



United Methodist Interagency
Just and Equitable Net-Zero Coalition
Progress Report • April 2022

Beginning the Journey:

The Interagency Climate Commitment to Just and Equitable Net-Zero Emissions

The United Methodist interagency commitment to support a transition to a just and equitable net-zero emissions future is the most systematic, comprehensive, global emission reduction effort in the history of The United Methodist Church. This commitment, established in 2021, seeks to ensure that the ministries of the present support the flourishing of God's creation for the future.

The Formation of the Commitment

The genesis of the commitment emerged through conversations among five general agencies engaged in environmental stewardship ministries – Church and Society, Global Ministries, Higher Education and Ministry, United Women in Faith (previously United Methodist Women) and Wespeth Benefits and Investments. Aware of the international scientific community's urgent warnings of the risks of global temperature rise above 1.5°C, they decided that they needed to deepen their impact. With a vision for coordinating their collective efforts to reduce harmful, human-generated emissions through strategies that center equity and justice, they began strategizing

for shared action and inviting other agencies and commissions to join them. Together, they committed to a goal of just and equitable net-zero emissions by 2050 across ministries, facilities, operations and investments. They also committed to leveraging the gifts of the connection, putting equity and justice at the center as they work toward a just and equitable emission economy by 2050.

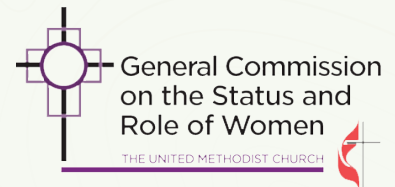
As a result of this commitment, United Methodist general agencies and commissions are working together as a coalition as they learn to measure the greenhouse gas emissions generated through their ministries. Their first step is to set a baseline in order to understand the sources and quantity of emissions. Then, with an understanding of their emissions, they can set interim goals and develop emission-reduction strategies that align with their capacities and contexts.

In mapping their contribution to the global challenge of climate change, agencies and commissions are also identifying connections to systems that create and perpetuate injustice. In developing plans to reduce emissions, they are working to not only 'do no harm' but also to 'do good' - to support a just and equitable transition that advances racial and gender equity.



Coalition Members

To date, the general agencies and commissions that have joined the commitment include:



United Methodist Publishing House is participating alongside the interagency coalition.

Organizing Structure

Core Team

The core team includes staff from Global Ministries, Church and Society, Higher Education and Ministry, United Women in Faith, United Methodist Communications and Wespeth with an open invitation to other agency representatives who wish to participate. This team meets bi-monthly to organize the overall effort, and coordinate training and education opportunities to equip agencies in planning and implementation of the work.

Work Areas

The work areas focus on implementation and reporting in the following areas central to the commitment:

1. Equity and justice
2. GHG emissions accounting
3. Communications.

Interagency Coalition

The broader coalition is made up of one or two representatives from each agency and commission. Representatives and other constituents will meet bimonthly in 2022 for education, training and skills development. In addition, representatives can invite other staff from their organizations to attend topical sessions—for example, we had agency staff invite colleagues from operations to an October 2021 discussion on reducing building emissions. We will discuss this example more in the next section.

Collaboration and Sharing

Because each agency and commission generates emissions in different ways, each can determine their own scope and focus while learning from each other. The coalition will seek to find ways to share lessons learned and resources with other United Methodists interested in taking just and equitable action towards net-zero.



Accountability and Reporting

Coalition members will be accountable to their boards to monitor progress toward the goal, and participate in a bi-annual coalition report. In 2021, representatives received an overview of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol accounting and reporting framework and training on EnergyStar Portfolio Manager, a tool that tracks energy use and emissions from buildings. These tools will support their tracking.

How Do We Know When We're at Zero? Counting Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The goal of just and equitable net-zero emissions by 2050 aligns with global efforts by governments, NGOs and the private sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere rapidly. Each agency and commission will reduce its heat-trapping emissions as much as possible and balance unavoidable emissions with an equivalent amount of emissions removed from the atmosphere.

