#11. New for 2026

Focus: To urge Wespath to add fossil fuels to its investment screens for all its portfolios.

Urging Fossil Fuel Divestment of All Denominational Funds at Wespath

WHEREAS the moral arguments for divesting our money from fossil fuels are clear: Surely the God of steadfast love, who declared all creation good and who has nurtured and sustained life on earth for eons, intends for life in abundance to continue (Genesis 129:12-17; Exodus 20:6), yet fossil-fuel driven climate change threatens human life and all life on earth. Surely Jesus, who said "just as you did it to one of the least of these siblings of mine, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40), calls us to consider our impacts on those who are most vulnerable, yet climate change impacts those who are most vulnerable first and worst; and

WHEREAS the 1980 General Conference resolution on energy policy made The United Methodist Church the first denomination to link the burning of fossil fuels to what was then called "global warming." It urged our church and the nations of the world to transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy and conservation. That resolution has been updated at almost every General Conference since it was passed; and

WHEREAS The United Methodist Church's mission to care for God's creation and commitment to human rights is seriously undermined by the denomination's simultaneous investment in the fossil fuel companies that are the primary drivers of climate change. They are responsible for global emissions that contribute to extreme weather events around the world, for pollution of vulnerable and marginalized neighborhoods and regions, for harmful health impacts that disproportionately impact children and other sensitive populations, for the buildout of durable fossil fuel infrastructure, and for deliberately fostering doubt about climate change. This missional misalignment must be addressed because it results in millions of deaths annually, suffering and displacement, and ecological destruction world-wide; and

WHEREAS the fossil fuel industry is also fueling inequality, violence, militarism, and war. Oil, gas, and coal are being called "weapons of mass destruction" because of their devastating role in both the climate crisis and in conflict; and

WHEREAS green energy sources like solar, wind and hydropower reduce carbon emissions and empower nations to generate their own electricity, reduce dependence on fossil fuel exporters, and eliminate one of the central motives behind many modern conflicts and wars; and

WHEREAS scientists are calling for a fast and fair phaseout of fossil fuels. Divesting from fossil fuels is one way that United Methodists can take a moral stand by ending our investments in fossil fuels and phasing out fossil fuels from our own investment portfolios; and

WHEREAS Wespath has successfully created alternative "Social Values Choice" funds that exclude companies with fossil fuel reserves used for energy purposes, and certain other investments associated with a prolonged and systematic pattern of human rights abuses; and

WHEREAS fossil fuel investments have underperformed in the stock market for a decade. Further, since 2017 the Social Values Choice ("fossil-free") investment portfolios at Wespath have outperformed their portfolios that include fossil fuels, increasing earnings to support ministry. While wars and other shocks may temporarily raise the value of oil, resulting in higher profits for fossil fuel corporations and higher returns for investments, this is not a rationale for ethical investment; and

WHEREAS as a response to the devastating harms caused by climate change, various Annual Conferences in The United Methodist Church have voted to divest their own long-term investments from fossil fuels by investing in Wespath's Social Values Choice funds; and

WHEREAS the global "fossil free" movement has inspired fossil fuel divestments from thousands of faith communities, universities, foundations, and financial institutions with total assets of over $40 trillion. The movement's slogan states the moral argument in simple terms: "It's wrong to profit from wrecking the planet."

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the _____ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church directs the Annual Conference Secretary to send a letter by August 1, 2026, to the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of Wespath's Board of Directors, and the Wespath staff listed at wespath.org/leadership. This letter shall express gratitude for the exemplary performance of Wespath's fossil-free funds, and shall make the following request:

The _____ Annual Conference urges Wespath:

- To commit to move toward excluding fossil fuels from all their investment portfolios in order to correct the undermining of the denomination's witness for God's creation and human rights by simultaneously investing in the fossil fuel companies responsible for global emissions, air pollution, infrastructure build-out and support that causes millions of deaths annually, suffering and displacement, and ecological destruction world-wide; and

- To create, publish and share an actionable roadmap for fossil fuel divestment of their unrestricted and restricted assets.

References:

Book of Resolution Energy Policy Statement
[https://www.umc.org/en/content/book-of-resolutions-energy-policy-statement]

Plain Talk: This Is What's at Stake
[https://fossilfreeumc.net/2024/02/13/plain-talk-this-is-whats-at-stake/]

Fossil fuels Continue to Drive Global Instability, Conflict, and Economic Insecurity
[https://350.org/press-release/fossil-fuels-continue-to-drive-global-instability-conflict-and-economic-insecurity/]

9 Ways Fossil Fuels Are Tied to Conflict — and How Feminist Peace Action Through the Fossil Fuel Treaty Can Stop It
[https://fossilfueltreaty.org/blog/feminist-peace-action]

IPCC Latest Report Reaffirms Urgency to Phase Out Fossil Fuels to Tackle Climate Emergency
[https://fossilfueltreaty.org/ipcc-ar6]

The UCS Position on a Fossil Fuel Phaseout: We support a fast and fair phaseout of fossil fuels around the world
[https://www.ucs.org/ucs-fossil-fuel-phaseout]

The Financial Case for Fossil Fuel Divestment
[https://ieefa.org/financial-case-fossil-fuel-divestment#:~:text=The%20fossil%20fuel%20sector%20has,to%20meet%20investment%20return%20targets.]

Introducing the Social Values Choice (SVC) funds for institutional investors
[https://www.wespath.com/assets/1/7/6099.pdf]

Global Fossil Free Commitments Database
[https://divestmentdatabase.org/]

California Nevada and California-Pacific Annual Conferences Join Pacific Northwest and Desert Southwest in Divesting from Fossil Fuels
[https://fossilfreeumc.net/2025/07/30/california-nevada-and-california-pacific-annual-conferences-join-pacific-northwest-and-desert-southwest-in-divesting-from-fossil-fuels/]

Find more info on the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement's Model Resolutions page. Find more information about Divestment from Fossil Fuels at Fossil Free UMC.

Note: Clergy and staff with pension funds at Wespath can and do divest their pensions by transferring their pension funds to the Social Values Funds at Wespath. Wespath's Lifestage investment option will be available soon.