121st Convention of the Episcopal Church in Utah
Report of the Commission on Peace and Justice

A. **Members** of the commission are (alpha order by last name):
   1. Ron Barness – St Marks
   2. Forrest Cuch – St Elizabeth's
   3. Dorothy Dobson – St John's
   4. Tom Elder – St John's
   5. Michaelann Gardner – St Mary's
   6. Esther Matthew – St Mark's
   7. Jane Myers – St Mark's
   8. Laura Orcutt – St James
   9. Katy Peterson – Grace
   10. Rev Dave Sakrison – St Francis
   11. Jonathan Snyder – St Luke's
   12. Jinx Strout – St James

B. **Mandate**

Canon 18 Commission on Peace and Justice

Section 18.1 Appointment. The Council shall provide for the appointment of members of the Commission on Peace and Justice

Section 18.2 Duties.

18.2.1 The Commission on Peace and Justice shall develop and implement recommendations and strategies regarding common ministry opportunities and concerns on issues of peace and justice.

18.2.2 The Commission on Peace and Justice shall make recommendations pertaining thereto the Bishop, the Standing Committee, the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Convention.

C. **Goals**

The Commissions goals were 1) supporting the first-ever Province VIII Creation Care Conference, hosted by the Diocese of Utah, Sept 25-27, 2026; and, 2) support the Southern Utah Wilderness Association's lobbying efforts in Congress to stop Senator Lee's and Representative Maloy's efforts to obtain a simple majority for the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to invalidate the management plan for Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM).

D. Action items

   a. Creation Care Conference
      i. Obtain overnight accommodation with ERCC, Alta Club and Little America
      ii. Scheduled speakers:
         1) Rev Leon Sampson (Navajoland Diocese)
         2) Forrest Cuch (Ute Elder)
         3) Ben Abbott (BYU GSL expert)
         4) Eric Balkan (Glen Canyon expert)
         5) McKinley Smoot (sustainable agriculture
         6) Ben Norton (USU professor emeritus sustainable agriculture)
         7) Gavin Noyce (Indigenous tribal consultant/consulting founder of Bears Ears)
         8) Deena Ute (White Mesa Ute artist/storyteller)
         9) Chris Wharton (Salt Lake City Council) -- welcome and Land Acknowledgement
      iii. Numerous planning details at St Mark's and ERCC working with staff as boots-on-the-ground

b. A week after President Trump downsized the national monuments, the Commission hosted a panel discussion at our August meeting with:
    i. Rev Leon Sampson – Navajoland Diocese
    ii. Rev Joe Hubbard – fmr. Vicar of St Christopher's Mission, Bluff
    iii. Forrest Cuch – Ute Elder & Commissioner
    iv. Eric Stansfield -- Senior Anthropologist with the Navajo Nation Heritage & Historic Preservation Depart. and Tribal Rep. in the Grand Staircase monument plan negotiations
    v. Ralph Burillo – Archeologist working on the Colorado Plateau
    vi. Scott Braden – Director of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA)

E. **Analysis of action**

a. Creation Care Conference was a professionally hosted (by Dio Utah) conference, and it was a successful first effort with 65 registrations.
b. Our efforts to block the CRA using a letter signed by 65 senior ecumenical faith leaders was a success as the effort by Sen Lee failed to obtain a majority of votes; however, Sen Lee was successful in getting President Trump to sign an Executive Oder downsizing GSENM and Bears Ears National Monument by approx. 90% each and opened the flood gates for extraction (oil, gas, mining, etc.) development. Both monuments were developing a joint management plan with Native Tribes and the Bureau of Land Management. This plan was shelved by the president at the urging of Sen Lee, Utah Gov Cox and the Utah congressional delegation.
c. The panel discussion a powerful conversation about why ecumenical support is necessary in protecting national monuments and Native American sacred sites. 82% of Utah voters say that it is important of Native Tribes to have a strong role in managing public lands containing sacred and/or culturally significant sites.

F. **Findings and conclusions**

The conference brought together creation-caregivers from across the U.S. West to spend three days studying best practices, ideas and concerns about the unset of the climate crisis and our use of polluting carbon energy. Providing this forum was useful as it provided resources and a template going forward.

G. Recommendations

Split the commissions on Peace & Social Justice and Environmental. The portfolio of issues is too numerous to make a substantial difference. Resolution 8 would facilitate the creation of a Commission on the Environment (creation caregiving work).

H. Statement of how the group's work fits into the mission strategy of the Diocese

A. Our work fits into the 3rd Pillar of the Core Mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah, which is "Justice & Reconciliation: Striving for peace, dignity and human rights for every person while actively seeking reconciliation in the community."
B. Supporting Utah's public lands – especially Tribal-managed national monuments – has been a foundational effort of the Commission on Peace and Justice was re-constituted by Bishop Scott Hayashi in the summer of 2021. Dio Utah's efforts in being good stewards of public lands/tribal lands and watersheds is acting in concert with Core Mission of the Episcopal Church in Utah.
C. At the 2025 Annual Convention of Dio Utah, the Commission on Peace & Justice sponsored a resolution to create the 'Episcopal Diocese of Utah Native American Endowed Scholarship' in partnership with the University of Utah. In one year, the scholarship fund now has $54,360.