Tools

GREENHOUSE GAS PROTOCOL

The coalition is using the [Greenhouse Gas \(GHG\) Protocol](#) to measure and track emissions. The GHG Protocol is the international standard for GHG accounting and reporting. It provides a framework for tracking the six categories of emissions covered by the [Kyoto Protocol](#). This framework allows users to track and understand their emissions relative to other nonprofits, businesses and countries, and helps agencies and commissions prioritize emission reduction efforts. By measuring emissions using the Protocol, agencies and commissions will know what parts of their ministries generate the highest emissions. Then they can target their short-term efforts toward the most impactful opportunities for emission reduction. Ongoing emission tracking over time will help them understand what's working and where to focus next.

The GHG Protocol organizes the tracking of emissions into three different scopes. For the first year of the commitment, the coalition has focused

on learning how to track emissions in [Scope 1 and Scope 2](#). In 2022, the coalition will begin learning to track emissions in [Scope 3](#).

ENERGY STAR PORTFOLIO MANAGER

The coalition has partnered with the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Energy Star Program to track emissions generated by agency buildings. [Energy Star Portfolio Manager](#) is a free, online tool that tracks building energy use and generates GHG Protocol-standard emission reports. The coalition has received training from the EPA as well as ongoing technical support.

Energy Star Portfolio Manager is also a tool congregations and conferences can use at no cost. Training and support are available through the [Energy Star for Congregations](#) program.

FIRST STEPS ON THE JOURNEY: MEASURING PROGRESS

The coalition members recognize that reporting is key to long-term accountability. In early 2022, each agency and commission responded to a [questionnaire](#) assessing understanding of how to measure emissions and progress in establishing processes for doing so. Key learnings include:

- ⚙️ All agencies and commissions in the coalition are in the process of identifying the most material sources of emissions they generate and considering strategies for reduction.
- ⚙️ In addition to the tools shared through the coalition, agencies are finding help in tracking emissions from property managers,

universities, energy management experts and through sectoral collaboration.

- ⚙ Many agencies and commissions have experienced emission-reducing transitions related to their workplaces in the last two years, including selling and consolidation of office space and transitions to hybrid or remote work. Some that share office space are considering how to work together on emission tracking.
- ⚙ Travel and events declined significantly during the pandemic. As staff consider travel and in-person events again, leaders are discerning how to effectively integrate emission reduction strategies into their planning.

THE CENTRALITY OF EQUITY AND JUSTICE

The net-zero commitment reflects both an understanding of God's invitation to care for God's good creation and a responsibility to address the ways the failure to do so has created environmental, economic and social injustice. The leaders of these agencies and commissions recognize that "the good news of the Kingdom must judge, redeem and reform the sinful social structures of our time" (¶102 Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task) and therefore commit themselves to transform broken and exploitative systems.

Simply attaining net-zero emissions could perpetuate the burden on communities that are suffering from our systems of extraction, production and waste. That is why equity and justice are at the core of the net-zero commitment. As the commitment states,

in reducing emissions, agencies and commissions will support a just and equitable transition that "dismantles structural barriers to racial and gender equity and builds resilient, flourishing communities."

The work is guided by the social teachings of The United Methodist Church, which in part affirm:

Confronted with the massive crisis of the deterioration of God's creation and called to a ministry of reconciliation between God, humankind and creation, we ask God's forgiveness and commit ourselves to a new way of being that integrates environmental, economic and social justice. As United Methodists we therefore are called to participate in God's healing of creation through acts of personal, social and civic righteousness. (#1033: Caring for Creation: A Call to Stewardship and Justice)

This work is connected to and a manifestation of the United Methodist denominational commitment to dismantling racism. And it is informed by and reflected through our global connection.

