



**FAITH - BASED  
STATEMENTS ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE**  
a collection by Citizens' Climate Lobby volunteers

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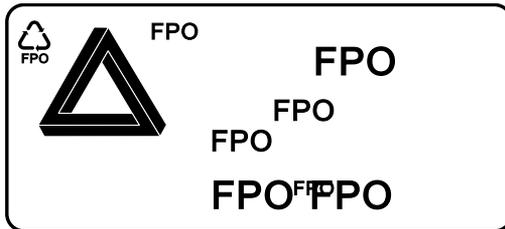
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# Preface

The first edition of this collection of faith-based statements on climate change was edited by Lynn Whitney and Ellie Whitney and published in 2012. I sincerely appreciate their generosity in letting me compile a second edition based on all the work that they did for that first edition.

I have benefitted from their guidance as well as the help of a number of fellow Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) volunteers who tracked down various faith statements for me. They include David Arey, Dan Barth, Jack Faulkner-Becker, Mary Grossnickle, Kent Hall, Leo Jacoby and Deana VanGrinsven from our Stevens Point Chapter of CCL, as well as other CCL volunteers such as Liz Fisher, Katya Gordon, Mary Hansen, Gary Horvitz, Kermit Hovey and Peter Garrett. I also appreciate the help of two people who are not CCL members: Huda Alkaff, who helped me locate the entry for Islam, and Rabbi Warren Stone, who helped me locate the entry for Judaism.

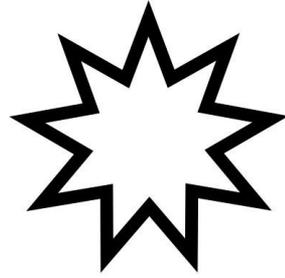
I'm especially grateful to Madeleine Para, National Program Director for Citizens' Climate Lobby, for the guidance and support she has given me throughout this entire project; to Kailan Schepper and Kaitlyn Borisch of Cornerstone Press for putting the book's manuscript into *In Design*, and to my son Daniel Dieterich of SeedsOfDesign.com for designing the cover of this book.

—Dan Dieterich, leader  
Stevens Point (Wisconsin) Chapter  
Citizens' Climate Lobby

Safeguard Creation.  
Because if we destroy Creation,  
Creation will destroy us!  
Never forget this!

—Pope Francis, May 21, 2014





**Bahá'í**

## **Science and Religion in the Climate Change Debate: Case Study of the Bahá'í Community**

by Arthur Lyon Dahl, Ph.D., President, International Environment Forum and Coordinator, UNEP/University of Geneva/Graduate Institute Environmental Diplomacy Programme, Geneva, Switzerland

Paper presented at the conference on **Ethics and Climate Change: Scenarios for Justice and Sustainability** in Padova, Italy, October 23-25, 2008

### **Abstract**

Science and religion are too often seen as antagonistic, with little to contribute to each other. As the debate over climate change has intensified, and the scientific evidence has become overwhelming, it is apparent that scientific information alone may be insufficient to motivate the necessary action for the fundamental transformation of human society. Religions and faith-based groups are increasingly raising the ethical issues behind the climate change challenge, in complement to the scientific arguments. One example of this is the Bahá'í community.

Scientific concepts of ecology, environmental responsibility and evolutionary social change are deeply rooted in the Baha'i writings, and the Bahá'í International Community has been active on environmental issues at the United Nations and elsewhere for many decades. Recent examples of this are a side event at CSD-15 on the Ethical Dimensions

of Climate Change, and an essay on this topic in The Bahá'í World 2005-2006, the public record of the Bahá'í community's activities.

In parallel, the International Environment Forum, a Baha'i-inspired organization of environmental professionals, has organized international conferences on the spiritual dimensions of, and response to, climate change, as well as on education for sustainable development and lifestyle changes.

The approach taken combines a scientific perspective on climate change with the resulting ethical challenges. It questions the dominant materialist society and consumer culture, emphasizing the necessary balance of the material and spiritual dimensions of human life. At the social level, it focuses on the unity of the human race founded on justice and solidarity. It explores the spiritual principles upon which any solution to the climate change problem and the larger challenges facing society must be based, and incites individual reflection and community action. Scenarios of the ever-advancing civilization that can result from a principle-based approach provide a positive focus to counterbalance the negative perspectives for our immediate future that the scientific facts demonstrate only too clearly.

A similar approach has proven effective in bringing ethics and religion into training mid-career diplomats in the Geneva environmental diplomacy programme. Participants have been able to integrate their religious and ethical beliefs with their international action.

## **Introduction**

While those of us in the environmental community have been raising concerns for decades about climate change due to anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases, we never imagined that it would occur at the rates now being measured, especially in the polar regions. The alarming evidence from the scientific community (IPCC 2007) combined with serious estimates of the economic cost of failure to act (Stern 2006) have now brought debate on the issue to the highest political levels. However it is apparent that scientific information, by itself, is inadequate to motivate action. Faced with the inertia of economic, political and social systems, and powerful vested interests determined

to maintain business as usual, the response to climate change is inadequate relative to what scientists say is necessary. Economic and political thinking are inherently short-term, producing what Sir Nicholas Stern called the greatest market failure in history (Stern 2006).

Unlike other global environmental problems like stratospheric ozone depletion, where the number of actors was limited and international agreement on control measures was possible, climate change threatens the very basis of the global economic system founded on the energy subsidy from cheap fossil fuels. This makes action very difficult, as it requires a fundamental transformation of human society. In addition, there are not just a few responsible parties. Everyone is to some extent responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, with responsibility increasing with wealth and the rate of consumption. Everyone also risks being a victim of climate change, with the poor the most immediately vulnerable. This raises a fundamental ethical dilemma that touches everyone.

Faced with the limitations of science to motivate change, it is natural to consider what the other great knowledge system, religion (defined in its largest sense), can contribute to the response to climate change. Science and religion are too often seen as antagonistic, with little to contribute to each other. Yet religion has traditionally been a major source of motivation and ethical guidance. As the debate over climate change has intensified, and the scientific evidence has become overwhelming while action has not followed, it is apparent that a broader approach is necessary. Religions and faith-based groups are increasingly raising the ethical issues behind the climate change challenge, in complement to the scientific arguments. This paper describes one example of this in the Bahá'í community, the most recent of the world religions founded in the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Bahá'í Approach to Climate Change**

Scientific concepts of ecology, environmental responsibility and evolutionary social change are deeply rooted in the Bahá'í writings (BWC 1990), and the Bahá'í International Community has been active on environmental issues at the United Nations and elsewhere for several decades (Dahl 2005). For Bahá'ís, science and religion are fundamentally in harmony, providing complementary perspectives on

the same fundamental truth. Just as religion without science and reason can fall into superstition, so does science without religion tend towards materialism.

The Bahá'í approach combines a scientific perspective on climate change with the resulting ethical challenges. It questions the dominant materialist society and consumer culture, emphasizing the necessary balance of the material and spiritual dimensions of human life (UHH 2005). By teaching contentment with little, and the need to eliminate extremes of wealth and poverty that are often associated with excessive greenhouse gas emissions (the former through overconsumption, the latter through deforestation and soil degradation), it encourages a reconsideration of lifestyles and consumption patterns. "Take from this world only to the measure of your needs, and forego that which exceedeth them. Observe equity in all your judgements, and transgress not the bounds of justice, nor be of them that stray from its path." (Bahá'u'lláh 2002)

At the social level, the Bahá'í approach focuses on the unity of the human race founded on justice and solidarity (BIC 1995). It explores the spiritual principles upon which any solution to the climate change problem and the larger challenges facing society must be based, and incites individual reflection and community action. For a complex issue such as climate change, where costs and benefits, immediate advantages and long-term risks are so unequally distributed, justice and equity will be essential to achieve any global agreement on action. As the Bahá'í International Community has put it in the larger context of development: "Concern for justice protects the task of defining progress from the temptation to sacrifice the well-being of the generality of humankind—and even of the planet itself—to the advantages which technological breakthroughs can make available to privileged minorities.

Above all, only development programmes that are perceived as meeting their needs and as being just and equitable in objective can hope to engage the commitment of the masses of humanity, upon whom implementation depends. The relevant human qualities such as honesty, a willingness to work, and a spirit of co-operation are successfully harnessed to the accomplishment of enormously demanding collective

goals when every member of society—indeed every component group within society—can trust that they are protected by standards and assured of benefits that apply equally to all.” (BIC 1995) The present difficulty in agreeing to global standards for greenhouse gas reductions arises in part because governments are still more concerned about defending their short-term interests rather than justly and equitably distributing both the efforts required and the accruing benefits.

Bahá'ís have a strong vision of a future global society, and see climate change as an important force compelling the nations and peoples of the world to give priority to their common interest.

The Bahá'í writings include scenarios of the ever-advancing civilization that can result from a principle-based approach to world challenges like climate change, with a federated world government able to maintain collective security, to manage the planet's vast resources and to distribute its products equitably (Shoghi Effendi, 1938). Such perspectives of the long-term future of the human race provide a positive focus to counterbalance the negative concerns for our immediate future that the scientific facts of climate change demonstrate only too clearly.

Given this background, it is normal that the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) should engage in the climate change debate. At the 15th UN Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in 2007, the BIC organized a popular side event in the UN building on the Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change, in partnership with the Missions of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, the UN, the Rock Ethics Institute at Penn State University, the International Environment Forum, and other NGOs. An essay on this topic was published in *The Bahá'í World 2005-2006*, the public record of the Bahá'í community's activities (Dahl 2007).

National Bahá'í communities have also participated in inter-faith events on environment, including climate change, and have encouraged their local communities to consider the need to mitigate climate change in planning their activities.

## **International Environment Forum**

In 1997, a number of Bahá'ís and other like-minded environmental professionals organized the International Environment Forum (IEF), a Baha'i-inspired professional organization for addressing the environment and sustainable development. Now with over 200 members in more than 50 countries, the IEF has provided a platform for its members to explore the relationship between ethical and spiritual principles and the environmental challenges facing the world. The IEF functions as a virtual organization, using the Internet and the world wide web to network among its widespread membership. It also organizes annual conferences on themes relevant to the environment and sustainability, and has been active in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In 2002, it was accredited to the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, where it participated in the Science Forum and organized several parallel activities. It is a partner in various educational activities such as a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Sustainable Development at the University of Geneva, and contributes to the European Union's Consumer Citizenship Network.

As an organization bridging science and spirituality, the IEF has been a forum where climate change has been considered from an ethical perspective, and it has supported the efforts of the Bahá'í International Community and various national Bahá'í communities to make contributions to the debate on climate change at the United Nations and elsewhere.

In 2006, the IEF organized an international conference at Oxford University on "Science, Faith and Global Warming: Arising to the Challenge" in partnership with the Bahá'í Agency for Social and Economic Development of the United Kingdom. The conference considered climate change from economic, social, gender, development and community perspectives. Speakers included Dr. Halldor Thorgeirsson, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Dr. Augusto Lopez-Claros, then Chief Economist at the World Economic Forum, and various scientists and academics.

The IEF annual conference in 2007 was held in Ottawa, Canada, in

collaboration with the Bahá'í Community of Canada, on the theme "Responding to Climate Change: Scientific Realities, Spiritual Imperatives". The location was chosen because Arctic communities are some of the first to be severely impacted by climate change, and an ethical and spiritual approach can help them to cope with the forced transformation of their environment and lifestyle. The opening speaker, Professor John Stone, a Vice-Chair of one of the main committees of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, had learned the morning of his talk that they had won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work.

Other IEF conferences have considered topics relevant to climate change such as education for sustainable development and lifestyle changes that would help to reduce carbon footprints. For its 2008 conference in the Netherlands in partnership with the European Bahá'í Business Forum, it considered "Growth or Sustainability? Defining, Measuring and Achieving Prosperity", with climate change as one of the major drivers for a new look at the purpose and functions of business incorporating a values-based approach.

### **Environmental Diplomacy Programme**

A similar approach has proven effective in bringing ethics and religion into training mid-career diplomats on climate change and other environmental issues. The challenges of extending international environmental law and applying existing law are so complex that few governments have the capacity to address them coherently. For example, negotiating an international agreement on climate change action beyond the Kyoto Protocol requires diplomats who understand both the underlying science and the multiple situations in which different countries find themselves when faced with accelerating global change, as well as the politics and economics of climate change.

The UNEP/University of Geneva/Graduate Institute Environmental Diplomacy Programme combines a broad coverage of emerging environmental issues requiring international action with the practical tools and negotiating skills necessary to achieve international consensus. One component of this training is a module on Ethics, Religion and Science for Environmental Diplomacy. It reviews the

ethical principles underlying international agreements, and explores the ways the religious or secular positions of governments affect their negotiating positions. It also shows the important contribution that principles relevant to the environment in all the major religions can make to the search for equitable agreements that can be implemented. Examples from the Christian, Islamic and Bahá'í traditions have been studied in detail. By extending the environmental issues requiring international agreement to the most fundamental level of ethical principle, the course helps to lay a foundation for greater international understanding in the future. It has enabled participants to integrate their religious and ethical beliefs and those of their nations and cultures with their international action. They often cite the ethical dimension as one of the strong points of the course.

The success of this approach underlines the need to include the ethical and spiritual dimension in a broad and inclusive form more widely in educational programmes of all kinds and levels to equip citizens for the challenges of the years ahead.

### **Conclusions**

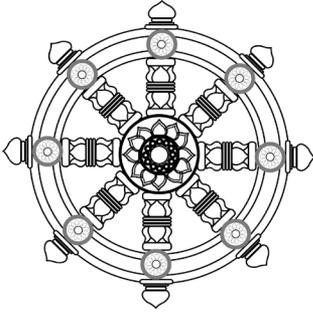
The need to mobilize the world population to respond to the challenges of climate change requires new kinds of partnerships across all segments of society. In particular, the scientific community which has been marshalling the evidence for climate change and trying to understand and project its impacts, should recognize that faith-based organizations have a unique reach to grass-roots levels all around the world, and a capacity to motivate change, that can be used to communicate the ethical challenges arising from climate change and the need for a common effort to respond. The necessary transition will require sacrifices from many people, which will be more readily accepted with an ethical justification and spiritual motivation.

The Bahá'í community provides one model showing how science and religion can be brought together to raise public awareness of climate change and motivate action towards sustainability based on justice and equity.

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<http://iefworld.org/ddahl08c.htm>



# Buddhism

## The Time to Act is Now

### A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change

The Declaration that follows presents a unique spiritual view of climate change and our urgent responsibility to address the solutions. It emerged from the contributions of over 20 Buddhist teachers of all traditions to the book *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency*. The Time to Act is Now was composed as a pan-Buddhist statement by Zen teacher Dr David Tetsuun Loy and senior Theravadin teacher Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi with scientific input from Dr John Stanley. The Dalai Lama was the first to sign this Declaration. (2009)

Today we live in a time of great crisis, confronted by the gravest challenge that humanity has ever faced: the ecological consequences of our own collective karma. The scientific consensus is overwhelming: human activity is triggering environmental breakdown on a planetary scale. Global warming, in particular, is happening much faster than previously predicted, most obviously at the North Pole. For hundreds of thousands of years, the Arctic Ocean has been covered by an area of sea-ice as large as Australia—but now this is melting rapidly. In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) forecast that the Arctic might be free of summer sea ice by 2100. It is now apparent that this could occur within a decade or two. Greenland's vast ice-sheet is also melting more quickly than expected. The rise in sea-level this century will be at least one meter—enough to flood many coastal cities and vital rice-growing areas such as the Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

Glaciers all over the world are receding quickly. If current economic policies continue, the glaciers of the Tibetan Plateau, source of the great rivers that provide water for billions of people in Asia, are likely to disappear by mid-century. Severe drought and crop failures are already affecting Australia and Northern China. Major reports—from the IPCC, United Nations, European Union, and International Union for Conservation of Nature—agree that, without a collective change of direction, dwindling supplies of water, food and other resources could create famine conditions, resource battles, and mass migration by mid-century—perhaps by 2030, according to the U.K.'s chief scientific advisor.

Global warming plays a major role in other ecological crises, including the loss of many plant and animal species that share this Earth with us. Oceanographers report that half the carbon released by burning fossil fuels has been absorbed by the oceans, increasing their acidity by about 30%. Acidification is disrupting calcification of shells and coral reefs, as well as threatening plankton growth, the source of the food chain for most life in the sea.

Eminent biologists and U.N. reports concur that “business-as-usual” will drive half of all species on Earth to extinction within this century. Collectively, we are violating the first precept—“do not harm living beings”—on the largest possible scale. And we cannot foresee the biological consequences for human life when so many species that invisibly contribute to our own well-being vanish from the planet.

Many scientists have concluded that the survival of human civilization is at stake. We have reached a critical juncture in our biological and social evolution. There has never been a more important time in history to bring the resources of Buddhism to bear on behalf of all living beings. The four noble truths provide a framework for diagnosing our current situation and formulating appropriate guidelines—because the threats and disasters we face ultimately stem from the human mind, and therefore require profound changes within our minds. If personal suffering stems from craving and ignorance—from the three poisons of greed, ill will, and delusion—the same applies to the suffering that afflicts us on a collective scale. Our ecological emergency is a larger version of the perennial human predicament. Both as individuals and

as a species, we suffer from a sense of self that feels disconnected not only from other people but from the Earth itself. As Thich Nhat Hanh has said, “We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.” We need to wake up and realize that the Earth is our mother as well as our home—and in this case the umbilical cord binding us to her cannot be severed. When the Earth becomes sick, we become sick, because we are part of her.

Our present economic and technological relationships with the rest of the biosphere are unsustainable. To survive the rough transitions ahead, our lifestyles and expectations must change. This involves new habits as well as new values. The Buddhist teaching that the overall health of the individual and society depends upon inner well-being, and not merely upon economic indicators, helps us determine the personal and social changes we must make.

Individually, we must adopt behaviors that increase everyday ecological awareness and reduce our “carbon footprint”. Those of us in the advanced economies need to retrofit and insulate our homes and workplaces for energy efficiency; lower thermostats in winter and raise them in summer; use high efficiency light bulbs and appliances; turn off unused electrical appliances; drive the most fuel-efficient cars possible, and reduce meat consumption in favor of a healthy, environmentally-friendly plant-based diet.

These personal activities will not by themselves be sufficient to avert future calamity. We must also make institutional changes, both technological and economic. We must “de-carbonize” our energy systems as quickly as feasible by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources that are limitless, benign and harmonious with nature. We especially need to halt the construction of new coal plants, since coal is by far the most polluting and most dangerous source of atmospheric carbon. Wisely utilized, wind power, solar power, tidal power, and geothermal power can provide all the electricity that we require without damaging the biosphere. Since up to a quarter of world carbon emissions result from deforestation, we must reverse the destruction of forests, especially the vital rainforest belt where most species of plants and animals live.

It has recently become quite obvious that significant changes are also needed in the way our economic system is structured. Global warming is intimately related to the gargantuan quantities of energy that our industries devour to provide the levels of consumption that many of us have learned to expect. From a Buddhist perspective, a sane and sustainable economy would be governed by the principle of sufficiency: the key to happiness is contentment rather than an ever-increasing abundance of goods. The compulsion to consume more and more is an expression of craving, the very thing the Buddha pinpointed as the root cause of suffering.

Instead of an economy that emphasizes profit and requires perpetual growth to avoid collapse, we need to move together towards an economy that provides a satisfactory standard of living for everyone while allowing us to develop our full (including spiritual) potential in harmony with the biosphere that sustains and nurtures all beings, including future generations. If political leaders are unable to recognize the urgency of our global crisis, or unwilling to put the long-term good of humankind above the short-term benefit of fossil-fuel corporations, we may need to challenge them with sustained campaigns of citizen action.

