

**“The Power to Change”:
New Energy Policy Guides Action on
Multiple Levels**

By Jenny Holmes, PRC Moderator

The Presbyterian Church, USA, has long been a leader in articulating a biblical and theological vision for the appropriate stewardship of God’s gift of energy and providing prophetic witness for this vision. The reality of global warming and new issues around energy use and production prompted a revision of the church’s 1981 policy, “The Power to Speak Truth to Power.” A study and recommendations reflecting current energy issues, entitled, “The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming,” was approved at the 218th General Assembly (GA) in June. It lays out a clear and well-documented path toward a sustainable and just energy future. The new policy was several years in the making. Substantial work was done initially by Christian ethicist, Dr. Robert Stivers, a primary author of Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice” (202nd GA) with a committee including PRC members Pam McVetty, Stewardship of Creation Enabler in Florida and John Topping of the Climate Institute. To complete the policy, Christian ethicist Dr. James Martin-Schram was tapped.

At a hearing on the policy the feedback to GA commissioners dealing with the resolution was very positive. As PRC moderator, I testified in support of the policy, noting that action on climate change tied directly to the General Assembly theme “Do Justice, Love Kindness, and Walk Humbly” (Micah 6:8). It is widely known that global warming will make it more difficult for the world’s poor to access food and clean water. However, a few had concerns. A representative of a group promoting a free market approach to global warming argued that the policy would harm the economy. A committee member from the Midwest expressed concern about the encouragement to eat less meat.

This new resolution urges individuals and families to first “Pray, asking for God’s forgiveness and for the power and guidance to enjoy and care for creation in new ways.”

Other recommendations at this level include:

- Study energy sources, their advantages and disadvantages, and the impacts they have on human communities, all species, and the ecological systems that support life on Earth; practice energy conservation as a form of thanksgiving and sharing by adjusting thermostats, walking, biking, car-pooling, using mass transit, turning off lights and appliances, recycling, minimizing the use of plastic water bottles and other wasteful packaging, etc.
- Purchase energy-efficient appliances and fuel-efficient vehicles for use at home and at work.
- Purchase sustainably grown food and other products from local producers in order to reduce the energy associated with producing, and shipping goods.
- Purchase Green-e certified energy and/or carbon offsets in the pursuit of a carbon-neutral lifestyle.
- Invest personal funds in the renewable energy industry and also in companies that demonstrate concern for the well-being of their workers, their communities, and the environment.
- Advocate for change and leadership within the church and in all forms of government regarding energy policy and global climate change.

Governing bodies of the church are urged “to become



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PRC Wants to Connect More, Use Paper Less

In the coming months, PRC will increasingly emphasize electronic communications to save paper and to be able to communicate more frequently with you. We are also moving toward giving you the option of electronic delivery of the PRC Update. Also, we are emailing surveys to get feedback from you. Recently, PRC e-mailed an online survey to gather member input for the PRC Steering Committee regarding a possible name change for the organization. If you would like to a) receive communications or b) the PRC Update by e-mail, or your e-mail has changed, please send your e-mail, name, address, city, zip and congregation or organization to prcsurvey@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

* PRC 2009 NATIONAL ECO-JUSTICE CONFERENCE

"Faith and Environment: Embracing God's Call to be Green"

July 7 – 11, 2009; Montreat Presbyterian Conference Center, Montreat, NC.

PRC members and friends are encouraged to come and learn more about what you can do to care for God's Creation. We promise to equip and inspire you as you make connections with prominent eco-justice leaders and fellow earth care believers. The conference is being organized in partnership with staff at Montreat and Warren Wilson College. Workshops and field trips for adults and youth will be offered. A limited number of scholarships will be available. **For further information and for on-line registration, check out www.montreat.org.**

* ECO-STEWARDS

Eco-Stewards West

July 5-12, 2009; Highlands Camp in Allenspark, CO; Greenwood Farm in Hardin, MT

Eco-Stewards Midwest

August 2-9 2009; Stronghold Retreat Center in Oregon, IL; Lakeview Presbyterian Church in Chicago, IL

