



Pilgrim United Church of Christ

535 Stow St, Fond du Lac, WI 54935 * (920)921-0415

March 6, 2023

Dear Members and Friends of Pilgrim Church:

We are inviting you to a special Congregational Meeting of Pilgrim United Church of Christ on Sunday, April 2, 2023 following our 9:00 A.M. worship service.

The purpose of this meeting will be to review and vote on adopting a Creation Justice Covenant for Pilgrim United Church of Christ. This meeting has been called by the Senior Pastor and Council President on behalf of the Green Team.

Attached is a letter Pastor Rob wrote which lays out why he believes we need to seriously consider adopting this covenant. The covenant reads as follows:

As members and friends of Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, we unite in our desire and intention to do our part in healing God's creation and working to bring environmental justice to those who suffer. We understand that degradation of the environment affects everyone and often the poor are impacted the most. Through education, advocacy and action we will strive to bring wholeness to a suffering planet and people. We will do our best to be good examples and teachers for the next generation, so they will learn to cherish God's gift of life and continue the work we begin. May the Spirit of Love empower us.

The agenda for the meeting will flow as follows:

- Declaration of a Quorum
- Opening Prayer
- Presentation of the Creation Justice Covenant
- Discussion
- Vote to Affirm the Creation Justice Covenant
- Recognitions
- Adjournment

We look forward to seeing you there.

Peace,

Patti Burns
Council President 2023

Rev Rob Van Ess
Senior Pastor

We Need a Clear Message

I believe that becoming a Creation Justice Church is vital for our continued growth and development as a faith community. It hasn't been that long since we were last shut down due to concerns over Covid (a little over one year). We are still reawakening as a church to our new normal. Churches across the country report people who broke the habit of attending church during the lockdown have not come back since. In many ways the church, like all our institutions, feels more disconnected from the community and reality than ever before. Let me take that to the next level: In many ways all of us are more disconnected from the community and reality than ever before. The shutdown may be over but the barriers of thought, both political and philosophical, are wide and vast. I don't think we've ever been more unsure and untrusting as a nation, as a state, or as a city, than we are now. There is a disconnect between our perceptions of "us" and "them" that threatens to tear our nation, our families, and yes, our churches, apart. **What we need now more than anything is to be authentic with a clear message of who we are and what we believe in.** THAT's what becoming a Creation Justice Church does for us. It provides us with an authentic and clear message.

Over the past two months we have shared Quill articles about what becoming a Creation Justice Church means. We have talked about how this is but one of the 8 Justice World Covenant programs in The United Church of Christ (UCC). Becoming a Creation Justice Church in The United Church of Christ (UCC) is like becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) Church. Both serve as ways by which the congregation can discern who we are and what we believe in. After which a covenant is created and voted on by the congregation where everyone agrees to the shared values expressed within. Doing this helps us to align our hearts and minds on various issues of great concern. Sometimes the conversations can be controversial and political while other times everyone seems to be in general agreement. Yet, if the conversation never happens does anything really change? That is one of the reasons why the Just World Covenant Programs exist in the UCC. Because if nothing changes, nothing changes. Just World covenants are all about our commitment to change.

Our ONA process was not an easy one that had roots in a conversation that took almost 20 years to complete. As a result we now not only have an ONA covenant proclaiming God's love for all, we have an obligation to continue to address these issues in the life of the church. Educating our membership and the community at large about the Christian values we hold dear that compel us to accept all of God's children without restriction to age, sex, gender, orientation, physical or mental ability, etc.

The same applies for the less controversial vote on becoming a Creation Justice Church. I don't know of anyone who doesn't want our planet to be loved and cared for to prevent the extinction of all life on earth. But that's not enough. As followers of the way of Jesus we need to do more. As a church we need to do more. As both members of our community and our families we need to do more. That's what our vote to become a Creation Justice Church is all about. We begin with the church which we consider the body of Christ. Literally the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. What would Jesus do to protect the planet? Would Jesus recycle? Would Jesus compost? Would Jesus lead the way by example? Would Jesus stop using single use plastics and start washing the dishes when need be? Yes, I do believe Jesus would do all of the above. Love radiates from the center of Jesus' ministry and love motivates our various Just World Covenant Programs. Our ONA process challenged us to consider who God is calling us to love while looking at many historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. Our Creation Justice Church process challenges us to love the earth and each other, I dare say this covenant compels us to love the entire universe. Both programs will provide us with an authentic and clear message that reveals who we are and what we believe in. This will help us to reach others who need to hear the unique and powerful gospel of love we proclaim, and we may just play a small part in saving the planet for future generations. Please join me in supporting our vote to become a Creation Justice Church on Sun. April 2nd immediately following worship.

Sincerely,



Pastor Rob