



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

United Church of Christ

General Information

The United Church of Christ (UCC) formed in 1957 when the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches of the United States merged into a single denomination. Through these formative branches, the UCC traces its history back to the Protestant Reformation and lays claim to a wide range of progressive firsts, including: the first mainline Protestant denomination to affirm same-gender marriage equality (2005); the first to ordain an African American (1785), a woman (1853), and an openly gay person (1972); and the first to study the link between racial inequality and the location of hazardous waste sites (1987).

More information about the United Church of Christ, including the Church's beliefs, structure, and history, can be found by going to <http://www.ucc.org/>

Number of members in the United States and Canada: 1.2 million

Official Statements on Animals

The Bible prohibits cruelty to animals. Our food choices should reflect this ideal

- **Every two years, the UCC holds a national convention, known as the General Synod, during which official Church resolutions are considered and voted upon. In 2011, the General Synod passed a resolution entitled “Resolution for Mindful and Faithful Eating.” This resolution reminds Christians that the Bible “prohibits cruelty to animals...and describes the peaceful, harmonious coexistence among all God’s creatures as an ideal.” Modern-day “concentrated animal feeding operations,” commonly known as CAFOs or factory farms, frequently violate these prohibitions and ideals through “intensive crowding and unhealthy living conditions” for animals, dangerous working conditions for employees, serious health risks for consumers, and long-term harm to the environment. For these reasons, the UCC urges members to “explore ways in which our food choices can be mindful and faithful, so that...what we eat reflects our values and beliefs.”**
- “The Bible affirms that humans have a sacred responsibility to care for the earth (Genesis 2:15) and our own bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19); prohibits cruelty to animals (Deuteronomy 22:10, 25:4); expresses concerns for workers (James 5:4), proclaims our Christian unity despite our dietary differences (Romans 14:20-21), and describes the peaceful, harmonious coexistence among all God’s creatures as an ideal...”

“Whereas, our dietary choices reflect many of these social, environmental, and economic justice issues, and

“Whereas, modern intensive farming is a leading cause of land, water, and energy consumption; worldwide animal agriculture contributes more to global warming (18% of greenhouse gases) than all forms of transportation combined (14%)...; and long-distance transport of food further increases the impact of our diets on the environment; and

“Whereas, the high injury rates and mistreatment of slaughterhouse workers has been well-documented...., and

“Whereas, the intensive crowding and unhealthy living conditions that typify concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) do not show respect for animals, and

“Whereas, animal and human welfare issues are intricately linked in numerous other ways, such as 1) pollution problems caused by CAFOs....; 2) bacterial resistance to antibiotics caused by the routine feeding of antibiotics to animals; 3) ‘Mad Cow Disease,’ bird flu, and other human health risks associated with intensive animal agricultural practices; 4) a wide range of medical disorders linked to the typical American diet, including heart disease, obesity, diabetes, arthritis, and certain cancers....; and 5) the negative impact of CAFOs on small family farms and thus on rural life, culture, and community, and

“Whereas, people have different nutritional needs, financial situations, and degrees of access to food, such that a mindful and faithful diet for one person at one location might be very different from a mindful and faithful diet for another person at another location....

“Therefore be it resolved that the Twenty-eighth General Synod invites Conferences, Associations, and congregations to explore ways in which our food choices can be mindful and faithful, so that, to the best of our abilities, what we eat reflects our values and beliefs; and

“Be it further resolved that the UCC Covenanted Ministries develop an Adult Education curriculum that compassionately and respectfully explores the ways in which our diets affect God’s earth, God’s animals, our God-given bodies, and the needs and concerns of workers, and this curriculum would explore ways that our food choices can reduce our ecological ‘footprint’ on the earth, be respectful of human and animal welfare concerns, and provide healthy nourishment for our bodies...”