All participating agencies and commissions bring unique perspectives and gifts to this commitment. Through shared dialogue, learning sessions, faithful questions and in relationship with impacted communities, they seek to leverage these gifts to transform systems of oppression and exploitation into systems of health and liberation.

Just as the commitment to reducing emissions begins with setting an emissions baseline, the journey toward equity and justice begins with an assessment of how physical facilities and current practices are connected to communities and ecosystems.



Here are questions we are exploring relating to how we can further our commitment to equity and justice:

- ⚙️ How might we acknowledge the ancestral lands we are located on and establish, strengthen and heal relationships with native communities?
- ⚙️ How do our sources of energy impact our neighbors both near and far?
- ⚙️ How should the impact on the environment and our neighbors determine the types of non-GHG emissions-intensive energy sources we choose?
- ⚙️ What downstream communities are impacted by our facilities?
- ⚙️ How are our decisions responsive to the leadership of impacted communities?

- ⚙️ Where might we adjust our visible institutional policies and practices (i.e., meetings, facilities, communications) to better reflect our commitments to gender justice and racial equity?
- ⚙️ How might we initiate or join advocacy efforts to create lasting change?

This journey toward equity and justice is part of the discipleship journey - one that seeks to live the fullness of Micah 6:8 - to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. As agency and commission leaders step further along this journey, they do so committed to encouraging, challenging and supporting each other while always remaining open to the new ways the Holy Spirit is calling them to respond.



Agency Engagement

Each agency has unique gifts, practices and programs that shape their engagement with this common commitment to just and equitable net-zero emissions.

To follow are brief summaries from each agency on their current efforts:

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

Much of Discipleship Ministries' work is devoted to programs, training events and the publication of resources. They are currently creating a list of their publications related to creation care and stewardship as a reference for church leaders, small groups and others. They're also collecting information about the sustainability practices of the printers who produce their resources and the warehouses that distribute them. For programs and events, they have started working with caterers who use compostable materials and vendors who can provide compostable/recyclable materials when purchasing other supplies. Discipleship Ministries is also off-setting carbon emissions from events by planting trees.

THE GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY (GBCS)

Church and Society supports the just and equitable net-zero commitment both through alignment of their facilities, investments, operations and programming and through organizing and advocacy to transform unjust and exploitive systems. By educating, equipping and mobilizing United Methodists for action, Church and Society seeks to advance policies that reflect their shared

commitment to racial, gender and climate justice. To learn more about Church and Society's advocacy and organizing work, visit its [website](#).

THE GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES (GBGM)

Headquartered in a [LEED Platinum-certified](#) building with missionaries and staff around the world, Global Ministries leaders recognize that ensuring a stable climate and healthy ecosystems is central to the work of alleviating suffering and bringing healing and hope for all of God's creation, which includes all of God's people.

Global Ministries supports local churches, conferences, and partners around the world through four missional priorities: Missionaries, Evangelism and Church Growth, Global Health and Disaster Response and Recovery. The agency is developing strategies to reduce emissions in the 17 programs that support these priorities. Follow these efforts at <https://umcmmission.org/net-zero-2050/>.

THE GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY (GBHEM)

GBHEM has downsized its space. In the fall of 2021, they began leasing a shared working space in a much smaller area. They are mostly working from home and not traveling to the office. They lease space from another agency that is also committed to this project. GBHEM will be forming a task force to begin measuring and implementing processes for this project.

THE GENERAL COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY (GCAH)

As GCAH seeks to preserve the paper and digital records of the past, they are doing so with an eye towards a more eco-conscious future. They're thinking creatively as to how to preserve the paper records of the past while ensuring that future generations and iterations of United Methodism center ecological care.