HOW TO APPLY: We invite young adults who are passionate about environmental issues and the connection to their faith to visit our website and apply by May 1, 2009! If you are a pastor, youth leader, camp director, teacher, environmental activist, parent, or student and you know someone perfect for the PCC, pass it on. www.presbyterianconservationcorps.org

* GHOST RANCH SEMINARS

2009 seminar: "Ritual & Loving the Earth Fiercely"

2010 seminar: "Water & a Baptismal Life"

For registration, housing, facility and meal information and to see other courses being offered visit the online catalog at www.ghost ranch.org.

- * **THE NATIONAL TEACH-IN ON GLOBAL WARMING 2009** took place on February 5. This event was designed to "engage over a million Americans in solutions-driven dialogue." These policy recommendations were lifted up: cutting carbon 40% below today's levels by 2020; creating millions of green jobs; revitalize America's economy; promote carbon neutral power. *The web-cast can be downloaded and viewed at anytime at: www.nationalteachin.org.*

**PRC is looking for a new coordinator.
Please look for information at www.prcweb.org.**

AN EMPOWERMENT GUIDE

How you can be an agent of change:

- If your congregation has a resource center, urge them to purchase books and DVDs on global warming, such as faith version of *The Great Warming*. See the energy and global warming section of the PRC website www.prcweb.org for resources as well as Interfaith Power and Light www.theregenerationproject.org.
- Remind your congregation or Presbytery that the Presbyterian Church (USA) Investment and Loan Program www.pcusa.org/pilp/ provides low-interest loans for energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy. Also, many states and utilities provide incentives or rebates. See what is available in your state at www.dsireusa.org. Most investments in energy efficiency pay for themselves quickly so delaying action is not good stewardship of funds or creation.
- Keep informed. Sign up for action alerts from the Presbyterian Washington Office at www.pcusa.org/washington.htm or call them at 202-543-1126. On the second Tuesday of each month, the office coordinates visits of Presbyterians to their legislators and provides issue briefings. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program www.nccecojustice.org offers a useful e-newsletter that frequently includes action alerts on climate change. Also, there are numerous national, regional, state and local organizations focused on global warming and energy policies that will help inform and empower you.
- Offer to organize a workshop on improving energy efficiency or on global warming as a faith issue for your Presbytery. Invite local utility or IPL representatives to help.
- Download and distribute PRC's Carbon Neutral pamphlet found at www.prcweb.org.

- Estimate the carbon footprint of your congregation using www.coolcongregations.com and identify actions that you can take shrink it.



- Gather a group in your church or home to view the participate in the National Teach-in on Global Warming which started on February 5. The premise of the Teach-in is that “throughout history, the only force in American politics that has overcome gridlock in Washington has been a powerful grassroots movement.” Download a webcast dialogue on what needs to be done in the first 100 days of the new administration to slow climate change, and why. Follow with discussion materials provided by Interfaith Power and Light along with the first two pages of the PCUSA’s “Power to Change” report. For information go to www.nationalteachin.org/faithorganization.php
- Attend or recruit someone to attend the seventh annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Enough for All, March 13-16, 2009 in Washington, DC that will focus on the connections between climate change, migration and poverty in the US and around the world. To register, go to www.advocacydays.org.
- Host a screening of *Fighting Goliath*, a film about the successful grassroots efforts opposing the construction of 19 Texas coal plants in 2007 plus. Sign up at www.theregenerationproject.org for materials for faith-based study and discussion materials and a version of the DVD with a 5 minute segment, *Covenant*, on faith community involvement.



Energy choices, more than ever, are moral choices. As our planet grows warmer, our Christian witness must become bolder.

As individuals, families, congregations, and church administrative bodies, we must become the change we want to see in our nation. We must put our own houses in order even as we call on our nation to accept its moral responsibility with regard to energy policy and climate change. Together we must radically reduce our carbon footprint.

