

Presbyterians for Earth Care
Overture Presentations (Jan. 11, 2026)
for PC(USA) 227th General Assembly

Introduction to Overtures

During our last assembly, we submitted overtures related to Wilderness protection, Plastics pollution and Climate change mitigation through Fossil Fuel Divestment.

All three of those passed the assembly but the last one was brought back to the floor and reversed with a muddled result.

This year we have chosen to focus on Soil Health, Climate Change and Equipping the Church to assist congregations and communities to achieve a just transition to a green energy future and repairing environmental harms.

Along the way we have endeavored to consult as closely as possible with those servants of the church who work in the various components of what we now call the Interim Unified Agency, to resource the church for carrying out its mission. Many thanks to the individuals both staff as well as volunteer committee members from each office for their time and feedback without which these overtures would certainly have looked much different than they do. The list of online zoom consultations includes representatives from the following offices:

MRTI - Mission Responsibility Through Investment

ACSWP - Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy

PF - The Presbyterian Foundation

BoP - The Board of Pensions

G.A. Budgeting - Interim Unified Agency Budgeting Personnel

PHP - Presbyterian Hunger Program

Advocacy Support - Women and Gender, LGBTQIA+, Racial Equity

CANOPY - Creation Action Network of Presbyterian Young Adults
(Partnership)

OPW - Office of Public Witness

CRHH - Center for the Repair of Historic Harms

PEC membership

**On The Importance of Regenerative Farming Practices in Caring for the Earth --
Jim Turner**

The United Nations is worried that worldwide deterioration of soil threatens the security of food supplies within a decade. Fortunately, modern science knows how farmers can regenerate soil, and there is some spreading awareness of that among American farmers.

Unfortunately, there are some up-front added costs for farmers if they adopt practices that take better care of the soil. Recently the US Dept of Agriculture announced a 900-million dollar program to assist farmers in better soil management, but that is not big enough to meet the need.

Our society's awareness of the need for regenerative farming practices can influence how the USDA allocates its funds and can support the judgement of farmers who move promptly to adopt those practices. A 2022 policy statement of ACSWP urged Presbyterians to lead toward better public awareness of regenerative farming, and this overture aims to elaborate about that duty and express a readiness for coordination of supportive learning and activity. This can be accomplished through voluntary activity of Presbyterians, supported by existing resources of PCUSA, with few added costs.

This overture is motivated partly by a need to counter the greenwashing efforts of large corporations that may aim to sell genetically-modified fungi and bacteria to farmers for soil treatments., as well as maintain their sales of gasoline and chemicals to farmers. More profits can be retained by families on farms if they stick to regenerative practices that are named in the overture, resulting in rural communities that are more populated by young people.

The overture mentions managed grazing by animals, because that produces revenues that can help farmers to survive the extra upfront costs from other regenerative practices.

While some might want this overture to advocate abstinence from meat as a reduction of burden on farmland acres, to address that controversy would likely make the overture incapable of adoption and influence. Such advocacy can be considered for other occasions in the future, as guided by the Holy Spirit.

I am grateful that PEC members from various states helped write this overture.

The new Dietary Guidelines issued by RFK Jr this week give emphasis to the importance of nutrition. But the nutrition in food is affected by attributes of the soil that nurtured the green plants producing that food, and the Guidelines do not even mention soil. Furthermore, worldwide deterioration of soil threatens the security of food supplies within a decade.

Fortunately, modern science knows how farmers can regenerate soil, and there is some spreading awareness of that among farmers. But there are some up-front added costs

for farmers who adopt practices that take better care of the soil. Recently the US Dept of Agriculture announced a 900-million dollar program to assist farmers in better soil management, but that is not big enough to meet the need.

Our society's awareness of the need for better farming practices can influence how the USDA allocates its funds and can support the judgement of farmers who act wisely. A 2022 policy statement of ACSWP urged Presbyterians to lead toward better public awareness of regenerative farming, and this overture aims to elaborate about that duty and express a readiness for coordination of supportive learning and activity. This can be accomplished through voluntary activity of Presbyterians, supported by existing resources of PCUSA, with few added costs.

This overture is motivated partly by a need to counter the greenwashing efforts of large corporations that may aim to keep selling tractor fuel, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, as well as genetically-modified fungi and bacteria to farmers for soil treatments. Some companies now envision using cameras to spot an insect on a leaf and send a drone to spray a drop of insecticide on it. But families on farms can gain better profits if they stick to regenerative

practices such as those named in the overture. This can result in rural communities that are more populated by young people.

The overture mentions managed grazing by animals, because that produces revenues that help farmers to profit from regenerative practices. (An acceptance of 'grass-fed' meat from grazing animals stops far short of the Dietary Guidelines implicit acceptance of meat from animals confined in feedlots.) While some might want this overture to advocate abstinence from meat as a reduction of burden on farmland acres, to address that controversy would likely make the overture incapable of adoption and influence. Such advocacy can be considered for other occasions in the future, as guided by the Holy Spirit. In general, this overture presents a positive view of how farm families will benefit from better practices, and leaves it to individual Presbyterians whether and how they will comment on economic and social problems that are involved in agriculture.

Changing Course for a Green Future -- Drew Hill and Pam McVety

Drew Hill – The Recommendation Section

The recommendations for the actual policy of the continuation of the long-standing effort to encourage the denomination to divest from fossil fuels. I want to focus on what this

recommendation actually does because it is very intentionally grounded in existing church policy.

