**WEST OHIO CONFERENCE:** The West Ohio Conference of the UMC includes about three quarters of the state geographically, ranging environmentally from the southeastern region of Appalachia with mining and fracking interests to the southwestern region of industry and agriculture to the northwestern region of farming and Lake Erie. The Conference established a Creation Care Task Force in the early 2000s under the auspices of the Board of Church and Society, now identified as Just Missions. Task Force membership and activity have ebbed and grown over the years depending on Conference leadership and competing priorities.

Over the past 15 years, the Task Force promoted 5 resolutions to the annual conference, all of which were adopted. In 2008, the Conference endorsed local church involvement in Creation Care and active advocacy of environmental stewardship. The first recommendation met with limited success depending on the local church; the second was largely ignored. In 2015, West Ohio forwarded 3 resolutions from Fossil Free UMC for action at the 2016 General Conference. They were never addressed by the overall assembly. This year the Task Force is endorsing the Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions resolution for adoption by the Conference on Jun 2. See Page 91 of the Annual Book of Reports at <https://www.westohioumc.org/sites/default/files/ac/documents/pdf/page/2023bookofreportsweb.pdf>

The resolution was submitted by the Green Team of Christ UMC – Kettering and is endorsed by the Conference United Women of Faith.

The Task Force has also offered numerous educational presentations and workshops on environmental stewardship. In 2013 it partnered with Ohio Interfaith Power and Light to sponsor several Green Building Workshops to help churches reduce their carbon footprints and save money on energy. In 2016 and 2017 the Task Force worked with the then United Methodist Women to promote Climate Justice; several members of the Task Force were instructors for the Mission U programs on that subject and one member, Jessica Stonecypher, authored *Embracing Wholeness: An Earth Perspective for Covenantal Living*, a text for Mission u 2018.

Two members of the Task Force are members of the initial cadre of Earthkeepers. One project to develop a Lay Leadership Course on Environmental Stewardship was beta-tested and credentialed within the West Ohio Conference in 2018-19. This course was subsequently refined for denominational use and was accredited by Discipleship Ministries in 2023 as *Loving People and Planet in God’s Name*. It focuses on developing Green Teams and environmental justice leadership in the local church and can be taught live, virtually or in a hybrid format.

Finally, the Task Force is in the process of renewing itself and its mission. Working with new leadership within the West Ohio Conference, the Task Force is attempting to expand membership diversity in age, ethnicity, locale (urban, suburban & rural) and geography. Recognizing the statewide emphasis of Earthkeepers, the Task Force is also working with the East Ohio Conference to promote mutual programs and coordinate advocacy efforts. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Robert Downs, Lead, West Ohio Creation Care Task Force, 937-901-6777 or bobdowns@sbcglobal.net.