

Promoting Pesticide Reduction

SPONSORS: Jubilee Social Justice, St. Paul's Cathedral
The Venerable J. Stannard Baker; The Very Rev. Greta Getlein; The Rev. Lisa Ransom

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RESOLVED, That the 190th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont give thanks for the gift of our inter-relatedness with God's creation and express lament regarding the damage to soil, contamination of food, surface water and groundwater, loss of pollinators essential for food production, loss of species, violation of the web of life and the promotion of human disease caused by over-reliance on pesticides at roughly one million pounds a year in Vermont; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention ask Senator Peter Welch, a member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, to co-sponsor S.269, Protect America's Children from Toxic Pesticides Act, and to seek action on this bill in this committee as soon as possible; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention ask Representative Becca Balint to be a co-sponsor of H.R. 5085, companion bill to S.269; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention recommend that all churches and properties belonging to the Episcopal Church in Vermont be managed without toxins whenever possible in order to protect human health and integrity of Creation; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention recommend collaboration between the Diocese of Vermont and Vermont Pesticide & Poison Action Network to promote pesticide reduction in Vermont.

EXPLANATION:

***Glory to you, Lord! Heaven and Earth are full of your Glory!
You made us the Stewards of your Creation. But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust..."***

Pesticide use statistics indicate that over 1 million pounds of pesticides have been used every year (except 2020) in Vermont since 2010.

Senate Bill 269, Protect America's Children from Toxic Pesticides Act, was introduced in February of this year by Senator Cory Booker and is awaiting action in the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, of which Senator Peter Welch is a member and not yet a cosponsor. Several Vermonters have spoken with his staff about the bill. Find the text and list of cosponsors here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/269>

H.R.5085 was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative James McGovern of Massachusetts. Find information on the bill here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5085/all-info>

An article about the Vermont Pesticide & Poison Action Network may be found here:

<https://vermontdailychronicle.com/new-pesticide-rules-wont-protect-people-or-pollinating-bees-activists-say/>

The 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church passed Resolution C026 in 2003, (https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_generate_pdf.pl?resolution=2003-C026) as follows:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention urge congregations, dioceses, provinces, and all church institutions to initiate a plan in the next triennium for the management of church buildings and grounds that *phases out the use of unsafe pesticides, herbicides, and other toxic chemicals to control pests and undesirable plants, and institutes the use of alternatives (emphasis added)* recognizing that children are the population most susceptible to toxins; and be it further Resolved, That the appropriate standing committee report back to the 75th General Convention regarding the ongoing effectiveness of this work.”

Several factors bring urgency to the work of reducing toxins in Vermont now:

- new science confirming carcinogenicity of glyphosate-based herbicides (Roundup); (Rana, I et al. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chemosphere.2023.139572>)
- new understanding that “the dose does NOT make the poison”, that pesticides and PFAS can have lasting and serious effects at very *low* amounts; (Birnbaum, LS. 2012. <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/ehp.1205179>)
- contamination of pesticide products with per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) without disclosure; (Lasee, S et al. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S266691102200020X?via%3Dihub>)
- role of PFAS in human disease, undermining immune systems, reducing efficacy of vaccinations; (Sunderland, E et al, 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6380916/>)
- detection by U.S. Geological Services of 7 pesticides in Lake Champlain in 2021:
 - Four herbicides: AMPA (break-down product of glyphosate), atrazine, diuron, metolachlor;
 - Three insecticides: chlorantraniliprole and two neonicotinoids toxic to bees, clothianidin and thiamethoxam; (Matt, S. 2022. <https://www.usgs.gov/data/synoptic-study-glyphosate-neonicotinoids-and-selected-other-pesticides-streams-draining-lake>)
- almost half of Vermont’s wild bumblebees, vital pollinators, have either vanished or are in serious decline. (<https://www.uvm.edu/news/gund/study-reveals-striking-decline-vermonts-bumble-bees>)

Pesticides are symptoms and products of oppressive forces in our day: the pesticide corporations, their promoters, EPA’s Office of Pesticide Programs, and the VT Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM). It is sad to include the latter, but true; this agency demonstrates serious conflict of interest as it was instrumental in the recent repeal of an important VT Statute calling for pesticide reduction, defends pesticide use in their regulations without concern for PFAS contamination, and their website contains misleading information claiming safety for glyphosate, a carcinogenic herbicide.

As Jesus resisted oppressive forces affecting land and people in his day, let’s recognize, name, and resist the oppressive forces in our land, in our time by collaborating with others to call forth creative, collaborative energies on behalf of all God’s people and Creation.