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United Methodist Bishops Lead on Climate Protection

Church leaders complete new training on climate advocacy and environmental sustainability from the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement

Foundational milestone reinforces ongoing climate stewardship as a denominational top priority

October 1, 2026 – Nearly two dozen members of the United Methodist Council of Bishops recently completed a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive training course called *Speaking Up for Climate Action*, designed to ground participants in climate science, theological mandates and effective environmental advocacy. The foundational step is one more example of United Methodist Church (UMC) leaders embracing climate action and creation justice as a spiritual obligation and moral imperative, aligned with the UMC's overall pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

"I am deeply grateful for this opportunity, which helped us move our Church from awareness to action, from concern to commitment, and from faithful confession to faithful stewardship of God's creation," said Bishop Hee-Soo Jung of the Ohio Episcopal Area. "May what we have learned become courage, commitment and faithful witness in the places we serve."

"This work is fully aligned with our call to love God and neighbor and the UMC new vision statement that calls us to seek wholeness for all people and the planet as part of the Lead Courageously aspect," added Bishop Héctor A. Burgos-Núñez who serves the Susquehanna and Upper New York Conferences.

The United Methodist Creation Justice Movement (UMCJM) and the Center for Ecological Regeneration at Garrett Seminary partnered to develop *Speaking Up for Climate Action* at the request of the Justice and Reconciliation Leadership Team of the Council of Bishops which in late 2025 formally committed to prioritize climate action and

creation justice on behalf of the larger church. The bishops' commitment followed a UMCJM open letter to the council, rallying the church to reenergize its efforts to protect and heal God's creation.

The *Speaking Up for Climate Action* curriculum spans a wide range of topics – from the scientific facts and consequences of climate change, to the role of entrenched global systems that foster injustice, to the biblical and Wesleyan theological mandate to preserve the well-being of all creation and work for climate justice, and the ways that church leaders can influence their communities, empower others, facilitate action and amplify grassroots movements.

"Our aim is to help our bishops and others cut through the complexity of the climate debate, so they can be highly effective advocates for climate justice," said Rev. Dr. Becca Edwards, deacon in the Rio Texas Conference and Climate Policy Manager at Texas Impact, an interfaith public advocacy organization.

"It's vital that we all have a collective understanding, shared alignment and common starting point for climate action, which is what this training provides," agrees Kim Richmond, the Creation Care Ministry team co-coordinator for the Western North Carolina Conference. "We look forward to making the course more widely available, so that others in the church and beyond can be stronger and more confident in their activism."

A recording of the Sept. 18, 2026 training session is now available at umcreationjustice.org/speaking-up-for-climate-action-training. Also available is a brief video including climate testimonies from many of the Bishops who participated in the training, used to introduce the training. In addition, supporting materials and other valuable resources can be found by selecting "enroll" on this Garret Collective page. The recording, video and resources are free and available not only to UMC leaders, but anyone interested.

About the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement

The mission of the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement is to participate with the Spirit of God in connecting and supporting groups within the United Methodist Church and beyond for the work of creation care, justice and regeneration. Learn more and join our newsletter at umcreationjustice.org.

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