First of all, it does not introduce a new theology or a new investment framework. It seeks to align our financial practices with commitments the church has already made repeatedly on creation care and climate justice.

The overture also explicitly recognizes the progress underway, commending both the Presbyterian Foundation and the Board of Pensions for reducing their exposure to fossil fuel companies. So, it is not a rebuke of fiduciaries, it is recognition that the church is already moving in the right direction.

Third, and key, the overture operates fully within our current fiduciary divestment policy. It affirms the church has already satisfied the requirements of the 1984 divestment strategy, which allows divestment from a class of firms as part of normal fund management and christian witness. In other words, it applies our rules, not re-writing them.

The divestment itself it calls for is phased and prudent, calling for companies whose primary business more than 50% of their profit is in fossil fuels and setting a goal by 2030, or as prudent management allows, respects fiduciary discretion, market realities, and risk return standards and is really measured and responsible.

Lastly, the recommendation does not abandon engagement. Rather, it directs MRTI and related advocacy bodies within the church to shift the leverage towards lenders, insurers, and public witnesses where engagement can be more effective at this stage. Divestment is not a withdrawal, but a strategic reorientation. The recommendation also places PCUSA within a clear ecumenical consensus, including the WORld Council of Churches and other bodies that have already divested. It strengthens our public witness and makes clear this faithful and mainstream response, not an outlier position.

In short, this is careful, faithful, fiduciary aligned, and overdue confession to consistency with the policy our church has already repeatedly affirmed.

Pam McVety -- Rationale

Here is the main message of this rationale. We are asking the church to change.

We are asking the church to join the global transition to renewable energy and to move away from our financial investments in the polluting production and use of fossil fuels and in so doing to fulfill our witness to God's justice, care and hope for creation. This

more faithfully tracks with both the findings of the global climate science community and the guidance and policy of previous General Assemblies,

More specifically, our denomination has long affirmed that caring for creation is central to our discipleship and public witness and this includes the need to teach and to practice that which will meet the Genesis mandate to be caretakers of the Earth.

The 226th GA in 2024, recommitted the denomination to the urgent need to align our programs with the global efforts to transition away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner. This is critical because the science indicates that the world must make significant emissions reductions by 2030 to avoid temperatures which will be catastrophic for all life.

Further, the 226th GA confessed our denomination's failure to take sufficient action to implement a restoring creation turnaround as called for by the 202nd GA in 1990. This kind of confession and repentance must be matched with a change of direction.

This overture seeks to bring the church's financial practices into alignment with the commitments we have already made. The denomination continues to maintain significant investments in fossil fuel companies.

Our current engagement strategy has yielded limited improvement in corporate behavior related to emissions from their operations and does not address the larger problem, that the products of this industry are destabilizing the global climate.

Thus our existing investment posture remains out of step with the theological commitments and moral direction repeatedly expressed by past GA.

Our investments are contributing to the very harms that we claim we are trying to heal.

We are calling for this to change.

The Green Future Endowment Fund – Fred Milligan

While the climate emergency demands attention to its root causes in green-house gas production, we in the faith community are aware that the necessary transition away from fossil fuels must be a just one. We must leave no one behind as we seek a green energy future. In order for this transition to be not only necessary but also just, it must

account for the financial costs of making the leap to the new technologies as well as the loss and damage resulting from rising sea levels, changing growing seasons and the economic dislocation resulting from the introduction of new energy technologies. This is why we are recommending the establishment of a permanent Green Future Endowment Fund, to provide financial support for such needs.

As we consulted with our partners in the new CANOPY organization, we heard them asking important questions around what a just transition should involve. Some of that group are involved in the native American “Land Back” movement which seeks to restore oversight of wilderness areas to the “first nations” whose ancestors served as stewards of these lands for thousands of years before the arrival of European colonizers. Others are working around matters of historic racial inequities which have squeezed African Americans and other minorities out of the ownership of family farms.

There is a need for long term assistance after the more emergency help of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has ended. There is a need for help, especially in poor communities, with those who must learn new skills and seek new jobs when coal, gas and oil related work disappears. And many congregations and communities need financial grants (not merely low cost loans) for installing solar panels or adapting to climate change in other ways.

Lastly but not least of the considerations, as previous assemblies have committed us to the “polluter pays” principle, is the role of our denomination’s investments in this climate change related and green energy transition fueled dislocation, loss and damage. As we have profited greatly from investments in the fossil fuel industry, whose products contribute around 70% of all greenhouse gas emissions, we must acknowledge a certain amount of pollution “debt” which is rightfully ours to pay.

The ACSWP resolution, “Investing in a Green Future” adopted by the 2022 General Assembly expressed repentance for the church’s failure to live up to our previous pledges and called the church to make financial commitments to address these past failures of discipleship.

As we began to delve more deeply into prior policy documents we discovered that the 2008 General Assembly adopted a recommendation for establishment of a fund to assist congregations with the green transition which, so far, has never been established.

We are therefore proposing that a permanent endowment fund be established to provide some level of support to various of these aforementioned concerns in order that the necessary green energy transition might leave no one behind – that it might be a more just transition and not merely a necessary one.

Should this assembly adopt our plan, a design team would be appointed and assigned the task to bring back a plan for capitalization and implementation of this fund to 2028 at the 228th General Assembly. But we are hopeful that contributions to it may begin immediately following its approval at this summer's meeting in Milwaukee, the 227th.