

A Proclamation for Sustainability
Watts Street Baptist Church - Durham, NC
Earth Day - April 22, 2020

This Proclamation is borne from a deep love for our God, our Earth and all its inhabitants. WSBC believes the Earth is a sacred place, and that “because congregations are often on the front lines of caring for the most vulnerable, our leadership is especially important in guiding our communities toward appropriate responses and encouraging them to assist those who have been impacted by a changing climate.”*

Damage to the climate is caused by a build-up of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, due to human exploitation of God’s creation and the extraction economy built around fossil fuels. This hyper-consumerism and moral imbalance favors wealth, power and personal convenience over empathy, justice and sustainability. The result is mass extinction of plant and animal species, an increase in frequency and severity of wildfires, droughts, heat waves, ice melting, and unprecedented flooding caused by super storms and rising seas. WSBC acknowledges our part, as witnesses and participants, in this imbalance and the climate crisis. We acknowledge that while all living things are affected, the greatest human impacts are borne by the least among us who are often least at fault, here and around the world.

With a Biblical and spiritual foundation and with firm resolve, we commit ourselves as a community of believers to a path of ecological practices that reduce our negative impact on Earth’s environment, extends our mission of social justice, and expands our joy for the natural world.

WSBC is compelled to be courageous in our faith, and to look beyond existing paradigms to create a world that reflects God’s love through beauty, justice and hope. This bold imagination leads us to stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable among us, as Jesus did, by striving to become a net-zero emission church.

To become a net-zero emission church and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, WSBC commits to the following actions as spiritual practices that bring us nearer to God, the Earth, and all of creation. We will revisit these goals to celebrate progress and re-commit to action in 2022:

- Reduce landfill waste produced at the church and in our personal lives, and the environmental burden placed on Sampson County residents who host Durham’s landfill, through the following efforts:
 - Eliminate single-use items, especially petroleum-based items like plastic, at church
 - Compost all food waste and biodegradable products used on church premises
 - Recycle everything possible.
- Continue to pursue opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of WSBC and our stewardship of the land, water, air and all of Earth’s occupants, including:
 - Monitor stormwater runoff management from our building and two parking lots
 - Purchase or install renewable energy resources on church premises
 - Reduce urban heat through tree planting or other measures
 - Offer plant-based alternatives to meat-based meals in equal measure at all church functions.
- Ask and help our partners in the wider community to respect our climate-conscious policies and practices when using Watts Street’s facilities.
- As building needs and uses change, review WSBC land use decisions related to church property and the proportion of green space, building footprint and other impervious surfaces, as they might contribute to damage or healing of Earth’s climate.
- Explore creative ways to offset the effect of fossil fuel emissions from church activities when we cannot meaningfully reduce or eliminate them.

We pray for mercy and guidance as we seek to live in greater harmony with God’s creation.

Creation Care Ministry

-with thanks to Binkley Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, for Proclamation language inspiration

**American Baptist Churches, USA*