Dr James Hansen of NASA and other climatologists have recently defined the precise targets needed to prevent global warming from reaching catastrophic “tipping points.” For human civilization to be sustainable, the safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is no more than 350 parts per million (ppm). This target has been endorsed by the Dalai Lama, along with other Nobel laureates and distinguished scientists. Our current situation is particularly worrisome in that the present level is already 387 ppm, and has been rising at 2 ppm per year. We are challenged not only to reduce carbon emissions, but also to remove large quantities of carbon gas already present in the atmosphere.

As signatories to this statement of Buddhist principles, we acknowledge the urgent challenge of climate change. We join with the Dalai Lama in endorsing the 350 ppm target. In accordance with Buddhist teachings, we accept our individual and collective responsibility to do whatever we can to meet this target, including (but not limited to) the personal and social responses outlined above.

We have a brief window of opportunity to take action, to preserve humanity from imminent disaster and to assist the survival of the many diverse and beautiful forms of life on Earth. Future generations, and the other species that share the biosphere with us, have no voice to ask for our compassion, wisdom, and leadership. We must listen to their silence. We must be their voice, too, and act on their behalf.

[http://www.ecobuddhism.org/bcp/all\\_content/buddhist\\_declaration](http://www.ecobuddhism.org/bcp/all_content/buddhist_declaration)

# Christianity



## Anglican

### **A Statement on Climate Change by the Primates of the Anglican Communion**

following the Primates' Meeting in Dublin, Ireland  
24 and 30 January, 2011

We note that the scriptures call humanity to a careful stewardship of creation. We undertake to ensure that issues of climate change and the responsible management of our natural resources, are items which are given urgent priority for reflection, study and action in our own provinces.

Climate change is a normal characteristic of our planet but it has become an urgent concern because of the evidence of the impact that humanity has had on the earth by our use and abuse of its natural resources.

We commend the development of the Anglican Communion's study course on the 5th mark  
Of mission; and also the importance of Anglican Communion's  
Environmental Network and  
its meeting in Peru.

We encourage all Anglicans to recognise that global climatic change is

real and that we are contributing to the despoiling of creation. We underline the increasing urgency of this as we see the impact of climate change in our provinces, especially in the Pacific region.

We press Government, industry and civil society on the moral imperative of taking practical steps towards building sustainable communities, and urge them to work to achieve agreement on the way forward at the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17) in Durban in November.

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/primates/>

Please also see-

## **Ecumenical**

**Lutheran, Anglican, & Episcopal Leaders**

**Pastoral Message on Climate Change: page 79**



## Baptist

# A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change

(March 10, 2008)

### Preamble

Southern Baptists have always been a confessional people, giving testimony to our beliefs, which are based upon the doctrines found in God's inerrant word—the Holy Bible. As the dawning of new ages has produced substantial challenges requiring a special word, Southern Baptist churches, associations and general bodies have often found it necessary to make declarations in order to define, express and defend beliefs. Though we do not regard this as a complete declaration on these issues, we believe this initiative finds itself consistent with our most cherished distinctives and rooted in historical precedent.

The preamble to the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (BFM 2000) declares: "Each generation of Christians bears the responsibility of guarding the treasury of truth that has been entrusted to us [2 Timothy 1:14]. Facing a new century, Southern Baptists must meet the demands and duties of the present hour. New challenges to faith appear in every age."

We recognize that God's great blessings on our denomination bestow upon us a great responsibility to offer a biblically-based, moral witness that can help shape individual behavior, private sector behavior and public policy. Conversations like this one demand our voice in order to fulfill our calling to engage the culture as a relevant body of believers.

Southern Baptists have always championed faith's challenges, and we now perpetuate our heritage through this initiative.

We are proud of our deep and lasting commitments to moral issues like the sanctity of human life and biblical definitions of marriage. We will never compromise our convictions nor attenuate our advocacy on these matters, which constitute the most pressing moral issues of our day. However, we are not a single-issue body. We also offer moral witness in other venues and on many issues. We seek to be true to our calling as Christian leaders, but above all, faithful to Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, our attention goes to whatever issues our faith requires us to address.

We have recently engaged in study, reflection and prayer related to the challenges presented by environmental and climate change issues. These things have not always been treated with pressing concern as major issues. Indeed, some of us have required considerable convincing before becoming persuaded that these are real problems that deserve our attention. But now we have seen and heard enough to be persuaded that these issues are among the current era's challenges that require a unified moral voice.

We believe our current denominational engagement with these issues have often been too timid, failing to produce a unified moral voice. Our cautious response to these issues in the face of mounting evidence may be seen by the world as uncaring, reckless and ill-informed. We can do better. To abandon these issues to the secular world is to shirk from our responsibility to be salt and light. The time for timidity regarding God's creation is no more.

Therefore, we offer these four statements for consideration, beginning with our fellow Southern Baptists, and urge all to follow by taking appropriate actions. May we find ourselves united as we contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all. *Laus Deo!*

**Statement 1**  
**Humans Must Care for Creation and Take Responsibility for Our Contributions to Environmental Degradation.**

There is undeniable evidence that the earth—wildlife, water, land and

air—can be damaged by human activity, and that people suffer as a result. When this happens, it is especially egregious because creation serves as revelation of God’s presence, majesty and provision. Though not every person will physically hear God’s revelation found in Scripture, all people have access to God’s cosmic revelation: the heavens, the waters, natural order, the beauty of nature (Psalm 19; Romans 1). We believe that human activity is mixed in its impact on creation—sometimes productive and caring, but often reckless, preventable and sinful.

God’s command to tend and keep the earth (Genesis 2) did not pass away with the fall of man; we are still responsible. Lack of concern and failure to act prudently on the part of Christ followers reflects poorly to the rest of the world. Therefore, we humbly take responsibility for the damage that we have done to God’s cosmic revelation and pledge to take an unwavering stand to preserve and protect the creation over which we have been given responsibility by Almighty God Himself.

## **Statement 2**

### **It Is Prudent to Address Global Climate Change.**

We recognize that we do not have any special revelation to guide us about whether global warming is occurring and, if it is occurring, whether people are causing it. We are looking at the same evidence unfolding over time that other people are seeing.

We recognize that we do not have special training as scientists to allow us to assess the validity of climate science. We understand that all human enterprises are fraught with pride, bias, ignorance and uncertainty.

We recognize that if consensus means unanimity, there is not a consensus regarding the anthropogenic nature of climate change or the severity of the problem. There is general agreement among those engaged with this issue in the scientific community. A minority of sincere and respected scientists offer alternate causes for global climate change other than deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels.

We recognize that Christians are not united around either the scientific

explanations for global warming or policies designed to slow it down. Unlike abortion and respect for the biblical definition of marriage, this is an issue where Christians may find themselves in justified disagreement about both the problem and its solutions.

Yet, even in the absence of perfect knowledge or unanimity, we have to make informed decisions about the future. This will mean we have to take a position of prudence based partly on science that is inevitably changing. We do not believe unanimity is necessary for prudent action. We can make wise decisions even in the absence of infallible evidence.

Though the claims of science are neither infallible nor unanimous, they are substantial and cannot be dismissed out of hand on either scientific or theological grounds. Therefore, in the face of intense concern and guided by the biblical principle of creation stewardship, we resolve to engage this issue without any further lingering over the basic reality of the problem or our responsibility to address it. Humans must be proactive and take responsibility for our contributions to climate change—however great or small.

### **Statement 3**

#### **Christian Moral Convictions and Our Southern Baptist Doctrines Demand Our Environmental Stewardship.**

While we cannot here review the full range of relevant Christian convictions and Baptist doctrines related to care of the creation, we emphasize the following points:

- We must care about environmental and climate issues because of our love for God—“the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of the Universe” (BFM 2000)—through whom and for whom the creation was made. This is not our world, it is God’s. Therefore, any damage we do to this world is an offense against God Himself (Gen. 1; Ps. 24; Col. 1:16). We share God’s concern for the abuse of His creation.
- We must care about environmental issues because of our commitment to God’s Holy and inerrant Word, which

is “the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried” (BFM 2000). Within these Scriptures we are reminded that when God made mankind, He commissioned us to exercise stewardship over the earth and its creatures (Gen. 1:26-28). **Therefore, our motivation for facing failures to exercise proper stewardship is not primarily political, social or economic—it is primarily biblical.**

- We must care about environmental and climate issues because we are called to love our neighbors, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us and to protect and care for the “least of these” (Mt. 22:34-40; Mt. 7:12; Mt. 25:31-46). The consequences of these problems will most likely hit the poor the hardest, in part because those areas likely to be significantly affected are in the world’s poorest regions. Poor nations and individuals have fewer resources available to cope with major challenges and threats. Therefore, “we should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy ... [and] the helpless” (BFM 2000) through proper stewardship.

Love of God, love of neighbor and Scripture’s stewardship demands provide enough reason for Southern Baptists and Christians everywhere to respond to these problems with moral passion and concrete action.

#### **Statement 4**

### **It Is Time for Individuals, Churches, Communities and Governments to Act.**

We affirm that “every Christian should seek to bring industry, government and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly love” (BFM 2000).

We realize that we cannot support some environmental issues as we offer a distinctively Christian voice in these arenas. For instance, we realize that what some call population control leads to evils like abortion. We now call on these environmentalists to reject these evils and accept the sanctity of every human person, both born and unborn.

We realize that simply affirming our God-given responsibility to care for the earth will likely produce no tangible or effective results. Therefore, we pledge to find ways to curb ecological degradation through promoting biblical stewardship habits and increasing awareness in our homes, businesses where we find influence, relationships with others and in our local churches. Many of our churches do not actively preach, promote or practice biblical creation care. We urge churches to begin doing so.

We realize that the primary impetus for prudent action must come from the will of the people, families and those in the private sector. Held to this standard of common good, action by government is often needed to assure the health and well-being of all people. We pledge, therefore, to give serious consideration to responsible policies that acceptably address the conditions set forth in this declaration.

### **Conclusion**

We the undersigned, in accordance with our Christian moral convictions and Southern Baptist doctrines, pledge to act on the basis of the claims made in this document. We will not only teach the truths communicated here but also seek ways to implement the actions that follow from them. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, we urge all who read this declaration to join us in this effort. *Laus Deo!*

<http://www.baptistcreationcare.org/node/1>



## Church of the Brethren Creation Care (2010)

God's good creation is vital part of the peace and justice we are seeking. A right relationship with God calls for a harmonious relationship with all of creation.

"Let everything that breathes praise the *Lord!* Praise the *Lord!*"  
(*Psalm 150:6 NRSV*)

### Creation Care and the Bible

"In the beginning . . . God created the heavens and the earth."  
(*Genesis 1:1 NRSV*)

"The *Lord* God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."  
(*Genesis 2:15 NRSV*)

The Bible provides a clear role for people in regards to the rest of God's creation. We shall have the special responsibility of caring for the earth not only because we depend on a healthy ecosystem, but because we are called by God to care for God's earth. Additionally, there are many points in the Bible which animals are used to describe that justice of a "new heaven" and "new earth" extends to all of God's creation. (*Isaiah 65, Colossians 1:15-20 NRSV*)

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it!"  
(*Psalm 24:1 NRSV*)

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (*Romans 8:19-21 NRSV*)

### **Creation Care and Church Ministry**

As climate change continues, the most vulnerable populations are the people most affected because of their dependence on the physical environment. Accordingly a dramatic rise in hunger, disaster, and war will mean the church will need to provide more ministry financial and volunteer support as we prepare to help increasingly more people.

### **Hunger**

Global climate change factors such as rainfall, flood, drought, and changing temperatures will make access to adequate food and clean water even more difficult. The UN Development program predicts that in Africa 600 million more people will face malnutrition due to climate change, and because of this sub-Saharan Africa will face up to 26% loss of productivity by 2060.

Water scarcity poses another serious threat as 1.7 billion people now are at risk. Climate change alone is going to add 1.8 billion people to that figure by 2080 in areas of South Asia and Northern China according to the 2007 UN Development report.

For Africa alone, the [National Council of Churches](#) estimates that the 15 communions (of which the Brethren is one) together would have to provide an additional million dollars annually to feed struggling populations.

### **Disaster relief**

Global warming could induce flooding and tropical storms in coastal and low-lying areas and displacing up to 332 million people according to the UN Development Program. Of these, countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Egypt could have a combined total of 92 million people displaced.

Not only floods and tropical storms, but also strong category 4 and 5 hurricanes are likely to continue to land more frequently because warming Atlantic ocean waters create stronger storms more often. Since 1970 the number of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes has doubled according to the National Science Foundation. In 2007, two category 5 hurricanes made landfall for the first time in history, and together caused thousands to be displaced from their homes, and killed a couple of hundred people according to *National Geographic*.

The most disastrous US hurricane of recent history is Hurricane Katrina, which caused 81 billion dollars in damages and killed almost 2000 people according to the National Hurricane Center. This kind of destruction will only continue as stronger storms become more frequent.

Just as in Katrina, the faith community will be called to serve in disaster relief ministries during such disasters. In Katrina alone the 15 communions of the National Council of Churches spent 2.5 million dollars in disaster relief. The churches combined will need to increase disaster funding by 42 percent to maintain supporting these ministries as hurricanes become more frequent.

### **War and violence**

As food and water become scarce, conflict will arise as people fight to get basic necessities. In many regions of the world people are already in conflict over arable land. A UN Environment Program report states that armed conflict will only continue to escalate forcing people from their homeland, and causing even more indirect deaths due to the changing climate.

According to the United Nations, 15.2 million refugees fled their homeland in 2009. During the last decade, over a million refugees have been naturalized in the US. In 2006, Church World Service and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service settled 16,768 people, spending about \$2,800 on each person according to Church World Service. The total cost of refugee resettling is estimated to be about \$8,000 per person according to the World Health Organization. Local community groups and churches fund the additional spending, meaning that as refugees continue to be displaced by climate change

and violence, the church will need to increase funding to refugee resettlement programs.

“All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”(*John 1:3-4 NRSV*)

## **Global Climate Change Impacts around the world**

In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported to the United Nations that the Earth is undoubtedly getting warmer. Throughout the world the IPCC has noted many indications of climate change:

1. Retreating mountain glaciers on all continents
2. Thinning ice caps in the Arctic and Antarctic
3. Rising sea level – about 6 to 7 inches in the 20th century
4. More frequent heavy precipitation events (rainstorms, floods or snowstorms) in many areas
5. More intense and longer droughts over wider areas, especially in the tropics and subtropics

This same report to the United Nations concluded that human contributions are more than 90% likely the cause of accelerated warming during the past 50 to 60 years. Humans contribute to climate change through large inputs of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Our dependence on fossil fuels including coal, oil, and gas to power our daily activities is largely to blame for our contribution. Developed countries with large homes, cars, and factories are using most of these fossil fuels. To make the problem worse these countries also cut down trees that could use carbon dioxide to provide more oxygen.

Americans are consuming more than our fair share of energy and fossil fuels. We produce 25% of the total carbon dioxide emissions for the entire world, even as we make up about 4% of the world's total population. The largest culprits of pollution are coal and gasoline. Coal produces 2.5 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, and cars produce 1.5 billion tons every year. These levels of emissions are not sustainable, and we must work to curb our addiction to polluting, non-renewable energy sources in order to protect God's creation.

“Our task is nothing less than to join God in preserving, renewing and fulfilling the creation.”

1991 Annual Conference Statement, *Creation: Called to Care*

## Impacts in the United States

According to a report by the United States Global Change Research Program, climate changes are also already happening within the United States in the coastal waters. Changes will increase the occurrence of heavy downpours, rising sea levels, lengthening ice-free seasons in oceans and lakes, and alteration of river flows. On land, lengthening growing seasons and rising temperatures will occur. Agriculture challenges include increases in heat, pests, disease, and weather extremes. Human impacts also arise from climate change: heat stress, diseases, pests, rodents, extreme weather, and declining air quality.

Fossil fuel consumption is not only negatively affecting the climate, it also harms Americans through higher energy costs. Here in the United States, families earning less than \$10,000 a year are paying up to 69% of their income after taxes for energy including heating, cooling, and transportation according to *U.S. News and World Report*. Up to half of American families are spending at least 20% of their income on energy according to the same report.

Energy policy transformation is needed to shift our collective energy use away from expensive and harmful sources into renewable sources that are respectful of Creation, and more affordable to all income brackets.

Visit the U.S. Department of Energy’s webpage on renewable energy

## Take Action

### As an individual

Small changes can make a big difference.

1. **Read** the Creation Care fact sheet.
2. **Read** the Gulf Oil Spill fact sheet.
3. **Be** an advocate for creation care.
4. **Change** five light bulbs in your five most-used light fixtures with ENERGY STAR bulbs.
5. **Recycle** newspapers, beverage containers, paper and other

goods. Use products packaged in recycled containers and items that can be repaired or reused.

6. **Compost** your food and yard waste. It reduces the amount of garbage that you send to landfills and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
7. **Use** water efficiently by turning the water off while shaving or brushing teeth. Repair all toilet and faucet leaks right away. Water your lawn when needed and do it during the coolest part of the day. Early morning is best.
8. **Heat and cool smartly** by cleaning air filters regularly and having your heating and cooling equipment tuned annually by a licensed contractor.
9. **Look for ENERGY STAR** when buying new appliances for your home.
10. **Encourage** others to do the same!

For more information, visit the Eco-Justice Program of the National Council of Churches.

### **As a congregation**

Congregations are finding innovative ways to be good environmental stewards.

- a. Use **eco-friendly detergents** to wash dishes and cloths.
- b. **Recycle** all worship bulletins.
- c. Reduce your **carbon footprint**. Learn how!
- d. Encourage **local, seasonal food** for celebrations and potlucks.
- e. Start a **youth green club** like Junior B.U.G.S. from Manassas College of Business
- f. **Go car free** for a Sunday. Bike, walk, or carpool to church.
- g. Start and maintain a **community garden**.
- h. Install **solar panels** on the roof as on University Park College of Business
- i. Hold a **worship service** on Earth Day to celebrate creation.

- j. Go on a **field trip** to a forest, lake, etc. to enjoy God's creation together.
- k. Host a **community event** around creation care.

For more information about these congregational greening tips and more, visit the Eco-Justice Program of the National Council of Churches.

### **As a nation**

As a nation we must review our treatment of creation and prioritize a more just and sustainable future. The BP oil spill was a reminder of the cost of lax environmental policies from the government, as well as a reminder that new energy policies are necessary to protect creation from harmful human practices.

We must be mindful of our policies towards fragile systems, including endangered ecosystems. Harmful practices such as mountaintop removal mining strip out our forests and destroy the precious ecosystems. Toxic chemical slurry is leached into the water supply. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 2,200 square miles of forests will be eliminated by 2010, and that 700 miles of stream had already been lost since 2001.

Protecting ecosystems includes providing for animals in danger of extinction. There are currently over 1,200 species endangered according to the National Fish and Wildlife Service. Overfishing is huge problem, especially because many popular seafood dishes are using unsustainable fishing methods. Check out the Environmental Defense Fund's Pocket Guide Seafood Selector to help you buy sustainable fish.

<http://www.brethren.org/advocacy/creationcare.html#Climate>



## Eastern Orthodox

### **Climate Change: An Eastern Orthodox Christian Perspective**

by Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, Theological advisor to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God!*  
Gerard Manley Hopkins

In September 2007, His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide and affectionately labeled “the Green Patriarch” by Al Gore, organized an interdisciplinary and interfaith symposium in Greenland, entitled *The Arctic: Mirror of Life*. This was the 7<sup>th</sup> of (now) eight such gatherings to highlight the state and fate of the world’s main bodies of water – a sacred symbol for most religions and a natural resource that covers seven-tenths of the earth’s surface. Last October, a similar symposium was held in New Orleans on the Mississippi River. Participants at these symposia include religious leaders, scientists, policy-makers, environmentalists, activists, local communities, and media. These unique global gatherings promote an alliance between science and religion in a spirit of mutual respect. <sup>1</sup> James Hansen was a participant and speaker at the Arctic Symposium. So it has been an honor to include him in the initiatives of our Church.

Yet, even as over the past two decades, perhaps no other worldwide religious leader has persistently proclaimed the primacy of spiritual values in determining environmental ethics as Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, during the same period, the world has witnessed alarming ecological degradation, increasing failure to implement environmental policies, and an ever-widening gap between rich and poor.

