

R2024-04: Resolution to develop a diocesan plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030

Whereas The Episcopal Church and the Church of England have set goals to reach net carbon neutrality by 2030; *therefore, be it*

Resolved, that the Diocese of Southern Ohio commit to a goal of net carbon neutrality in its diocesan operations and the work of diocesan staff, standing commissions, interim bodies, and Diocesan Convention by 2030, through a combination of reducing emissions from travel, reducing energy use, increasing energy efficiency in buildings, installing and/or utilizing clean energy sources, and at last resort, purchasing offsets from duly investigated, responsible, and ethical partners. The goal as well as updates on progress toward that goal will be located prominently on the diocese's website as a key diocesan priority; *and be it further*

Resolved, that the 150th Convention create a policy for diocesan staff to take concrete actions to reduce fossil fuel emissions from travel by said groups, such as carpooling, online meetings, regional gatherings, etc. by June 1, 2025; *and be it further*

Resolved, that the 150th Convention direct diocesan staff to work with the Commission on Creation Care to draft a policy to offset one hundred percent of fossil fuel emissions from unavoidable travel by diocesan groups, either through an internal offset program or through purchase from duly investigated, responsible, and ethical partners, with appropriate accountability and oversight, and report on progress toward the goal by September 1, 2025; *and be it further*

Resolved, that the 150th Convention direct diocesan staff to develop a policy to prohibit the diocese from purchasing new fossil-fuel-powered appliances (HVAC, water-heaters, stoves), vehicles (utility vehicles, cars, vans, etc.), or equipment (lawn tools, etc.) for diocesan use (with diocesan properties) to replace fossil-fuel components once they reach the end of their lifespan but rather purchase electrified, zero-direct-emissions alternatives (when feasible or when appropriate options are available) by September 1, 2025; *and be it further*

Resolved, that the 150th Convention encourage diocesan parishes, schools, and other diocesan institutions to pursue their own goal of net carbon neutrality by 2030 through a combination of reducing emissions from travel, reducing energy use, increasing energy efficiency in buildings, and purchasing offsets from duly investigated, responsible, and ethical partners; *and be it further*

Resolved, that the 150th Convention direct diocesan staff to develop and share resources for parishes to commit to and work toward this goal, such as the online carbon tracker already created by the Diocese of California, as well as other online and print resources by November 1, 2025.

Explanation

The Diocese of Southern Ohio is deeply committed to living out its faith through action that promotes justice, compassion, and care for creation. Recognizing the urgent threat of climate change, we acknowledge the moral and spiritual imperative to address this global crisis. This resolution draws inspiration from the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting warming to 1.5-2°C and the leadership of the Episcopal Church and the Church of England in setting targets for carbon neutrality 2030.

In response, this resolution calls on the diocese to set an ambitious goal of achieving net carbon neutrality in its operations by 2030. This resolution outlines a multifaceted strategy to reach this goal. It emphasizes reducing emissions from travel by promoting practices like carpooling, online meetings, and regional gatherings. It encourages increasing energy efficiency in buildings and transitioning to clean energy sources. The resolution underscores the importance of offsetting remaining emissions through partnerships with responsible and ethical organizations. It promotes the development of policies and resources to support these efforts, including a ban on purchasing new fossil fuel-powered equipment and encouraging the adoption of electrified alternatives.

Additionally, the resolution urges diocesan parishes, schools, and institutions to work towards their own carbon neutrality goals, providing a framework for congregation-based plans.

Progress towards this goal will be prominently reported on the diocese's website, underscoring its importance as a key diocesan priority and commitment to transparency and accountability.

This resolution is a significant step towards fulfilling the diocese's mission to care for God's creation and work for environmental justice. It reflects the diocese's recognition of the moral and spiritual imperative to address climate change and its commitment to being a leader in the Episcopal Church's efforts towards carbon neutrality. By prioritizing the health of the planet and future generations, the Diocese of Southern Ohio is modeling a path for other dioceses and faith communities to follow in responding to the climate crisis. The resolution demonstrates the power of faith-based action in driving meaningful change and highlights the critical role that religious institutions can play in addressing this global challenge.

It is important to acknowledge that each parish must consider the unique challenges and constraints of historic buildings when pursuing carbon neutrality. It's essential that we approach this goal in a way that is feasible, cost-effective, and mindful of the diverse needs within our diocese. Our technical experts agree it would be difficult to convert some parishes to 100% electric. However, keep in mind, that high-efficiency heat pumps are now available and provide heat down to zero degrees There are also numerous other electric types of radiant heaters that are coming out and being used in Europe (they are a bit ahead of us).

The first thing to note is that this resolution prohibits “the purchase of new fossil-fuel-powered appliances (HVAC, water-heaters, stoves), vehicles (utility vehicles, cars, vans, etc.), or equipment (lawn tools, etc.) for diocesan use to replace fossil-fuel components once they reach the end of their lifespan but rather purchase electrified, zero-direct-emissions alternatives (when feasible or when appropriate options are available)”. The key here would be that the policy would be for those properties and appliances that are controlled by the diocese, namely Procter Conference Center and Procter Farm in London, Diocesan House at 412 Sycamore Street in Cincinnati, and the Latino Ministry Center at 11381 Hanover Road in Forest Park.

As stated earlier, there may be circumstances where it is not feasible to fully convert to electricity, and each parish is encouraged to “pursue their own goal of net carbon neutrality by 2030”. Of course, it would be our hope that every parish takes on that goal as their own but there is nothing binding parishes to that goal in this resolution.

The resolution's intent is not to place an undue burden or prohibit upgrades that are genuinely incompatible with a parish's specific circumstances. Rather, it encourages a shift towards the most environmentally friendly options whenever possible, while acknowledging that a complete prohibition may not always be practical.

References

The Diocese of Northern California, 2022 Diocesan Convention Resolution, Resolution to Further 2022 General Convention Resolution A087 Through the Development of Congregation-Based Plans to Achieve Carbon-Neutral Facilities and Operations By 2030. https://www.norcalepiscopal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/R1-2022_Climate_Neutral_2030.pdf

The Episcopal Church, 2022 General Convention, 2022-A087-Resolution to “Commit to Net Carbon Neutrality by 2030”. https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_generate_pdf.pl?resolution=2022-A087

The Episcopal Church, 2024 General Convention, 2024-D050- Resolution to Complete the Journey to Net Carbon Neutrality by 2030. <https://www.vbinder.net/resolutions/711?house=HD&lang=en>

The Church of England (December 2, 2020). General Synod Sets 2030 Net Zero Carbon Target. <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-sets-2030-net-zero-carbon-target>
Impact

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The overall impact of this resolution is for diocesan-controlled buildings to lead by example and eliminate, as much as possible, the emission of greenhouse gases into the environment.

This will reduce the impact of climate change that most grievously impacts those least able to weather the storms, live through prolonged droughts, and survive extensive wildfires and sea level rise.

There will be a budget impact when this resolution is passed. The resolution specifically has the diocese study the means to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions, with the help of the Creation Care and Environmental Justice Commission, so that budgets can be adjusted, and the work can begin. The overall net cost impact and timing is difficult to estimate until the study is complete. Some actions listed will save money such as how we hold meetings, how we travel, possibly what equipment we purchase, etc. Some actions will increase cost such as buying carbon offsets until full carbon neutrality is achieved and possibly what equipment we purchase. We plan to propose the commitment for neutrality by convention 2025 either through Council or another resolution.

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