

**GENERAL SYNOD 2016  
RESOLUTION**

**Resolution Number C001**

**Subject:** Fossil Fuel Divestment

**Moved By:** Archdeacon David Selzer, Ottawa

**Seconded By:** Reverend Monique Stone, Ottawa

**Be it resolved that this General Synod:** direct the managers of the Anglican Church of Canada's Consolidated Trust Fund to divest the Fund of holdings in fossil fuel extraction companies, as defined by fossilfreeindexes.com, and, where possible to reinvest in renewable energy industries.

**Source:** Memorial to General Synod passed at the 2015 Synod of the Diocese of Ottawa

**Submitted By:** Archdeacon David Selzer

Does this motion contain within it any financial implications?    No

If yes, has the General Synod Expenditures Committee considered the implications?    Yes    No

**EXPLANATORY NOTE/BACKGROUND**

This resolution derives from a Memorial to General Synod from the Synod meeting of the Diocese of Ottawa, on October 31st 2015. The Memorial, which was supported by over 95% of Ottawa delegates, was passed alongside a motion that commits the Diocese of Ottawa to fossil fuel divestment. Similar motions have been passed by the Dioceses of Montreal, Huron, Québec, and Toronto, as well as several of our ecumenical brothers and sisters, including the United Church of Canada.

Below is the rationale for the Memorial and for this resolution.

“The climate change crisis is the most urgent moral issue of our day.” This is the conclusion of an international group of Anglican bishops, including two Canadian bishops, National Indigenous Bishop Mark MacDonald and Bishop of Edmonton Jane Alexander, who met in February 2015 in Johannesburg to discuss the Church’s response to climate change. In their report, *The World is Our Host*, the bishops urge Anglicans to act. One action they recommend is supporting “environmental sustainability and justice by divesting from industries involved primarily in the extraction or distribution of fossil fuels.”

Why do the bishops say that climate change is the most urgent moral issue of our time? Because it is immoral to allow the widespread environmental and social destruction that climate change entails, given that we know how to avoid it. If we continue burning fossil fuels (oil, coal, and natural gas), the extreme hurricanes, floods, and droughts we have seen over the past few years will pale in comparison to those to come. Within the next few decades more than half of the world’s people will be living in

areas of severe food and water shortages due to intense, persistent drought, leading to millions of climate change refugees.

If we let this happen, there is no going back. But we can still stop it before it becomes catastrophic. This will require a very rapid shift, completely away from the fossil fuel-based economy, to an economy based on renewable energy. At the Paris climate summit in December 2015, the nations of the world, including Canada, agreed that to avoid climate catastrophe we need to limit the average global temperature increase to less than 2°C above the pre-industrial average. To accomplish this, 80% of known fossil fuel deposits must be left in the ground, never to be extracted and burned.

Publicized divestment is a symbolic gesture intended to press governments to implement policy change. For example, the anti-apartheid divestment movement was instrumental in convincing the South African government to end apartheid, even though it did not directly affect the South African companies that were its target. Similarly, the objective of fossil fuel divestment is to send the message to governments that they must quickly implement policies to move the economy off fossil fuels and onto renewable energy, in time to avoid climate calamity. Fossil fuel divestment focuses on the fossil fuel extraction industry because this industry is at the base of the fossil fuel economy. Governments that support continuation of the fossil fuel-based economy implicitly deny the reality of climate change, and condemn people around the world to an impossible future.

In our baptismal covenant we promise to “safeguard the integrity of God's creation.” Climate change is destroying the integrity of God’s creation, and if we have investments in the fossil fuel extraction industry, we are complicit in this destruction. Therefore, we request that the Anglican Church of Canada divest from major fossil fuel extraction companies.