



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE
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Earth Day 2026 Letter

“The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth’s creatures.” (Genesis 9:16)

God’s Covenant promise made after the flood was to do no harm, to humans and to all of God’s creation. Since God promises to do no harm, we, as people who follow the ways of God, we too are committed to do no harm to any part of God’s creation. No harm through our wrongful actions, our greed, or our inattention to God’s beautiful creation.

Global temperatures are rising dramatically, with each year hotter than the last, as a result of the burning of fossil fuels. In 2024, global temperatures rose to an average of 1.55 degrees Celsius, which is past the 1.5 degrees Celsius lower limit that was agreed upon at the 2021 COP21 Paris Agreement. We are experiencing more severe weather, drought, fires, and flooding, which disproportionately affect those who have least contributed to the problem. Our window of opportunity to change the course of climate change is soon closing.

We can no longer afford to ignore the urgency of this moment. As stated in our Social Principles, “we acknowledge that unsustainable human activities have placed the entirety of God’s creation in peril.” (Para. 160, pg. 110)

At General Conference 2024 we agreed to: create Green Teams in churches, Districts, and Conferences; implement sustainable practices in managing church properties; commit to Net Zero Green House Gas Emissions; and implement sustainable practices at Annual Conference.

In March 2025 we in Virginia held a Climate Summit, sponsored by the Board of Church and Society. We brought together stakeholders from a variety of churches, districts, and conference boards and agencies to begin working together for change.

Each year people around the world celebrate Earth Day on April 22. The theme this year is “Our Power, Our Planet”. How might we as United Methodists use our power to protect the planet Earth?

1. Make Creation Care/justice a priority.
2. Study the issues together, such as Discipleship Ministries’ “Loving People and Planet” course.
3. Talk about Creation Care. Preach about it.
4. Establish Creation Care/Green Teams in local churches and in every district – using the Conference Green Church Initiative.
5. Celebrate the Feast of Creation or a Creation Care Sunday.
6. Incorporate caring for creation into the work of evangelism, social concerns, mission activities, stewardship, caring for our structures (Trustees) and worship.
7. Conduct an energy audit of the church, then take steps to improve efficiency and conservation. Energy Star for Congregations
8. Take actions towards Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions through transition to renewable energy sources and divestment from fossil fuels.
9. Advocate for Creation Justice policies and practices at the local, state, and federal levels.

I invite you into this urgent work. Together we can and must work to do no harm to God’s world.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Haupt-Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Resident Bishop