

Diocese of Auckland, NZ
Fossil Fuel Divestment Resolution

Motion

“Synod requests that the Diocesan Council takes appropriate steps to ensure that no Diocesan funds are invested in corporations whose main business is the extraction and/or production of fossil fuels, and that existing holdings in such corporations are divested within 2 years.”

Mover: Mathew Newton

Seconder: Adrienne Puckey

On behalf of St. Paul’s Symonds St and the Diocesan Climate Change Action Group

Explanatory note

In April 2013, Archbishop Desmond Tutu issued a call for churches to divest from the fossil fuel industry, saying:

“The divestment movement played a key role in helping liberate South Africa. The corporations understood the logic of money even when they weren’t swayed by the dictates of morality. Climate change is a deeply moral issue too, of course. Here in Africa we see the dreadful suffering of people from worsening drought, from rising food prices, from floods, even though they’ve done nothing to cause the situation. Once again we can join together as a world and put pressure where it counts.”

Given that:

1. The Anglican Bishops of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia have acknowledged global climate change to be “a real and present danger to the future of this planet and the survival of the species” and have urged action on this important issue;
2. Global climate change will disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable—not least in the Pacific islands where sea level rise poses a grave threat—and is one of the most serious challenges to global health and social justice in human history;
3. Authoritative inter-governmental scientific reviews have concluded that the evidence for global warming is “unequivocal”, and vast systematic reviews of the last two decades of climate science find that fewer than 2% of peer-reviewed publications challenge the consensus position that human activity is causing global warming;
4. A recent report released by the World Bank states that if carbon emissions continue at the current rate, 4°C warming is likely before the end of the century, leading to rising sea levels inundating coastal cities, food and water scarcity, frequent extreme weather events such as heatwaves and cyclones, and the irreversible loss of biodiversity, including coral reef systems;
5. The Copenhagen Accord signed by world leaders in 2009 recognizes that global atmospheric temperature rises should be kept below 2°C to “prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”;
6. Research by the Carbon Tracker Initiative has found that 80% of known fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground (or sea) if we are to avoid exceeding a 2°C rise in global temperatures;

And given that:

7. The Auckland Diocese has already responded with conviction on the issue of climate change in the past through the establishment of its Diocesan Climate Change Action Group and has exercised significant leadership in the area of sustainable living;
8. The 'Marks of Mission' of the Diocese state that we "strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth" and "seek to transform the unjust structures of society";
9. The Diocese has a firm commitment to Ethical Investment and Social Responsibility;

We submit that Synod should consider investment in the fossil fuel industry to be unethical, socially irresponsible, and contrary to the Diocese's missional goals of the care of creation and social justice. Consequently, we propose that the Diocese divest its funds from corporations whose main business is the extraction and/or production of fossil fuels. It will be some time before the Diocese is carbon-neutral in its day-to-day activities, but divestment is a step within our reach today and would be a powerful act of moral leadership and Christian witness.

(References for this note are available in the Auckland Diocese Fossil Fuel Divestment Discussion Paper.)