



Annual Meeting 2013

Pacific Northwest Conference
of the United Church of Christ

Resolutions

TITLE

Opposing the Construction of Coal Export Terminals and Transport of Coal via Trains from Montana and Wyoming to These Terminals A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the Pacific Northwest Conference Justice and Witness Committee
Chair: Rich Gamble; Contact person: Meighan Pritchard

SUMMARY

This resolution is based on the belief that the development of new coal export terminals will be detrimental to the well-being of the planet and particularly to all who come into contact with this coal.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

Psalm 24:1

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.

Genesis 2:15

Then the Lord God took the human and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Leviticus 19:18

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in God's ways, and observing God's commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying God, and holding fast to God; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Matthew 7:12

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

In the second Genesis creation story, humans are told to till and keep the earth, that is, to take care of it so that all may thrive. We are not told to destroy God's creation for our personal gain. In Deuteronomy, God calls on heaven and earth to bear witness to our choices and tells us to choose life: choose sustainable ways of living that will allow future generations to thrive on this earth.

We are creatures beloved of God, just as all other creatures are. When we as Christians are called to love God, love our neighbor, and love ourselves, we include as our neighbors everyone in the communities along the railroad tracks from Wyoming and Montana to the proposed ports on the coast, the people in Asia where the coal will be burned and air pollution will be the worst, and all citizens of the globe affected by the worsening effects of climate change: drought, flooding, fires, and intense storms.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, scientists have determined that human use of fossil fuels is a key contributor to climate change, which is already forcing many species into extinction and is creating record droughts, more frequent and more intense extreme weather, rising sea levels, melting glaciers and ice caps, and other changes that make our planet less hospitable to life as we know it; and

Whereas, coal is the dirtiest of the fossil fuels with the largest carbon emissions as well as other toxic chemicals, including mercury; and

Whereas, coal trains up to 1-1/2 miles long running through our state with uncovered train cars full of coal lose coal dust all along the way, causing increased rates of asthma, heart and lung disease, and other health concerns among those living near the tracks; coating the tracks with dust that can cause derailments; delaying emergency and other vehicles that urgently need to cross the tracks; and forcing cities to build bridges over tracks with their own funds; and

Whereas, coal emissions from Asia can waft back across the Pacific Ocean to the West Coast; and

Whereas, the several hundred jobs created in construction, railroads, and export terminals do not offset the tens of thousands of jobs at risk in the tourism, small business, farming, fishing, and other sectors if the terminals are built, in addition to lost days and lost jobs due to illness from coal and coal dust; and

Whereas, opposition to coal export terminals has come from people not just of one political party or region but from all walks of life across several states, including clergy, ranchers, doctors, students, retirees, tribe members, fishermen, and elected officials, turning out in record

numbers at hearings; nearly 250 clergy and religious leaders from across Washington have signed Earth Ministry's letter opposing coal export, and numerous denominational executives and heads of religious organizations signed a letter asking for an environmental review of the Port of Morrow proposed terminal in Oregon;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Northwest Conference (PNC) of the United Church of Christ hereby states its opposition to the construction of coal export terminals and any increase in coal trains running through this region; and

Be it further resolved that the Annual Meeting of the PNC requests that a comprehensive environmental impact statement be done for all five of the proposed coal export terminals as a whole rather than treating each project separately; and

Be it further resolved that the Annual Meeting of the PNC calls upon its congregations to work actively with elected officials, Earth Ministry, the Sierra Club, and others to keep the coal in the ground and to pursue cleaner forms of energy; and

Be it further resolved that we as earth stewards will examine our own energy consumption and determine ways to reduce our own carbon footprints; and

Be it further resolved that we will undertake education, advocacy, and action in our congregations, communities, cities, and regions that promote renewable energy industries and jobs and that create sustainable, healthy communities.