--from the United Church of Christ, 28th General Synod, [Resolution for Mindful and Faithful Eating](#), (passed 7/5/11)

All animals--including animals used "in the laboratory and commercially"--deserve humane treatment

- **The Bible, says the UCC, repeatedly affirms the value of animals in God’s eyes and the need for humans to treat animals with compassion and care. Because God affirms the right of animals to “humane and respectful treatment,” the UCC invites members to educate themselves about the plight of animals and to question whether we are doing all we can and should to protect and preserve animals “both in their wild and tame states, and...in the laboratory and commercially.”**

- “Whereas, the biblical faith sees human beings as creatures of God, tenants in God’s earth (Leviticus 25:23) and stewards of creation;

“Whereas, the biblical charge to ‘have dominion over every living thing’ (Genesis 1:28) has often been understood as placing human beings above creation instead of part of it, while the scriptures teach that we *are* creatures and that we are to tend the earth for its creatures (Genesis 2:15);

“Whereas, the rainbow story of the covenant declares four times (Genesis 9:8-17) that God’s covenant is ‘with every living creature;’

“Whereas, the scriptures teach that our lives are to be filled with compassion, not cruelty, toward animals (Proverbs 12:10);

“Whereas, it is being urged by an increasing number of concerned and thoughtful Christians as well as others that all living creatures deserve humane and respectful treatment because, as living creatures, it is their right in the eyes of God;

“Whereas, human compassion and decency require not only that we care for our fellow human beings, but that we treat no creature with cruelty or carelessness; and

“Whereas, a growing awareness of our environmental responsibility has led to a concern for the preservation and protection of animals, both in their wild and tame states, and the use of animals in the laboratory and commercially;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Nineteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ commends to its members and congregations the consideration of our place among all living creatures as God's creatures, and invites them to evaluate human use of animals and resulting effects on the animals with questions such as these:

1. Are these animals treated justly, mercifully and with compassion and care?
2. Do these animals suffer unnecessary pain either in life or in death?
3. As a result of modern technology and advances, is there another, more humane way to supply our needs?
4. Does the benefit gained from the use of these animals outweigh the cost to them?
5. How does our current treatment of animals affect our spiritual development and welfare?
6. How does treatment of animals affect the diverse richness of God's creation?

“Be it further resolved that the Nineteenth General Synod invites the Conferences, Associations, and congregations of the United Church of Christ to gather educational and theological material on the place of animals and to share this information among these entities with the assistance of the Office for Church in Society so that our Church may study the relationships.”

--from United Church of Christ: *Minutes: Nineteen General Synod*, [Resolution: "Respect for Animals."](#)

Contemporary References on Animals

Each and every creature is a gift from God for which we must take responsibility and show gratitude

- "[E]ach creature and every living thing," says the UCC, is "part of the total gift" of God's universe. **Humanity has been granted dominion over this gift, says the Church, but has made the mistake of equating dominion with domination. Instead, we must see that "dominion means responsibility and gratitude for the gift..."**
- "Our Biblical heritage tells us that God created the entire universe and gifted humankind with the responsibility to maintain and honor the gift. If we see creation as a gift and not an entitlement--or an object to be dominated and controlled--then we practice respect and love for both the Giver and the gift. Dominion does not mean domination. Dominion

means responsibility and gratitude for the gift of life itself. In this way, we see every creature and every living thing as a part of the total gift and necessary to sustain life for the next generations to come.

"People of faith are called to be humble stewards of the natural systems of which they are a part. As the dominant specie[s] that has the opportunity for both harm to creation and care of creation, humans are challenged to examine their place in a holistic view of creation and ask themselves if they are humbly respectful or arrogantly harmful to God's creation. Every generation and every person has the ethical responsibility to determine their own and their community's own response to God's gift of creation and to see if their daily practices hurt or enhance what God has given to all."

--from United Church of Christ, "[Biodiversity](#),"

Racial-injustice and ecological-injustice are interconnected. Protecting animals can help protect humans

