

# Episcopal Ecological Network



(EpEN)

Reflect † Educate † Act

[eenonline.org](http://eenonline.org)

[news@eenonline.org](mailto:news@eenonline.org)

This paper  
prepared for the  
EpEN by  
Jerry Cappel, Diocese  
of Kentucky

July 1, 2009

## *Resolution A035:*

### *Establish Standing Commission on the Environment*

#### Talking Points

#### Main points in the resolution text:

##### Resolves:

- ☛ That the 76th General Convention establish the Standing Commission on the Environment;
- ☛ That this Standing Commission be consistent in size and authority with the other Standing Commissions of the Church;
- ☛ That the triennial budget be \$45,000.00, with enough extra money for a start-up meeting.

##### Rationale:

- ☛ The Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns. . . did not have the skills or time to study this [water - see background] or other matters affecting the environment which are equally serious and life-threatening.
- ☛ We have little policy in this Church on the environment, which limits the Presiding Bishop and the Office of Governmental Affairs in their capacity to speak for the Church and to work to safeguard the environment.

##### Key Points

"Ecological concerns" are almost always connected to other justice concerns. Examples include: toxic waste sites negatively impact human health; climate change directly affects the spread of tropical human diseases; rising sea levels, storm severity, and drought (if as predicted). These will create millions of "environmental refugees" over the next 50 years; and those whose voices are so often not heard represent those who suffer the most from climate change's impacts.

The Episcopal Church, as currently organized, does not have an organizational mechanism or funding, to effectively establish environmental priorities and goals.

The next triennium will be an especially important time for such a commission. The scientific consensus is that significant change in human behavior must take place within the next decade

While resolution 2006-C018 (see below) calls for acting with utmost urgency in addressing the church's environmental responsibility, The Episcopal Church currently has no recognized or funded commission to attend to this urgent area of concern to the church and our society.



# *Episcopal Ecological Network Talking Points*

## *Resolution A035: Establish Standing Commission on the Environment*

Page 2

Establishing an environmental commission highlights the fact that ecological concerns are to be a real, budgeted concern of The Episcopal Church, as called for by its own resolutions of past conventions. This is a matter of putting money and action behind our words and stated convictions.

The Episcopal Church has already begun to take a leading role in the faith community on environmental concerns. One example of this is that in 2008 it moved to staff the new position of Economic and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Officer. The next step is to add a commission, as called for in this resolution.

One of the goals of the EEA Officer is to assess and reduce the carbon emissions of The Episcopal Church. To effectively take this prophetic position, a commission to advance these concerns is needed over the next triennium.

The Obama administration is keen to establish policies to address climate change, energy and other environmental concerns. Along with other denominational bodies (ie. Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, Catholic, etc.), The Episcopal Church needs now to respond thoughtfully, wisely and with strength and passion.

### **Background:**

In late May of 2008, the Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, spent one week in Zimbabwe as the personal representative of the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori and at the invitation of Bishop Sabastian Bakare of the Diocese of Harare. While on that trip Rev. Shaw recognized the need for the church to make the connections between this poverty and injustice and the environmental issues of water quality and availability. That is the personal experience that has lead to this resolution A035.

The Episcopal Church **has already passed resolutions** that directly call for continued and urgent action on these issues of environmental degradation and justice:

2006-C018: Recognize Global Warming and Reaffirm Church's Environmental Responsibility (calls for the "highest urgency" from the church in reaffirming resolution 1991-A195).

1997-A036: To authorize the continued work of the Committee on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (calling for the funding of these subcommittees [including Environmental Stewardship] to carry out its work to facilitate communication and collaboration around these crucial issues).

The Episcopal Church has recently created a new position in the church: **Economic and Environmental Affairs Officer**. Mike Schut has been appointed to the position. The combination of economic and environmental affairs in the creation of Mike's position reflects the understanding that issues of the environment are also justice issues. Mike's new office in Seattle can be reached at [mschut@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:mschut@episcopalchurch.org).