



Written statement
submitted by
**The Most Reverend Michael Bruce Curry¹,
Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church²**
to the 66th session
of the
United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

March 14th – 25th, 2022

**“Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change,
environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”**

The Episcopal Church is a Christian denomination of 1.8 million members in 17 nations in North America, Latin America & the Caribbean, Europe and Asia & the Pacific and a member province of the worldwide Anglican Communion, the third largest Christian denomination.

As Christians, Episcopalians believe that God is the originator of all creation and created all humans equally in God’s image, worthy of dignity, love, liberty, and life-giving relationships with God, each other and creation. Our scriptures, Jesus’ way of love, and our baptismal covenant call us to love God and each other as ourselves, to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to care for creation. Responding to God’s abundant grace and love, we affirm the call to empower women and girls, including those identifying as transgender³, celebrate their diversity, honor their forerunners, and welcome next generations.

Our Christian values explain The Episcopal Church’s affirmation of United Nations international conventions, agreements and declarations calling for just and equal treatment of women and girls⁴, protection of creation, climate and environment⁵, poverty eradication and sustainable development⁶. Episcopalians support women and girls, and creation care, through their mission, programs⁷, legislation, policies and advocacy by individuals, congregations, dioceses, schools, seminaries, agencies and networks.

Episcopalians of all genders and in all regions report their experiences with intensifying impacts of climate change and related disasters, including droughts, desertification, floods, sea level rise, wildfires and heat waves, as well as biodiversity loss and pollution. These impacts disproportionately affect marginalized populations, resulting in increased disasters, land degradation, diminished quality of life and poorer health, violation of human rights, food insecurity and poverty, economic and political instability, insecurity and conflict, authoritarianism, displacement and forced migration, gender-based violence (including early and forced marriage, trafficking in children and women and intimate partner violence), and aggressive behavior, anxiety and mental health disorders. The Church responds

¹ The Most Reverend Michael Bruce Curry is the Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church. He submits this statement as the Church’s spokesperson charged by its Church’s *Canons and Constitutions* to “speak God’s words to the Church and to the world, as the representative of this Church and its episcopate in its corporate capacity” (*Canons and Constitutions of The Episcopal Church*, 2015. Title I, Canon 2, Sec. 4 (a)(2).)

² The Episcopal Church is incorporated by the State of New York as “The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.”

³ GC 2018-C022: Support End of Discrimination Against Transgender and Non-Binary People.

⁴ GC 2018-A039: Affirm the Work of The Episcopal Church at the United Nations; GC 2015-A020: Urge Episcopalians to Support the UN and Be Informed of the Church’s Consultative Status; 2015-D07: Ratify UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities; 1994-C024: Call for Ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc.

⁵ EXC102019.08: Mission Within The Episcopal Church and GC 2018-A018: Adopt Bishops’ Pastoral Teaching and Commit to Paris Climate Accord support the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement.

⁶ EXC102016.30: Support for U.N. Sustainable Development Goals.

⁷ GC 2012-A076: Recognize Mission and Work in Small Congregations.



vigorously at individual, local, diocesan, national and international levels by prioritizing environmental stewardship (“creation care”) and climate action through parish, diocesan and churchwide legislation, programming, financing and advocacy.⁸

While The Episcopal Church celebrates progress in achieving gender equality and empowerment for and by women and girls worldwide, it recognizes⁹ that they are disproportionately exposed to and impacted by the risks and injustices that climate change exacerbates, such as displacement, poverty, violence and disease.

Consequently, the Church urges member states, United Nations entities, and civil society to:

1) Address the climate emergency and implement gender mainstreaming across climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.

The survival of our planet and people depends upon urgent, widespread action to address the triple emergency¹⁰ of climate, biodiversity loss and pollution. Additionally, climate change disproportionately impacts the lives, livelihoods and progress of women and girls; gender inequalities and societal gender roles exacerbate its impacts, especially for women in rural areas, agriculturally based and/or low-income economies. Simultaneously, women and girls are active change agents with frontline experience and expertise, innovators in transformation, highly influential decision-makers, educators and caretakers, Indigenous and traditional knowledge keepers, adaptation and mitigation entrepreneurs, storytellers and speakers, stakeholders and sovereigns. These imbalances must be addressed in climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.

