

PREAMBLE

We, the African-American Churches represent the historical consequences and exist as the response and result of racial segregation and discrimination. Though our institutional life and existence are due to such historical circumstances, our being is of God manifested in the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. We continue to live in the community of that Spirit.

Traditionally, the mission of our African-American Church reflects responses to the religious, social, economic, and political needs of our people. Accordingly, our Church has combined into one the model of Mary, gathered around the Word in preaching and sacraments, and the model of Martha, serving the basic human survival needs. (Luke 10:38-42). We recognize that presently those needs are intricately linked to the preservation of God's Holy Creation which we are called to proclaim and protect.

It is that mission which has brought us together at the Black Church Environmental and Economic Justice Summit on December 1-2, 1993 in Washington, D.C. We have come, as the leadership of the six historic Black Churches, members of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA, together with local pastors, and lay leaders of our congregations under the theme: 'The Earth is the Lords'. We have come in recognition of the collective threats to our planet earth which has generated this global environmental crisis. We have come to condemn the rampant materialism and greed of our society which contributes to the pollution of the earth. We have come to oppose environmental racism which leads to the disproportionate toxic dumping in our community.

As church leaders, who are committed to the full authority of the scripture, we are aware of the ways in which we, too, have degraded creation and fallen short before the glory of God. It is out of that confession that we make the following commitments:

COMMITMENT

We commit ourselves to be vigilant and steadfast as we deepen our resolve as servants of Jesus Christ to be faithful to the leading of the Holy Spirit in living out our environmental justice concerns. In these times, the Spirit leads the Church into an understanding of life as one: - inter-related and inter-dependent: - and into an understanding that dominion is not mastery over nature, but rather stewardship of creation.

We, the Black Churches, historically committed to justice issues; affirm the unitary nature of life and commit ourselves to the ministry of converging justice and environmental issues that are critical matters of life and death for our Church, our community and for the African Diaspora. We commit our Churches to the formation of a Black Church Environmental and Economic Justice Network which will:

- A) Stand in solidarity with people in struggle in local communities.
- B) Educate our members about legislative and executive initiatives on environmental justice issues.

- C) Bring this issue before our Annual General Boards, Assemblies and Conventions.
- D) Struggle against damage to the environment which poses threats disproportionately to the health and well-being of the poor and the powerless.
- E) Challenge the environmental movement to respond to the call to include economic and racial justice priorities.
- F) Work for change in national and international governmental policies and corporate practices that inflict environmental and racial injustices.

To ensure that this declaration is a document which lives up to the spirit engendered at the Summit, we commit ourselves to build, maintain and expand the Black Church Environmental and Economic Justice Network by calling together the members from each of the historic Black Churches along with grassroots persons to follow-up on this urgent agenda which will proclaim through action that: "THE EARTH IS THE LORDS".