- **Since the 1980's, when research uncovered a link between racism and environmental degradation, the UCC has been committed to fighting the twin evils of social- and ecological-injustice. Evidence that these two problems are connected can be seen in issues impacting animal welfare. For instance, industrial hog farms, which inflict suffering on warehoused pigs, are predominantly located in or near communities of color. The untreated waste from these industrialized farms pollutes the surrounding ground water, sickening both wildlife and human communities. Another example of the connection between ecological- and social-injustice can be seen in the problem of global climate change, which, among its other problems, disrupts both arctic wildlife and the indigenous people who depend upon wildlife for their survival and cultural identity.**
- "Many ...corporate [animal] farms are located in or near communities of color. Corporate hog farms are some of the most egregious perpetrators of environmental racism. These hog farms create tremendous amounts of animal wastes. Factory-farm operations throughout North America have millions of gallons of liquefied animal feces stored in open lagoons that emit more than 400 different volatile, dangerous compounds into the atmosphere. These 'sewerless cities' generate so much surplus manure that it cannot be stored or disposed of safely. Some large hog farms produce volumes of untreated hog manure equivalent to the human waste of a city of 360,000 people. One hog farming operation in North Carolina carelessly allowed tons of untreated wastes to leach into groundwater sources. During a severe storm, the wastes ran off into rivers and killed wildlife and contaminated drinking water sources. The community affected was predominantly African American."
--from United Church of Christ, "[Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty 1987-2007](#)," (Cleveland: Justice and Witness Ministries, 2007), 118.
- "Global warming and climate change pose yet another serious threat. The land of the Indigenous people in the arctic region is literally melting under their feet, disrupting the lifecycles of the plants and animals they depend on, and forcing coastal and island communities to abandon their homes and traditional lands. What happens to a culture when the land and environment it stems from no longer exists? Even more frightening is that the proposed solutions to climate change, such as carbon trading, nuclear power, and

'clean' coal technologies, will only exacerbate the problems faced by Indigenous communities."

--from UCC, "[Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty 1987-2007](#)," 121.

God speaks through every living creature. We need to listen to "God's voice...in the world around us"

- **The UCC's commitment to creation-care and animal-protection is reflected in its liturgical materials. Prayers recited on Earth Day and Integrity of Creation Sunday (the second Sunday of Easter or the Sunday before Earth Day) remind members that God speaks through all creatures. If we are to hear God's voice, we must be attentive to God's creatures.**

- "Perhaps our doubting of God's presence in creation is what hinders our 'ecological outreach.' If we stopped to realize that God's presence is in every blade of grass, every cloud, then maybe we would do better at cherishing the gift we have been given. On Integrity of Creation Sunday and on Earth Day, the United Church of Christ expresses its commitment to ecological justice and the earth as teacher. In this simple prayer, we contemplate a classic Easter Bible story in a new way--listening to God's voice of peace in the world around us.

One: God speaks through rocks and trees and water.

People: *And the words 'peace be with you' are heard.*

One: God speaks through budding flowers and twinkling stars.

People: *And surely 'peace be with you' is heard.*

One: God speaks, and is still speaking, when every living creature on earth breathes.

People: *'Peace be with you. Peace be with you.'* (pause)

One: But some do not hear the words.

People: *Some do not hear God speaking through the land or the sea or the air.*

One: They doubt.

People: *God speaks, but they do not hear."*

--from United Church of Christ, "[God Speaks, Earth Speaks](#): A Contemplative Prayer Based on John 20:19-31," Integrity of Creation Sunday.

We must repent and reform our past "wanton and reckless" treatment of animals and the earth

- **The failure of humanity to listen to the voice of God in creation has resulted in wanton and reckless behavior toward animals and the planet. The UCC encourages members to reflect on past failures to "act compassionately and gently towards all forms of life" and to pray to God to "forgive us...and help us to change."**

- "Reader 1: God you created our planet, the birds, fish and other animals and you saw that all created things were good.
Reader 2: God of life, You also created us, the human family to be your viceroys and to act compassionately and gently towards all forms of life.
People: *Remind us, O God, and help us to change.*
Reader 1: We confess that we often forget that we are utterly dependent upon you and interdependent with the rest of your creation.
Reader 2: God of creation, we confess that instead of acting compassionately and gently toward all forms of life, humanity had behaved wantonly and recklessly.

People: Forgive us, O God, and help us to change.

Reader 1: God of compassion, our land lies polluted under our feet, and we see members of the animal kingdom, on land and in sea, dying as a result of the contamination that we have created.

Reader 2: God of grace, we confess that we are damaging the earth, the home that you have given us through our consumerism and the use of products that are constantly polluting our air, land, and water, harming wildlife and endangering human health.

People: Forgive us, O God, and help us to change.

Reader 1: God of wisdom, help us understand that whatever we do to the web of life we do to ourselves.

Reader 2: God of power, help us acknowledge that we must act now and wake up to our moral obligations and that the future of our beautiful planet is in our hands.

People: Forgive us, O God, and help us to change."

--from United Church of Christ, "[A Litany of an Environmental Confession,](#)"

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For more Humane Society of the United States Faith Outreach resources, visit **www.humanesociety.org/faith**.