THE GENERAL COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE (GCORR)

GCORR is committed to reducing its carbon footprint. They are working with sibling agencies to combat environment racism that disappointedly impacts communities of color at home and throughout the world. They will explore innovative options of connecting and developing anti-racist leaders that will ensure the reduction of their emission use in the forthcoming years and not creating more harm. The GCORR Board of Directors and staff will be identifying areas and plans that will contribute to reaching net just-zero (whereby all areas will be reduced) by 2050. Learn more on the [agency](#) and [R-Squared](#) websites.

THE GENERAL COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN (GCSRW)

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women leadership and Board of Directors are committed to reviewing and improving four areas: ministries, facilities, operations and investments. Using 2019 as a baseline they will:

- ⚙️ Create digital resources and increase virtual training events (Ministries)

- ⚙️ Reduce office square footage to decrease energy and paper use (Facilities)
- ⚙️ Minimize staff auto and air travel through remote work, virtual meetings and training events while reducing their boards auto and air travel by limiting in-person meetings to one. (Operations)
- ⚙️ Continue researching investing practices within their portfolio. (Investments)

Their next steps are to determine the measurement of these changes and to choose a project that will offset the carbon footprint to ultimately drive efforts that promote building a sustainable economy.

THE GENERAL COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (GCFA)

GCFA has resources and information that they can provide to the coalition members regarding ways to reduce or neutralize impact as it relates to travel and meeting planning. They are also in the process of co-locating with other agencies at 1908 Grand Avenue which should reduce GCFA's emissions impact. As further efforts are made towards the net-zero commitment, they will add information to the GCFA [website](#).

UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS (UMCOM)

The general agencies' commitment supports collective action in partnership with other United Methodists and faith communities. In this regard, United Methodist Communications plays an essential role in mobilizing audiences by raising [awareness](#) of the climate crisis, using storytelling

to put a human face on the issue, sharing [how church leaders are addressing climate change, providing how-tos](#) to empower those driving change and fostering dialogue. Creation care landing pages have been created to curate content so that it is easily accessible. These sites are targeted to their various audiences of [members](#), those [new to the church](#) and resources from various agencies for [church leaders](#). UCom is evaluating its facilities, programming and staff resourcing to holistically reduce the agency's GHG emissions.

UNITED METHODIST MEN (UMM)

The General Commission on United Methodist Men have evaluated the basics of lighting for the building and have swapped to LED. They note that getting the time to spend on specifics can be a challenge in this particular season for their agency.

UNITED METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE

The United Methodist Publishing House is in the early stages of a transition from maintaining 125,000 sq. ft. of owned office space with over 300 staff to an operation with approximately 120 staff by working remotely. It leases less than 1,500 sq. ft. of space for equipment and files for which it has no operational control. Travel by air or auto is only by exception, and daily operations are conducted exclusively via the internet. Given the magnitude of the changes, UMPH plans to use the next year to reestablish baseline metrics, set goals and map action plans.

