

## **Range of Light Resolution as Adopted by the Sequoia Association of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ**

Date of Submission: April 25, 2022 & Adopted June 2022

A Resolution of Witness

### Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding

The Earth and its inhabitants are facing an existential crisis of global proportion that requires our immediate attention and action. The Bible is clear that we are part of God's creation (Psalm 24:1 *The earth is the LORD's and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants too.*). Therefore, we are responsible for creating and maintaining a healthy environment for all life as stated in Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."* The Earth is an original gift to sustain all life. We are responsible for restoring, protecting life and supporting policies and people that further that protection.

Furthermore, as stated in the preamble of the Earth Charter, "We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations." [2]

UCC has a long history of supporting environmental issues, starting with the recognition of environmental racism in the 1980s, continuing with studies on toxic pollution (1987, 2007, 2020), the campaign of the Three Great Loves: Neighbor, Children, and Creation (2017), programs on Green and Creation Justice Churches, and the formation of Environmental Justice Teams. The United Church of Christ Synod has passed resolutions that directly express concerns for Earthcare: [1] [4].

We support the Range of Light National Monument, as a designation that protects wildlife and enables peaceful recreation and restoration of our natural world. [4] Representative of biblical thought and witness that testifies that all of creation starts with God.

### **Motion**

WHEREAS all life, depends on flourishing and natural cycles, and those cycles depend upon a stable climate. Carbon dioxide emissions from human sources are causing climate change, which is harming these natural cycles of life, threatening humanity and leading to species' extinctions. One way to fight climate change and all the ensuing damage is to plant trees and restore wild habitats. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen, which is vital to providing air that we breathe, sustaining life and stabilizing our climate.

WHEREAS One way to support reforestation and re-wilding of landscapes is to preserve and protect the natural world, which has an additional benefit of providing spiritual places for people to experience nature. The fundamental idea behind recreation is that it's a "re-creation" of self and a rejuvenation of life within; nature is important for revitalization of humanity's spirituality as well as providing a direct source of life and nourishment. The proposed Range of Light National Monument is located between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks and in the center of the longest interconnected wilderness in the lower 48; as such it will re-create a 1.4-million-acre interconnected habitat area and establish a sacred space in one of the most vital landscapes in the world, the Sierra Nevada.

WHEREAS Half of California's native plant species live in Sierra Nevada and more than 400 are found nowhere else on earth. The monument area is home to 26 species of conifers, including the iconic Giant Sequoia. These trees are champions in the fight against climate change and play an important role in protecting the planet as a whole. In addition, 93 at-risk species live in the area, 12 of which are on the endangered species list including the Sierra Nevada Red Fox, the Pacific fisher and the Great Gray Owl.

WHEREAS The proposed Range of Light National Monument would also create a refuge where it is most needed for people – the proposed monument is adjacent to the Central Valley, a region suffering from the worst air and water pollution in the nation, and with a dearth of local, city and state parks, and home to a growing population with the need for clean air, pure water and time outside to experience peace, beauty and spiritual renewal.

WHEREAS The UCC has a long history of creation-care, starting with the recognition of environmental racism in the 1980s, continuing with studies on toxic pollution (1987, 2007, 2020), the campaign of the Three Great Loves: Neighbor, Children, and Creation (2017), programs on Green and Creation Justice Churches, and the formation of Environmental Justice Teams. The United Church of Christ Synod has passed resolutions that directly express concerns for Earthcare; [1] [4].

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Sequoia Association of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ (Sequoia Association of the NCNC/UCC) boldly proclaims in the public square that:

Humans need a dramatic shift from the point of view that the Earth and all her resources are available for our sole benefit. Nature was created as a mutually sustaining ecosystem, which is not to be destroyed or abused. People of faith are stewards of the land in our care, and the land itself provides a sacred place to spiritually connect with God and all of God's creatures. We proclaim publicly, "The Earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (PS. 24:1), and as such, we support the Range of Light National Monument, as a designation that protects wildlife and enables peaceful recreation and restoration of our natural world. [4]

The Earth is an original gift to sustain all life. We are responsible for restoring, protecting life and supporting policies and people that further that protection.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Sequoia Association of the NCNC/UCC listens to the cries of the Earth, adopts this "Range of Light" resolution, and takes the following prophetic actions:

