

# PEOPLES CHURCH GARLAND DECLARATION: IN DEFENSE OF DISRUPTING EMPIRE

## Preamble

*“The Spirit of the Exalted God is upon me, for God has anointed me:  
God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor;  
to heal broken hearts; to proclaim release to those held captive and liberation to those in prison;  
to announce a year of favor from God, and the day of God’s vindication;  
to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve in Zion—  
to give them a garland of flowers instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of tears, a cloak of praise instead of despair.”*

(Isaiah 61, quoted by Jesus when he began his public ministry.)

We, Peoples Church of Flint, part of the Flint community and the global community for nearly two centuries, and now returned to this downtown community, newly at home on Garland Street, do reaffirm our commitment to the common good, God’s vision of a just world illuminated by the prophets ancient and modern, and lived in the life of Jesus.

We choose the garland instead of ashes, and desire it be so for all the world. “Joyfully defiant,” we say, “for the sake of a just world,” because the truth of human brokenness and deprivation obligates us to be on the side of creation — people, animal and the earth itself, struggling to breathe under the weight of greed, power and self-indulgence.

*When we say we follow Jesus’ way of social justice, that is only the short answer. This declaration is the full rendering of what we mean.*

## Proclamation

**WE HEREBY STATE** again the commitment of our Statement of Faith to all people, those of every race, culture, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and economic circumstance, including those with and without home, with and without documentation, with and without a place in the mainstream or a voice in the conversation. We will learn to love.

**WE AFFIRM** the biblical commitments to the common good — dignity, home, enough, purpose, liberty, sabbath — commitments delineated by the prophets and defended for generations by people of a variety of faiths.

**WE EXTEND** our defense of these beyond humans to the earth itself and all the creatures with whom we share it. Dignity, home, enough, purpose, liberty, sabbath — surely these are also of value to rainforests and oceans, animals and insects.

**WE CLAIM** equity, hospitality and sustainability as our watchwords, and we recognize that these require sacrifice.

**WE DECLARE** it to be the obligation of our faith to be on the side of the oppressed, and to these needs we turn our attention: for the causes of racial justice, economic justice, bodily autonomy, integrity of the earth and restoration of creation, for an end to militarism and war, exploitation and abuse, for mitigation of the exploitative effects of capitalism, for peace among and between peoples and species.

**WE EMBRACE**, for the good of the world’s people, safe and decent homes for all, healthcare for all, childcare for all, pay equity, safe and honorable work, a living wage, education equity, abundant and healthy food, safe and affordable water, access to transportation, and release for those unjustly imprisoned. We further denounce hoarding and embrace an equitable system of wealth redistribution, a system requiring the most from, and placing the most responsibility on, the wealthiest, including churches.

**WE EMBRACE**, for the good of the earth and all its creatures, a commitment to sustainable energy and food sources, and to the work of science to teach us how to live.

**WE ENDORSE** public ownership of the commons, including infrastructure, utilities, green spaces, water, and all things necessary to life; and we call for compassionate and welcoming border policies that recognize the world’s people as neighbors. We humbly acknowledge that others were here first and that we have no superior right to the abundance of the earth.

**WE COMMIT** ourselves to being at various times a voice, defiance, or a threat in the stand against domination by American empire or global capitalism; countercultural and dependably different, we will learn to follow Jesus’ way of social justice despite the cost.

**WE DECRY** the power of empire to oppress and enslave. We will challenge unjust laws and systems and the prevailing acquiescence to inequity, power and greed.

**WE MAKE THIS OUR WORK OF FAITH**, dedicating ourselves, individually and as a community of faith, by our worship and prayer, by our political engagement, by our expenditures and investments, by reparations for historic harms, by our relationships with non-human species, by our habits of consumption, by our biblical understanding of the imagination of God and what it means to be a neighbor.

**WE RISE**, to continue to learn, to listen, to lift up voices of those ignored.

**WE PLEDGE OUR ALLEGIANCE** to this resurrected life: to the wholeness of the world, inspired by the life of Jesus and empowered by the Spirit of God, and in place of the ashes of death and despair, a garland of life.



Adopted 15 May 2020  
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