—218th General Assembly, “The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming.”

“The Power to Change: models of energy-efficient institutions and proponents of renewable energy” by providing information in resource centers and holding workshops, reducing the carbon footprint of meetings and working with working with the New Church Development Committee to ensure that all new and remodeled churches meet high-efficiency standards.

The report makes a number of recommendations directly to governments including shifting subsidies and financial incentives toward industries specializing in renewable energy and energy efficiency and away from the fossil fuel and nuclear power industries. Because of a more favorable political environment following the 2008 elections, the public debate on climate policy at the regional, state, and national level will provide many opportunities for people of faith to put their faith into action in the public square.

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God's Call to Eco-Stewardship, Sustainability and Greening Urban Communities

By Robin Garzoni of Holmes Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center

I draw to myself today
Strength of heaven,
Glory of sun,
Brightness of moon,
Radiance of fire,
Swiftiness of lightning,
Speed of wind,
Depth of sea,
Stability of earth,
Firmness of rock...

—18th Century Prayer for Protection on a Journey

The Presbyterian Conservation Corps (PCC), a collaboration of PRC and Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association (PCCCA) continues to listen for and hear God's call to eco-stewardship, sustainability and greening communities. Celtic prayer and worship were at the heart of the Eco-Stewards training this summer. As this style of prayer and worship centers on its appreciation for the natural world, it drew the Eco-Stewards closer to God and led the way as PCC continued its journey on June 5th-14th, 2008.

Under the Presbyterian Conservation Corps, young adults are training to become "Eco-Stewards." Four young adults assembled at Camp Lackawanna where Lorrie Loughney (Director of Lackawanna), Rob Mark (Co-Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Waltham, MA), Robin Garzoni and Fred Milligan led them in training.

Creative guest speakers assisted the Eco-Stewards as they built community, shared eco-testimonies, examined eco-theology and ethics, learned how to create presentations for varied age groups, and explored the process of change in an organization. Over the weekend, the Eco-Stewards assisted with and engaged in the Vosburg Neck Festival, a celebration of nature, culture, and history in the region. They also gave inspiration to many as they shared their eco-testimonies during a community worship service.

God's call to stewardship enables us to value creation, its diversity and connection. God holds us accountable for the choices we make that effect creation. The Eco-Stewards listened for their call to eco-stewardship through conversation and examination of what they can do. At Holmes, they learned how the newly-installed solar panels being used to provide hot water for the camp's staff cabins are making an impact on the camp program. Throughout their experience, spending time in creation allowed for a deeper sense of call to resonate.

As God holds humans accountable, it is important to remember to care for creation in order to conserve all that God provides. God creates systems and cycles that keep everything in balance. How can balance be sustained between conservation and consumption? The Eco-Stewards were challenged on their trip to Cascade Farm, a cooperative organic farm. Here they assisted in harvesting crops for a food bank in New York City to make the organic vegetables available to all of God's children. The facility staff shared the history and process of the farm. Here the crops are rotated in order to give the earth a chance to replace and refresh the natural resources consumed in the process of producing food. Participants were able to learn about God's call for sustainability and be a part of the action!

While living in the beauty of God's creation at camp, it is easy to feel connected and eager to care for creation. When we remove ourselves from the midst of God's creation, it is easy to get caught up in everyday life and to forget about how the choices we make each day will

A CANOE TRIP ON THE BRONX RIVER :

Upstream, the river is rather pristine and the community is able to enjoy the beauty and recreation it provides. In the area that the Eco-Stewards explored by canoe, dead animals, broken dolls and other trash floated alongside the nests of many birds who call this area home. Orange "water" was seen entering the river from a building nearby.





effect generations to come. The Eco-Stewards journeyed to Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) in Bronx, NY. Here, Stephen Oliveira, Environmental Justice Educator, gave a first hand look at the impact generations have had on the Bronx River area. The Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice empowers youth to make their own impact on their Bronx community.

