

Recommendation to Train Clergy in the Climate Change and Disaster Response

Submitted by the Retired Clergy Association - via Mission and Justice Committee

Number of Members: 20

Number present for vote: 20

Number voting YES: 17

Number voting NO: 0 Number of abstentions: 3

Date of Vote: March 18, 2026

Fiscal Impact: Unknown

Parliamentary Procedure in Plenary, Session Pursuant to Standing Rule I.C.5.a.

Recommendation:

1. Be it resolved, the Cal-Nevada Annual Conference will include in its clergy training instruction
2. about climate change and its current and projected impacts on our churches, mission fields, and
3. God's creation. These indispensable trainings will include a theological rationale for urgent
4. action to protect the community of God's creation based on Scripture and tradition and outlined
5. in the Book of Discipline and the Book of Resolutions. Primary elements of these trainings will
6. also include:
 7. Education about disaster prevention, response, and follow-up. These trainings will make
 8. clear that urgent action is required to protect the community of God's creation and to
 9. establish church readiness and resilience for the sake of their members and communities in
 10. today's context of disasters made more frequent and intense by climate change.
 11. Education about climate justice and the disproportionate harm inflicted on people living in
 12. poor and climate-vulnerable regions, on front line communities harmed by fossil fuel
 13. operations, on children and young people, on future generations, and on other species
 14. facing extinction; and an overview of the rationale, leadership, and strategies of the global
 15. movement for climate justice.
 16. Suggestions for church ministries and collaborative actions that offer relief from weather
 17. related disasters, provide help with adaptation, promote resilience, mitigate greenhouse gas
 18. emissions that cause climate change, and organize for advocacy and action for systemic
 19. change and sound climate and energy policies.
20. Be it further resolved, the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet, in consultation with the
21. Conference Climate Justice Ministries Task Force and the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement,
22. will identify seminaries, United Methodist Agencies, or other institutions that offer such courses or
23. trainings, and identify them as part of readiness for pastoral ministry for those in the preparation process
24. and for continuing education credits for active pastors.

Background:

It is essential that California-Nevada pastors be ready for the dramatic changes that are coming with climate change. As emissions and global temperatures steadily advance, the frequency and intensification of weather-related disasters will increase on every continent, but many [poor and marginalized countries](#) and [communities](#) will suffer the most severe effects. Rising temperatures and weather extremes counteract efforts to reduce poverty, including in the very regions where our churches reach out in mission to provide relief from suffering. [People in poor regions and black and brown communities](#) are disproportionately impacted by fossil fuel pollution and climate disasters. Wealthy nations are responsible for the bulk of historical emissions.

[Since 2023 average global temperatures have spiked](#), alarming scientists. Global temperatures are now hovering around 1.5°C, the lower limit of the Paris Agreement. Scientists warn that we face a perilous moment of choice. The window of time to stabilize the climate still stands open, but if we continue along the current path, it will soon slam shut.

Our conference has experienced numerous disasters intensified by climate change including fires and floods, and we are in an area that will also experience impacts of sea level rise. Churches as primary community centers need to be leading in discussion of the impacts of climate change on God's creation, and physically and organizationally getting their buildings and congregations ready to respond to such crises.

United Methodists have experienced disasters in recent years in Los Angeles, San Diego, Paradise, Weed/Mt. Shasta, Santa Rosa/Lake County, Monterey County, Marin County and more. Pastors and congregations that have gone through such disasters may be asked to assist in laying out necessary components. The Retired Clergy Association has members who have participated in disaster response work projects and can share their experiences and insights about the impacts of climate-change fueled disasters and possible responses.