responsible, meaningful, and lasting actions that will make a difference in the future of God’s creation. Through this overture, the PC(USA) will demonstrate the depth of our theological understanding of the stewardship of God’s creation by promoting alternatives to divestment that unite us.

Some Positive Steps

We begin with some good news: the United States has been gradually reducing its greenhouse gas emissions in recent years. Between 2004 and 2013, emissions in total have declined nearly 9 percent, while per capita emissions are down more than 15 percent. China has made significant investments in green energy. It plans to increase its solar-energy capacity this year alone by 18 gigawatts—as much solar-energy capacity as exists in the U.S. right now. Its wind-energy production has increased tenfold in a half-dozen years, and the country is in the midst of what one analyst called “the largest build-out of hydroelectricity the world has ever seen.” The cost of solar power is rapidly declining. In the sunniest locations in the world, building a new solar-power plant now costs less than coal or natural gas, even without subsidies, and within six years, this will be true of places with average sunlight, too.

Biblical and Theological Rationale

Ecology and justice are implicit in the story of creation itself: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). As the 1990 study, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*,^[1] (“RCEJ”) observes, “tilling” requires a community effort that establishes an economy; “keeping” is an act of environmental stewardship that regards the creation as a gift to be cared for. RCEJ identifies four

norms that characterize “a new faithfulness” reflecting God’s love for the world: sustainability, participation, sufficiency, and solidarity.^[2] These highlight the inherent tensions. We cannot address only the good of the creation without also considering the good of the community. We cannot address only the good of the community without considering the good of creation. Global climate change, regardless of its cause, threatens both the community and the earth over which we are stewards. Our call is to address these threats responsibly, with meaningful effect, while promoting economic justice.

Denominational Rationale

Our denomination has long recognized a moral obligation to be faithful stewards of God’s creation. We have acknowledged the realities of climate change and its effect on the “least of these,” and the need to take action. Previous General Assemblies (1981, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2006, and 2008) have passed overtures, resolutions, and reports warning us of the dangers of climate change and calling on us to reduce our energy consumption and transition away from fossil fuels. Now is the time to move beyond pronouncements and symbolic actions into education and behavioral changes.

The 221st General Assembly (2014), in response to an overture from the Presbytery of Boston *et al*, referred to MRTI a proposal that the General Assembly declare our intention to categorically divest from fossil fuels within five years. However, in assessing the divestment proposal against the dual criteria of (i) economic development and justice for all people and (ii) faithful and responsible stewardship of God’s creation, we believe the proposal falls short.

The divestment proposal is unlikely to achieve its expressed aims. There is no causal connection between the concern expressed—climate change—and the action proposed—sell certain stock investments. The contribution we as individuals and institutions make to the emission of greenhouse gases is the result of the consumption decisions we make, not the investments we own. Therefore, actions that alter investment portfolios but leave our consumption decisions unchanged should not be expected to change our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. To be effective, a proposal must lead to changes in our behaviors. Carbon exploration and production is driven by carbon consumption. Investment strategies that promote conservation, reduce consumption, and make political solutions more likely are a better strategy than divestment.

In summary, we believe the church needs faithful alternatives to the divestment proposal because (i) divestment fails to recognize the continuing importance of economic development for the relief of poverty and the significant role low energy costs play in economic development and (ii) divestment is unlikely to achieve the result for which it aims because there is no causal link between the proposed action and that target. We believe the alternatives discussed below provide a more faithful response.

Faithful Engagement on Climate Change

How can we assess the faithfulness of alternatives? In considering what constitutes a faithful response, the church should keep in mind:

1. Does it address the problem (rather than simply make a judgment)?
2. Does it advance economic justice (both globally and domestically)?
3. Will it have a practical effect?
4. Does it propose behavior we are willing to adopt ourselves?

An Effective Approach

This overture proposes positive and inclusive investment practices that will hopefully be understood as being in the interests of all church members, more directly address the problem of divestment, and clarify behaviors consistent with reducing greenhouse emissions.

From our perspective, the root cause of the climate change issue is behaviors—both consumption and investment. We all engage in behaviors that contribute to climate change. A faithful response is to encourage ourselves and others to modify these behaviors. Many organizations and individuals have taken strong steps to reduce greenhouse emissions and they deserve our financial and moral support.