2) Prioritize responses and protections for women and girls marginalized by environmental racism.

Beyond assuring gender-responsive policies and programs, decision-makers must expose and confront colonialism, white supremacy, environmental racism and discrimination as root causes and drivers that have marginalized populations of women and girls for hundreds of years. We declare unacceptable the disproportionate inequalities and sufferings experienced by Indigenous women¹¹; women of color; women of African descent; women experiencing discrimination for their ethnicity, race, caste, descent¹², language, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity/expression¹³; women with disabilities¹⁴; women experiencing poverty; migrants, refugees, internally displaced, undocumented, or stateless women; rural women; older and ageing women; and women heads of households. Their human rights are frequently violated, and their lands, homes, resources, and opportunities unprotected from discriminatory and unsafe industrial and corporate practices, poor land use and planning, pollution, resource extractions and violation of Indigenous sacred spaces. States regularly fail to consult them on matters affecting them directly. In 2018, The Episcopal Church affirmed that no community, especially poor communities, those who live closest to the land in subsistence cultures, and members of marginalized ethnic groups, should bear a disproportionate risk of environmental pollution or degradation¹⁵.

⁸ In 2015, The Episcopal Church identified Creation Care as one of its three priorities, creating a churchwide Department of Creation Care to assist Episcopalians in responding and networking with each other, in 2018 passing 19 churchwide legislative resolutions on creation care. Episcopal Relief & Development recognizes climate change as one of three programmatic priorities. Church members advocate locally, nationally and globally within the UN system, and The Episcopal Church has attained observer organization status with the UNFCCC and UNEP.

⁹ GC 2018-B027 Encourage Gender-Inclusive Responses to Climate Change.

¹⁰ United Nations Environment Program (2021). *Making Peace With Nature*.

¹¹ GC 2012-A131: Express Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples.

¹² GC 2000-D024: Calls on U.S. Government to Condemn All Forms of Caste based Discrimination; GC 2015-A049: Prioritize Gender Equality Concerns in Foreign and Church Aid; GC 2012-A016: Affirm the Moral Responsibility to Protect Populations from Atrocities.

¹³ GC 2018-C022: Support End of Discrimination Against Transgender and Non-Binary People.

¹⁴ GC 2018-D090: Engaging the Church in Advocacy for Disability Rights.

¹⁵ GC 2018-A011: Affirm Commitment to Address Environmental Racism.



When Episcopalians embraced the call to “leave no one behind” and “reach the furthest behind first” in Agenda 2030¹⁶, this meant prioritizing these communities.

- 3) **Accelerate women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality and eradicate violence against women and girls.** To successfully overcome disproportionate impacts on women and girls in climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction, we must continually address underlying gender imbalances, eradicate violence against women and girls and promote gender equality education. Gender equality will only become reality once the whole of society understands its social, economic, and political benefits and agrees to transform root causes.

The Episcopal Church urges member states, the United Nations, civil society and all people to

- universally ratify and implement international legal frameworks including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement, Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 2030, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Security Council Resolution 1325 and Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁷.
- allocate 0.7% of national operating budgets for Sustainable Development Goals¹⁸;
- divest from fossil fuels, lower greenhouse gas emissions, accelerate climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and honor just transition;
- enforce environmental protections for clean air, clean water, biodiversity and wilderness protection;
- recognize and raise awareness that climate change differently impacts people by gender and that women and girls (including transgender¹⁹) are at the frontline of climate impact;
- research and report scientific evidence of impact on and responses by women and girls using gender-specific indicators and sex-disaggregated data²⁰;
- involve women in decisions affecting themselves, their families, and communities in response to disasters and humanitarian emergencies²¹;
- encourage and advocate for gender inclusive approaches to forced migration and displacement, increasing financial and practical support;
- lift women’s leadership on climate justice, support gender inclusive approaches to climate resilience and make available as resources institutions and providers working with disasters, climate refugees, maternal health, poverty alleviation, and addressing inequalities²²;
- protect the health of all persons from unsafe and unhealthy exposures to air and water pollution, toxic substances, or radiation in their food, water supply, living quarters, and workplaces²³;
- address unwise governmental decisions regarding land use, industrial, energy and transportation development, and application of environmental standards²⁴;

