



CARING IN CREATION

Position Statement

Adopted 10/27/98

The Montana Association of Churches affirms and supports:

- Humanity's responsibility to care in and for creation;
- The recognition that land ownership is not absolute, but a sacred trust given by God from the past for the present and the future;
- Economic vitality linked to social justice and environmental sustainability;
- Protection of land, air and water through laws and policies that phase in prohibitions against the discharge of harmful emissions and effluents;
- Restoration of air, land, and water quality whenever disrupted by harmful environmental practices;
- Sensitivity to the traditional values of American Indians concerning land use; and
- Assessment of the environmental impacts of alterations to Montana's ecosystem using scientific data gathering procedures.

We call upon all citizens, corporations, and our governmental representatives to seek ways to safeguard the quality of the air, land and water which we and our descendants need to live healthy lives and to have productive employment.

Supporting Statement

Our efforts to protect both the human community and the natural ecology are based on scriptural values which call us to protect human dignity, respect creation, ensure a safe environment, promote just and sustainable economic development, and protect ecosystems. All of us are called by God to be responsible in our creativity and in protecting and sustaining that part of creation placed in our care.

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." Gen. 1:31. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." Gen. 2:15 As a part of a good creation, humanity is to respect and care for the earth and all its creatures.

"For the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land." Lev. 25: 23b-24. Human ownership of land is not absolute; it is held in trust from God in partnership with all life. Ownership means responsible use. God intends the gifts of creation to be for the benefit of everyone. This implies that Montana's economic development is to benefit all of its citizens. Montana's natural resources cannot be wantonly exploited nor reserved for the advantage of a few.

It is possible to provide employment where workers are treated with dignity and given a living wage, and yet, continue to respect the environment. There is no inherent conflict between the worker's quest for employment and the community's goal of a sustainable environment.

Agriculture, mining, logging, tourism and recreation continue to be key elements of the social and economic fabric of Montana. Technology exists and can be developed which enables these and other industries to protect and enhance the air, land and water and be productive. Companies doing business

in Montana can eliminate environmental harms by seeking alternative processes and products. Government officials and agencies, as the guardians of public health and safety, can enact and enforce such laws and policies as are required to promote community health and well-being. All people can contribute to the protection and restoration of Montana's environment as caretakers of God's earth.

Biblical principles and American Indian traditions teach that the earth is to be respected and cared for. Earth's gifts are to be shared by all living beings through the ages.

Environmental impact statements and other types of environmental assessments which use the latest and best scientific data and methods of analysis give objective foundation for the development of legislation. The dissemination of these statements and assessments in a manner that is truthful and informative and accessible to the general public in terms of language and availability makes good environmental decisions possible.