

## **Statement adopted by the Thomas Merton Center Board of Directors.**

Pittsburgh is becoming a leader in demonstrating care of the environment. Our actions have become models for cities nationally and internationally. By our far-sighted decisions, we are acknowledging that our actions as a city will have consequences not only for current generations but for future generations.

We are a world-wide model for green building and ecological urban renewal. In 2010 our city council voted unanimously to ban natural gas drilling within city limits, a galvanizing moment for the rest of the world. Following Pittsburgh's courageous lead, hundreds of cities in the US and world-wide are now banning hydraulic fracturing for gas and oil.

We at the Thomas Merton Center believe that our new city government will continue to foster wise and far-sighted endeavors that care for our air, water, soil and people. This new administration has the power to ~~point the way to a brighter future~~ build on these bold actions.

Therefore, the Thomas Merton Center is asking our Pittsburgh city government to take another visionary action in the coming year. We are asking that the City of Pittsburgh divest from fossil fuels by

- immediately freezing any new investments in fossil fuels and
- divesting from direct ownership and any commingled funds that include fossil fuel-based public equities or corporate bonds within 5 years.

We recognize that this is a challenging path. In the same way that communities have responded to other moral issues, we are asking Pittsburgh to no longer support, through its investments, practices which cause immeasurable harm to all of creation. render the earth inhospitable to life as we know it.

The leaders of 167 Countries (including the US) have agreed that any warming of the planet above 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F) would be unsafe. Scientific data shows that if the world releases just 565 more gigatons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the global temperature will rise at least 2 degrees Celsius. At this point, climate change will increase at a much faster rate than is already happening and may very well be irreversible. Most remaining complex life forms will be in grave danger and human survival will be seriously threatened.-The challenge is that proven coal, oil, and gas reserves of the fossil-fuel companies are 2,795 gigatons, five times the amount that we can release to maintain the 2 degree limit.

The stated mission of fossil fuel companies is to utilize known reserves. It is unrealistic to expect them to do otherwise without strong voices and actions to resist "business as

usual”. Public actions are needed to persuade these companies that these excess reserves must be left in the ground for the sake of the well-being of all forms of life.

By divesting now, the City will join a world-wide divestment movement to protect the planet.

The purpose of divestment is to:

- build public recognition of the urgent need to drastically and rapidly reduce dependence on fossil fuels
- call widespread attention to the consequences of continuing a “business as usual” approach to extracting, marketing and burning fossil fuel
- inspire an accelerated and popular commitment to leaving 80% of the known carbon reserves untapped
- lead to the development of renewable energy resources, many of which can be local or regional, benefitting Pittsburgh’s economy
- make it possible for life as we have known it to continue
- alert extraction industry corporations that the time has come to transition to a new model of growth.

The will and criteria for responsible investment *can* come from individuals, though, and from a city devoted to a fossil-free future. We don’t have to continue on a path destined for desolation—or even settle for mere “sustainability.” Our goal can be bigger than just avoiding suicide. With several small green energy businesses already operating in our region—and much more untapped potential—our city can divest from fossil-fuel-addicted multi-national corporations and invest in local, green, renewable energy. If we make wise decisions now, we *will* have a brighter future. And together, we can thrive!

\*Many divestment resources at: [350.org](http://350.org) and [www.GoFossilFree.org](http://www.GoFossilFree.org)