The Importance of Working Toward Unity

This approach is not one that can be undertaken along with divestment from fossil fuels. Divestment is a divisive strategy that alienates faithful Presbyterians who have strong beliefs that their work to provide inexpensive energy to the world has been a net good. Divestment drives a wedge between those faithful Presbyterians who work in or have retired from the fossil fuel industry and those for whom divestment has no personal cost. Job loss in the fossil fuel industry is a serious concern, especially to our brothers and sisters in states where this industry is prevalent. Further, divestment ignores the reality that PC(USA) congregations and missions have benefited from the access to inexpensive and reliable energy sources and from pledges and donations from faithful members who work in the fossil fuel industry.

All of us agree that living in our technological world has benefitted almost all of humanity. We understand that the overuse of fossil fuels has potentially catastrophic costs that must be avoided. However, this is most easily accomplished with the church acting as a unified body instead of as a church further diminished through the additional loss of congregations. We note also that it is the responsibility of every industry to adapt to changing dynamics of the market in which it operates. In exercising due care and their fiduciary duty, we expect investments to be shifted away from firms and industries that adapt poorly to the new economy and toward firms and industries that successfully adapt to these changes. These shifts in our investment portfolio should not require explicit direction from PC(USA).

The Consistency of Our Witness

Our actions should be consistent with our values. We are charged to consider not only the ideological purity of our response, but also its practical effect. If we decry the production and use of fossil fuels, then our actions must be consistent. If we decry the production, should we not also decry the consumption—including our own? If we choose divestment, should we not also abstain from fossil fuel products? We live in a world

where we produce greenhouse gas emissions through many of our daily activities. Every member of the PC(USA) uses fossil fuels every day in hundreds of applications that significantly improve quality of life. It is more faithful on moral and ethical grounds to directly address greenhouse emissions rather than to call for divestment from fossil fuel producers, whose contributions to greenhouse emissions vary widely.

Summary

We Presbyterians approach creation with the twin perspectives of responsible use (“tilling”) and sustainable care (“keeping”). An ethic of stewardship, therefore, must consider creation both as a good in itself and as a resource for economic justice. The responsibility of holding wealth is directed toward an ethic of engagement that seeks to use the wealth to transform injustice and immorality, rather than an ethic of purity that shuns such engagement. Addressing greenhouse emissions, and discouraging activities that work to delay legislative action on climate change is more consistent with long-standing denominational policy statements and would be a faithful response to the urgent climate change issues that are before us.

[1] https://www.presbyterianmission.org/site_media/media/uploads/environment/pdf/restoring-creation-for-ecology&justice.pdf

[2] Sustainability means “the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together—which requires human beings to practice wise, humble, responsible stewardship, after the model of servanthood that we have in Jesus. Participation refers to the inclusion of all members of the human family in obtaining and enjoying the Creator’s gifts for sustenance. Sufficiency provides for all to have enough through equitable sharing and organized efforts to achieve that end. Solidarity means “steadfastness in standing with companions, victims, and allies ... to the realization of the church’s potential as a community of support for adventurous faithfulness.”

Concurrence: Grace Presbytery

MOTION: The Presbytery Coordinating Commission recommends that the Presbytery of East Iowa concur with Overture 24 from the Presbytery of Central Nebraska, and direct the Stated Clerk to transmit this concurrence to the 222nd General Assembly.

OVT-024 On Adding Section G-2.1104, Administrative Personnel Association (APA)—From the Presbytery of Central Nebraska.

Source:	Presbytery	Event:	222nd General Assembly (2016)
Committee:	No Assignment	Sponsor:	Central Nebraska Presbytery
Topic:	Unassigned	Type:	General Assembly Full Consideration

<http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=6298>

The Presbytery of Central Nebraska overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall a new section be added to G-2.11, Certified Church Service, to read as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

“G-2.1104 Administrative Personnel Association (APA)

“a. Skills and Training

“Certified Administrative Personnel Assistants are persons certified and called to service in the ministry of church administration in congregations and councils. They shall have skills and training in church polity, church history, reformed theology, spiritual growth and discipline, office administration, Directory for Worship, Book of Confessions, and General Assembly Entities.

