



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

Moderator: On Fossil Fuels and Living into Decisions Made

[Français](#)

12 January 2016

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The United Church's New Creed affirms our commitment to live with respect in creation. How we do that is not always clear. However, we have different approaches to how we live out these shared values. In our diversity, it is inevitable that our church will make choices that some of us find hard to accept.

This summer the General Council voted to sell our investment holdings in the 200 largest fossil fuel companies. We made this decision out of our deep desire to "participate in God's work of healing and mending creation." Many in our church celebrate this decision, seeing it as one way that we can live out our commitment to climate justice.

At the same time, for those faithful United Church members whose work is connected to the fossil fuel industry, this decision has been a source of pain. At a time when many are experiencing layoffs and employment uncertainty due to low oil prices, this action may have felt like their own church kicking them when they are down. Some of our brothers and sisters have also felt judged by the tone of the discussion surrounding this decision.

The United Church of Canada stands with them in this time of economic uncertainty. As another proposal at the General Council meeting noted, while the church is encouraging investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency, we also want a "just transition for workers and communities" affected by the shift away from oil.

And of course the issues go well beyond the fossil fuel companies and their employees. Each of us wrestles with the complexity of living in a social and economic system that is dependent on fossil fuels. Every day I am confronted by all the ways my life and my choices contribute to climate change. Although I try to embody my faith commitments in how I live my life, I always do so imperfectly. It is the same for all of us.

The church is certainly not alone in pushing for energy alternatives. The world's first comprehensive climate agreement, signed in Paris last month, should breathe new life into the green energy sector. Here in Canada, both the federal and Alberta governments have expressed support for this transition, as they know it will create many new job opportunities as the renewable energy industry grows and expands.

There are no simple answers when it comes to our warming climate. While I celebrate each small step our church takes that shows respect for creation, at the same time I grieve with those who feel alienated by our decisions. I find hope in knowing that even at difficult times and with difficult decisions, God is with us.

So whether you are celebrating the choice our church has made about fossil fuels, or fearful for the direction in which we are heading, may you know that you are not alone.

The Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell
Moderator
The United Church of Canada

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