¹⁶EXC102016.30: Support for U.N. Sustainable Development Goals.

¹⁷ GC 1991-A091: Endorse United Nations' Statement on Discrimination Against Women; GC 1994-C024: Call for Ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

¹⁸ GC 2018-B027 Encourage Gender-Inclusive Responses to Climate Change.

¹⁹ GC 2018-C022: Support End of Discrimination Against Transgender and Non-Binary People.

²⁰ GC 2018-B027 Encourage Gender-Inclusive Responses to Climate Change.

²¹ GC 2018-B027 Encourage Gender-Inclusive Responses to Climate Change.

²² GC 2018-B027 Encourage Gender-Inclusive Responses to Climate Change.

²³ GC 2018-A011: Affirm Commitment to Address Environmental Racism.

²⁴ GC 2018-A011: Affirm Commitment to Address Environmental Racism.



- advocate for and support policies protecting these populations, the sanctity of communities and livelihood of future generations from disparate impacts of climate change and environmental degradation²⁵;
- protect the sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge²⁶;
- dismantle historical and contemporary forms of environmental racism, repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery²⁷ and pursue of truth and reconciliation processes and reparations;
- amplify voices and prioritize participation of Indigenous women and girls, youth, people of color in planning, resource allocation and programs and uphold their Free, Prior and Informed Consent²⁸;
- address food insecurity and sovereignty and ensure access to healthy food;
- ensure human rights education and awareness campaigns for all of society and enforce rights protections via local, national and international legal mechanisms;
- increase and extend access to basic resources, public social services and social protections and infrastructure for women and girls, including formal and informal education and training, universal health care, maternal²⁹ and infant health, sexual and reproductive health³⁰, equal access to health care regardless of gender³¹, paid family leave, affordable and safe childcare, viable social security systems³² and sustainable infrastructure, living wages for all³³ and equal pay for equal work;
- facilitate women's ownership of land, property, and businesses, especially in agriculture sectors;
- recognize women as contractual parties and participants in financial and commercial transactions;
- promote gender equality education for all, including transgender³⁴, and include men and boys;
- continue multi-stakeholder collaborations and grassroots awareness campaigns to end gender violence³⁵;
- strengthen legal and judicial protections, including law enforcement, for all women and girls, especially survivors of violence;
- ensure gender equality in consultation, policy design, decision-making, leadership and representation at all levels.

Twenty-five years after Beijing, five years after the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations must ensure ecojustice includes gender justice in climate, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.

²⁵ GC 2018-A011: Affirm Commitment to Address Environmental Racism.

²⁶ GC 2012-A132 Protect Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Sites and GC1991 D125: Oppose Oil Development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

²⁷ GC 2009-D035 Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery.

²⁸ Enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and supported by GC 2009-D035: Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery.

²⁹ GC 2018-D014: Addressing Maternal Mortality.

³⁰ GC 2018-D032: Advocate for Gender Equity, Including Reproductive Rights, in Healthcare.

³¹ GC 2018-D032: Equal Access to Health Care Regardless of Gender.

³² GC 2018-C041: Repair America's Safety Net.

³³ GC 2015-C048: Support Living Wage and Increase in the Minimum Wage.

³⁴ GC 2018-C022: Support End of Discrimination Against Transgender and Non-Binary People.

³⁵ GC2012-A139: Endorse Efforts Against Gender Violence.