“b. Councils Responsibility

“The presbytery shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing for recognition at presbytery at the time of their certification and by inviting these employees to presbytery meetings, granting them the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified APA members who are ruling elders, the privilege of voice and vote at all its meetings.

“Names of those who have earned certification through APA shall be transmitted to the Presbyterian Mission Agency, which will forward them to the Office of the General Assembly and to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.”

Rationale

A request from twelve women attending a business administration course at the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, laid the groundwork for a professional organization to be created. In 1976, the Administrative Personnel Association (APA) was founded by Joyce Bauer and in almost forty years APA has expanded to nine regions, which includes all fifty states with a membership of 367 representing churches of all sizes, including those denominations with whom we are in full communion, presbyteries, synods, and the different agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The APA defines its active members as all persons engaged in administrative work in any local church or church-related institution, governing body or agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or those denominations with which we have communion. The APA is ruled by the body but lead by the Executive Board and Council. The Executive Board is made up of elected officials to include the president, president-elect, immediate past-president, certification chair, membership chair, secretary, and treasurer. The Council is composed of the following: The National Executive Board, all regional presidents, bylaws chair, nominating chair, finance chair, council on accreditation chair, membership chair, and national conference planning chair.

The mission of APA is to offer the opportunity for professional development and personal growth for those called by God to serve as support staff of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and those denominations with whom we are in full communion. The mission is accomplished by providing continuing education events for certification and occasions for fellowship, worship, and spiritual nurture and prayer at both national and regional meetings as well as APA-sponsored training events.

We offer three levels of certification with the opportunity to receive recognition for every fifty hours of continuing education beyond level 3. Our members may also receive an additional certificate in Concentrated Studies in Polity, Communications, Administration and Facilities Management, Theology, Church History, and Finance after completing another twenty-five hours in each of these areas of studies. Approved instructors are required to teach the requested amount of time for the class. Approval is given by our certification chair. The Certification Committee reviews the classes to ensure the classes being taught are current with what is happening in the church and office administration. Elective hours include conflict management, designing for communication, technology classes, financial matters, and other classes that provide professional growth and understanding of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Below explains the breakdown for each level.

LEVEL I

Core Courses	
Church History (Part 1)	2.5 hours
Church History (Part 2)	2.5 hours
Polity 1 (Part 1)	2.5 hours
Polity 1 (Part 2)	2.5 hours
**Office Administration	2.5 hours
*Spiritual Growth and Discipline	2.5 hours
Theology—Christian Perspectives of the Church (Part 1)	2.5 hours
Theology (Part 2)	2.5 hours
Total Core Hours	20 hours
Total Elective Hours	20 hours
Total Hours Required	40 hours

LEVEL II

Core Courses	
Directory for Worship	2.5 hours
Legal Matters	2.5 hours
PC(USA) History Since Reunion (Part 1)	2.5 hours
PC(USA) History Since Reunion (Part 2)	2.5 hours
Polity II	2.5 hours
**Office Administration	2.5 hours
*Spiritual Growth and Discipline	2.5 hours
Total Core Hours	17.5 hours
Total Elective Hours	27.5 hours

Total Hours Required	45 hours
LEVEL III	
Core Courses	
<i>Book of Confessions</i>	2.5 hours
GA Entities	2.5 hours
Polity III	2.5 hours
**Office Administration	2.5 hours
*Spiritual Growth and Discipline	2.5 hours
Total Core Hours	12.5 hours
Total Elective Hours	37.5 hours
Total Hours Required	50 hours

Prior to the changes made to the Form of Government, APA had been recognized previously by General Assembly, and under the former section G-14.0740 we had been affiliated with the Office of Vocation and had a PC(USA) staff liaison. We had also been listed in the *Directory* and Book II. However, after the new Form of Government was approved we were lost in translation and have struggled since to be specifically identified by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for our service and dedication to the larger church. Therefore, it is time after almost forty years of service and dedication, that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) specifically recognizes the Administrative Personnel Association (APA) and its certified members in the *Book of Order*.

Concurrence: Presbytery of New Castle

MOTION: The Presbytery Coordinating Commission recommends that the Presbytery of East Iowa concur with Overture 48 from the Presbytery of Detroit, and direct the Stated Clerk to transmit this concurrence to the 222nd General Assembly.

