

2015 RESOLUTION ON CLEAN WATER

From the beginning of creation God filled the earth with an abundance of life-giving and life-sustaining water. God commanded humankind to be caretakers of creation (Genesis 1:28), which includes caring for the precious resource of water. We believe that God’s gift of water should be enjoyed and cared for by all people. The United Nations resolution of July 28, 2010, declares that clean drinking water is a basic human right.

Today we are experiencing a water crisis that is causing a “silent tsunami” of human suffering and ecological damage in every nation. Despite significant progress in the past twenty years, approximately 750 million people—one out of ten people in the world— do not have access to clean water. Approximately 1.8 billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with feces. More than 840,000 people die each year from diarrhea as a result from unsafe drinking water (340,000 of whom are children). By 2025, half of the world’s population will be living in water-stressed areas.¹ In addition to human costs, watersheds and ecosystems are degraded, harming other species that also depend on clean, accessible water. This ongoing crisis is due to complex and interrelated factors that include²:

- *Misuse*—Population growth and general overconsumption by developed nations stress water sources and disrupt watersheds and ecosystems. Irrigation practices in agriculture often add stress and deplete and contaminate rivers, lakes, and aquifers.
- *Pollution*—Water is often contaminated from industrial waste, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and household sewage and waste water.
- *Changing Weather Patterns*—The marked increase of severe droughts and floods make water sources more unpredictable and unreliable.
- *Politics*—International, national, and local policies often codify harmful water practices and deny basic water rights to people in need, including people in the United States and Canada. Conflicts over water are predicted to rise as nations and communities compete over the same water resources.

Despite these challenges, we are not without hope. God declares through the prophet Amos, “Let justice roll on like a mighty river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24, NIV). Jesus not only blessed the sharing of water with others (Matthew 10:42), he said, “I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink” (Matthew 25:35). Increasing access to clean water will:

- Save lives and improve the health of people, communities, and ecosystems.
- Enable more children to attend school, particularly girls.
- Allow more time for work other than collecting water, particularly for women.
- Provide economic benefits for families and promote peaceful and stable communities.

In light of this need and this call we resolve to:

1. Cultivate lifestyles that preserve, conserve, share, and protect God’s precious gift of water.
2. Participate in and support programs that increase access to clean water and sanitation.
3. Raise awareness of the issues surrounding the global water crisis.
4. Advocate for just and sustainable policies that address these issues.

¹ World Health Organization Water Fact Sheet #391, July 2014, available at www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs391/en/

² For detailed information on the causes behind the current water crisis, see the resource section of this resolution.

Resources

For further study:

- UN Resolution 64/292, “The human right to water and sanitation”
- *A Silent Tsunami: The Urgent Need for Clean Water and Sanitation*, by William K. Reilly and Harriet C. Babbitt
- *Enough: Why the World’s Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty*, by Roger Thurow and Scott Kilman
- *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*, by Marc Reisner

Ministries working on clean water:

- Covenant World Mission www.covchurch.org/mission
- Covenant World Relief www.covchurch.org/relief
- Paul Carlson Partnership www.paulcarlson.org
- Covenant Kids Congo www.covchurch.org/covenantkidscongo
- Bread for the World www.bread.org
- Water 1st www.water1st.org
- Look for other agencies in your local community.