A canoe trip on the Bronx River brought to light the dichotomy that exists. Upstream, the river is rather pristine and the community is able to enjoy the beauty and recreation it provides. In the area that the Eco-Stewards explored by canoe, dead animals, broken dolls and other trash floated alongside the nests of many birds who call this area home. Orange “water” was seen entering the river from a building nearby. The canoe trip ended beside the Concrete Plant Park. In early 1999, YMPJ received notice that the city intended to auction the Concrete Plant property. The group advocated that the property be converted into a public park for the children of the community, which is just one of the many successes for YMPJ.

After the adventure on the Bronx River, Stephen Oliveira provided a tour of the YMPJ office and its models for youth to teach Environmental Education in the community. There were examples of rain barrels, French drains being used to water rain gardens, green roofs and backyard composting. Eco-Stewardship can find a home within urban communities as well as in yours!

The lives of the Eco-Stewards were transformed through their education and hands-on experiences. One of the participants, Rachael Albers, said,

“My experience with the Eco-Stewards program has been amazingly fulfilling and inspiring to me, both as a Christian and a steward of creation! The Presbyterian Conservation Corps has given me an outlet to channel both my passion for sustainability and Christian com-

munity. I have loved being able to lead as well as learn from my peers on many issues relating to sustainability and environmental justice, which has been very rewarding. In order to affect mass change, one must rally a wide variety of people together and help them to understand the urgency of the issue and feel compelled to join the movement! I have been challenged by the PCC to approach the issue of environmental justice with a Christian heart, knowing that people are on all different legs of the journey, and understanding that I must find creative, loving, and relevant ways to communicate. Community is at the heart of what the PCC is all about, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to explore activism with a wonderful Christian community that supports me as I, too, fumble along in my own journey. I am excited to see where the PCC path will lead me next!”

Do you hear God’s call to eco-stewardship, sustainability and greening your community? Join us by encouraging young adults to participate in the PCC, by telling your congregation and governing body about PCC, by volunteering as a PCC leader, by identifying ministries that PCC participants can partner with after their experience, by financially supporting the PCC, and most importantly by praying for the leaders and young adults who participate.

To find out more about this program, visit www.presbyterianconservationcorps.org or join our Yahoo Group, www.groups.yahoo.com/group/conservationcorps.

In Summer 2009, we will have two Eco-Steward Trainings!

ECO-STEWARDS WEST (JULY 5TH–12TH) will be held in collaboration between Highlands Presbyterian Camp and Retreat Center in Colorado for training and the Greenwood Farm for a hands-on project of building a “green” house.

ECO-STEWARDS EAST (AUGUST 2ND–9TH) will be held at Stronghold Conference Center in Illinois followed by hands-on work in the Chicago community based out of Lakeview Presbyterian Church.

We are looking for Eco-Steward applicants from who demonstrate interest in church, camp, and environmental concerns. The application deadline is May 1, 2009.

Burning the Future . . .

by (the Rev.) David M. Brookman, PRC Update Editor

Recently Valley Watch, an Evansville-based group dedicated to protecting public health and the environment in the lower Ohio River Valley, sponsored a public showing of the film *"Burning the Future: Coal in America."* I thought about Robin Blakeman's article "Wake Up Call" in the last *Update* and decided that I couldn't miss the film despite 60 round trip miles on darkened, rain slicked roads. True, no mountain tops in Gibson County, Indiana were being razed in order to strip out the coal for the local electrical generating station west of my home in Princeton, Indiana. But I remembered how many TV commercials I had seen lately invoking the term "clean coal technology." Is this really the direction America needs to claim in order to power its future?

