

Petition to Further Resolution A087
Through the Development of Congregation-Based Plans to Achieve Carbon-Neutral Facilities
and Operations by 2030

Frequently Asked Questions about the resolution:

What does it mean to be carbon neutral or net-zero carbon?

Carbon neutrality means that there is a balance between the amount of carbon that is emitted by a facility and the amount of carbon emissions that are absorbed or removed from the atmosphere using offsets. For example, carbon can be removed from the atmosphere by planting trees or offset by purchasing carbon “credits.”

A net-zero facility does not emit carbon at all, such as a facility that runs entirely on solar power. Net-zero facilities do not use fossil fuels and do not require an offset.

What are congregations asked to do?

- Study, pray, and work to discern how the Spirit is leading the congregation to address climate change in their households and daily lives.
- Conduct a facility needs assessment to identify actions necessary to enable the congregation’s facilities and operations to become carbon neutral by 2030. The results of the assessment should be presented to the vestry by the end of 2024.

What does the overall process involve?

The process involves three components:

- Conducting a facility needs assessment to identify the extent of carbon emissions produced.
- Exploring different options to reduce, offset, or eliminate carbon emissions, and the benefits (pros) and challenges (cons) associated with each option.
- Considering available programs and funding to pursue carbon neutrality.

What is the Commission on the Environment asked to do?

The Commission on the Environment will:

- Provide education, guidance, and resources to assist congregations and other diocesan organizations as they develop their needs assessments.

- Conduct ongoing research to identify potential financial resources to carry out the measures identified in the facility needs assessments to promote carbon neutrality while preventing undue financial burdens on congregations.

Are congregations required to implement the actions identified in their facility needs assessments by 2030?

Congregations are not required to implement the plans by 2030; however, the General Convention adopted Resolution A087, Net Carbon Neutrality by 2030, commits the Church to a goal of net carbon neutrality in its operations and the work of staff, standing commissions, and interim bodies. The proposed effort by individual congregations is intended to support the Church's resolution to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Does this mean that congregations need to install solar panels on their churches?

No. Solar panels are one option/tool for achieving carbon neutrality.

What if the church building is a historical landmark or structurally inadequate to support the installation of solar panels?

The purpose of the facility needs assessment is to explore opportunities to reduce, offset, or eliminate carbon emissions to achieve carbon neutrality. Recognizing challenges such as historical landmark status or structural limitations is part of that process. Potential options should not be limited to on-site solar production.

What can a church do to move toward carbon neutrality without having solar panels?

Carbon neutrality is not confined to facility operation, but extends to congregational processes and behaviors. For example, congregations may choose to conduct meetings using Zoom or other technology to reduce the expenditure of fossil fuels associated with travel to and from committee meetings or other events. Congregations may wish to reconsider who they purchase energy from and choose to purchase energy from only a clean energy provider. The purpose of the facility needs assessment is to consider the many ways in which the use of fossil fuels can be reduced, offset, or eliminated.

What expenses are involved with the assessment process and becoming carbon neutral?

The Commission on the Environment anticipates no cost associated with the facility needs assessment process. The Commission will provide congregations with the information and tools necessary to undertake the needs assessment. The outcome of that process may identify necessary investments, and the Commission will work with congregations to identify potential funding sources.