

Background and context: Park View Mennonite Church took renewed interest in its ecological impact in 2009 by creating a new council to give focused attention to creation care concerns in its operations, and among its members. This new approach was part of a biblical and theological affirmation of PVMC's commitment to mirror God's own love and care for creation and God's love and care for the vulnerable and poor of the world. Since 2009 the Creation Care Council (CCC) has launched many new initiatives to extend greater care to creation and now proposes that PVMC acknowledge and pay for its own contribution to climate change by transferring the value of the ecological cost to reparation projects in areas of the world most affected and least able to adapt to a changing climate.

Climate change and emissions: The position of the CCC on climate change recognizes both the perils of climate emissions from fossil fuel derived energy, generally, and the complicity of the church in its ongoing use of such fuels in its operations. To become sustainable, PVMC must reduce its consumption of fossil fuels and eventually achieve climate neutrality. While this transition is underway, PVMC will collect a monetary value of the unpaid ecological costs and provide the funds to reparation projects with the objective of achieving the following:

1. PVMCers will recognize that we are not currently paying the full cost of fossil fuel-derived energy through our regular utility bills
2. Through annually budgeted contributions to climate-change reparations, we will begin to structurally pay for some of the ecological costs, while fulfilling our mission of addressing situations of human suffering in the world
3. PVMC will establish a designated Climate Change Reparation Fund and encourage voluntary contributions for the purpose of building more widespread support and offering a mechanism for members to meet their personal (and church) ecological commitments
4. Future PVMC decisions about energy use and alternative sources will include full cost calculations as part of the cost-benefit analysis

Assumptions and Mechanisms: Initially, PVMC will assess full cost pricing only on its energy utilities (electricity and propane), acknowledging that other activities (driving, air travel, asphalt parking) associated with the operation of the church also have damaging emissions; these may be added later. The cost of emissions for electricity will reflect the actual regional fuel mix for the local utility; this will need to be reviewed every few years for accuracy. Desiring to use objective, third-party data on the cost of carbon, PVMC will use EPA calculations, at a 3% discount rate, at the 95th percentile; this amounts to \$116 per metric ton of CO₂e (through 2020) and adds six cents/KWh for electricity, and 67 cents/gallon for propane. With these parameters, the total cost of carbon emissions for actual PVMC utility usage in 2014 is \$6,478; this will be accounted for with an operating expense (\$2,500) budgeted annually, with the balance raised each year from members' individual contributions to a Climate Change Reparations Fund (CCRF). The CCC will

take the responsibility of researching, identifying, and recommending projects to receive funding from the CCRF.

Summary and Perspective: Placing a value on climate emissions will help PVMC first of all recognize the true/full cost of our actions. Second, it will provide a mechanism for the church to account for its actions and assist some of those harmed by climate change. Finally, this approach will help speed the transition from unsustainable (and damaging) fossil fuel-derived energy to clean(er) and/or renewable sources. To do nothing with the knowledge we have is to accept that our enjoyment of conditioned and lit buildings, cooked food, and travel when and where we want is more important than the simple survival needs of some of our global neighbors. Perhaps in the West we have come to assume that our “way of life” is natural, maybe even simplistic, yet if it comes from the exploitation of fossil fuels, it is neither natural nor sustainable; it is certainly not “simple living” in a global or long-term perspective. To do nothing is to place our luxurious wants above the desperate and survival needs of the world’s poor.

This approach to climate emissions is guided by the following beliefs and understandings adopted by the PVMC Creation Care Council:

1. We believe that God created the earth in all its majesty, that God loves and cares for each living creature, and that we honor God by loving and caring for others and creation.
2. We accept the scientific consensus on the realities of climate change and the role of human behavior in contributing to the problem.¹
3. We acknowledge that the wealth and opportunities afforded us today, unprecedented in human history, are partly due to energy derived from fossil fuels over the past 150 years, which we now know to cause climate imbalances.
4. We understand that the effects of climate change will disproportionately impact those who have contributed to it least, and who are least-equipped to adapt to predicted environmental, social, economic, and political changes.
5. We recognize that our continued emissions of greenhouse gases places further strain on the poor and disadvantaged and impacts all of Creation, and that the operations of PVMC and each of our individual parts in it are currently contributing to climate change.
6. We acknowledge that we have a faith-based responsibility (and perhaps a human moral imperative) and choice as a body, and as individuals, to reduce our climate impact.

¹ International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report (2014)