Writer/director David Novack seeks to repudiate this illusion in *"Burning the Future"* and does so by examining how mountain top mining in West Virginia has interrupted the intimacy between the people who live there and the land itself. As he recounts in his filmmaker's statement on the web: "As I began filming in the lush mountains of West Virginia, I thought I was telling the story of Coal – the historic role it played in building America, and the incredible position it holds today – providing Americans with half our electricity. Then I met Maria Gunnoe. Maria and thousands of people living in Appalachia are under environmental assault. Their land is destroyed, their loved ones are ill and the mountains they love are being blown away – in the name of 'cheap energy' for every American. But now, they are fighting to restore their cherished way of life. And with every new coal-fired power plant proposed across the globe, their fight becomes harder."

"They are fighting to restore their cherished way of life. And with every new coal-fired power plant proposed across the globe, their fight becomes harder."

—David Novack, Director

I grew up in Ohio cradled by a lovely wooded stretch of West Virginia's Appalachian foothills spread along the upper Ohio River and parts of the film proved especially poignant. Testimonies about the deleterious health consequences of mountain top mining were interwoven with scenes of a bulldozer pushing overburden down the side of a mountain into stream beds below. The result of this appalling destruction is that human communities are compromised even as the hydrology of the entire region is forever altered.

I recall a conversation with a high school classmate during a reunion that drifted into the subject of mountain top removal. We had not seen each other for many years and I was surprised by the vigor of her defense of the practices in question. "Mountain top removal creates jobs," she asserted. In fact, with the powerful technology in use now, there are fewer miners employed at present than there were decades ago. As the film's website (www.burningthefuture.semkehr.com) points out, "Every eleven and one half days, the explosive equivalent of the Hiroshima atomic bomb is unleashed upon the mountains of southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky."

I wonder now what sort of culturally conditioned trance afflicted my friend. It was probably the same cultural

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NEWS FROM GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

A Social Creed for the Twenty-first Century

by Chris Iosso

What is a "social creed," you may ask, and why one for this century?

A Social Creed is a one-page statement of what the churches stand for in the world. It is not a doctrinal creed, but it gets at both the overall vision of a better world, and principles that move us toward practical action. The original Social Creed of 1908 was developed as a Christian response to the harsh side of industrialization. The churches joined together to pledge their help for all "who labor and are heavy-laden;" they developed a consensus around what a "Christlike-God" would want in the new world of their time, with its growing cities and surging immigration. The Churches were particularly concerned to oppose child labor, as well as to support better working conditions, old age pensions and some other

items made into law 30 years later in the New Deal. The Churches were on target and ahead of their time.

Today's economic divisions are disturbingly similar in terms of the widest gap between rich and poor since the 1920's and the pressure on working families. The new Social Creed broadens the concerns to deal with globalization and sustainability, as well as the impacts of on-going wars and the particular dangers of climate change.

At the General Assembly, the most persuasive voice was that of a 20 year old Youth Advisory Delegate who urged immediate approval: "this is the kind of thing young people want to hear from the churches ..." As it turned out, 83% of the commissioners voted to adopt the Social Creed after debate, providing us a platform (if you will!) that goes considerably deeper than that of either political party.

The Social Creed, as well as additional background materials, can be found at www.pcusa.org/acswp/socialcreed.htm.

A Valley of the Sun

by David Sholin, PRC Member

The goal: to produce 8500 to 9500 kilowatt hours (kWh) a year and consume less than that.

After only one frustratingly false start (a mysteriously balky inverter), the second attempt at commissioning by our electric utility went well. With that our house is now in the solar electric energy-making business. And we only talked about doing it for 17 years.

So why now? If it weren't for several government and utility company incentives and rebates now available (which should be even better in 2009), we would probably still just be talking about it. As it is, we came to the conclusion that for us the long term cost, benefit and payback numbers make not just real environmental sense but real investment sense, too. (As I am writing this our utility is now considering a new 7% rate increase request.)

The environmental sense speaks for itself. The negative consequences of carbon based energy production are well known. For us, we're really looking forward to producing the electricity used to plug in a plug-in: bye-bye brown cloud. (Any of you familiar with Phoenix winter air quality know what I'm talking about.) And anyway like our son Mark says, "It's the right thing to do."

