

Peoples Church of Flint

Creation Justice Guiding Principles

Psalm 24:1-2

*The earth is God's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for God founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.*

Job 12:7-9

*But turn to the animals, and let them teach you; the birds of the air will tell you the truth.
Listen to the plants of the earth, and learn from them; let the fish of the sea become your teachers.
Who among all these does not know that the hand of God has done this?
In God's hand is the soul of every living thing;
in God's hand is the breath of all humankind.*

Genesis 2:15

*Then God took the earth creature and settled it in the garden of Eden
so that it might cultivate and care for the land.*

Preamble:

Peoples Church of Flint is committed to living as nurturers and care-takers of the earth with a special awareness for environmentally and socially just practices. As stated in our Garland Declaration, we extend our defense of the biblical commitments to the common good to "rainforests and oceans, animals and insects" and believe we have an obligation to the "integrity of the earth and restoration of creation."

The above scripture verses show us God's vision. The earth is God's and we are to tend it; to heed the animals, the birds of the air, the plants of the earth, and the fish of the sea. But when we reflect on how we are doing, there is no denying that the earth is in decline under our watch. We are in the sixth mass extinction, there is a growing number and ferocity of fires, hurricanes and droughts, the sea level is rising as the polar ice sheets are losing mass, and global temperature is rising to uninhabitable levels. If we remain on the current trajectory of despoiling the earth, the human story will follow, leading to massive, catastrophic, global suffering.

To be sure, there is no doubt about the beauty, majesty and wonder of creation. But there is also no doubt that we are systematically destroying its beauty by plundering its resources for our gain, blind to its majesty in our visions of personal greatness, and that we have lost all sense of wonder as we live as though we are gods. We act as if we have no appreciation for what we have been given or responsibility to those who come after us.

We at Peoples Church affirm by our choices and actions the beauty, majesty and wonder of creation. We affirm that the earth is God's, that we have been called to care for and tend it, to live in a way that replenishes it, allowing the earth and all creatures to thrive. We recognize that our choices and actions directly affect issues of justice in all its forms, in particular racial, environmental, and climate justice.

As long as people, animals, vegetation or the earth itself is suffering, dying, or languishing due to human action or inaction we must work to restore the earth to its original potential to bring joy and full, abundant life to every thing and person. We call on Peoples members to do this in our individual lives in our homes, as a church community participating in the city of Flint, MI, and by joining with others around the world.

In support of the Garland Declaration, adopted by Peoples Church in May 2020, which states that "the truth of human brokenness and deprivation obligates us to be on the side of creation — people, animals and the earth itself, struggling to breathe under the weight of greed, power and self-indulgence," this Statement of Creation Justice Guiding Principles is to be our guide for how we live.

Peoples Church is committed to:

1. raise awareness of the injustices that we inflict upon the earth and how they impact our community, our nation and our world;
2. right the wrongs that have been imposed on all those without power or a voice, the ones who are always the first to feel the devastating impact of social injustice, in this instance as it relates to our misuse of creation and the resultant changing climate;
3. join with other organizations to prepare for a world affected by climate change;
4. take action in our community and in our personal lives to reduce our negative impact on creation;
5. recognize the urgency that we must act, and we must act now.

To that end, Peoples will work to:

1. research environmentally just options for new purchases such as furniture, kitchen supplies, building supplies, and landscaping;
2. intentionally hire local contractors who support environmentally and socially just practices;
3. use fair trade and sustainable supplies and refrain from using single-use plastics for church events;
4. adopt a plant-based menu for church and community events;
5. challenge members and friends to consider their own consumption habits and choose to live sustainably;
6. offer resources to the community such as a Little Library, community garden, tool library, vehicle charging station, to encourage shared space and supplies to push back against consumerism;
7. provide hospitality to those affected by climate events locally and as climate migrants;
8. present events that educate and support the urgency of creation justice;
9. join in solidarity with local organizations that advocate for environmentally just policies especially as they relate to issues of inequality;
10. reduce energy consumption and utilize energy sources that are environmentally friendly;
11. become a carbon neutral church;
12. call upon elected officials to support legislation that advances environmentally just practices for the earth;
13. communicate to church and community opportunities to contact our politicians about specific environmental issues locally, nationally and globally;
14. share Peoples' vision of Creation Justice through print and online media to let visitors and the broader community know that Peoples is acting upon its values in meaningful ways.

Our efforts are not limited to these actions but they serve as a framework to guide us toward an intentional lifestyle that reflects the worth and value of all that God has made.

The Bottom Line:

We recognize that we cannot be completely "pure" in our use of the earth's resources and that we may not meet some of our stated goals, but as a congregation we will seek always to minimize harm, lift up peoples and communities, and care for all the inhabitants of the earth and indeed the earth itself, so that all may live freely and well and the earth may flourish.

We will further encourage People Church members and friends to consider these guidelines as families and individuals to determine the impact of their personal habits on the earth, on people both near and far, and all things created.

We choose to live visibly and intentionally in a way that gives evidence that we value the beauty, majesty, and wonder of creation.