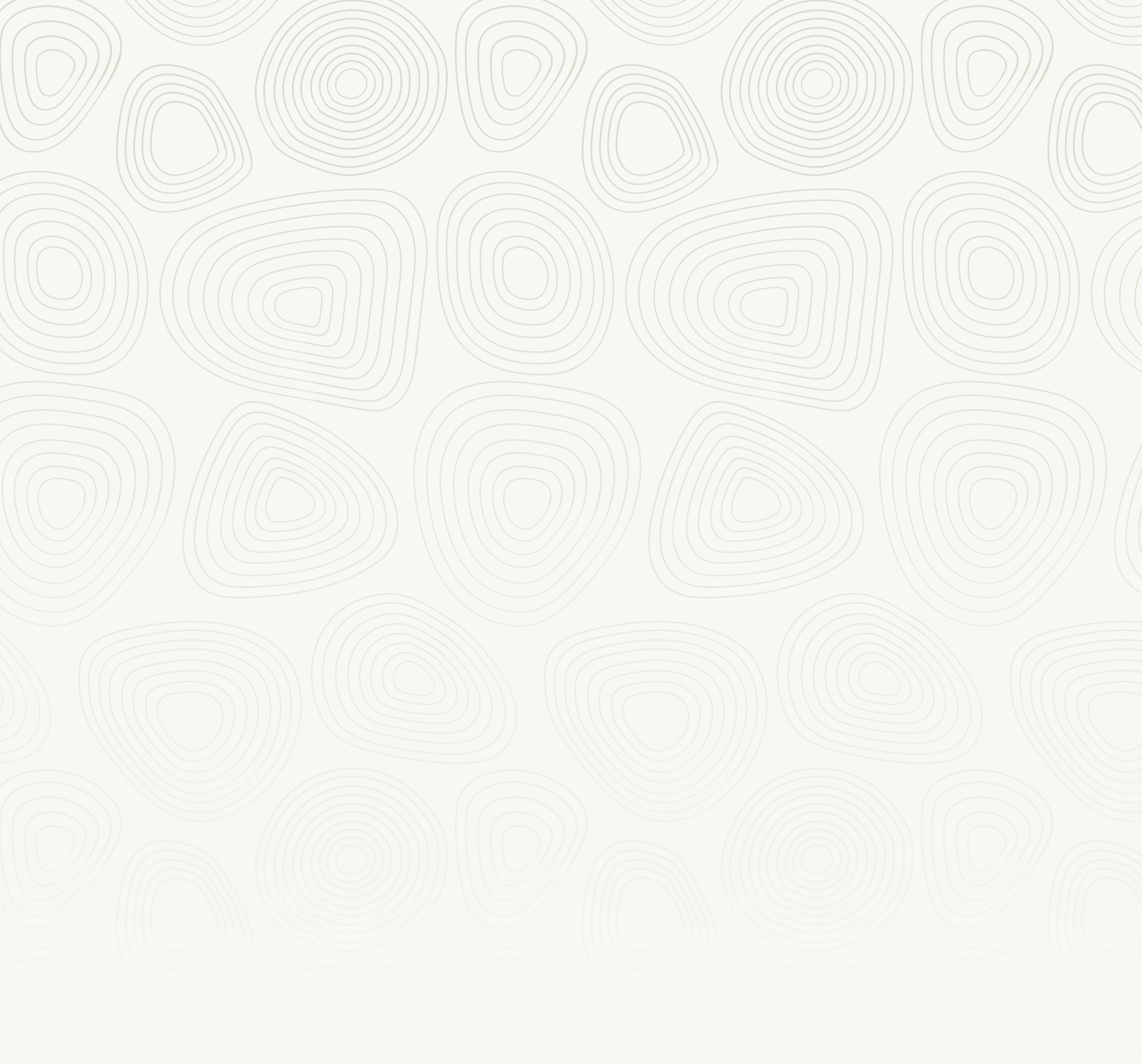
UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

The agency is exploring resources that they can provide within their area of influence with the National Mission Institutions (NMIs) across the United States. Last year they began sharing information about energy efficiency and their goal to reach net-zero. They encourage NMIs to be intentional about making their buildings more energy-efficient, i.e. installing energy-efficient windows, HVAC systems and LED lights, as well as purchasing energy star certified equipment. Some are exploring the feasibility of solar installation. UMW's Be Just. Be Green 13 Steps to Sustainability resources are also used at events for training.

WESPATH BENEFITS AND INVESTMENTS (WESPATH)

Wespath has been a well-known global leader in sustainable investment for many years. It has a long-standing commitment to contribute to a sustainable global economy—one that promotes social cohesion, with reliable access to basic necessities; long-term prosperity for all, with equal opportunities for advancement; and environmental health, with resilient ecosystems. More information is available on its [website](#).

Its culture is one in which all employees can directly contribute towards a net-zero future. Employees have led efforts to make and keep their building and operations green, from the building design and renewable energy sourcing, to composting on-site and community-supported agriculture.



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The people of The United Methodist Church®