The system: 5.46 kW on-grid photovoltaic (PV) array with 26 (40" x 58") solar panels @ 210 watts each; a Fronius 5100W inverter (which feeds DC to AC converted current through the utility meter onto the grid)

Consider our investment sense: a one time \$20,000 yields \$1200 a year in saved electric bills; property values are increased by at least several percent; there is ownership of a warranted electric solar array system; not to mention that the excellent construction crew employed by the contractor to install the system are part of the local economy.

So here I am commissioned to make electricity with a few parting words to those who would be solar wise. 1) Study and anticipate shading patterns and panel system location design. Not all roof and shade tree configurations are PV compatible. 2) Know the importance of your inverter capacity (it dictates the possible size of the system). 3) Plan on regular panel surface cleaning. For us to regularly get on and off our southwestern style flat roof safely and easily has required building a sturdy stair system. (I want no ladder accidents in my future thank you very much.)

But like they say, watching the meter run backward makes it all worthwhile.

David Sholin and family are long time PRC members. Their energy enterprise is located in Ahwatukee Foothills, Phoenix, Arizona.

Do you have a story to share?

We are always looking for stories and typically take articles of 400 words or less. **The next submission date is April 15.**

Send your ideas to Jenny Holmes, jehrestore@aol.com

DVD REVIEW

Renewal



The producers say this: "This documentary is inspired by the many Americans who are answering a spiritual call to confront the enormous challenges of environmental degradation. From within their

Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and

Muslim traditions, these men, women and children are finding ways to become caretakers of the Earth.

"With great courage, they are re-examining what it means to be human and how we choose to live on this planet. The religious-environmental movement grows as people from diverse traditions work to build a sustainable future. *Renewal* is their story."

Renewal can be viewed as a 90-minute documentary, or each of the 8 stories can be viewed individually. The stories include Evangelical Christians bringing attention to the degradation caused by mountaintop removal; Muslims building relationships between urban communities and sustainable farms; a Jewish camp educating children in environmental care; a Buddhist community campaigning to save trees; Pentecostals combating industrial contamination in Mississippi; and Catholics and Native Americans protecting land and water.

Another story, *Going Green*, is about a partnership between GreenFaith, a New Jersey interfaith environmental coalition, and the Highland Park (NJ) Reformed Church. It tells about the activities that the church undertook in their journey to make environmental care central to their mission. I have used this story in a number of settings: a bible study, a creation cares small group, a session meeting and a presbytery workshop, and it has inspired the participants each time.

And in the last story, *Interfaith Power and Light*, you can see our moderator, Jenny Holmes! For more information, go to www.renewalproject.net.

—Sue Smith

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Burning the Future...

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trance that would have us affirm that "clean coal technology" is an appropriate energy strategy for America's future. It is time for all of us to disabuse ourselves of this lie. As the film makes clear sludge ponds created by cleaning the coal are responsible for dangerous and irremediable groundwater contamination as well as irreversible ecological patterns and trends that diminish the richness and diversity of life itself.

I suppose that the honest response to such tragic circumstances is lamentation. The following from Lamentations 5:1-5 seems appropriate:

Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!

Our inheritance has been turned
over to strangers, our homes to aliens.

We have become orphans, fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.

We must pay for the water we drink;
the wood we get must be bought.

With a yoke on our necks we are hard driven;
we are weary, we are given no rest.

Yet, as I write this, the swiftly passing days of Advent remind us of the unanticipated ways in which God accomplishes the mightiest deeds with the most understated, most tender mercies. Isn't Advent really all about responding to the invitation to shape one's vocation according to one's discernment of our Creator's presence in the world?

Even if we as individuals or communities cannot directly intercept the destruction taking place in Appalachia, we can declare our independence from coal. We can do this by becoming agents of change through raising the awareness of others in our communities of faith about global warming, by enhancing energy efficiency and by critically examining the choices we make. Then the creation that exuberantly embodies our Creator's imagination will not only survive but continue to nurture us as well.

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