No. 8545

RESOLUTION CONCERNING ACID RAIN

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Introduction

Acid Rain - A Subject of Christian Concern. In Christ, a redeemed humanity is the vanguard of the redemption of the created order. In Romans 8, Paul describes how the whole creation groans like a woman in labor, longing to see the children of God revealed in Christ.

An enhanced and liveable environment on earth is seen to be the consequence of the coming Christian community. To be careless or indifferent about environmental issues such as acid rain, therefore, is a contradiction of the new nature we share in Christ and a denial of God's justice for all peoples.

What Is Acid Rain? By definition, acid rain is any rain (or snow) that is more acidic than natural rain, which is only slightly acidic. However, acid rain has become a serious environment-threatening and life-threatening problem because it is frequently ten times more acidic than natural rain. On occasion, rainfall one to two thousand times more acidic than natural rain has been recorded in North America and Europe. This equals or exceeds the acid level of vinegar.

Human Sources. Scientists in Scandinavia and Western Europe have been measuring acid rain since the early 1950's. Measurements of acid rain began in North America in the late 1960's. Today it is the consensus of the scientific community in Europe and North America that at least ninety percent of all acid rain is the result of human activity. The National Academy of Sciences agrees with this conclusion.

The primary sources of acid rain are sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, gases produced in huge quantities in advanced nations such as Canada and the United States. The burning of high sulphur coal and oil in electrical generating facilities, and the smelting of ores containing several other non-iron metals, produce sulphur dioxide. Furthermore, several thousand coal powered vehicles not using catalytic converters release acid rain.
fall in rain. Changing winds carry the acid-producing emissions across state and national boundaries, making acid rain an interregional and international problem. In North America, acid rain involves both Canada and the United States.

Acid rain has rendered hundreds of lakes in southern Ontario, northern New York, and New England biologically dead. Tens of thousands of other lakes will die if the problem is not corrected. Runoff from acid rain and snow has killed off all the salmon in at least seven streams in Nova Scotia. Tourism, and recreational and commercial fishing industries are being hurt.

A convincing body of growing evidence has linked acid rain with sick and dying evergreen forests in various regions, including areas of eastern and western North America. Tourism and lumbering industries in these regions are among those which will eventually be hurt if the problem is not corrected.

Acid rain also leaches poisonous heavy metal compounds from the soil and deposits them in lakes in affected regions. These poisons are later concentrated in the food chain, potentially reaching high levels in fish and even higher levels in the bodies of people who eat the fish.

What Can Be Done About Acid Rain? The most important task is to reduce the production of the gases that cause acid rain by installing equipment to reduce emission at the source. Individuals can also help by reducing their personal consumption of energy, by making sure their cars have emission controls in good working order, and by recycling materials, especially copper and aluminum.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, August 2-7, 1985, endorse the Resolution on Acid Rain adopted by the National Council of Churches of the Churches of Christ (NCCC) Governing Board May 17, 1984, which reads,

"The NCCC Governing Board, concerned about the role of acid rain in damaging God's good Creation and the failure of persons and institutions in this country to carry out their responsibilities as stewards and as good neighbors, and, conscious of the fact that conclusive scientific confirmation of the relationship between sulphur dioxide emissions and acid rain may not be available until after irreversible harm has been done, calls upon the Congress, the Administration, and especially the Environmental Protection Agency rapidly to develop and implement an adequately funded and staffed program to reduce sulphur dioxide emission to no more than 12 million tons a year, and to lower nitrogen oxide emissions, within a decade, with significant immediate reductions.

"Such a program should involve strategies which are environmentally sound, preserve existing jobs and create new ones, encourage energy conservation and renewable energy sources, support research into environmentally sound technologies, and distribute costs among corporations, governments and consumers, taking specific steps to protect the poor.

"The NCCC Governing Board further calls upon its member communions, their local congregations and the ecumenical network to advocate for and support these measures."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly:

- encourage the governments of Canada and the United States to work quickly and closely together to develop and implement effective steps toward dealing with the nations' common problem of reducing toxic emissions in the atmosphere through a joint acid rain control program;
- encourage the environmental agencies of Canada and the United States to further enact and enforce regulations controlling the emission of nitrous oxides from gasoline powered engines;
- encourage the governments of Canada and the United States to allocate sufficient funds for programs to reduce and prevent acid rain and for the restoration of acid rain damaged areas; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly:

- call on regions, congregations, and members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to study the problem of acid rain in their geographic area and that they seek ways to become part of the resolution and prevention of acid rain problems;
- encourage congregations to pursue public awareness programs related to acid rain and to urge public schools and community agencies to do the same;
- urge individuals, as stewards of the earth, to follow the emission control guidelines for their own vehicles by not bypassing or altering the functioning of catalytic converters and other vehicle emission control system functions;
- encourage individuals to contribute to a reduction of sulphur dioxide in the atmosphere by recycling copper and aluminum.