Promote compassionate care, foster love, and co-live responsibly with the Earth Community of Life. [2] Safeguard the common goods, space and shared resources of the Earth, for humanity and biokind. Uphold the rights of ecological integrity, biodiversity, and healthy bioregions. Advocate intergenerational responsibility for the biotic community of the Earth, our mountains and gratitude of the natural world as a divine gift. [4]

Uphold the ecological principle that the Rights of Nature supersedes harmful and destructive property rights, for the balanced cycles of the natural world must be protected as a common good for the present and future generations of human life and biokind. [4]

Promote economies of life rather than unregulated extractive economies that exploit resources, such as logging, mining and grazing and seek financial reparations and restoration to the habitats when corporations and/or government projects harm and damage habitats.

Support the Earth Charter and the movement of Indigenous Peoples to grant legal standing to nature. [3] Urge all corporate and/or governmental land and water projects to perform environmental impact studies on minimizing damage to forests (waterways, lands, atmosphere) and wildlife. Promote the right of local communities or environmental organizations to represent the unheard voices and cries of Nature. [4]

Combat attitudes that relegate Nature to mere capital for profit or a dumping ground for toxic waste. Encourage the reduction of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides that negatively impact the soil, aquifers, and other life.

Promote the Rights of Nature to be free from human harm, including the right to healthy habitats, the right to species flourishing, and the right to fulfill their ecological potential without human infringements.

Support the protection and preservation of land for all people regardless of race, heritage, ethnicity or gender, and acknowledge that nature is a place that welcomes all, without prejudice or judgement. [4]

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Sequoia Association of the NCNC/UCC calls on all settings of the church to respond to the Range of Light proposal by taking intentional actions such as:

Fostering love of God's creation, organizing walks in the forest and wilderness areas, planting trees, taking nature hikes, and attending summer camps. [4]

Subscribing to the UCC Environmental Justice newsletters and environmental newsletters, sharing webinars, and reading and studying about creation care and climate change, as spiritual practices to equip us for creation care. [4]

Encourage individuals to participate in grassroots action and congregations to adopt and support an endorsement of the proposal ,communicating with federal agencies, as appropriate, and expressing the value of trees to the human community.

Organizing locally by partnering and building community networks with conservationist and environmental groups, and finding common ground to restore damaged environments. [4]

Appointing a member or members of the congregation to attend meetings and represent the United Church of Christ at important gathering regarding the management of our forests.

FUNDING: The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within Sequoia Association of the NCNC/UCC will determine the implementing body.

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[1] Past General Synod Resolutions: 2013, Mountain Top Removal: Coal Mining in Appalachia; Urging Divestment from Fossil Fuel Companies to Address Climate Change; On Making UCC Church Buildings More Carbon Neutral; 2015, Transition From Fossil Fuels to Renewable Energy; 2017, The Earth Is the Lord's, Not Ours to Wreck: Imperatives for a New Moral Order; 2019, Let Justice Roll: Declaring Support for the Green New Deal, Affirming the Intersectionality of Climate Justice with All Justice Issues, [https://www.ucc.org/environmental\\_resolutions\\_at\\_general\\_synod](https://www.ucc.org/environmental_resolutions_at_general_synod)

[2] Principle of the Earth Charter, <https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/preamble>

[3] Alexis Bunten, "What Do the Rights of Nature have do with Indigeneity?" BioNeers, <https://bioneers.org/rights-nature-indigeneity>; Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, <https://celdf.org/>; Mari Margold, "Marching towards Change: Faith and Governance in the Movement for the Rights of Nature," Center for Humans and Nature, <https://www.humansandnature.org/marching-toward-change>; David R. Boyd, The Rights of Nature: A Legal Revolution that Could Save the World, FVW Press, 2017.

[4] Denotes excerpts adopted from Resolution as Adopted by the United Church of Christ General Synod 33, July 11-18, 2021, "[Who Will Speak for the Trees? A Resolution on the Rights of Nature.](#)"

### **Contact Information**

Deanna Wulff, Executive Director  
Unite the Parks  
[director@unitetheparks.org](mailto:director@unitetheparks.org)  
408-464-2992

Bill Phelps-Ramos  
[williamphelps5356@gmail.com](mailto:williamphelps5356@gmail.com)  
661-304-2772

Kim Williams  
[kim.williams.1337@gmail.com](mailto:kim.williams.1337@gmail.com)