This is why it would be fair to say that the hallmark of the Patriarch's initiatives – as, indeed, the efforts of any of us – is not success, but in fact humility. I believe that a sense of modest realism is what ultimately connects with creation. Yet, in its own distinctive way, the earth unites us all: beyond any individual or collective efforts, and certainly beyond any doctrinal or racial differences. We may or may not share religious convictions or political principles. But we do share an experience of the environment: we share the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, and the ground that we tread—albeit neither always equally nor always fairly. But by some mysterious connection, that we do not always understand (and sometimes choose to ignore), the earth itself reminds us of our interconnectedness.

This is surely the deeper connection also between religion and environment. The Ecumenical Patriarch recognizes that he stands before something greater than himself, indeed something greater than his (or any) faith. Religion is what suggests a sense of permanence here – seeing and making sense of things beyond ourselves and our needs. This is why, for Bartholomew, healing a broken environment is a matter of truthfulness to God, humanity and the created order. He was the first to dare broaden the traditional concept of sin – beyond individual and social implications – to include environmental damage! Some fifteen years ago, he declared:

To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For human beings to cause species to become extinct and destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; ... to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing climate change; ... to strip the earth of its natural forests, or destroy its wetlands; ... to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life – all of these are sins.”<sup>2</sup>

Religion clearly has a key role to play; and a spirituality that remains uninvolved with outward creation is ultimately uninvolved with the inward mystery too. The environment is not only a political or a technological issue; it is, as we have come to appreciate, primarily a religious and spiritual issue.

Nevertheless, when Eastern Christians speak of sin and repentance, they envisage not any legalistic spirit or sense of guilt, but rather a radical transformation of one's worldview and lifestyle. In his now classic article, entitled "The Roots of our Ecological Crisis," Lynn White already suspected – although in some ways neither he nor subsequent scholars have elaborated on – the truth behind this simple claim. He wrote:

"The Greek saint contemplates; the Western saint acts. The Latins ... felt that sin was moral evil, and that salvation was to be found in right conduct. ... The implications of Christianity for the conquest of nature would emerge more easily in the Western atmosphere."<sup>3</sup>

You see, we call this crisis "ecological," which is fair in so far as its results are manifest in the ecological sphere. Yet, the crisis is not first of all about ecology. It is a crisis about us; it is a crisis about the way we envisage, the way we imagine our world. It is a spiritual battle against – to quote an Eastern Christian mystic – "movements and powers within us, which are disordered,unnatural, and hostile to God's creation."<sup>4</sup> We are treating our planet in an inhuman, god-forsaken manner because we perceive it this way, because we see ourselves this way. So before we can effectively deal with environmental issues, we must change our self-image. Otherwise, we are only dealing with symptoms. An eighth-century spiritual classic of the Eastern Christian Church claims: "The whole earth is a living icon of the face of God."<sup>5</sup> We must recall that we are less than human without God, less than human without each other, and less than human without creation.

Far too often, we are sure that we have the solutions to the environmental crisis that we face without pausing long enough, without being still to listen to the earth that we have so burdened. Far too often,

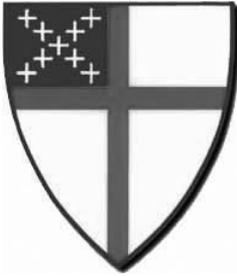
we tend to pursue tangible results in alternative energy or else are dissatisfied with our inability to act effectively. It helps to recall that it is our very actions that led us in the first place to the predicament we face. The aim is not simply to consider alternatives, whether political (such as cap-and-trade) or personal (such as carbon offsets). In some ways, as recently observed, these solutions are not unlike the medieval “indulgences,” that result neither in any radical response to the challenge at hand nor in any real change in our lifestyle; they merely create a sense of self-complacency and promote a sense of self-sufficiency.

And here, I think, lies the heart of the problem. For we are unwilling – and, in fact, violently resist any call – to adopt more simple lives. Paradoxically, ecological correction may in fact begin with environmental in-action. First, we have to stop what we are doing. What we need is a discipline of vigilant and voluntary frugality. Yet, such is the way of humility, of learning to tread lightly and gently on this planet. We know we cannot treat people like things; it is time we learned not to treat also things like mere things. Pride is a uniquely human attribute; it belongs to Adam. Humility through simplicity can reconcile a world otherwise divided by pride; it will preserve a planet otherwise exploited by greed. If we are guilty of relentless waste in our world, it may be because we have lost this spirit of simplicity and this spirituality of compassion. The challenge is: How do I live in such a way that promotes harmony and not division? How do I live in such a way that communicates gratitude and not greed? Then, we would hear the grass grow and feel the seal’s heart beat. Ironically, the earth, too, would cooperate in this task. As Patriarch Bartholomew declared jointly with the Pope John Paul II:

“It is not too late. God’s world has incredible healing powers. Within a single generation, we could steer the earth toward our children’s future. Let that generation start now.”<sup>6</sup>

- 1 See the website of the Religious and Scientific Committee of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: <http://www.rsesymposia.org>.  
Also, see the website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: <http://www.patriarchate.org>.
- 2 See Alon Tal, *Speaking of Earth: Environmental Speeches that Moved the World* New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006, 201-209. See also John Chryssavgis, (ed.), *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew*, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, Revised Edition, 2009, 190.
- 3 *Science* 155, March 1967, 1203-1207.
- 4 St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662)
- 5 St. John of Damascus (675-749)
- 6 See "The Venice Declaration" in John Chryssavgis (ed.), *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew*, Grand Rapids MI: Erdmans Publishing, Rev. Ed., 2009, 281.

<http://www.christiansforthemountains.org/site/Topics/Issues/Climate/orthodox.pdf>



## Episcopal

### Seek Environmental Justice

The Acts of Convention of The Episcopal Church  
Resolution 2012 – B023

*General Convention, Journal of the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, July 12, 2012 (New York: General Convention, 2012), p. 324.*

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church stands in solidarity with those communities who bear the greatest burdens of global climate change: indigenous peoples, subsistence communities, communities of color, and persons living in deprivation around the world; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses, and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of The Episcopal Church to support policies that provide tangible benefits to overburdened “frontline” communities (those already experiencing the impacts of climate change) and “fence-line” communities (those suffering in body and spirit for their proximity to the extraction and processing of fossil fuels); and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses, and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of The Episcopal Church, to work for the just transformation of the world’s energy beyond and away from fossil fuels (including all forms of oil, coal, and natural gas) and toward safe, sustainable, renewable,

community controlled energy, and that fossil fuel workers and their families be supported during the transition to a “post-carbon” society; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses, and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of The Episcopal Church to resist the development and expansion of ever more unconventional, dangerous, and environmentally destructive sources of fossil fuel and move toward conversion to more sustainable sources; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of The Episcopal Church to support the self-determined aspirations of communities around the world, who, like the Iñupiaq Community of Kivalina, Alaska, having emitted minimal amounts of carbon and having received negligible material benefit from fossil fuel consumption, nevertheless bear the brunt of climate-change impacts; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of The Episcopal Church, including Episcopal Relief and Development, to support the implementation of grassroots, community-based solutions to climate change, including, but not limited to, adaptations to improve local resilience, to build local food sovereignty, to support ecological restoration and economic re-localization.

# Evangelicals

## Loving the Least of These: Addressing a Changing Environment

by Dorothy Boorse with contributions by Leith Anderson, Thomas Ackerman, Chris Shore, Galen Carey, Ken Wilson and Jo Anne Lyon  
A Conversation Piece from the National Association of Evangelicals (2011)

*Loving the Least of These is an eloquent, powerful document, replete with specific examples that show not only that climate change is a real and urgent crisis in the lives of millions of the world's poor, but that a strong Biblical case can be made to do something about it. This is my summary of the document, edited with permission by the National Association of Evangelicals. You'll find the link to the pdf of the complete 29-page document at the end of my summary*

—Katya Gordon

***This is not an official policy statement of the NAE or its Board of Directors. Rather, it is a conversation piece. It is a call to care, to understand, to respond. We heard stories from missionaries, statistics from scientists, and exhortations from pastors. Their words were collected into one document that was reviewed by two dozen Bible scholars, professors, and evangelical leaders—we wanted the thinking of many and not just of a few. Please read with an open mind and with open hands. But most of all, join me with an open heart for the poor.***

This document covers four ideas: a biblical basis for Christian engagement, a look at changing environments around the world, insight into how environmental variances affect the poor, and thoughts on what Christians should do.

Climate change lies on top of many other factors affecting the natural world and affecting the impact of the environment on poverty. Photos and stories cited are examples of how environmental events affect the poor. We do not attribute any particular amount of any specific event to climate change, although such events are more likely in a changing climate.

The Bible does not tell us anything directly about how to evaluate scientific reports or how to respond to a changing environment. But it does give several principles that might be helpful: care for creation, love our neighbors, and witness to the world.

Jesus tells us: "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15). Loving God means obeying. This includes caring about what happens to God's creation because God cares about it and because God gave us the job of caring for it. God does not give us complete control to do with creation as we will. Rather, the Bible makes it clear that our authority is only entrusted to us; God retains ultimate authority. "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1).

We are like the servants in the parable of the talents (see Matthew 25:14-30). The natural world is a precious gift for which we will be held accountable. We hold it in trust for God, but we also hold it for the next generations.

It is tempting but unwise to assume that God would prevent us from drastically harming the earth. God is sovereign, yet he allows us to experience the natural outcomes of our own actions.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (v. 40)... When we care for the poor, we are ministering to Jesus himself: To care for the weakest is to care for Christ.

...The realities of climate change mean that those suffering millions may become billions. All of us who follow Jesus will need to respond.

Yet people need to see not only our witness in relief efforts after a disaster but also that we understand what causes natural disasters to be so terrible. They need to see not only that we will clean up after the disaster but also that, whenever possible, we will help prevent situations that displace millions. As we will see, changes in the environment are threat multipliers for the many problems faced by the poor around the globe. Recognizing this reality will strengthen our witness.

“All human beings are to be stewards of the rich abundance of God’s good creation. We are authorized to exercise godly dominion in using it for the sake of human welfare and needs, for example in farming, fishing, mining, energy generation, engineering, construction, trade, medicine. As we do so, we are also commanded to care for the earth and all its creatures, because the earth belongs to God, not to us. We do this for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the creator, owner, sustainer, redeemer and heir of all creation.

We lament over the widespread abuse and destruction of the earth’s resources, including its bio-diversity. Probably the most serious and urgent challenge faced by the physical world now is the threat of climate change. This will disproportionately affect those in poorer countries, for it is there that climate extremes will be most severe and where there is little capability to adapt to them. World poverty and climate change need to be addressed together and with equal urgency.”

--excerpt from the Cape Town Commitment: [Christ’s Peace for His Suffering Creation](#)

If there is reasonable evidence that our actions may be harming vulnerable populations and future generations, then we violate prudence and justice to insist on “absolute proof” before taking steps to lessen the harm. We risk being counted among “those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

Climate is dynamic, not static, and it changes over time due to external drivers (called “forcing factors”) and natural internal variability. Some of these changes happen on time scales and through processes that

are easy to understand. These processes are well understood, even if they are not predictable. Over the last 1,000 years, the earth's climate record has shown a lot of natural variability. Natural cycles and events, such as the one mentioned above, greatly affect year-to-year variations. However, the global average temperature has risen at a rate that is most likely greater than natural variability can account for. Evidence suggests that an increase in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses accounts for much of the warming over the last 50 years.

In contrast to the way climate change debates are often portrayed in the media, scientists who study climate rarely attribute climate variability exclusively to either natural or human forcing factors. Instead, they compare and evaluate the two. On the short term (a few years to a few decades), natural variability is most likely to play the largest role. On timescales of several decades to a century, human activity is most likely to be the dominant driver.

By one estimate, 250 million people in lower-income countries were harmed by extreme events from 2000 to 2004. This is many times higher than the impacts in high-income countries, in part because poorer people often have to live in vulnerable areas.

It is hard to sort through the media hype to discover the truth. Christians, as well as others, have voiced skepticism about climate change. Skepticism is healthy.

### **Dig Deeper into the Facts**

How are environments around the world changing? Is there a physical explanation for the phenomenon? What could reasonable alternative explanations be? The questions we ask about climate change often lie with the relative importance of natural and human-caused factors, as discussed above. In the case of climate understanding, there is a great deal of scientific evidence that can answer these questions.

### **Avoid Polarizing Voices**

Don't look for good information from angry people who call others names or refer to conspiracy theories. Listen to those who are careful with their words, a biblical characteristic shown in James 1:19-20.

**Listen**

Look to official joint statements from professional societies. For example, the nation's top scientists in the National Academies of Science (NAS) and other professional societies represent the conclusions of tens of thousands of scientists.

One of the advantages of such statements is that they remove individual biases scientists may have. Scientists don't all vote the same way, don't like the same activities, may not even like each other, and would not agree to something as a group unless they thought it was accurate. Check the resource list for some reputable sources.

**Get to Know a Scientist**

Get to know local scientists who are Christians. Let them help you sort through the scientific information in the media. Are there scientists in your church? Ask for advice. Of course, no scientist understands all scientific questions. Scientists also don't have a single point of view. But they can help you understand why there is uncertainty and show you where to find unbiased information. Sometimes people, including scientists, talk outside their areas of expertise. Know the difference between an expert in the area in which you are asking a question and a person with a general interest.

I have published more than 150 peer-reviewed scientific papers in the field of climate on a wide range of topics. Through all this, I have remained firmly convinced that God has called me to this work just as surely as he called my father, my younger brother and my son to be ministers of his word.

For most scientists, there is no single moment of blinding light on the Damascus road in which one is suddenly convinced of some scientific truth. Rather, it is a journey of study and research, of careful construction and testing of hypothesis. It is like working on a huge jigsaw puzzle with only a fuzzy picture as a guide. But, eventually, the combined efforts of controversy about procedure arose have been confirmed by subsequent research.

...One healthy outcome of these problems has been a change in the way some scientists operate—especially in communicating, transparency and data sharing. Such changes needed to occur. However, the e-mail leak of 2009 did not change the conclusions of scientific studies. All of the subsequent evidence and extensive reviews have upheld the scientific basis of climate change in spite of procedural flaws. Unfortunately, one of the effects was an erosion of trust of scientists by many in the general public. It may take time for the scientific community to regain that trust. —Thomas Ackerman,

Many scientists lead to a much clearer picture, a firm theory of how Earth climate works. Through such a process, my colleagues and I have reached an understanding of the role that carbon dioxide plays in maintaining our climate and how increasing concentrations will warm our planet, leading to changes in our climate. These conclusions, while not without uncertainty, are neither arbitrary nor capricious; they are firmly rooted in the laws of physics and chemistry.

I have never felt a dissonance between these two aspects of my life, the study of the world and of God's word. Through them both, I see God. Among my most treasured theological truths are the providence of God and common grace: "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45).

I am encouraged that the evangelical church has begun serious discussion of the climate issues, including calls to reconsider our profligate use of the global environment. I hope and pray that its voice will become increasingly clear on these issues.

--Thomas Ackerman, Professor of Atmospheric Sciences and Director of the Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean University of Washington

The impact on the poor can be summarized as four main problems: (1) Poor people are more affected by disasters. (2) The cost prevention and survival (mitigation and adaptation) are higher relative to their income. (3) They are more likely to be displaced, and (4) they are more likely to be affected by ensuing conflicts.

Adapting to a changing environment by moving, building safer structures, or erecting water tanks costs money. For example, an initial estimate of the cost of adapting to changes in the climate (activities such as planting flood-tolerant crops; building new roads, levies, and bridges; building water storage in dry areas; moving out of flooded lands; growing drought-tolerant crops; and preventing the spread of disease) was \$40 to \$170 billion per year, about the cost of three Olympic Games series.

In 2008 alone, an estimated 36 million people were internally displaced as a result of sudden-onset natural disasters, including 20 million displaced by disasters associated with climate change. In addition, it has been recognized that more gradual changes, such as rising sea levels, desertification, water scarcity and decreased agricultural output will cause people to migrate in order to support livelihoods.

As a result of concerns about heightened conflict, natural disasters and migration, as well as the costs the military bears with the threat of sea level rise and its use of coastal bases, the U.S. Department of Defense has identified climate change as a national-security issue.

Climate change is a global phenomenon that affects people everywhere, but it hits the poor hardest. For example, an African farmer who barely ekes out a living with insufficient seeds, tools and other equipment may now be getting more rain, less rain, or the same amount, but in much more intense storms. There may be too much water for planting, too little water to germinate the seeds, rain coming at the wrong time and wiping out the crop. This farmer likely has no crop insurance or government assistance to fall back on, very limited savings, and little or no access to credit. So any weather shock will drive her into deeper poverty, forcing her to sell her only assets, such as her animals or tools. She may even be forced to eat the seeds she needs to grow next year's crop.

### **What might our response look like?**

#### **1. Pray for Wisdom**

Evangelicals believe in the power of prayer. We should pray for discernment as we sort through confusing messages about climate

change. We should pray specifically for those who are likely to be most affected by potential changes to our climate.

## 2. Make Lifestyle Changes

People have long adapted their life habits and systems to the energy that is available to them. The challenge for us is to make changes voluntarily, forced on us by world events.

## 3. Consider energy policy reforms.

If we had to pay the full cost of the energy we use, we would certainly use it more wisely. Changes to our energy policy should be carefully studied and implemented in a way that rewards conservation and efficiency while cushioning the impact on those with limited means.

If you are unsure about the science of climate change, implementing some of the above changes is still beneficial for other reasons.

## 4. Support Communities' Efforts to Adapt

When disasters strike, evangelicals respond and give generously.

The scientific consensus is not yet widely accepted within the evangelical community. There are disagreements about the facts and predictions, suspicions about the motives of those who propose solutions, and concerns about unintended consequences if we adopt the recommended remedies. These are important issues that need prayerful study and discernment. Lives are at stake—lives of precious human beings for whom Jesus died.

Precisely because we are pro-life and pro-family, we are not content to roll the dice with our own and our neighbors' future. We take appropriate precautions. We pray for God's deliverance, and we seek to align our lives with our prayers. Providentially, some of the behaviors that would mitigate climate change are also beneficial for other reasons.

The people of Egypt might have starved. But, as J. Matthew Sleeth, MD, author of *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action*, says, Joseph was wise and stored up crops for the years of hardship. Sleeth sees a clear parallel to today. "There was a climate

crisis. The people obeyed. They conserved, and lives were saved.” Today, Sleeth says, we need to plan ahead for what climate changes might bring.

This is not an issue one person can solve, but together, by God’s grace, we can make a difference. It would be easy to feel overwhelmed. We could throw up our hands in despair. Our faith, however, encourages us to persist: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

In Zambia in 2009, I watched an AIDS widow and mother of four clutching a handmade shovel and scratching the soil’s hard surface. The energy needed far surpassed her strength. Seasons are now unpredictable. The rains barely came during the rainy season, followed by an early drought. As a result, this mother was still trying to plant a garden in some borrowed space in hopes there would be food for the next season.

As I stood there, helpless, I heard the words echo through my mind: Love your neighbor as yourself. I pondered the practicality of this. Later, on the same trip, I heard the bewildered village elders say, “We used to know exactly when to plant, and almost the day the rains would start, but something very strange is going on that we have never experienced, nor did our ancestors.”

Yes, climate change is happening. While we debate the causes of climate change, people are dying from its effects. Do we “love our neighbor” only if it costs us little or nothing, agrees with our politics, is convenient, and doesn’t interrupt our lives? In her book *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, Annie Dillard challenges us regarding the power of God. She writes, “The waking God may draw us out to where we can never return.” This is a call to more fully understand the reality of loving our neighbors as ourselves. Living at this level brings new eyes—new understandings, new feelings, and yes—new and bold actions.

[http://www.nae.net/images/content/Loving\\_the\\_Least\\_of\\_These.pdf](http://www.nae.net/images/content/Loving_the_Least_of_These.pdf)



## Methodist

### The United Methodist Church Resolution on Global Warming

Adopted 2008, Resolution #1031

*2008 Book of Resolutions*

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WHEREAS, global warming is an issue of concern, interest, and action among many United Methodists; and

WHEREAS, global warming is “an average increase in the temperature of the atmosphere near the Earth’s surface and in the troposphere, which can contribute to changes in global climate patterns.”<sup>1</sup> Global warming can occur from a variety of causes, both natural and human-induced; and in common usage, “global warming” usually refers to the warming which is thought to occur from increased emissions of human-produced greenhouse gases;<sup>2</sup> and

WHEREAS, a greenhouse gas is “any of the atmospheric gases which contribute to the greenhouse effect.”<sup>3</sup> Carbon dioxide, water vapor, and methane are three such examples. The greenhouse effect is “the overall warming of the earth’s lower atmosphere primarily due to carbon dioxide and water vapor , which permit the sun’s rays to heat the earth, but then restrict some heat-energy from escaping back into space.”<sup>4</sup> “The greenhouse effect is unquestionably real and helps to regulate

the temperature of our planet," making life on Earth possible.<sup>5</sup> Without a natural greenhouse effect, the average temperature of the Earth would be about zero degrees F (-18°C) instead of its present 57°F (14°C).<sup>6</sup> However, too much greenhouse effect can produce conditions on Earth unfavorable to various species of life, including some human populations. Human activity has increased the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere—mostly carbon dioxide climate/globalwarming/sio-migr.gif> from fossil fuel (coal, oil, gas) combustion;<sup>7</sup> and

WHEREAS, the largest international body critically examining issues related to greenhouse gases and global warming is the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In their 2007 preliminary report, the IPCC reported, with a certainty of 90 percent, that this increase in human-produced greenhouse gases has increased the greenhouse effect, thereby contributing to Earth's recent warming.<sup>8</sup> Prior to the Industrial Revolution, levels of carbon dioxide, the most significant greenhouse gas, were about 280 parts per million by volume (ppmv), and current levels are about 370 ppmv.<sup>9</sup> The concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in our atmosphere today has not been exceeded in the last 420,000 years html>, and likely not in the last 20 million years.<sup>10</sup> According to the IPCC Special Report on Emission Scenarios (SRES), by the end of the 21st century, we could expect to see carbon dioxide concentrations of anywhere from 490 to 1260 ppmv (75-350 percent above the pre-industrial concentration);<sup>11</sup> and

WHEREAS, such an increase in future carbon dioxide concentration is very likely to cause significant warming of the Earth's climate, resulting in a variety of changes.<sup>12</sup> Scientists have observed some changes already occurring, including: sea level rise, shrinking glaciers, changes in the range and distribution of plants and animals, trees blooming earlier, lengthening of growing seasons, ice on rivers and lakes freezing later and breaking up earlier, and thawing of permafrost.<sup>13</sup> Some of these changes, and other changes not mentioned, may have significant detrimental impacts upon human populations in the future; and unfortunately, many of the impacts may occur in nations with the least ability to adapt, given the economic and social challenges within those nations.

*Now therefore, be it resolved*, that as a global church community, we call on our members to reduce human-related outputs of greenhouse gases;

*Be it further resolved*, that members should make an effort to learn about human production and release of greenhouse gases and evaluate their own lifestyles to identify areas where reductions in production and release of greenhouse gases can be made. There are many informative resources for learning how one can reduce his/her greenhouse-gas impact;

*Be it further resolved*, that members should also work to make their own congregations more aware of the issue of global warming and create policies and practices which reduce greenhouse gas emissions from congregational infrastructure (church buildings, parsonages, vehicles, etc.);

*Be it further resolved*, that members call on the nations of the world to require reductions in greenhouse emissions using the most efficient and cost-effective mechanisms;

*Finally, be it resolved*, that members should also attempt to educate others outside their church communities on the need to take action on this issue.

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## Presbyterian

### **Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Call to Restore the Creation**

The 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) unanimously approved a recommendation to lift up the “Call to Restore the Creation,” originally adopted as part of *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* by the 202nd General Assembly (1990), in recognition of its continuing importance and the crucial work remaining on its 20th anniversary.

Creation cries out in this time of ecological crisis:

- Abuse of nature and injustice to people place the future in grave jeopardy.
- Population triples in this century.
- Biological systems suffer diminished capacity to renew themselves.
- Finite minerals are mined and pumped as if inexhaustible.
- Peasants are forced onto marginal lands, and soil erodes.
- The rich-poor gap grows wider.
- Wastes and poisons exceed nature’s capacity to absorb them.
- Greenhouse gases pose threat of global warming.

Therefore, God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to—

- respond to the cry of creation, human and non-human;
- engage in the effort to make the 1990s the “turnaround decade,”

not only for reasons of prudence or survival, but because the endangered planet is God's creation; and

- draw upon all the resources of biblical faith and the Reformed tradition for empowerment and guidance in this adventure.

The church has powerful reason for engagement in restoring God's creation:

- God's works in creation are too wonderful, too ancient, too beautiful, too good to be desecrated.
- Restoring creation is God's own work in our time, in which God comes both to judge and to restore.
- The Creator-Redeemer calls faithful people to become engaged with God in keeping and healing the creation, human and nonhuman.
- Human life and well-being depend upon the flourishing of other life and the integrity of the life-supporting processes that God has ordained.
- The love of neighbor, particularly "the least" of Christ's brothers and sisters, requires action to stop the poisoning, the erosion, the wastefulness that are causing suffering and death.
- The future of our children and their children and all who come after is at stake.
- In this critical time of transition to a new era, God's new doing may be discerned as a call to earth-keeping, to justice, and to community.

Therefore, the 202nd General Assembly [(1990)] affirms that—

- response to God's call requires a new faithfulness, for which guidance may be found in norms that illuminate the contemporary meaning of God's steadfast love for the world.
- earth-keeping today means insisting on sustainability—the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together—which requires human beings to practice wise, humble, responsible stewardship, after the model of servanthood that we have in Jesus.
- justice today requires participation, the inclusion of all members of the human family in obtaining and enjoying the Creator's gifts for sustenance.
- justice also means sufficiency, a standard upholding the claim

of all to have enough—to be met through equitable sharing and organized efforts to achieve that end.

- community in our time requires the nurture of solidarity, leading to steadfastness in standing with companions, victims, and allies, and to the realization of the church's potential as a community of support for adventurous faithfulness.

On the basis of these findings and affirmations the 202nd General Assembly (1990)—

- recognizes and accepts restoring creation as a central concern of the church, to be incorporated into its life and mission at every level;
- understands this to be a new focus for initiative in mission program and a concern with major implications for infusion into theological work, evangelism, education, justice and peacemaking, worship and liturgy, public witness, global mission, and congregational service and action at the local community level;
- recognizes that restoring creation is not a short-term concern to be handled in a few years, but a continuing task to which the nation and the world must give attention and commitment, and which has profound implications for the life, work, and witness of Christian people and church agencies;
- approaches the task with covenant seriousness—'If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God ... then you shall live' (Deut. 30:16)—and with practical awareness that cherishing God's creation enhances the ability of the church to achieve its other goals." (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, pp. 646–47)

In approving this recommendation, the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) also approved recommendations to—

- Commend the faithful congregations, Presbyterian church-related institutions, and church members who have responded to God's call to cherish and protect God's creation, and urge perseverance in the tasks of restoring God's creation.
- Urge congregations, Presbyterian church-related institutions, and church members to adopt institutional and individual lifestyles

reflecting greater stewardship of resources, particularly in energy consumption.

### **Rationale**

Twenty years ago, the 202nd General Assembly (1990) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) overwhelmingly adopted the comprehensive policy *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*. This policy built upon the historic General Assembly policy base reflecting the determination that the protection of the environment is an essential part of the Christian faith. Subsequent General Assemblies provided additional guidance in environmental education and advocacy efforts for all councils and offices of the church.

The *Book of Order* (W-7.5001) states that “God calls the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s work of creation and preservation...” In W.-7.5003, it reminds us that we are “... stewards of God’s creation who hold the earth in trust ....”

*Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* called the 1990s the “turn-around decade,” and indeed generated new and renewed efforts by the church at all levels to respond to the ecological crisis and its impact upon the poor and vulnerable with focused strategies, deeper theological and ethical reflection, and institutional and individual commitment. Yet, more work needs to be done. On the 20th anniversary of the General Assembly’s adoption of this comprehensive policy, it is fitting to reaffirm its findings, celebrate what it has spawned in the life of the church, and recommit ourselves to the calling that remains as valid and necessary today as it was in 1990.

### **Comment**

In 2010, this resolution was approved as were these additional recommendations:

4. Affirm that concern for God’s creation is, for every Christian, an essential way of living faithfully in Christ’s world that will necessitate personal study of, attention to and engagement with emerging and new environmental concerns that are persistent, acute, and pressing
5. Affirm that the best available science should inform our care for God’s creation, shaping the direction of responsible programming

and policy, especially with respect to public witness concerning emergent environmental issues such as global climate change, desertification and access to potable water, and wetlands/coastal erosion.

6. Affirm that all living creatures require potable water to live; that water, being essential to life, is a human right that must be accessible to all people, and that plans for urban growth, suburban sprawl, and rural development should all be conditional on the wise stewardship of water.

### **Rationale**

On approval: *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* is and has been an important call in the life of the church. Informing environmental justice ministries and Presbyterians for Restoring Creation (now Presbyterians for Creation Care), this “Call to Restore Creation” continues to guide our understanding of what it means to be in relationship with God’s creation. This call has been reaffirmed by other assemblies, including the 208th General Assembly (2008) that, in *Hope for a Global Future*, appeals to the 1990 “Call to Restore Creation,” affirming that “human life and well-being depend upon the flourishing of other life and the integrity of the life-supporting processes that God has ordained” (*Minutes*, 1996, Part I, .p. 534)

On Recommendation 4: Environmental concern is necessarily a whole-world and whole-church commitment as well as a personal commitment incumbent upon all Christians as a means of living faithfully in God’s shared creation. The interrelatedness of elements of the biosphere demands a holistic attention to the environment that reaffirms the Presbyterian environmental policy commitment to “sustainability, sufficiency, participation, and solidarity” in addressing the ethics of ecology and justice. Environmental commitment is also confronted by the reality of new environmental issues that unfold as humankind inhabits the earth and explores the universe.

On Recommendation 5: Several environmental issues have arisen or become more acute since the 1990 adoption of “Restoring Creation.” While the concerns of “Restoring Creation” remain continuing commitments, these “new” environmental issues have expanded

our awareness of a continuing and enlarged need for attention and commitment to the environment. For instance, since 1990, previous General Assemblies have repeatedly called on the United States and the global community to join together in order to mitigate and prevent the worst effects of global climate change. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved “The Power to Change: U.S. Energy and Global Warming” in which it called for measures to create more sustainable and just energy consumption at all levels of the church—individuals and families; councils, governing bodies, consistent with agencies; and the church’s social responsibility regarding U.S. energy policy (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 934–37).

For its recommendations on climate change policy, the 2008 document drew specifically on the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’s fourth Assessment Report, which contained scientific recommendations based on the most recent scientific data available. Such data and scientific recommendations have since been updated, leaving the recommendations of the 218th General Assembly (2008) behind the most current data. Urging that responses to climate change be commensurate with the best available science will allow the statement of the 218th General Assembly (2008) to grow with new learnings and understandings (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 935–37).

On Recommendation 6: Water, one of five areas of social policy focus in the 1990 “Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice” deserves more focused attention as we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century. The 216th General Assembly (2004) approved the “Report and Recommendations on Limited Water Resources and Takings with Study Guide” that addressed, in abbreviated form, the balance of water usage (agricultural, industrial, urban) necessary for water justice. As drought continues in southwestern states, and desertification has increased in all regions of the world, and as the issue of water rights grows increasingly contentious within the U.S., the General Assembly may affirm that clean water is a human right for all persons whether living in the developing world or in the United States. Within the U.S., disputes over sources of water among states and municipalities create political controversy. In addition, the increasing commodification of water,

through bottled drinking water and other ways in which water rights are bought and sold, puts in danger the common availability of clean water to all people residing in the United States as well as increasing the burden on the environment through the use of nondegradable disposable containers.

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## Quaker – Society of Friends

### Facing the Challenge of Climate Change

A statement originated by Quaker Earthcare Witness, the Quaker United Nations Office, and Friends Committee on National Legislation for their joint presence at events during the UN Climate Summit in September 2014.

*It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part of it?"*

*William Penn, 1693*

As Quakers, we are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole Earth, in right sharing with all peoples.[1] We recognize a moral duty to cherish Creation for future generations.

We call on our leaders to make the radical decisions needed to create a fair, sufficient and effective international climate change agreement.

As Quakers, we understand anthropogenic climate change (climate change due to human activities) to be a symptom of a greater challenge: how to live sustainably and justly on this Earth.

We recognize that the current rise of greenhouse gas emissions is leading to an unprecedented rate of increase in global average surface temperature of extreme detriment to the Earth's ecosystems and species, including human beings.

We recognize that catastrophic global climate change is not inevitable if we choose to act urgently.

We recognize a personal and collective responsibility to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable peoples now, and all our future generations, do not suffer as a consequence of our actions. We see this as a call to conscience.

We recognize the connections between climate change and global economic injustice as well as unprecedented levels of consumption, and question assumptions of unlimited material growth on a planet with limited natural resources.

We recognize that most greenhouse gas emissions are created by fossil fuel combustion. We recognize that our increasing population continues to pursue fossil fuel-dependent economic growth. We recognize that the Earth holds more fossil fuel reserves than are safe to burn, and that the vast majority of fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground if we are to prevent the catastrophic consequences of climate change. We therefore question profoundly the continued investment in, and subsidizing of, fossil fuel extraction.

We seek to nurture a global human society that prioritizes the well-being of people over profit, and lives in right relationship with our Earth; a peaceful world with fulfilling employment, clean air and water, renewable energy, and healthy thriving communities and ecosystems.

As members of this beautiful human family, we seek meaningful commitments from our leaders and ourselves, to address climate change for our shared future, the Earth and all species, and the generations to come. We see this Earth as a stunning gift that supports life. It is our only home. Let us care for it together.

[Signatories updated to January 2015:]

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)  
 Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)  
 Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)  
 Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)  
 Westtown Monthly Meeting, Pennsylvania, USA  
 Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)  
 American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)  
 Princeton Friends Meeting, New Jersey, USA  
 Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC)  
 Northampton Friends Meeting, MA, USA  
 Sacramento Friends Meeting, CA, USA  
 Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, UK  
 Cookeville Monthly Meeting, USA  
 FWCC- Asia West Pacific Section  
 Quakers in Aotearoa New Zealand  
 Croton Valley Meeting, NY, USA  
 Newtown Monthly Meeting, USA  
 New York Yearly Meeting, USA  
 Memphis Friends Meeting, USA  
 Miami Friends Meeting, USA  
 Netherlands Yearly Meeting  
 Quakers in Australia  
 EcoQuakers Ireland  
 Living Witness, UK  
 Quakers in Britain

[1] Kabarak Call to Peace and Eco-Justice, 2012, p. 1

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## Roman Catholic

# United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Global Climate Change

February 2010

### Issue

Climate change is at the center of the environmental challenges facing our nation and the world. Our response to global climate change raises fundamental questions of morality and justice, fairness and shared sacrifice. People living in poverty—both at home and abroad—contribute least to climate change but they are likely to suffer its worst consequences with few resources to adapt and respond. The impacts of climate change - including increased temperatures, rising sea levels, and changes in rainfall that contribute to more frequent and severe floods and droughts - are making the lives of the world's poorest even more precarious. Urgent action that both addresses the growing impact of climate change and acts to protect the poor and vulnerable is needed.

### Background

Climate change policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the consequences of climate change will create changes not only in our environment but also in our society and

economy. The good news is that well-designed climate change policies can both help address climate change and protect the most poor and vulnerable. Most policy and legislative approaches to address climate change will generate substantial revenue by putting a price on carbon emissions. The United States bishops insist that a significant portion of these resources be used to minimize the disproportionate burdens felt by those least able to cope with the impacts of climate change and policies to address it.

The U.S. Congress has been working on climate legislation, and the House of Representatives has already passed *The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009*. Key senators, such as Harry Reid (D-NV), John Kerry (D-MA), Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), and Lindsey Graham (R-SC), are currently negotiating elements of a climate bill. While the timing of climate legislation is uncertain, it is important that we continue to urge key senators and members of the committees with jurisdiction over the bill (Environment and Public Works, Foreign Relations, Energy and Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Finance) to include provisions that protect poor and vulnerable people. This is especially important in the Senate, because the climate bill passed by the House of Representatives does not include robust international adaptation funding.

At the international level, global climate change negotiations held in December 2009 in Copenhagen included a commitment by rich nations to provide \$100 billion by 2020 to help poor countries adapt to and mitigate climate change. The Obama Administration has signaled strong support for this effort.

### **USCCB Position**

The Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to the debate about climate change by lifting up the moral dimensions of this issue and the needs of the most vulnerable among us. Pope Benedict XVI continues his leadership on climate change and environmental justice, highlighting these themes in his recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, and in his 2010 World Day of Peace message, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*. In Pope Benedict XVI's World Day of

Peace Message, our Holy Father declares there is an urgent moral need for solidarity with creation and those affected by climate change. The pope insists, “To protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate, there is a need to act in accordance with clearly-defined rules ... while at the same time taking into due account the solidarity we owe to those living in the poorer areas of our world and to future generations” (no. 7).

The USCCB is carrying out these directions and the policies and priorities adopted in the bishops’ statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*. Our efforts promote prudent action to address the growing impact of global climate change and pursue the common good in a very polarized debate. The bishops’ primary concern within the current public debate is to place the needs of the poor and vulnerable at the center of climate legislation. Poor people cannot be made to bear an undue burden of the impacts of climate change or the global adjustments needed to address it.

The bishops and other leaders of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment outlined in a letter to Congress broad agreement on four key principles:

1. The principle of prudence requires us to act to protect the common good by addressing climate change.
2. The consequences of climate change will be borne by the world’s most vulnerable people and inaction will only worsen their suffering.
3. Policies addressing global climate change should enhance rather than diminish the economic situation of people in poverty.
4. Policies should help vulnerable populations here and abroad adapt to climate impacts and actively participate in these efforts.

Protecting God’s creation and “the least of these” requires urgent, wise and bold action. The USCCB supports strong leadership by the United States and policies that protect poor and vulnerable people, at home

and abroad, from bearing the most severe impacts of climate change and from the human and economic costs of any proposed legislation to respond to climate change.

### **Action Needed**

Contact your senators and urge greater U.S. leadership to address climate change, especially its disproportionate impact on poor and vulnerable people here and abroad.

SUPPORT a clear priority for the poor and vulnerable in climate change legislation by:

1. Providing the same level of funding as provided in the House bill to fully protect low-income individuals and families in the United States from the effects of increased energy costs resulting from climate legislation, and
2. Significantly increasing the funding for international adaptation programs. At a minimum, starting in 2012, \$3.5 billion must be allocated to international adaptation programs and increased rapidly to \$7 billion annually by 2020, so that people living in poverty around the world can be protected from the effects of climate change.

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/global-climate-change-2010.cfm>



## **Unitarian Universalist Association**

### **Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change 2006 Statement of Conscience**

**Last updated on August 24, 2011**

Earth is our home. We are part of this world and its destiny is our own. Life on this planet will be gravely affected unless we embrace new practices, ethics, and values to guide our lives on a warming planet. As Unitarian Universalists, how can our faith inform our actions to remedy and mitigate global warming/climate change? We declare by this Statement of Conscience that we will not acquiesce to the ongoing degradation and destruction of life that human actions are leaving to our children and grandchildren. We as Unitarian Universalists are called to join with others to halt practices that fuel global warming/climate change, to instigate sustainable alternatives, and to mitigate the impending effects of global warming/climate change with just and ethical responses. As a people of faith, we commit to a renewed reverence for life and respect for the interdependent web of all existence.

## **A Matter of Science**

There is scientific consensus that the Earth's climate is changing due to global warming/climate change caused primarily by the human use of oil, coal, and natural gas. The burning of these fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which traps more heat from the sun. Global warming/climate change is accelerating as planetary temperatures reach record highs. The melting of polar ice and mountain glaciers may cause sea levels to rise by at least three feet, probably much more, and by eighty feet in coming centuries if the average temperature rises five degrees, warming that will be difficult to avoid. Half of the world's plant and animal species are at risk of extinction by 2100 as habitats are destroyed and ecosystems unravel. The huge Siberian permafrost peat bogs are apparently starting to melt, releasing methane and accelerating global warming/climate change. Antarctic glaciers are sliding into the ocean faster than previously expected, which may result in worldwide coastal flooding. Rapidly melting polar ice caps and glaciers provide visual evidence of global warming/climate change. Indirect effects due to melting polar and Greenland ice can upset the delicate salt balance in the North Atlantic Ocean, triggering a shift in the thermohaline current, which ironically may result in a local ice age in Northern Europe and parts of North America .

Increasing temperatures can devastate human communities and wildlife habitats. Warmer climates are extending toward the poles, dramatically altering ecosystems. Melting polar ice caps raise sea levels and upset the delicate balance of ocean salinity. This imbalance may lead to a shift in ocean circulation patterns, which could wreak havoc with regional climates. Recent increases in sea surface temperatures are linked with more intense hurricanes.

Global warming/climate change can cause both increases and decreases in local temperatures and precipitation. Until now the effects of global warming/climate change have been proportionate to increases in greenhouse gas concentrations. We can minimize the damage of climate change only if we act vigorously and soon—in the next decade according to top climate scientist. Since human-generated greenhouse gases are at a level not seen for at least 600,000 years, effects will persist and increase for a while even as we begin to control emissions.

Climatic changes, combined with habitat destruction and pollution, are causing loss of species, forests, human settlements, glaciers, and coastal heritage sites. All living organisms depend on ecosystems that can be sustained only in relatively narrow temperature ranges.

The recent rapid global average temperature increase is indeed the result of human activity. While the climate is always changing, attribution studies using sophisticated supercomputer global climate models show that natural causes do not account for the recent rapid temperature increase and that human activity does. See the 2001 IPCC/SPM report, Figure 2.4.

### **A Matter of Faith and Justice**

As Unitarian Universalists, we are called by our seventh Principle to affirm and promote “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” We envision a world in which all people are assured a secure and meaningful life that is ecologically responsible and sustainable, in which every form of life has intrinsic value. In other words, Unitarian Universalists are called to defer to a balance between our individual needs and those of all other organisms. Entire cultures, nations, and life forms are at risk of extinction while basic human rights to adequate supplies of food, fresh water, and health as well as sustainable livelihoods for humans are being undermined. To live, we must both consume and dispose. Both our consumption and our disposal burden the interdependent web of existence. To sustain the interdependent web, we must burden it less while maintaining the essentials of our lives. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are painful omens of how racism, sexism, and poverty worsen the effects of global warming/ climate change. Our world is calling us to gather in community and respond from our moral and spiritual wealth; together we can transform our individual and congregational lives into acts of moral witness, discarding our harmful habits for new behaviors and practices that will sustain life on Earth, ever vigilant against injustice.

### **A Matter of Policy**

Global warming/climate change is not only an environmental phenomenon; it is a hotly contested policy issue. All countries, in particular developing countries, will be unable to protect their residents

from sea level increases, frequent and intense droughts, heavy rains, and violent hurricanes and tornadoes. Species worldwide face extinction from these same events. It is a bitter irony and a grave injustice that economically developed countries that are most responsible for global warming/climate change possess the wealth, technology, and infrastructure to cope with its negative effects, while those who have the least will have the largest burdens to bear.

In 1992, the United States ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Convention calls for its signatories to stabilize their greenhouse gas emission rates. It also states that economically developed countries will take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and not use scientific uncertainty about some aspects of climate change as a cause for delaying an immediate response. While the scientific evidence is solid, there seems to be an effort by some to confuse the public. To date, the United States has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention, which sets milestones for reducing greenhouse gas emission rates. International cooperation is critical for addressing this global dilemma.

### **A Call to Action**

Affirming that we are of this earth and that humankind has brought about global warming/climate change, we, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, pledge to ground our missions and ministries in reverence for this earth and responsibility to it as we undertake these personal practices, congregational actions, and advocacy goals.

### **Personal Practices**

- Reduce our use of energy and our consumption of manufactured goods that become waste;
- Use alternative sources of energy to reduce global warming/climate change and to encourage the development of such sources;
- Choose the most energy-efficient transportation means that meet our needs and abilities (e.g., walk, bike, carpool, use mass transit and communication technologies, and limit travel);
- Determine our personal energy consumption and pledge to

reduce our use of energy and carbon emissions by at least 20 percent by 2010 or sooner and into the future;

- Reuse, recycle, and reduce waste;
- Plant and preserve trees and native plants and choose sustainably harvested wood and wood products;
- Eat and serve energy-efficient food that is locally produced and low on the food chain;
- Use financial resources to encourage corporate social responsibility with reference to global warming/climate change;
- Model these practices by committing to a life of simplicity and Earth stewardship;
- Consume less, choose appliances that are rated energy-efficient (e.g., by the EPA Energy Star Program), and choose products and materials that are made from renewable resources and can be recycled at the end of their usefulness; and
- Commit to continue to learn about the science, impact, and mitigation of global warming/climate change and communicate this knowledge by teaching about and discussing the problems and dangers of, and actions to address, climate change.

### **Congregational Actions**

- Celebrate reverence for the interdependent web of existence in all aspects of congregational life;
- Treat environmentally responsible practices as a spiritual discipline;
- Seek certification through the Green Sanctuary Program of the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth;
- Educate ourselves, our children, and future generations on sustainable ways to live interdependently;
- Whenever possible, plan congregational facilities around proximity to public transportation and encourage congregants, as they are able, to travel by public transportation, walking, biking, and carpooling;
- Seek U. S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for all new congregational building projects and use LEED guidelines for renovation projects;

- Use congregational financial resources to positively address the global warming/climate change crisis;
- Practice environmentally responsible consumption and encourage voluntary simplicity among members;
- Build a broader base for environmentally mindful policies and practices through congregational alliances within Unitarian Universalism, through interfaith channels, and with secular entities; and
- Maximize the energy efficiency of congregational facilities by enrolling in the EPA's Energy Star for Congregations Program.

## **Denominational Affairs**

We call upon our denominational leaders to provide:

- Leadership, by calling upon the major political parties to develop energy and climate change policies and to make them central topics of debate in state, congressional, and presidential elections;
- Education, by providing spiritual, educational, and technical resources for congregational and individual responses;
- Justice, by seeking opportunities for public witness for environmental justice, including joining interfaith and public events promoting a just response to climate change;
- Sustainable practices, by exploring the options for performing environmental audits of all UUA properties and for modeling appropriate management and purchasing practices;
- Sustainable investing, by exploring the potential for using the ownership rights of the denomination's financial resources to positively address the global warming/climate change crisis;
- Support, by assisting congregations in evaluating and addressing the risks and challenges they face as a result of global warming/climate change;
- Recognition of congregational action, by encouraging, honoring, and publicizing the work of UU congregations, including those that achieve Green Sanctuary accreditation; and
- Ministry, by recognizing and supporting the need for UU leaders to help others understand the urgency and severity

of addressing global warming/climate change, the resulting potential for despair, and places to find hope for the future.

### **Advocacy Goals**

- Full compliance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with the understanding that because human activity is affecting global climate change, it follows that the greater our total population the greater the impact;
- Ratification of and compliance with the Kyoto Protocol;
- Funding for research and development of renewable energy resources and energy-efficient technologies that includes a shift of federal subsidies from fossil fuel industries to renewable energy technologies and improved energy efficiency;
- Funding of regional, national, and international programs to assist in mitigating the effects of global warming/climate change;
- Safe and responsible development of power sources with low greenhouse gas emissions;
- Policies and practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase forestation and other forms of carbon dioxide sequestration;
- Funding for development of energy-efficient mass transit and encouragement of its widespread use;
- Global warming/climate change impact studies (including physical, social, and economic effects) to be conducted by local and regional governments, with the findings to be incorporated into local government processes;
- Urban and regional planning designed to reduce energy consumption;
- Access to family planning services in the United States and around the world;
- Significantly strengthened Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standards for automobiles and light trucks;
- National greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets of 10 percent below current levels by 2015, 20 percent by 2020, and 60 percent by 2030;

- United States policy that takes a leadership role in future global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the negative impacts of global warming/climate change;
- Monitor, propose, and support legislation at the local and state level related to global warming/climate change and opportunities to reduce emissions; and
- Provide information on legislative advocacy opportunities to members of the congregation.

Given our human capacity to reflect and act upon our own lives as well as the condition of the world, we accept with humility and determination our responsibility to remedy and mitigate global warming/climate change through innovation, cooperation, and self-discipline. We undertake this work for the preservation of life on Earth.

<http://www.uua.org/statements/threat-global-warmingclimate-change>



# United Church of Christ

## Climate Change and Global Warming

“We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late.”

—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### What You Need To Know

For as long as the earth has existed, the sun’s rays have provided warmth that gives us seasons, weather patterns, and a predictable climate. Periodically, the earth has warmed or cooled, but the global warming patterns experienced in the last 250 years are the result of human activity directly related to the burning of fossil fuels. Beginning with the industrial revolution in the late 1700’s, coal and oil have provided the energy to build the modern economy.

However, the side effects of burning fossil fuels have proven to be more harmful than we ever knew, because that process releases chemicals into the air we breathe and into the upper atmosphere. Those chemicals like carbon dioxide act like a blanket over the earth and prevent heat from escaping in a normal way. As the activities and energy consumption of an industrial civilization have increased, trapped heat has risen to the point where entire natural systems are changing.

The problems of climate change and global warming are confirmed and well-documented by the scientific community. Reputable scientific organizations that reflect the consensus among leading scientists about this urgent problem include:

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)
- National Academies of Science (NAS)
- Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change
- American Geophysical Union (AGU)
- American Meteorological Society (AMS)
- Climate Change Research Center (CCRC)
- American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)

Before the industrial revolution, the historic level of carbon dioxide was roughly 275 parts per million. We are currently raising that level at two parts per million annually to the level of approximately 400 parts per million in 2015. Even if we changed our fossil-fuel based economy immediately, the effects of current global warming will continue to heat the planet. In addition, there are feedback loops that may accelerate global warming. For instance, white ice reflects heat whereas darker ocean absorbs heat; as some ice melts, more ocean is exposed and the ice melts faster because the surrounding ocean is warmer.

The fact is that our planet and the natural systems that sustain life are changing due to global warming. With hotter weather, we get more evaporation and more moisture into the air. The consequence is that we have more extreme weather events; when it rains, it is more likely to flood. When a hurricane passes over warmer water, it is more likely to strengthen. Normal rainfall patterns are changing around the earth, and humans and animals are having to adjust their behavior, their reproductive patterns, where they live, and their sources for food.

### **Why Is Global Warming An Issue Of Faith?**

People of faith are beginning to realize that global warming and climate change are issues of environmental justice. For humans, those who are poor or unable to adjust will be the first to feel the effects of a warming planet; many will lose their homes to rising seas and be unable to grow food for their families. The scientific predictions are that as ice melts on Antarctica and Greenland, sea levels will rise as much as four feet, thus displacing millions of persons who live and work and grow food near the coasts. Low-lying countries such as Bangladesh will lose most of their land mass, islands in the Pacific will disappear, and coastal marshes such as The Everglades in South Florida will be under sea water. For

plants and animals, global warming means that many will not adjust in time and will become extinct, thus reducing the diversity and beauty of God's natural creation.

Developed countries such as the United States consume a disproportionate amount of the earth's resources and produce a disproportionate amount of carbon. In the U.S., 5% of the world's population consumes 25% of the earth's resources, thus contributing a disproportionate amount to global warming. It is an issue of injustice between those who "have" and those who "have not."

### **What Can You Do?**

- Calculate the carbon footprint of your family and your congregation to determine a baseline for energy savings.
- Home: turn the thermostat down in winter and up in summer, insulate, get only the appliances you need and make them energy efficient, buy a smaller home or rent a smaller apartment, shade your windows, dry your clothes on the line.
- Transportation: ride a bike or walk more and drive less, purchase fuel-efficient and smaller vehicles, commute by public transportation, limit flying.
- Food: grow a garden for vegetables and herbs, support your local farmers through a CSA, limit packaging and waste, start a compost pile.
- Yard: plant native perennials rather than grass to limit mowing, buy an electric mower if you need to cut grass, recycle leaves and yard waste, plant trees for shade and heat reduction, start a worm farm, compost for soil enrichment.
- Education: explore websites and community resources for more ways to save energy and cut your carbon footprint, join our congregational "Green Team" to plan for action.
- Advocacy: write or call your elected officials at every level to inform them that global warming is an issue of faith and justice and that public policy decisions to address global warming are essential.

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[http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries\\_climate-change-and-global](http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_climate-change-and-global)



# Ecumenical: Creation Justice Ministries

## Faith Principles on Climate Change

*Creation Justice Ministries educates, equips and mobilizes Christian communions/denominations, congregations and individuals to protect, restore, and rightly share God's Creation.*

The following principles were developed in 2007 by Creation Justice Ministries in conjunction with our interfaith community to outline the elements we feel must be addressed in any national climate change legislation. Though there may be other principles that would be appropriate, we feel that these are the essential faith principles that we must lift up as a community in our ministry to protect God's planet and people.

**Justice:** Strive for justice and acknowledge that climate change's societal impact already falls, and will continue to fall, most heavily on the people around the world who are least able to mitigate the impacts—poor and vulnerable populations in the U.S. and in developing countries. As a leading industrialized nation that has disproportionately contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, it is incumbent upon us to rectify this injustice. To reach our goal of justice, we require that legislation—

1. Include mechanisms that mitigate the impacts of climate change particularly for vulnerable populations in the U.S. and abroad.

2. Prevent further harm to human health and all of God's creation by utilizing clean energy sources when addressing climate change and carbon pollution.
3. Focus on a fair and equitable distribution of total benefits and costs among people, communities, and nations, and in particular rectify the disproportionate impact that low-income communities have and will experience as the climate continues to change.
4. Enable our brothers and sisters now living in poverty to have both economic independence and stability and to eliminate the devastating impacts that climate change has and will continue to have on those people in the U.S. and around the world living in poverty.
5. Take action now to avoid placing the burden of carbon reduction unduly on our children's children.
6. Endorse policies that place a high priority on allowing all people to live in God's abundance and with dignity by ensuring that basic human needs and worker justice are not adversely impacted by the effects of climate change or future efforts to address climate change.

**Stewardship:** Heed the call to be faithful stewards and caretakers of God's creation by limiting the future impacts of climate change on God's Earth. Already, climate change has damaged the precious balance of God's creation, including increasing the number of threatened species, causing long-term drought, and melting Arctic ice. To reach our goal of stewardship, we require that legislation—

1. Follow recognized scientific guidelines and recommendations in order to protect all of God's creation and prevent catastrophic damage to God's Earth and God's people. Following their recommendations, legislation must include comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth's temperature to 2 degrees Celsius or less. Legislation should focus on the short term goal of reducing U.S. carbon emissions to reach a 15-20 percent reduction in carbon by 2020 with a long term vision to achieve carbon emissions that are 80 percent of 2000 levels by the year 2050.
2. Avoid catastrophic climate change, which would devastate God's creation, put more pressure on disaster and relief responses, and

endanger the future of the planet. Although climate change impacts are already being felt, we must ensure that God's people and planet are protected from the catastrophic effects that may occur if we fail to significantly curb our carbon emissions.

3. Call on major emitters to take responsibility for their actions and work to significantly reduce their carbon emissions.

**Sustainability:** Ensure that efforts to curb climate change prevent further environmental and societal tragedies. As people of faith we are guided by the value of sustainability. Sustainability requires that we enable biological and social systems that nurture and support life not be depleted or poisoned. To reach our goal of sustainability, we require that legislation—

1. Maintain God's good creation by preventing policies that place the burden of our lifestyles on one aspect of creation and encouraging policies that sustain and restore vibrant eco-systems with economic justice so that communities of life can flourish for generations to come.
2. Respond to climate change in a way that reflects the interdependence of all of God's creation.
3. Support energy sources that are renewable, clean, and avoid destruction of God's creation.

**Sufficiency:** In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough requires that those among us who have more than enough will need to address our patterns of acquisition and consumption. We cannot achieve significant reductions in climate change emissions unless we make changes in our lifestyles and particularly in our energy consumption. To support the goal of sufficiency, legislation must—

1. Encourage energy conservation in our homes, our communities, and our places of worship.
2. Encourage energy conservation in national transportation and distribution systems and commercial enterprises.
3. Encourage the federal government to lead through research and example in the practice and implementation of energy conservation.

<http://www.creationjustice.org/faith-principles-on-climate-change.html>

# Ecumenical: Pastoral Message on Climate Change

by the national leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, and Anglican Church of Canada

September 19, 2014

We are united as Christian leaders in our concern for the well-being of our neighbors and of God's good creation that provides life and livelihood for all God's creatures. Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste.

Many have reacted to these changes with grief and anger. In their outrage some have understandably focused on the neglect and carelessness, both in private industry and in government regulation, that have contributed to these changes. However, an honest accounting requires a recognition that we all participate both as consumers and investors in economies that make intensive and insistent demands for energy. In addition, as citizens we have chosen to support or acquiesce in policies that shift the burdens of climate change to communities that are most vulnerable to its effects. People who are already challenged by poverty and by dislocation resulting from civil war or famine have limited resources for adapting to climate change's effects.

While an accounting of climate change that has credibility and integrity must include our own repentance, we find our hope in the promise of God's own faithfulness to the creation and humankind and in the liberation that comes from God's promise.

God, who made the creation and made it good, has not abandoned it. Daily the Spirit continues to renew the face of the earth. All who care for the earth and work for the restoration of its vitality can be confident that they are not pursuing a lost cause. We serve in concert with God's own creative and renewing power.

Moreover, we need not surrender to political ideologies and other modern mythologies that would divide us into partisan factions—deserving and undeserving, powerless victims and godless oppressors. In Christ we have the promise of a life where God has reconciled the human community. In Christ God sets us free from the captivity of blaming and shaming. God liberates us for shared endeavors where we find each other at our best.

While the challenge may seem daunting, the Spirit's abundant gifts for service empower us to find common cause with people who exercise countless insights and skills, embodied in hundreds of occupations and trades. We have good reason to hope in all the ways God's grace is at work among us. We can commend ourselves to the work before us with confidence in God's mercy.

Opportunities to act imaginatively and courageously abound in all our individual callings. The Holy Spirit's work in us leads us as faithful consumers and investors in a global economy to make responsible choices to reduce energy use, carbon emissions, and the wasteful consumption of water and other natural resources. As citizens, we have voices to use in educating children about the climate and in shaping public and corporate policies that affect the environment. The Spirit has also given us our voices to contribute our witness to public discussion of just and responsible use of natural resources.

We also have the resources and responsibility to act together for the common good, especially for those most vulnerable to the effect of climate change in the spirit of the seventh Millennium Development Goal, "to ensure environmental stability". World leaders will meet this month in New York for a Climate Summit, and in December in Lima, Peru, to discuss global cooperation on climate change. Working under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

(UNFCCC), participants in the UNFCCC's negotiations hope for an agreement in 2015 that will move toward reduction of carbon emissions, development of low carbon technologies, and assistance to populations most vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate.

We encourage you to take the initiative to engage decision-makers in this godly work in all arenas of public life — in government and business, in schools and civic organizations, in social media and also in our church life. We are not powerless to act and we are not alone. “We have the power of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling Spirit of Christ to give us hope and courage.”

The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God's good creation.

**Signatories:**

**The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton**, presiding bishop of the ELCA;

**The Rev. Susan Johnson**, national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada;

**The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori**, presiding bishop and primate, The Episcopal Church; and

**The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz**, primate, Anglican Church of Canada.



## Ecumenical: World Council of Churches

### Minute on Climate Justice

The World Council of Churches is a worldwide fellowship of churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service. On November 8, 2013, its 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly adopted this as part of its Report of the Public Issues Committee:

*“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the water.” (Psalm 24)*

*“...cease to do evil and learn to do right. Pursue justice and champion the oppressed. Give the orphan his rights, plead the widow’s case.” (Isaiah 1:16b-17)*

Climate change is today one of the most challenging global threats affecting especially the most vulnerable. The World Council of Churches (WCC) was among the first to warn about the dangers of climate change. Now after 20 years of advocacy, churches have helped bring ecological justice into the international debate on climate.

The WCC governing bodies have developed policy on climate change. Furthermore, the WCC has also presented statements to the high level segment of the Conference of Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In recent years churches and specialized ministries have increased their advocacy efforts. Together with Christian churches, interfaith initiatives have also shown how faith communities have reached consensus in addressing the climate change crisis.

Despite being a most crucial issue, climate change has lost priority on the public and political agendas. While there are some encouraging signs, nonetheless climate change negotiations at the international level have not realized the stated goals.

In September 2013, the first part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report was delivered confirming the gravity of climate change and the consequences it already has, among them the rise of sea level, the melting of glaciers and polar ice, the further increase of the strength and frequency of floods, tropical storms and droughts. The report also evidenced the growing consensus in the scientific community on the human causes of climate change.

The effects of climate change are being experienced already now. Churches in countries like Tuvalu, Kiribati, Bangladesh, and the Philippines as well as the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations are already addressing the tragedies associated with climate displaced people.

Victims of climate change are the new face of the poor, the widow and the stranger that are especially loved and cared for by God (Deut. 10:17-18). When creation is threatened in this way, churches are called to speak out and act as an expression of their commitment to life, justice and peace.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea, 30 October – 8 November, 2013, therefore:

- A. *Reiterates*** the concerns of the churches over climate change and its adverse effects on the whole of creation and especially on vulnerable communities in many parts of the world;

- B. Encourages** member churches to support the role of the WCC in enabling an ecumenical pilgrimage for justice and peace to strengthen links between churches and communities in various parts of the world working together to care for creation and eco-justice;
- C. Calls** upon churches and ecumenical organizations to insist that the respective governments look beyond national interests in order to be responsible towards God's creation and our common future, and urge them to safeguard and promote the basic human rights of those who are threatened by the effects of climate change and particularly those church representatives present at COP19 in Warsaw, Poland, to urge the Polish COP presidency to increase the ambitions of the Warsaw outputs; and
- D. Welcomes** the climate change plan of the White House and calls upon the President of the United States to reject the building of the Keystone Pipeline in the United States of America.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/minute-on-climate-justice>



## Hinduism

### Hindu Declaration on Climate Change

Adopted at the Convocation of Hindu Spiritual Leaders

Parliament of the World's Religions, Melbourne, Australia, December 8, 2009

*Earth, in which the seas, the rivers and many waters lie, from which arise foods and fields of grain, abode to all that breathes and moves, may She confer on us Her finest yield.*

—Bhumi Suktam, Atharva Veda  
XII.1.3

The Hindu tradition understands that man is not separate from nature, that we are linked by spiritual, psychological and physical bonds with the elements around us. Knowing that the Divine is present everywhere and in all things, Hindus strive to do no harm. We hold a deep reverence for life and an awareness that the great forces of nature—the earth, the water, the fire, the air and space—as well as all the various orders of life, including plants and trees, forests and animals, are bound to each other within life's cosmic web.

Our beloved Earth, so touchingly looked upon as the Universal Mother, has nurtured mankind through millions of years of growth and evolution. Now centuries of rapacious exploitation of the planet have caught up with us, and a radical change in our relationship with nature is no longer an option. It is a matter of survival. We cannot continue to destroy nature without also destroying ourselves. The dire problems besetting our world—war, disease, poverty and hunger—will all be magnified many fold by the predicted impacts of climate change.

The nations of the world have yet to agree upon a plan to ameliorate man's contribution to this complex change. This is largely due to powerful forces in some nations which oppose any such attempt, challenging the very concept that unnatural climate change is occurring. Hindus everywhere should work toward an international consensus. Humanity's very survival depends upon our capacity to make a major transition of consciousness, equal in significance to earlier transitions from nomadic to agricultural, agricultural to industrial and industrial to technological. We must transit to complementarity in place of competition, convergence in place of conflict, holism in place of hedonism, optimization in place of maximization. We must, in short, move rapidly toward a global consciousness that replaces the present fractured and fragmented consciousness of the human race.

Mahatma Gandhi urged, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." If alive today, he would call upon Hindus to set the example, to change our lifestyle, to simplify our needs and restrain our desires. As one sixth of the human family, Hindus can have a tremendous impact. We can and should take the lead in Earth-friendly living, personal frugality, lower power consumption, alternative energy, sustainable food production and vegetarianism, as well as in evolving technologies that positively address our shared plight.

Hindus recognize that it may be too late to avert drastic climate change. Thus, in the spirit of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, "the whole world is one family," Hindus encourage the world to be prepared to respond with compassion to such calamitous challenges as population displacement, food and water shortage, catastrophic weather and rampant disease.

Sanatana Dharma envisions the vastness of God's manifestation and the immense cycles of time in which it is perfectly created, preserved and destroyed, again and again, every dissolution being the preamble to the next creative impulse. Notwithstanding this spiritual reassurance, Hindus still know we must do all that is humanly possible to protect the Earth and her resources for the present as well as future generations.

[http://www.hinduismtoday.com/pdf\\_downloads/hindu-climate-change-declaration.pdf](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/pdf_downloads/hindu-climate-change-declaration.pdf)



# Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change

## The Anchorage Declaration

April 24, 2009

From 20-24 April, 2009, Indigenous representatives from the Arctic, North America, Asia, Pacific, Latin America, Africa, Caribbean and Russia met in Anchorage, Alaska for the Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change. We thank the Ahtna and the Dena'ina Athabascan Peoples in whose lands we gathered.

We express our solidarity as Indigenous Peoples living in areas that are the most vulnerable to the impacts and root causes of climate change. We reaffirm the unbreakable and sacred connection between land, air, water, oceans, forests, sea ice, plants, animals and our human communities as the material and spiritual basis for our existence.

We are deeply alarmed by the accelerating climate devastation brought about by unsustainable development. We are experiencing profound and disproportionate adverse impacts on our cultures, human and environmental health, human rights, well-being, traditional livelihoods, food systems and food sovereignty, local infrastructure, economic viability, and our very survival as Indigenous Peoples.

Mother Earth is no longer in a period of climate change, but in climate crisis. We therefore insist on an immediate end to the destruction and desecration of the elements of life.

Through our knowledge, spirituality, sciences, practices, experiences and relationships with our traditional lands, territories, waters, air, forests, oceans, sea ice, other natural resources and all life, Indigenous Peoples have a vital role in defending and healing Mother Earth. The future of Indigenous Peoples lies in the wisdom of our elders, the restoration of the sacred position of women, the youth of today and in the generations of tomorrow.

We uphold that the inherent and fundamental human rights and status of Indigenous Peoples, affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), must be fully recognized and respected in all decision-making processes and activities related to climate change. This includes our rights to our lands, territories, environment and natural resources as contained in Articles 25–30 of the UNDRIP. When specific programs and projects affect our lands, territories, environment and natural resources, the right of Self Determination of Indigenous Peoples must be recognized and respected, emphasizing our right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, including the right to say “no”. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreements and principles must reflect the spirit and the minimum standards contained in UNDRIP.

### **Calls for Action**

1. In order to achieve the fundamental objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), we call upon the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC to support a binding emissions reduction target for developed countries (Annex 1) of at least 45% below 1990 levels by 2020 and at least 95% by 2050. In recognizing the root causes of climate change, participants call upon States to work towards decreasing dependency on fossil fuels. We further call for a just transition to decentralized renewable energy economies, sources and systems owned and controlled by our local communities to achieve energy security and sovereignty.

In addition, the Summit participants agreed to present two options for action: some supported option A and some option B. These are as follows:

- A. We call for the phase out of fossil fuel development and a moratorium on new fossil fuel developments on or near Indigenous lands and territories.
  - B. We call for a process that works towards the eventual phase out of fossil fuels, without infringing on the right to development of Indigenous nations.
2. We call upon the Parties to the UNFCCC to recognize the importance of our Traditional Knowledge and practices shared by Indigenous Peoples in developing strategies to address climate change. To address climate change we also call on the UNFCCC to recognize the historical and ecological debt of the Annex 1 countries in contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. We call on these countries to pay this historical debt.
  3. We call on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and other relevant institutions to support Indigenous Peoples in carrying out Indigenous Peoples' climate change assessments.
  4. We call upon the UNFCCC's decision-making bodies to establish formal structures and mechanisms for and with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples. Specifically we recommend that the UNFCCC:
    - a. Organize regular Technical Briefings by Indigenous Peoples on Traditional Knowledge and climate change;
    - b. Recognize and engage the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change and its regional focal points in an advisory role;

- c. Immediately establish an Indigenous focal point in the secretariat of the UNFCCC;
  - d. Appoint Indigenous Peoples' representatives in UNFCCC funding mechanisms in consultation with Indigenous Peoples;
  - e. Take the necessary measures to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous and local communities in formulating, implementing, and monitoring activities, mitigation, and adaptation relating to impacts of climate change.
5. All initiatives under Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) must secure the recognition and implementation of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including security of land tenure, ownership, recognition of land title according to traditional ways, uses and customary laws and the multiple benefits of forests for climate, ecosystems, and Peoples before taking any action.
6. We challenge States to abandon false solutions to climate change that negatively impact Indigenous Peoples' rights, lands, air, oceans, forests, territories and waters. These include nuclear energy, large-scale dams, geo-engineering techniques, "clean coal," agro-fuels, plantations, and market based mechanisms such as carbon trading, the Clean Development Mechanism, and forest offsets. The human rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect our forests and forest livelihoods must be recognized, respected and ensured.
7. We call for adequate and direct funding in developed and developing States and for a fund to be created to enable Indigenous Peoples' full and effective participation in all climate processes, including adaptation, mitigation, monitoring and transfer of appropriate technologies in order to foster our empowerment, capacity-building, and education. We strongly urge relevant United Nations bodies to facilitate and fund the participation, education, and capacity building of Indigenous youth and women to ensure engagement in all international and national processes related to climate change.

8. We call on financial institutions to provide risk insurance for Indigenous Peoples to allow them to recover from extreme weather events.
9. We call upon all United Nations agencies to address climate change impacts in their strategies and action plans, in particular their impacts on Indigenous Peoples, including the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). In particular, we call upon all the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other relevant United Nations bodies to establish an Indigenous Peoples' working group to address the impacts of climate change on food security and food sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples.
10. We call on United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to conduct a fast track assessment of short-term drivers of climate change, specifically black carbon, with a view to initiating negotiation of an international agreement to reduce emissions of black carbon.
11. We call on States to recognize, respect and implement the fundamental human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the collective rights to traditional ownership, use, access, occupancy and title to traditional lands, air, forests, waters, oceans, sea ice and sacred sites as well as to ensure that the rights affirmed in Treaties are upheld and recognized in land use planning and climate change mitigation strategies. In particular, States must ensure that Indigenous Peoples have the right to mobility and are not forcibly removed or settled away from their traditional lands and territories, and that the rights of Peoples in voluntary isolation are upheld. In the case of climate change migrants, appropriate programs and measures must address their rights, status, conditions, and vulnerabilities.
12. We call upon states to return and restore lands, territories, waters, forests, oceans, sea ice and sacred sites that have been taken from Indigenous Peoples, limiting our access to our traditional ways

of living, thereby causing us to misuse and expose our lands to activities and conditions that contribute to climate change.

13. In order to provide the resources necessary for our collective survival in response to the climate crisis, we declare our communities, waters, air, forests, oceans, sea ice, traditional lands and territories to be “**Food Sovereignty Areas,**” defined and directed by Indigenous Peoples according to customary laws, free from extractive industries, deforestation and chemical-based industrial food production systems (i.e., contaminants, agro-fuels, genetically modified organisms).
14. We encourage our communities to exchange information while ensuring the protection and recognition of and respect for the intellectual property rights of Indigenous Peoples at the local, national and international levels pertaining to our Traditional Knowledge, innovations, and practices. These include knowledge and use of land, water and sea ice, traditional agriculture, forest management, ancestral seeds, pastoralism, food plants, animals and medicines and are essential in developing climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, restoring our food sovereignty and food independence, and strengthening our Indigenous families and nations.

**We offer to share with humanity our Traditional Knowledge, innovations, and practices relevant to climate change, provided our fundamental rights as intergenerational guardians of this knowledge are fully recognized and respected. We reiterate the urgent need for collective action.**

***Agreed by consensus of the participants in the Indigenous Peoples’ Global Summit on Climate Change, Anchorage Alaska, April 24th 2009***

<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/smsn/ngo/168.pdf>



## Islam

### **Conclusions and Recommendations of the First International Conference on Muslim Action on Climate Change**

Bogor, Indonesia, April 10, 2010

#### **The resource persons, participants and organizers of the conference recognizing that—**

- Global warming and climate change are just as much the concerns of people in the Islamic World as of people in other parts of the world for the potential impacts they have on humanity.
- Global warming and climate change are mainly caused by the continuous increase in human consumption driven by a global paradigm that is anthropocentric and has economic growth as its primary objective.
- If current trends continue, carbon emissions will double by 2050 and global warming will upset the world's ecological balance. There will be enormous natural disasters, increase in diseases and risk of food scarcity due to lower productivity in agriculture and fisheries. These have the potential to induce massive migration.
- Climate change is a scientifically proven phenomenon induced by human behavior. Therefore, action dealing with climate change needs to influence human motivation. Effective communication

and education are keys to this effort. Hence, religious values, in our case Islamic teaching, have the potential to influence human behavior to help mitigate climate change.

- Islam has profound wisdom to offer the rest of the world. The holistic Islamic teaching of 'rahmatan lil alamin' (the blessing of the universe) propagates that we share the world fairly with all mankind. The holistic Islamic concept 'rahmatan lil alamin' (the gift or blessing of the universe) necessitates that we share the world fairly with all mankind. The participants agreed to base the efforts for sustainable development on both the Qur'an and the history of Islamic science and civilization. The Islamic World will in the future anchor its development in the Islamic teaching of a holistic ecological paradigm that balances the relationships between human beings and Allah (hablun min Allah), among human beings (hablun minannas), and between human beings and nature (hablun minal alam). Preservation of the earth's ecosystem is the preservation of life. We believe that global good environmental governance can be achieved with the principles of mizan (balance), khalifah (leadership of the people and stewardship of the earth), and ukhuwah (collaborate, care and share). These are key elements that will help change Muslims' behavior and promote activities to deal with climate change.
- Islam is the religion of more than one and a half billion people on earth, constituting around one quarter of the world's current population. Like all good citizens of this planet, Muslims need to contribute to the world development and to help curb the problems of climate change. Efforts to build awareness and educate Muslims around the world about responding to climate change can lead to significant actions and contribution by governments and people across the Islamic world to help mitigate and adapt to climate change. There is a need to strengthen education system to include awareness about the links between man and nature, as well as knowledge and capacity for good environmental stewardship, governance and policy
- The Islamic World needs to look into various aspects related to climate change, including the overall development agenda, poverty

alleviation, cities and regional development, food production, both industrial and infrastructure development, and empowerment and education for sustainable development.

- The important roles of grass-root and community-based Islamic education systems in Islamic countries such as Indonesia's pesantren system (Islamic boarding school system), networks of independent ulamas and Qur'anic study programs in many localities, and large scale mass-organization like Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama with a combine membership of more than 100 million people. All these can serve as bases for actions.
- The existence of strong networks of Islamic leaders, educators and Islamic institutions in South East Asia.
- The Muslim Seven Year Climate Change Action Plan (M7YCAP), and the leadership of MACCA (Muslim Association on Climate Change Actions) in promoting green cities and Islamic Al-Khaer cities in the Islamic World under which program joint announcement with Muhammadiyah, Indonesian Biodiversity Foundation, Conservation International Indonesia, and MC-TAP/BPPT has been made to recognize and support Bogor, the city that hosts this conference, to become a green city

**hereby agree:**

- To base our efforts for Islamic sustainable development on both the Qur'an and the history of Islamic science and civilization. The Islamic World will in the future anchor its development in the Islamic teaching of a holistic ecological paradigm that balances the relationships between human beings and Allah (hablun min Allah), among human beings (hablun minannas), and between human beings and nature (hablun minal alam). Preservation of the earth's ecosystem is the preservation of life.
- To strengthen the knowledge and technology bases of Islamic countries and societiesto be able to face the challenge of climate change, and promote collaboration in the area of climate change among Islamic countries by transforming the political mindset, and

to develop an Islamic Brains Trust by mobilizing scientists from the Islamic World, promoting collaboration across universities and enhancing research and revitalizing our education approach to internalize the holistic paradigm in Islamic teaching. To that effect, the participants will develop network among Islamic universities and research centers, to be led by UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta.

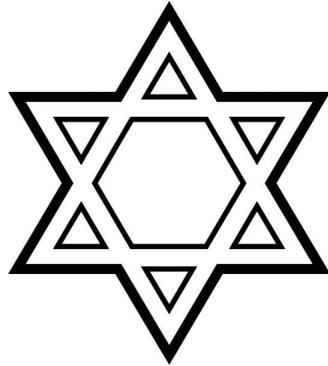
- To promote the re-integration of science and Islamic teaching into both policy making and education systems for sustainable development across the Islamic World. We need a special council in the OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) to take leadership in protecting OIC Member Countries from climate change impacts through promotion of coherent climate change policy, environmentally benign technology and corporate practices and adoption of a lifestyle in accordance with Islamic values.
- To promote governmental leadership in the Islamic World for developing coherent climate change policies, integrating them into the countries' development agendas, with spatial and land use plans that balance economic and ecological needs, enabling the creation of various innovative financing facilities and fiscal incentives to lower the greenhouse gas emissions.
- To promote joint and synchronized actions across the Islamic World in all segments of society (government, civil society, private sector and media) to take their respective share of responsibility for global environmental stewardship. For that purpose we need to promote more Muslims as agents of change in environmental protection.
- To promote and conduct community and grass root actions to respond to climate change with mitigation and adaptation efforts, and to develop various hubs of cooperation for exchange of knowledge and best practice. Rehabilitation and revitalization of local natural resources that increase resilience and quality of life should be prioritized. We need to promote mosques as community and education centers to disseminate the sustainability message.

- To train religious leaders about climate change and best educational practices using in-country Islamic education such as the pondok pesantren system in Indonesia. The eco-pesantren program and model can be enhanced and replicated to promote best environmental education practice and promote Islamic pro-environment ethics and practices.
- To strengthen the grass-root and community-based Islamic education system in Indonesia and other Islamic countries/communities, with the knowledge to care for and protect nature through good stewardship and to face the challenge of climate change.
- To strengthen the networks and co-operations among Islamic leaders, educators, scholars and institutions across the Islamic countries and communities in South East Asia.
- To establish national platforms or institutions for facilitating Muslim's actions on climate change and promote education for sustainable development.
- To recognize and celebrate successful efforts, from governmental policies to corporate practices to community actions at all levels to encourage learning and exchange of knowledge and best practices across the Islamic World.
- As a follow up program of the Muslim Seven Year Action Plan for Climate Change Action (M7YAP), the participants support the promotion of Islamic Green Cities as first step toward Al-Khaer City, and the implementation of Bogor as Green City. Through establishment of a multi-stakeholder council and potential association with MACCA (Muslim Association for Climate Change Actions) and other institutions, participants are committed to support the developments of international standard and criteria for green and Islamic Al-Khaer cities, guidelines for green city planning, development and evaluation, as well as accountability mechanism toward the realization of the declaration.

- To work with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and other existing organizations and networks to disseminate lessons learned from national level initiatives internationally, such as: (i) Indonesia's strategy as well as institutional and policy approach to climate change, and (ii) the Islamic Green and Al Khaer Cities initiatives.
- To submit this Recommendation to OIC and all its member countries for follow-up and implementation.

Bogor, Indonesia 10 April 2010

[http://www.academia.edu/2084876/Muslim\\_Conference\\_on\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Action\\_Bogor\\_10-11\\_April\\_2010](http://www.academia.edu/2084876/Muslim_Conference_on_Climate_Change_Action_Bogor_10-11_April_2010)



## Judaism

### **Jewish Community Priorities for Climate and Energy Policy 2008 of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)**

#### **Advocacy and Policy Issues**

The organized Jewish community is united in its belief that climate change is occurring and in its deep concern that the quality of life and the earth we inhabit are in danger. We affirm our responsibility to address this planetary crisis in our personal and communal lives by supporting appropriate legislation. To this end, The Coalition for the Environment and Jewish Life (“COEJL”) adopts the following climate and energy policy priorities. These priorities represent a working consensus of the organized Jewish community and have been endorsed by B’nai B’rith International; Central Conference of American Rabbis; Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, Inc.; Jewish Council for Public Affairs; the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation; Jewish War Veterans; National Council of Jewish Women; The Rabbinical Assembly; The Union for Reform Judaism; Women’s League for Conservative Judaism; and Women of Reform Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

## **Promote Domestic Energy Security**

According to the US Department of Energy, the United States imported nearly 170-million barrels of oil from OPEC nations in April 2008. With oil selling at record highs, this dependence facilitated an \$18 billion transfer of wealth from American consumers to a cartel that includes some of the most dangerous regimes in the world. This importation undermines national security. The Jewish community strongly supports specific domestic policies that reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Such policies include measures to increase fuel economy and encourage use of alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind energy (either through tax incentives or by mandating additional production from renewable electricity). In particular, the Jewish community supports a Renewable Electricity Standard requiring that at least 15% of our domestic electricity production come from renewable sources by 2020. Such a standard would help develop a distributed energy infrastructure to simultaneously reduce US dependence on foreign oil and protect the existing electricity transport infrastructure from attack. Israel has shown tremendous leadership in the area of renewable energy development. The Jewish community supports policies that facilitate collaboration between the United States and Israel in the government, nonprofit, and academic sectors for the mutual benefit of both nations. The Jewish community also supports the continued exploration and investment in biofuels, with appropriate global warming performance standards. While the Jewish community supports domestic energy security, it should not be achieved at the expense of the environment. Consequently, the Jewish community supports policies that take the environmental impact into consideration. In particular, the Jewish community does not support drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or reliance on liquid coal or tar sands.

## **Need for Aggressive Action**

Our tradition teaches that Adam and Eve were asked “to till and to tend” the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:15). We believe humans remain a partner in Creation. We fulfill this mandate by practicing “Tikkun Olam,” literally, repairing the world. Climate change threatens to irreparably alter the Earth. Carbon dioxide concentrations are higher than they have been in more than half-a-million years. Since the advent of the industrial revolution, carbon dioxide levels have risen 30 percent. At the

same time, global temperature has increased by more than 1 degree Fahrenheit in the last century. These changes are expected to result in more forest fires, severe floods, soil erosion, droughts, sea-level rise, an increased frequency of severe storms, and pest and pathogen outbreaks. The Jewish community supports aggressive climate change legislation to reduce these impacts. Such legislation should aim to reduce carbon concentrations by 80% by 2050, with significant interim reductions.

### **Support for Short-Term Emission Reductions**

Jewish tradition teaches us to protect the Earth for future generations. (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah, 1 on Ecclesiastes 7:13). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports that past and future anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions will continue to contribute to warming and sea-level rise for more than a millennium. Consequently, any delay in adopting federal climate change legislation will have repercussions for future generations. Moreover, the cost of needed reductions will increase exponentially absent immediate action. To prevent and respond to these intergenerational impacts, the Jewish community supports policies that require short-term emissions reductions in accordance with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Such reductions should reduce carbon emissions by 25-40% by the year 2020.

### **Prudence Is Paramount**

Jewish tradition recognizes the virtue of prudence. We are taught that the builder of a house must place a fence around its roof to prevent someone from falling off of it. (Deuteronomy 22:8) Thus, we are instructed to remove a possible danger that could cause fatal harm to another – even where the danger is not imminent or certain. Likewise, the Jewish community believes we must take measures to address global warming absent perfect information. While the precise threats climate change presents to human life are not certain, we recognize that climate change places human life and all creation at risk. Therefore, the Jewish community supports policies that proactively address climate change by reducing emissions to avoid its potentially catastrophic effects. This means supporting legislation that prevents global temperature from exceeding 2 degrees Celsius by limiting

concentrations of heat-trapping gases in accordance with scientific principles. Failure to act in the near term will create undue expense in the future by increasing the eventual cost of reductions.

### **Need for U.S. Leadership**

Our tradition teaches: “It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet, you are not free to desist from it.” (Pirkei Avot 2:16) While a global response to climate change is necessary, failure to secure an international commitment does not absolve the United States from taking critical first steps. Strong and decisive leadership will set an important model for other nations. America is committed to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law – regardless of the actions of other nations. The same principles must guide our response to climate change. Accordingly, the United States need not wait for China, India and other nations to join an international agreement before taking action. Rather, the United States should lead by example and create technologies to facilitate the global transition to a low-carbon economy. US leadership is particularly appropriate because the United States produces a disproportionate share of global emissions; while the United States constitutes 5% of the world’s population, it emits 25% of its greenhouse gases. At the same time, China, India and other developing nations should be urged to reduce emissions as fast as possible, because US efforts to address climate change will be ineffective without global participation.

### **Addressing the Needs of the Poor**

Jewish tradition is founded on the principles of justice. The Torah teaches of the importance of pursuing justice (Deuteronomy 16:20) and includes a detailed program to ensure the equitable distribution of resources (Exodus 22:24-26; Leviticus 25:36-37; Deuteronomy 23:20-1, 24:6,10-13,17). Both climate change itself and policies taken to address it present a disproportionate burden on the poor. Domestically, rising energy and gas prices will unduly burden those with inelastic incomes. Vulnerable nations will have the least capacity to cope with the devastating impacts of extreme weather events, rise in sea level, drought, disruption of water and food supplies, impacts on health, and the destruction of natural resources. The Jewish commitment to justice demands that we support policies that address these inequities

both in the United States and abroad. Domestically, federal policy should provide financial assistance to vulnerable populations (for increased heating and cooling costs, weatherization, and the purchase of energy-efficient appliances) and support employment training and opportunities in an emerging “green” economy. Internationally, the United States should provide funds to help vulnerable populations adapt to climate change. The United States should also look to transfer appropriate technology (e.g., drought-resistant crops, renewable energy technologies) and resources to mitigate and avoid the effects of climate change abroad.

### **Obligation to Avoid Unnecessary Waste**

Jewish law prohibits wasteful consumption. We are taught that, even in times of war, one is not to destroy the trees of our enemies. (Deuteronomy 20:19-20) Because the Earth belongs to God, consuming in a wasteful manner damages Creation and violates our mandate to use Creation only for our legitimate need. Because of this prohibition, the Jewish community supports policies that encourage energy conservation in our homes, communities, and government institutions. Such policies include incentives to develop efficient technologies, tax credits to encourage the purchase of such technologies, energy standards for new buildings and appliances, heightened fuel economy standards, and provisions for public transit. While tax incentives and credits help reduce the cost of converting to renewable electricity, the Jewish community also embraces a Renewable Electricity Standard (“RES”) to expedite the transition to a green economy. Such a mandate would require that at least 15% of our domestic electricity production be from renewable sources by 2020.

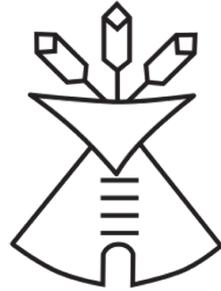
### **Market Mechanisms Are Desirable**

The Jewish community believes that a balance between regulatory and market approaches is achievable and desirable. By establishing a firm cap on emissions, federal climate change legislation will create needed price signals to encourage emission reductions. At the same time, the regulatory flexibility associated with a cap and trade policy allows for technological innovation and emission reductions at the lowest possible cost.

**Flexibility Is Critical**

Our tradition recognizes that human beings are fallible. (Proverbs 24:16). While the Jewish community believes that it is imperative that the United States takes immediate aggressive action to respond to climate change, we recognize that such measures are unlikely to be sufficient. Federal climate legislation must allow for periodic assessment and revision to accommodate emerging science and human error. 1 Endorsing organizations have made climate and energy key legislative priorities and agree in principle with the overall spirit of the document, but have not necessarily adopted each of these policy proposals as their own.

<http://www.coejl.org/resources/jewish-community-priorities-for-climate-and-energy-policy-2008/>



## **Native American Church**

### **Hopi Message to the United Nations General Assembly**

December 10, 1992

The presentation by Mr. Thomas Banyacya, the final indigenous speaker, was preceded by three shouts by Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Six Nations and first speaker of the day. The shouts were a spiritual announcement to the Great Spirit of the presence of the people assembled and the intention to give a message of spiritual importance.

Thomas then sprinkled corn meal next to the podium of the General Assembly and made a brief remark:

Hopi Spiritual leaders had an ancient prophecy that someday world leaders would gather in a Great House of Mica with rules and regulations to solve world problems without war. I am amazed to see the prophecy has come true and here you are today! But only a handful of United Nations Delegates are present to hear the Motee Sinom (Hopi for First People) from around the world who spoke here today.

My name is Banyacya of the Wolf, Fox and Coyote clan and I am a member of the Hopi sovereign nation. Hopi in our language means a peaceful, kind, gentle, truthful people. The traditional Hopi follows the spiritual path that was given to us by Massau'u the Great Spirit.

We made a sacred covenant to follow his life plan at all times, which includes the responsibility of taking care of this land and life for his divine purpose. We have never made treaties with any foreign nation including the United States, but for many centuries we have honored this sacred agreement. Our goals are not to gain political control, monetary wealth nor military power, but rather to pray and to promote the welfare of all living beings and to preserve the world in a natural way. We still have our ancient sacred stone tablets and spiritual religious societies which are the foundations of the Hopi way of life. Our history says our white brother should have retained those same sacred objects and spiritual foundations.

In 1948, all traditional Hopi spiritual leaders met and spoke of things I felt strongly were of great importance to all people. They selected four interpreters to carry their message of which I am the only one still living today. At that time I was given a sacred prayer feather by the spiritual leaders. I made a commitment to carry the Hopi message of peace and deliver warnings from prophecies known since the time the previous world was destroyed by flood and our ancestors came to this land.

My mission was also to open the doors of this great House of Mica to native peoples. The Elders said to knock four times and this commitment was fulfilled when I delivered a letter and the sacred prayer feather I had been given to John Washburn in the Secretary General's office in October 1991. I am bringing part of the Hopi message to you here today. We have only ten minutes to speak and time is late so I am making my statement short.

At the meeting in 1948, Hopi leaders 80, 90, and even 100 years old explained that the creator made the first world in perfect balance where humans spoke a common language, but humans turned away from moral and spiritual principles. They misused their spiritual powers for selfish purposes. They did not follow nature's rules. Eventually, their world was destroyed by sinking of land and separation of land which you would call major earthquakes. Many died and only a small handful survived.

Then this handful of peaceful people came into the second world. There they repeated their mistakes and the world was destroyed by freezing which you call the great Ice Age.

The few survivors entered the third world. That world lasted a long time and as in previous worlds, the people spoke one language. The people invented many machines and conveniences of high technology some of which have not been seen yet in this age. They even had spiritual powers that they used for good. They gradually turned away from natural laws and pursued only material things and finally only gambling while they ridiculed spiritual principles. No one stopped them from this course and the world was destroyed by the great flood that many nations still recall in their ancient history or in their religions.

The elders said again only a small group escaped and came to this fourth world where we now live. Our world is in terrible shape again even though the Great Spirit gave us different languages and sent us to the four corners of the world and told us to take care of the Earth and all that is in it.

This Hopi ceremonial rattle represents Mother Earth. The line running around it is a time line and indicates that we are in the final days of the prophecy. What have you as individuals, as nations and as the world body been doing to take care of this Earth? In the Earth today, humans poison their own food, water and air with pollution. Many of us including children are left to starve. Many wars are still being fought. Greed and concern for material things is a common disease. In this Western hemisphere, our homeland, many original native people are landless, homeless, starving and have no medical help.

The Hopi knew humans would develop many powerful technologies that would be abused. In this century we have seen the First World War and the Second World War in which the predicted gourd of ashes which you call the atomic bomb fell from the sky with great destruction. Many thousands of people were destroyed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For many years there has been great fear and danger of World War Three. The Hopi believed the Persian Gulf War was the beginning of World War Three but it was stopped and the worst weapons of

destruction were not used. This is now a time to weigh the choices for our future. We do have a choice. If you, the nations of this Earth, create another great war, the Hopi believe we humans will burn ourselves to death with ashes. That's why the spiritual Elders stress strongly that the United Nations fully open the door for native spiritual leaders to speak as soon as possible.

Nature itself does not speak with a voice that we can easily understand. Neither can the animals and birds we are threatening with extinction talk to us. Who in this world can speak for nature and the spiritual energy that creates and flows through all life? In every continent are human beings who are like you but who have not separated themselves from the land and from nature. It is through their voice that Nature can speak to us. You have heard those voices and many messages from the four corners of the world today. I have studied comparative religion and I think in your own nations and cultures you have knowledge of the consequences of living out of balance with nature and spirit. The native peoples of the world have seen and spoken to you about the destruction of their lives and homelands, the ruination of nature and the desecration of their sacred sites. It is time the United Nations used its rules to investigate these occurrences and stop them now.

The Four Corners area of the Hopi is bordered by four sacred mountains. The spiritual center within is a sacred site our prophecies say will have a special purpose in the future for mankind to survive and now should be left in its natural state. All nations must protect this spiritual center.

The Hopi and all original native people hold the land in balance by prayer, fasting, and performing ceremonies. Our spiritual Elders still hold the land in the Western Hemisphere in balance for all living beings including humans. No one should be relocated from their sacred homelands in this Western Hemisphere or anywhere in the world. Acts of forced relocation such as Public Law 93531 in the United States must be repealed.

The United Nations stands on our native homeland. The United Nations talks about human rights, equality and justice and yet the native people

have never had a real opportunity to speak to this assembly since its establishment until today. It should be the mission of your nations and this assembly to use your power and rules to examine and work to cure the damage people have done to this earth and to each other. Hopi Elders know that was your mission and they wait to see whether you will act on it now.

Nature, the First People and the spirit of our ancestors are giving you loud warnings. Today, December 10, 1992, you see increasing floods, more damaging hurricanes, hail storms, climate changes and earthquakes as our prophecies said would come. Even animals and birds are warning us with strange change in their behavior such as the beaching of whales. Why do animals act like they know about earth's problems and most humans act like they know nothing. If we humans do not wake up to the warnings, the great purification will come to destroy this world just as the previous worlds were destroyed. (Thomas and Oren Lyons held up a picture of a large rock drawing in Hopiland.)

This rock drawing shows part of the Hopi prophecy. There are two paths. The first with high technology but separate from natural and spiritual law leads to these jagged lines representing chaos. The lower path is one that remains in harmony with natural law. Here we see a line that represents a choice like a bridge joining the paths. If we return to spiritual harmony and live from our hearts we can experience a paradise in this world. If we continue only on this upper path, we will come to destruction.

It's up to all of us, as children of mother earth, to clean up this mess before it's too late.

The Elders request that during this International Year for the Worlds Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations keep that door open for spiritual leaders from the four corners of the world to come to speak to you for more than a few minutes as soon as possible. The Elders also request that eight investigative teams visit the native areas of the world, observe and tell the truth about what is being done and stop these nations from moving in this self-destructive direction.

If any of you leaders want to learn more about the spiritual vision and power of the elders, I invite you to come out to Hopiland and sit down with our real spiritual leaders in their sacred Kivas where they will reveal the ancient secrets of survival and balance.

I hope that all members of this assembly that know the spiritual way will not just talk about it but in order to have real peace and harmony, will really follow what it says across the United Nations wall: 'They shall beat their swords into plowshares and study war no more.' Let's together do that now!"

### **Epilogue**

The night before the presentations of the native people from around the world to the General Assembly there was a total eclipse of the moon over New York City and the sky was clear. The evening after the presentation by Mr. Banyacya and the other native spokespersons, heavy rain and a strong wind began. The weathermen had been calling for a snowstorm but what came the following day, instead, were the worst floods in New York's memory. Major highways were closed, some houses were washed away by the sea and the United Nations itself experienced flooding of its lower subfloors forcing a shutdown of its heating and air conditioning and all personnel were dismissed at three o'clock. To the native people present, these events were more than coincidental.

In the ground floor meeting room where on December 11, native peoples were meeting representatives of various U.N. agencies, Thomas Banyacya spontaneously called on all the participants including U.N. officials to form a great circle. All the Elders were in the center and Thomas called in some non native people as well. Each silently said a prayer. The forming of the circle of unity of all people from the four corners of the Earth was more than just a symbolic act. One participant said she had never felt herself to be in such a safe place. Later, several present noted that no further storm damage occurred in Manhattan and that the storm itself abated that afternoon.

<http://www.nativeamericanchurch.com/Signs/HOPI-UNMsg.html>



## Taoism / Daoism

### Taoism and Climate Change

by Peter Cook, May 25, 2012, [www.peakdecisions.org](http://www.peakdecisions.org)

Daoism is a wisdom tradition in which humans seek to act in harmony with the Dao, or the way of nature. For Daoism, humankind is the mediating figure between heaven and earth. In this relationship between humans, heaven and earth, the responsibility of humans is to act in accordance with the Dao, rather than to disrupt or contravene the Dao. Out of this premise, might it be possible to draw some conclusions in relation to the great ethical challenges posed by climate change?

Chen Xia and Martin Schönfeld have written a fine article on this question: "A Daoist response to climate change," in the *Journal of Global Ethics*, August 2011, pp.195-203. The article is behind a paywall so can only be accessed through a university library or similar. The authors' ideas are deserving of a wider public and so I offer a summary and selected extracts here.

The core thesis of the article revolves around a contrast between the terms Dao and wu (translated as things, matter, or creatures), as they are used in the *Tao Te Ching*. The Dao is "the creative, evolutionary and

emergent ground of being” (p. 198). The wu are the myriad manifestations of the Dao in the world.

*Dao and wu are opposites. Wu is transient, Dao is eternal; wu is structured, Dao is shapeless; wu involves distinct objects, Dao permeates all; wu is many, Dao is one. Dao and wu are certainly different, but they are also inseparable. One can think of these opposites as poles along an evolutionary and ontogenetic continuum. They are joined in time, as a ground and its offspring, or as a creative power and its generated creatures. One can also think of these opposites as poles along an ontological continuum. In this perspective, they are joined in space, as simultaneous aspects of a unified reality. In that sense wu is like matter, Dao is like energy, and Dao is wu just like matter is energetic. One can think of this co-presence analogous to a wet cloth—Dao surges through wu just as water drenches a fabric. (p. 198)*

However, the relationship between Dao and wu does not rest on a dualistic separation of essence and appearance, rather it emphasises that everything is inter-related:

*Dao unfolds wu and precedes wu, but does not dwell on a transcendent plane or supernatural far side; Dao exists through the myriad things.....*

*The ontological bond of Dao and wu means that the force of Dao dwells in the things. This transfer of power from the generative principle to individuated creatures, which is unlike anything in the monotheisms in the west, implies that reality is dynamic, that nature is self-organizing, and that the wu are innately active. (p.199)*

Having established some basic features of Dao and wu, Xia and Schönfeld draw out some implications:

*First, as wu or the things of nature absorb Dao's power, dualistic distinctions between the secular and sacred disappear. Similar to a Western deity, Dao deserves reverence and is essentially valuable. Unlike a Western deity, Dao is natural, not supernatural, and not a personified substance, but an energy flow. The flow manifests itself as a pulse, a beat, or a rhythm. The secular and the sacred merge, and nature gains intrinsic value in all its things. Second, as things absorb the Dao's power, and as this power is regarded as natural and good, nature's way is already the right way, and nature's power always finds its proper outlet. Human intervention is not needed. Leaving wu alone gives them the freedom to unfold. And finally, as wu express Dao, and as Dao deserves respect, protecting wu is our species duty, as the only type of human intervention Daoism requests. (p. 199)*

The last sentence above deserves emphasis because it highlights one of the main conclusions of this article about what kind of imperative of responsibility Daoism calls forth in relation to climate change. The heaven-human-earth trinity has some ethical import for how humans interact with wu ('things'): "The rise and fall of things partly depend on humans. For their creation, things depend on the cosmos, for their root, they depend on the Earth, and for their security, they depend on humans." (pp. 199-200) Furthermore, anthropogenic climate change raises this dependence to a new level:

*Climate change destabilizes the Earth system and ravages the biosphere. Without human emissions, these destabilizations and destructions would not have happened. The Earth system would have continued to pulse through its cycles, and the biosphere would have continued adding more biotic complexity from cycle to cycle. Anthropogenic influence on the natural flow*

*of things is thus jarring, destructive and goes against nature's flow. (199)*

Xia and Schönfeld now hone in on the sort of human action which is compatible with Daoism:

*The basic precept of Daoist ethics is that humans ought to act in accordance with the way. Just as the Dao turning into wu .... , humans should process and transform things for their use. But such an activity should not violate their original nature. What humans should do is to disclose, to bring out, to actualize potentials, and to bring forth.*

*Humans have the right to use, process and transform things, and the duty to follow the natural flow of events. Activities should not disrupt natural processes, not upset biospherical balances, and generally remain types of non-action. The Daoist precept of non-action or wuwei does not mean to do nothing. It can be translated as 'effortless action' or 'non-calculating action'.... Non-action could be described as acting in a manner that is as gentle and non-violent as the Dao, and that is the opposite of acting in a compulsive, reckless and willful way." (p. 200)*

According to Xia and Schönfeld, Daoism offers two responsibilities for humankind:

*In positive terms, Dao brings forth life and complexity, and humans should do the same. Their first responsibility in a changing climate is to learn to become stewards of the biosphere, to shepherd life, and protect complexity. In negative terms, Dao acts by non-acting; that is, by acting in harmony with the natural flow. Their second responsibility is accordingly to refrain from further disruptions of the flow, and to*

*learn to become mitigators of climate change, to soften the impact and to calm down the waves. (p. 200)*

A further practical prescription from Daoism, according to Xia and Schönfeld, is to follow a simple and frugal lifestyle. The excessive consumption in the developed world has become decoupled from any incremental increase in happiness. A voluntary return to simplicity may represent a new stage of post-consumerist civilization (p. 201).

Daoism, as a biospiritual tradition which places equal emphasis on transformation of body and mind, also offers a powerful metaphor for humankind's relation with nature:

*In a wider sense, humans and nature share the same body. This allows humans to free themselves from the constraints of individuality and meditatively fuse with the greater body of the universe. Honing the relationship between human vitality and the pulse of the cosmos is a Daoist contemplative practice. This may suggest that simplicity, as the ideal life, is a stepping stone to something even greater. But be this as it may, climate change is a visceral reminder that we are in the world; that our being is part of a larger being, and that going against the flow of nature means to run counter to our collective self-interest. (p. 202)*

Xia and Schönfeld are to be commended for carefully presenting a Daoist perspective on the nature of things and the types of human action that can resonate with the Dao. There are many questions to be explored using Xia and Schönfeld's perspective as a starting point. For example, where does modern science-based technology, a type of action which acts directly into the world at the atomic and genetic levels, stand in relation to the imperative for non-action and the voluntary return to simplicity? Obviously we are not seeking a return to the caves — although our collective failure to adequately face up to present problems

may mean that we inadvertently do so. Hopefully we can reach some kind of half-way house which retains and re-shapes the best of civilization's hard-won knowledge and techniques into a more equitable and sustainable configuration. Daoism as a mode of contemplation and practice emerged before humans had any idea of the technological power we could unleash. Daoism may yet teach us to stand in awe of that power, and to restrain it.

<http://peakdecisions.org/2012/05/taoism-and-climate-change/>

# Interfaith

# Canadian Interfaith Committee on Climate Justice

## Canadian Interfaith Call for Leadership and Action on Climate Change

October 25, 2011

### **Climate change: the spiritual roots of a crisis**

1. We, representatives of Canadian faith communities, are united in our conviction that the growing crisis of climate change needs to be met by solutions that draw upon the moral and spiritual resources of the world's religious traditions. We recognize that at its root the unprecedented human contribution to climate change is symptomatic of a spiritual deficit: excessive self-interest, destructive competition, and greed have given rise to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Humanity's relationship with the environment has become distorted by actions that compromise the welfare of future generations of life.
2. Our faith traditions and sacred texts call upon us all – individuals, civil society, businesses, industry, and governments – to consider the spiritual dimensions of the crisis of ocean and climate change; to take stock of our collective behaviour; to transform cultures of consumerism and waste into cultures of sustainability; and to respect the balance between economic activity and environmental stewardship. The November 29 – December 9, 2011, 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17) conference in South Africa has the potential to be a transition point – where we, as a global community, change how we think and act to address climate change.

### **Values for a sustainable economy**

3. The world's religious traditions teach us to look beyond ourselves – individually and collectively, now and for future generations – as we confront the crisis of ocean and climate

change, and to reflect on our choices and decisions. We see people as more than consumers with unlimited appetites. The foundations for a sustainable economy include the values of restraint, cooperation, and reciprocity. We believe we must work together in transforming cultures of self-interest and unprecedented consumption into cultures of justice for all.

4. All religious traditions uphold the nobility of the human spirit, calling on us to seek moderation and service to the common good. Such a vision empowers individuals to take responsibility for relationships with each other and our planet. Indeed, our everyday choices about food, transportation, clothing and entertainment are all practical expressions of what we value. At the same time, disconnections between our professed beliefs and our daily actions indicate our need for personal and collective awareness and transformation. We need to seek coherence between our beliefs and our actions, so that our lives and consumption habits reflect our relationship with the rest of humanity and the Earth itself.

### **The challenge of climate justice**

5. Climate change is a planetary crisis that knows no borders. Some countries are far more adversely affected by climate change than others as they experience major changes in weather patterns. They know the impact of rising seas and erosion of lands, leading to drought or flooding. These countries are most often among the poorest and least equipped to respond.
6. Many countries are suffering from the long-term consequences of unrestrained carbon emissions that damage the atmosphere. We believe all nations need to adopt energy policies that result in actual emission reductions to a fair and safe global level. Organizations, businesses, and individuals have similar duties to reduce their emissions. For high-income nations such as Canada, justice demands that our governments shoulder a greater share of the economic burden of adaptation and mitigation – first and foremost, because of access to greater means, but also because of an historic role in contributing to its causes. We have a moral imperative to act.

## **A call for leadership and action**

7. We call for leadership to put the long-term interest of humanity and the planet ahead of short-term economic and national concerns. The teachings of our faiths tell us that the best interests of one group or nation are served by pursuing the best interests of all. There is one human family and one Earth that is our common homeland. Climate change is a global crisis and requires global solutions that put the well-being of all people first – especially the most vulnerable. Furthermore, our environment is the natural source of our wealth and the home of millions of species for which we are planetary stewards. How long can we barter this priceless inheritance for the promise of growing economic returns?
8. In our neighbourhoods and communities, in businesses and organizations, we need to change wasteful patterns of production and consumption. This calls for a cultural transformation that brings the values of sustainability to the forefront of public consciousness – and into more responsible practices. We cannot wait for others to act but instead must lead by example. Religious organizations, public institutions, and businesses all have important roles to play in promoting ethical consumption and more sustainable lifestyles and practices in their everyday operations.
9. We speak respectfully to our political leaders, who have been entrusted with authority by Canadians. We ask that you act with due regard for the values of both religion and science, looking objectively on the problems confronting our planet. Climate science points to a future of greater instability and unpredictability, problems that can be addressed by action today. We stand ready to work alongside you to promote a future of security, prosperity, and justice – for humankind, and the whole of creation.
10. As you carry out your responsibilities at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17), we urge you to honour the values we have described and adopt the following policy goals:

- In the spirit of global solidarity, take collective action by signing and implementing a binding international agreement replacing the Kyoto Protocol that commits nations to reduce carbon emissions and set fair and clear targets to ensure that global average temperatures stay below a 2° Celsius increase from pre-industrial levels;
- Demonstrate national responsibility by committing to national carbon emission targets and a national renewable energy policy designed to achieve sustainability; and
- Implement climate justice, by playing a constructive role in the design of the Green Climate Fund<sup>1</sup> under United Nations governance, and by contributing public funds to assist the poorest and most affected countries to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

We believe these to be practical and critical measures necessary to secure the well-being of the planet for future generations of life.

<sup>1</sup> The Green Climate Fund is being established by the United Nations to support projects, programme, policies and other activities in developing countries related to climate mitigation and adaptation.

## **Signatories**

### **Leaders of faith communities:**

**The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz**, Archbishop and Primate, the Anglican Church of Canada

**His Grace Bishop Bagrat Galstianian**, Primate, Armenian Holy Apostolic Church, Canadian Diocese

**Mobeen Khaja**, O.Ont., President, Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada

**Imam Dr. Hamid Slimi**, Chairman of the Canadian Council of Imams, President of Faith of Life Network

**Carol Dixon**, Presiding Clerk, Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

**Reverend Richard E Hamilton**, Regional Minister Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

**The Rev. Bruce Adema**, Director of Canadian Ministries, Christian Reformed Church in North America

**L.K. (Rev. Fr.) Messale Engeda**, Head Priest and Administrator of Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Canada

**The Rev. Susan C. Johnson**, National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

**Pandit Roopnauth Sharma**, President, Federation of Hindu Temples of Canada

**Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios of Toronto**, Head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Canada

**The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius**, the Diocesan Bishop of North America and Europe

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**Karen McKye**, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

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**The Rev. Dr. H.D. Rick Horst**, Moderator of the 137th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in Canada

**The Rev. John Kapteyn**, Executive Secretary, Regional Synod of Canada, Reformed Church in America

**Brian Peddle**, Commissioner, Territorial Commander, Salvation Army, Canada and Bermuda Territory

**David Courchene (Nii Gaani Aki Inini – Leading Earth Man)**, Anishnabe Nation, Eagle Clan, Founder, Turtle Lodge, Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba,

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**The Rev. Dr. William Phipps**, Chair, Faith and the Common Good

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### **More endorsing faith communities and faith-based organizations**

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**Sister Pat Boucher**, President, Canadian Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph

**Heather Eaton (Chair)**, Saint Paul University

**Peter Timmerman**, York University, Toronto, Canadian Forum on Religion and Ecology

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**Dr. Gary Groot**, President, Canadian Unitarian Council

**Rev. Frances Deverell**, President, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

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**Kesta Occident**, Congregational Leader, Congregation of the Sisters of Holy Cross

**Fay Edmonds**, GSIC, General Superior, Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

**Evanne Hunter**, IBVM, Canadian Provincial Leadership, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loretto Sisters)

**Margaret Galbraith**, Chair, Interfaith Coalition for Climate Justice, Member, Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax Social Responsibility Committee

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**Adele Finney**, Executive Director, The Primate's World Relief & Development Fund

**(Fr.) Paul E. Hansen**, C.Ss.R., Biblical Justice Advocacy, Redemptorists Father and Brothers

**Jack Lynch**, SFM, Superior General, Scarboro Missions

**Risa Alyson Cooper**, Director, Shoresh Jewish Environmental Programs

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**Sister Sandra Shannon**, General Superior, Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul

**Sister Joyce Harris**, ssa, Social Justice Committee Chair, Sisters of St. Ann

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**Rev. Innen Ray Parchelo**, Director, Tendai Buddhism Canada

**Zul Kassamali**, President, Toronto Area Interfaith Council

<http://cpj.ca/sites/default/files/docs/Canadian-Interfaith-Call-for-Leadership-and-Action-EN-Dec1.pdf>



## **Interfaith Power & Light**

### **A Religious Response to Global Warming Mission** (2015)

The mission of Interfaith Power & Light is to be faithful stewards of Creation by responding to global warming through the promotion of energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. This campaign intends to protect the earth's ecosystems, safeguard the health of all Creation, and ensure sufficient, sustainable energy for all.

Global warming is one of the biggest threats facing humanity today. The very existence of life— life that religious people are called to protect—is jeopardized by our continued dependency on fossil fuels for energy. Every major religion has a mandate to care for Creation. We were given natural resources to sustain us, but we were also given the responsibility to act as good stewards and preserve life for future generations.

IPL has over a decade of experience helping congregations address global warming by being better stewards of energy. The campaign has a track record of tangible results: shrinking carbon footprints and educating hundreds of thousands of people in the pews about the important role of people of faith in addressing this most challenging issue.

In addition to practicing energy stewardship in our facilities, IPL brings the voice of the faith community into the policy-making arena. We know that our actions alone cannot stem the tide of climate change—we need to enact public policies to advance clean energy and to limit carbon pollution. IPL is working to support policy change at the local, state, and national levels.

As people of faith, our mission includes being advocates for vulnerable people and communities that are the most heavily impacted by climate change. From air pollution to droughts to rising seas, it is poor people who are being hit first and worst by global warming. Our goal is to ensure that climate policies provide adaptation and mitigation support for communities domestically and internationally whose health and survival is at stake. We also aim to make sure that all people can participate in and benefit from the growing clean energy economy.

<http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/about/mission-history/>

# **Interfaith Declaration on Climate Change**

## **Statement of the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

**Durban, South Africa, December 2, 2011**

The nurturing and respect for Life is a central doctrine of all faiths on Earth. Yet today we are endangering life on Earth with unacceptably high and rising levels of greenhouse gas emissions. These gases are destabilizing the global climate system, heating the Earth, acidifying the oceans, and putting both humanity and all living creatures at unacceptable risk.

The extraordinary delicacy of Nature's balance is becoming increasingly apparent, even as human actions inflict ever larger, more dangerous and potentially irreversible changes on the indivisible web of atmosphere, earth, ocean and life that is creation. Today our faiths stand united in their call to care for the Earth, and to protect the poor and the suffering. Strong action on climate change is imperative by the principles and traditions of our faiths and the collective compassion, wisdom and leadership of humanity.

We recognize the science of climate change, and we call for global leaders to adopt strong, binding, science-based targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases in order to avert the worst dangers of a climate crisis. We urge the nations of Earth to ensure that those who will suffer under climate-induced changes such as more severe storms, floods, droughts and rising seas, be aided to adapt, survive and equitably prosper.

We recognize that climate change is not merely an economic or technical problem, but rather at its core is a moral, spiritual and cultural one. We therefore pledge to join together to teach and guide the people

who follow the call of our faiths. We must all learn to live together within the shared limits of our planet.

We recognize that just as climate change presents us with great challenges, so too it offers great opportunities. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions can stimulate economies sustainably, protect our planet, lift up the poor, and unite to a common cause people threatened by a common danger. Assisting vulnerable communities and species to survive and adapt to climate change fulfills our calling to wisdom, mercy, and the highest of human moral and ethical values.

We commit ourselves to action – to changing our habits, our choices, and the way we see the world – to learning and teaching our families, friends, and faiths – to conserving the limited resources of our home, planet Earth, and preserving the climate conditions upon which life depends.

In this spirit, we call upon our leaders, those of our faiths, and all people of Earth to accept the reality of the common danger we face, the imperative and responsibility for immediate and decisive action, and the opportunity to change.

[This statement has been endorsed by over 120 organizations and well over 500 individuals worldwide.]

<http://www.interfaithdeclaration.org/index.html>



# **Interfaith Summit on Climate Change organized by the World Council of Churches and Religions for Peace**

## **Climate, Faith and Hope: Faith traditions together for a common future**

New York, September 21, 2014

As representatives from different faith and religious traditions, we stand together to express deep concern for the consequences of climate change on the earth and its people, all entrusted, as our faiths reveal, to our common care. Climate change is indeed a threat to life, a precious gift we have received and that we need to care for.

We acknowledge the overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change is human-induced and that, without global and inclusive action towards mitigation and unless fully addressing its fundamental causes, its impacts will continue to grow in intensity and frequency. At the same time, we are ready to dialogue with those who remain skeptical.

In our communities and thanks to the media, we see the manifestations of climate change everywhere. From our brothers and sisters around the world, we hear about its effects on people and nature. We recognize that these effects disproportionately affect the lives, livelihoods and rights of poorer, marginalized and therefore most vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples. When those who have done the least to

cause climate change are the ones hardest hit, it becomes an issue of injustice. Equitable solutions are urgently needed.

We recognize that climate change stands today as a major obstacle to the eradication of poverty. Severe weather events exacerbate hunger, cause economic insecurity, force displacement and prevent sustainable development. The climate crisis is about the survival of humanity on planet earth, and action must reflect these facts with urgency.

Therefore, as faith leaders, we commit ourselves to the promotion of disaster risk reduction, adaptation, low carbon development, climate change education, curbing our own consumption patterns and reducing our use of fossil fuels. Based on our spiritual beliefs and our hope for the future, we commit to stimulating consciences and encouraging our peers and communities to consider such measures with urgency.

We share the conviction that the threats of climate change cannot be curbed effectively by a single State alone but only by the enhanced co-operation of the community of States, based on principles of mutual trust, fairness and equity, precaution, intergenerational justice and common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities. We urge the rich to support the poor and the vulnerable significantly and everywhere, especially in Least Developed Countries, Small Island States and Sub-Saharan Africa. Significant support would include generous financial resources, capacity building, technology transfer and other forms of co-operation.

We encourage Heads of State and Ministers attending the Climate Summit to announce pledges for the Green Climate Fund, including commitments to increase them thereafter, to establish new partnerships for climate resilience and low carbon development, and to assure access to renewable energies for all people.

As people of faith, we call on all governments to express their commitment to limit global warming well below 2° Celsius. We emphasize that all States share the responsibility to formulate and implement Low Carbon Development Strategies leading to decarbonization and the complete phase-out of fossil fuels by mid-century.

Consequently we encourage world political and economic leaders to exercise their leadership during the Climate Summit by announcing joint actions such as important short-term emission cuts, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, coal caps or coal divestment, forest protection, increased energy efficiency in construction and transportation, and other concrete steps. We further call on all governments to identify medium and long-term adaptation needs and to develop strategies to address them based on country-driven, gender-sensitive and participatory approaches to better manage residual loss and damage due to adverse climate impacts.

Ultimately we request all States to work constructively towards a far-reaching global climate agreement in Paris in 2015, building on transparency, adequacy and accountability. The new agreement must be:

- ambitious enough to keep temperature from rising well below 2° Celsius;
- fair enough to distribute the burden in an equitable way; and
- legally binding enough to guarantee that effective national climate policies to curb emissions are well funded and fully implemented.

As religious representatives and citizens in your countries, we hereby commit ourselves to address the climate change threat. We continue to count on your leadership, and we encourage and expect you to make the right decisions. When difficult decisions need to be taken for the sustainability of the earth and its people, we are ready to stand with you. We pray for you and for all humanity in caring for the earth.

**[Signed by over thirty religious leaders representing Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Indigenous, and other belief systems.]**

<http://interfaithclimate.org/the-statement>