OVT 48 ON CLARIFYING THE ROLE OF ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICERS—FROM THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

The Presbytery of Detroit overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to amend G- 3.01049 by:

- Inserting “Ecclesiastical” in the title:
- Immediately after the main title inserting a new subsection “(a) Moderator”;
- Immediately after the words in the 3rd paragraph “who shall preside in the absence of the moderator” insert a new subsection “(b) Clerk and Stated Clerk”;
- Begin a new 5th paragraph in the current 4th paragraph where it says, “The clerk of a presbytery, a synod, and the General Assembly shall be called stated clerk, . . .”;

- **Inserting the following after the words “and must be a ruling elder or teaching elder”.**
A stated clerk is the council’s chief ecclesiastical administrator and relates to other governing bodies and Christian communions, interprets council actions, represents the council, staffs the council’s Permanent Judicial Commission, and is the council’s executive secretary and parliamentarian.
- **Creating a new paragraph beginning with the words, “A stated clerk may be removed”**

so that G3.0104 reads:

G-3.0104 Ecclesiastical Officers

(a) Moderator

The pastor of a congregation shall be the moderator of the session of that congregation. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall both be considered moderators and have provisions for designating who presides at a particular meeting. If it is impractical for the pastor to moderate, he or she shall invite another teaching elder who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator.

The moderator possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body. He or she shall convene and adjourn the body in accordance with its own action.

Each council higher than the session shall elect a moderator for such terms as the council determines. At the time of their election, moderators must be continuing members of, or commissioners to, the council over which they are elected to preside. They shall preside at meetings of the council during their term of office; councils shall provide by rule who shall preside in the absence of the moderator.

(b) Clerk and Stated Clerk

Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council, keep its rolls of membership and attendance, maintain any required registers, preserve its records, and furnish extracts from them when required by another council of the church. Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any council of the church. The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine.

*The clerk of a presbytery, a synod, and the General Assembly shall be called stated clerk, shall be elected by the council for a definite term as it may determine, and must be a ruling elder or teaching elder. **A stated clerk is the council’s chief ecclesiastical administrator and relates to other governing bodies and Christian***

communions, interprets council actions, represents the council, staffs the council's Permanent Judicial Commission, and is the council's executive secretary and parliamentarian.

A stated clerk may be removed from office prior to completion of his or her term of service through the use of the process outlined in G-3.0110.

RATIONALE:

The ecclesiastical governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is deeply rooted in John Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. John Calvin, as well as his successor, Theodore Beza, were committed to the plurality of church ministers, and never intended for church governance to be the right nor responsibility of a single person, be it a bishop or a pastor. Hence the Geneva Consistory and Company of Pastors informed the reformation of the Church of Scotland under John Knox and Andrew Melville, from whence our denomination descends, along with our polity.¹

These amendments underscore the historic and current chief ecclesiastical offices of each council of the church. With these amendments the elected offices of the church are further defined as ecclesial, which aids in our ecumenical dialogues, and gives further explanation of their particular functions.²

¹ For further reading on the historic role of moderators and clerks, see Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church 1536-1609*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

² Under Calvin and Bucer, the role of Moderator was to be the presiding presbyter elected by peers, responsible to oversee the meetings of the assembled presbyters of a given council, and served as the chief spokesperson. The moderator was also given precedence at ceremonial functions, like ordinations and installations (Ibid, 62). This was one part of the former role of a bishop in episcopal traditions. The role and function of principal or stated clerks is administrative, again picking up the other part of the traditional role of bishops in the episcopal traditions, having oversight and stewardship of the daily business of a given council as well as judicial process.

The amendment to the role of moderators in the ordination and installation of ordered ministers connects the Form of Government to the Directory for Worship, and underscores the historic role of all moderators in this sacred role in local congregations as well as in presbyteries.

The amendment to the role of stated clerks more clearly marks the historic tradition and function of a stated clerk within the Presbyterian tradition, and brings the Form of Government in line with the practice and the guidance already given by the Office of the General Assembly

The overture was supported by a consensus of the Association of Stated Clerks at their 2015 Annual meeting.