

Social Justice Vestry Motion 2026

Recommitting to “protect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth.”

We, the parish of St. Olave’s Swansea in the Diocese of Toronto,

- **Pledge to honour our baptismal commitment to “safeguard the integrity of God’s creation” and**
- **urge the Government of Canada to honour its commitments to the Paris Accord, 2015: to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40-45% below 2005 levels by 2030 and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.**

In our baptismal covenant, we pledge to “safeguard the integrity of God’s creation and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth.” This is part of our duty of care for our neighbour, particularly those who are most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change, and for whom Christ had a preferential bias.

Over 88,000 peer-reviewed scientific studies on the damage caused by CO₂ point in the same direction: that the planet is warming at a rate that poses significant threats to Creation.¹

The consequences of the warming include:

1. More frequent and more severe weather events (hurricanes, floods, fires, tornadoes)
2. Increased desertification of land and acidification of the oceans
3. Reduced food production capability from the land
4. Rising sea levels from glacial melt
5. Loss of freshwater resources
6. Loss of habitat and sustainability for plants, animals, and other organisms.

Secondary consequences of global warming are already massive.

1. Wars over resources
2. Increased numbers of people displaced by climate impacts
3. Diminished biodiversity
4. Increased numbers of invasive species of plants and insects due to the changing climate zones
5. Increased economic inequality (the most vulnerable nations and people will suffer the most.)
6. Increased health issues from heat, smoke, and water scarcity.

¹ <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2021/10/more-999-studies-agree-humans-caused-climate-change>

Our lived experience of 2025 offers independent confirmation of the science. It was the hottest summer on record (following the previous hottest summer of 2024) ² It was the second most destructive forest fire season in Canada, with attendant smoke hazards for much of the country.³ While harder to quantify, we have also experienced many significant floods following torrential rains.⁴

Despite these growing impacts, and the overwhelming scientific evidence, the amount of CO₂ has increased every year.⁵ Scientific data alone has failed to persuade governments and industry to protect the most vulnerable and future generations by ensuring a livable planet. As Christians, we must embody our faith commitment with actions that show our care for those whom we may not know, but who will be most susceptible to the climate emergency.

Our faith informs the way we act. We proceed in hope – not fantasy, not wishful thinking – but Christian hope, which means living ‘as though’ we already dwell in the kingdom of God. Consistent with living this way, we celebrate all of creation, and protect woodlands and animals, birds and sea creatures, oceans watersheds, clean air and the rains, thanking God for their variety and working to ensure their vitality.

If we live this way, we will plant more forests, not chop them down⁶. We will use less energy, particularly in transportation, industry and agriculture. We will not consume more than our basic needs. We will recycle and repurpose, sharing more with our neighbours who have less.

We will also advocate for governments to honour their climate commitments. In 2015, 196 countries adopted the landmark Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change. The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to achieve this goal and a net-zero-emission world by 2050, countries must significantly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions without delay. **Yet, current global commitments fall far short of this, leading to projections of warming by 3 degrees Celsius by 2100.**³

² <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/risky-heat-climate-central-1.7636309>

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/climate/wildfire-season-2025-1.7606371>

⁴ <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/en>

⁵ <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions>

⁶ <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/diocesan-life/social-justice-advocacy/creation-care/communion-forest-movement/>

Since 1990, the Government of Canada has made many domestic and international commitments to address climate change, including commitments to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.⁷ Yet Canada's greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by only 8.5% in the 19 years since then.⁸ Oil production from the tar sands generates as many CO² emissions as all Canada's other human-generated sources combined.⁹ Canada is the worst performing of the G-7 countries in terms of meeting its targets.¹⁰

In June 2025, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed Resolution A200 endorsing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, and urging the federal government to:

- **End expansion of any new coal, oil or gas production** in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme;
- **Phase-out existing production of fossil fuels in a manner that is fair and equitable**, taking into account the respective dependency of countries on fossil fuels and their capacity to transition; and
- **Ensure a global just transition to 100% renewable energy globally**, support dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels, and enable all people and communities, not least the Global South, to flourish.¹¹

This vestry motion, which urges the government of Canada to honour its commitments to the 2015 Paris Accord, aligns with General Synod's Motion. Moreover, it aligns with our Diocesan Cast the Net Call #8 "Intensify advocacy and action in response to the climate crisis," and our own baptismal commitments.

There are many ways in which we can bring action and advocacy to bear on the climate crisis. To learn more, please refer to the additional resources in support of this motion, which will be made available on the Diocesan website at

www.toronto.anglican.ca/vestrymotion

⁷ <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/climate-plan/climate-plan-overview/healthy-environment-healthy-economy.html#toc14>

⁸ <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/greenhouse-gas-emissions.html>

⁹ Nature Briefing, January, 2024

¹⁰ https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/att__e_43947.html

¹¹ <https://fossilfueltreaty.org/faith-letter#faith-letter> laying out a binding global plan to: