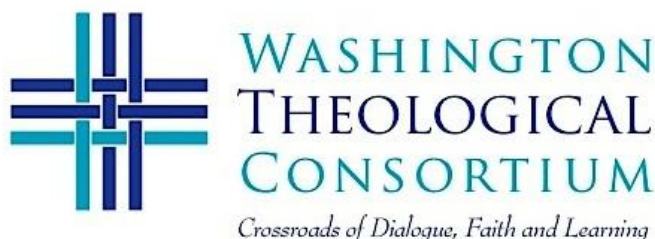


Ecology and the Churches

Official Statements and Resources for Study

June 2015



Pope Francis' timely encyclical on the environmental crisis, [*Laudato Si'*](#) culminates years of deliberation and study by Christian churches of all traditions about the ecology, theology, and our moral responsibility for the earth as “our home”. The Washington Theological Consortium presents this resource for all persons of faith to engage this challenge with greater ecumenical understanding and depth. The focus is on churches in the United States, and their global communions.

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The Anglican Communion and Episcopal Church in the U.S.

The Anglican Communion

Lambeth Declaration 2015 on Climate Change

<https://pilgrimage2paris.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/lambeth-declaration-on-climate-change.pdf>

Note: The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has joined other representatives from the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, Methodist and Reformed churches, the Salvation Army, and other denominations, along with leaders in the Muslim, Sikh and Jewish communities to sign this declaration as an urgent call of interfaith leaders.

The original declaration was hosted by the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and signed by faith leaders in 2009 ahead of the Climate Summit in Copenhagen.

The Declaration

As leaders of the faith communities we recognise the urgent need for action on climate change.

From the perspective of our different faiths we see the earth as a beautiful gift. We are all called to care for the earth and have a responsibility to live creatively and sustainably in a world of finite resources.

Climate change is already disproportionately affecting the poorest in the world. The demands of justice as well as of creation require the nations of the world urgently to limit the global rise in average temperatures to a maximum of 2°C, as agreed by the United Nations in Cancun. We have a responsibility to act now, for ourselves, our neighbours and for future generations.

The scale of change needed to make the transition to a low carbon economy is considerable and the task urgent. We need to apply the best of our intellectual, economic and political resources. Spirituality is a powerful agent of change. Faith has a crucial role to play in resourcing both individual and collective change.

We call on our faith communities to:

Recognise the urgency of the tasks involved in making the transition to a low carbon economy.

Develop the spiritual and theological resources that will strengthen us individually and together in our care of the earth, each other and future generations.

Encourage and pray for those engaged in the intellectual, economic, political and spiritual effort needed to address this crisis.

Work with our communities and partners in the UK and internationally to mitigate the effects of climate change on the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the world;

Build on the examples of local and international action to live and to work together sustainably,

Redouble our efforts to reduce emissions that result from our own institutional and individual activities.

As representatives of the vast numbers of people of faith across the globe we urge our Government to use their influence to achieve a legally-binding commitment at the international Climate Change talks in Paris, and with the continuing programme beyond. Through our various traditions we bring our prayers for the success of the negotiations.

We call with humility, with a determination enlivened by our faith and with awareness of the need for courage, justice and hope. We are faced with a huge challenge. But we are hopeful that the necessary changes can be made - for the sake of all who share this world today - and those who will share it tomorrow.

Signatories to the Lambeth Declaration 2015:

Title	Name	Surname	Organisation
Most Rev & Rt Hon	Justin	Welby	Archbishop of Canterbury
Rt Revd Dr	Joe	Aldred	Acting General Secretary, Pentecostal and Multi-cultural Relations, Churches Together in England
Revd	Brian	Anderson	President of the Methodist Church in Ireland
Rt Revd	Bishop	Angaelos	General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK
Rt Revd	John	Arnold	RC Bishop of Salford
Rt Revd	John	Arnold	On behalf of Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster
Rt Rev & Rt Hon	Richard	Chartres	Bishop of London
Rt Revd	Richard	Cheetham	Bishop of Kingston
Most Revd	David	Chillingworth	Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church
Most Revd	Richard	Clarke	Archbishop of Armagh
	Gauri	Das	International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Bhaktivedanta Manor
Mrs	Gill	Dascombe	Vice President of the Methodist Conference
Rt Revd	John	Davies	Church and Society for the Church in Wales
	Malcolm M	Deboo	President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe
Most Revd		Gregorios	of Thyateira and Great Britain, Greek Orthodox Church
Revd	David	Grosch-Miller	Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church
Revd	Torbjorn	Holt	Chairman, on behalf of the Trustees of the Council of Lutheran Churches
Rt Revd	Nicholas	Holtam	Bishop of Salisbury and lead bishop for the Environment
Revd	Kenneth	Howcroft	President of the Methodist Conference
Rabbi	Laura	Janner-Klausner	Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism
Rt Revd	James	Jones	former Bishop of Liverpool
Mr	James	Laing	on behalf of the Trustees of the Council of Lutheran Churches
Rt Revd	Martin	Lind	Lutheran Church in Great Britain
Rt Revd Dr	Geevarghese	Mar Theodosius	The Mar Thoma Church, New York
	Mervyn	McCullagh	Executive Officer, Irish Council of Churches
Chief Rabbi	Ephraim	Mirvis	Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth
Shaykh	Ibrahim	Mogra	Asst. Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain
Most Revd Dr	Barry	Morgan	Archbishop of Wales
Revd	John	Proctor	General Secretary, The United Reformed Church
Ven	B	Seelawimala	Chief Sangha Nayake of Great Britain
Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr	John	Sentamu	Archbishop of York
	Indarjit	Singh	Director, Network of Sikh Organisations
Bhai Sahib	Mohinder	Singh	Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak
		Ahluwalia	
Rt Revd	Graham	Usher	Bishop of Dudley
Revd Dr	Donald	Watts	Irish Council of Churches
	Vivian	Wineman	Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom
Rabbi	Jonathan	Wittenberg	Masorti

The Episcopal Church in the United States of America

The “Genesis Covenant” (2009) with Study Guide

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/genesis_covenant_final.pdf

Memorializing the Genesis Covenant

(passed by General Convention in 2009)

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, that the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirms that the Episcopal Church become a signatory to the Genesis Covenant, thereby making a public commitment to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from every facility it maintains by a minimum of 50% within 10 years.

Explanation

Climate change threatens all of God’s creation on earth. Our Christian response to climate change is a deeply spiritual and moral issue. Climate change poses greater threat to poor, marginalized people across the world than to affluent people, and therefore climate change and our Christian call to social justice are inextricably linked. In the words of Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, “the crisis of climate change presents to us unprecedented challenge to the goodness, interconnectedness, and sanctity of the world God created and loves... and the church’s commitment to ameliorating it is a part of the ongoing discovery of God’s revelation to humanity and a call to the fuller understanding of the scriptural imperative of loving our neighbor.”*

The Genesis Covenant is a multi-faith effort to engage national faith communities in a single and significant course of action to reduce the damaging effects of climate change. That course of action is to work to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of each facility they maintain by 50% in ten years. Although the covenant is without enforcement, it defines a clear goal to which faith communities can aspire. This goal of 50% reduction is challenging and may not be possible for each facility, but as we work toward that goal, God’s grace may help us find a way.

The Genesis Covenant was formally introduced to the national church at the Healing our Planet earth conference (HOPE), sponsored by the Diocese of Olympia and the Episcopal Divinity School in April 2008. Resources are available to assist dioceses and churches implement this resolution. They include the Office for Economic and Environmental Affairs of the Episcopal Church, earth ministry, interfaith Power and light, dioceses that have already begun this work, local utility companies, and others.

Earlier resolutions will be supported through our commitment to the Genesis Covenant. Those resolutions include:

- Resolution 1991-a195, adopted by the 70th General Convention, declaring that Christian stewardship of God’s created environment, in harmony with our respect for human dignity, requires a response from the church of the highest urgency;
- Resolution 2006-D022, adopted by the 75th General Convention supporting the millennium Development Goals, specifically Goal 7, “ensure environmental sustainability”; and
- Resolution 2000-a048, adopted by the 73rd General Convention, encouraging all members, congregations, dioceses, and other church institutions to use environmentally safe and sustainable energy sources.

Communities of faith have the power to inspire, to create momentum, and to become a catalyst for addressing climate change. By becoming a signatory to the Genesis Covenant we live into our Christian values and also model the kind of leadership that we hope other religious organizations and our public policymakers will provide.

* Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori; speech to the United states senate environmental and Public Works committee, June 2007

The Text of the Genesis Covenant

The Challenge

The Genesis Covenant is an invitation to every community of faith to take action to reverse global warming. The Genesis Covenant is a pledge to be made publicly by the national religious bodies that endorse it as their witness to the holiness of creation and their commitment to protect the Earth as a sacred trust. The Genesis Covenant is an expression of the unity of the world's religious communities in the face of a shared crisis. The Genesis Covenant is a challenge to all other sectors of society to join people of faith in a global effort to change history by changing behavior.

The Covenant

WE WILL REDUCE THE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM EVERY FACILITY THAT WE MAINTAIN BY 50% IN 10 YEARS.

The Commitment

The Genesis Covenant must be endorsed by the appropriate representative governing body of the community. Once that body has adopted the Covenant every facility that it maintains will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from their levels at the time of ratification by 50% within ten years. This includes places of worship, offices, schools, camps, retreat centers and other facilities.

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Baptist Churches

American Baptist Churches U.S.A.

American Baptist Policy Statement on Ecology:

An Ecological Situational Analysis (modified 1995, 2007)

<http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ecology.pdf>

From earliest times human beings have sought to understand their relationship to the environment, as the Greek meaning of the word ecology indicates: eco (house or home) and logia (the science, or study of). Modern humanity has a critical task before it. Our impact on the environment is disrupting nearly every ecosystem on the planet at a rapidly accelerating rate. Glaciers brought major reshaping and change. Our activities caused even more drastic changes in a fraction of the time. The thinning of the ozone layer will allow more of the sun's ultraviolet radiation to reach the earth, causing more skin cancers, impairing human immune systems and retarding crop growth. Gases already present in the atmosphere will cause continuing deterioration of the ozone layer for years to come. The "greenhouse effect" will cause a warming of the global environment. It is produced by rising levels of CO₂ (carbon dioxide) and other gases caused primarily by the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. Evidence that the warming is already underway was reported in 1988 by a U.S. Geological Survey Team, which reported that the frozen earth beneath the Arctic tundra in Alaska had warmed 4 to 7 degrees Fahrenheit over the last century. One of the most feared consequences of global warming is the rise in sea level of several feet that will result from thermal expansion of the oceans and the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps. Many major cities are located in coastal areas such as Shanghai, London and New York. Low lying densely populated areas of Asia, including parts of Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the deltas of the Indus, Mekong and Chang Jiang (Yangtze) Rivers would be especially vulnerable to flooding. The costs of protecting the rice growing plains and deltas of Asia and the densely populated coastal regions of the world are incalculable.

According to a national forum convened in October, 1986, (by the U. S. National Academy of Science and the Smithsonian Institute) nearly 100 prominent biologists sounded a note of warning about the multiplying threats to species survival. Participants warned of a potential wave of extinction which would approach the magnitude of the natural cataclysm which wiped out the dinosaurs and half of all extinct species millions of years ago. By contrast, human activities drive the disaster now unfolding.

Deforestation is increasing rapidly in many Third World nations as a result of land clearing, firewood gathering, logging and highway building. In central Europe and the United States major losses are due to air pollution and acid rain. Half of the world's rain forests, the lungs of the earth, have disappeared in the last 40 years. In addition to direct economic losses to forest industries, serious environmental consequences occur including species depletion, increased run-off of rainfall with accompanying flooding and soil erosion, and diminished water quality. Time alone will reveal the full story of ecological loss. Burgeoning human populations are integrally related to other ecological problems. During mid-1986 the world population reached five billion indicating mounting pressures on the earth's natural

resources and ecological systems. Experts project the doubling of world population to 10 billion in the early 21st century. The earth's biological systems are becoming less able to adequately support the population expansion. Stanford University biologist, Peter M. Vitousek, and his colleagues estimate that nearly 40% of the net primary productivity on earth is now used directly or indirectly by humans--mostly for food production but also for fiber, lumber and fuel--or it is lost as a result of our activities. The amount remaining to sustain all other species and to maintain the integrity of natural systems gets smaller and smaller as the size and demands of the human population increase. This denial of needed energy to natural support systems could cause their deterioration on a massive scale.

Other serious environmental problems threaten our survival including acid rain, toxic and hazardous wastes, soil erosion, pesticide contamination and groundwater pollution. A sustainable society fulfills its needs without diminishing the prospects of generations to come. Contemporary society fails to meet this criterion. Efforts to improve living standards are themselves beginning to threaten the health of the global economy. On every continent issues of ecological sustainability demand attention. The impact of human interaction with the environment now threatens the habitability of the earth itself.

Theological Statement

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Then God commanded, "Let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that yield grain and those that yield fruit," and it was done. So the earth produced all kinds of plants, and God was pleased. -- Genesis 1:1, 11-12 (paraphrase)

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few are left. - Isaiah 24:5-6 RSV

These two passages of scripture present a stark contrast. We have poisoned the earth which God has given us. It is no longer the beautiful garden that Genesis portrays as the home of Adam and Eve. Instead, it is one of streams polluted by nearby landfills, of air filled with chlorofluoro-carbons (CFCs) destroying the ozone layer, and of forests dying from acid rain. The images of the prophet are visible in many places around the world today. Our irresponsibility as creatures is destroying the creation.

Creation and the Covenant of Caring

Christians believe that the whole creation is God's handiwork and belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). The creation has value in itself because God created and values it (Proverbs 8:29-31). God delights in the creation and desires its wholeness and well-being. God created the earth, affirmed that it was good, and established an everlasting covenant with humanity to take responsibility for the whole of creation. God declares all of creation good. Our proper perspective on all activity on the earth flows directly from our affirmation of God as Creator.

The earth belongs to God, as affirmed in Psalm 24:1. We are caretakers or stewards. Thus we are each related to God as one appointed to take care of someone else's possessions entrusted to us -- our life, our home, the earth.

The vast resources of the earth can provide for all its inhabitants, or they can be greedily swallowed up or poisoned by a few without regard for the impact of their actions. The best understanding of the Biblical attitude of humanity's relationship with the Creation can be gained by a study of the Greek words which are the foundation of the New Testament. The word "stewardship" comes from the Greek words for house and management. The Greek word which is commonly translated "stewardship" is the root word for economics and ecology. The literal translation of steward is manager of the household. As such, we are all called to be managers of God's household, the earth and all that is in it.

Our responsibility as stewards is one of the most basic relationships we have with God. It implies a great degree of caring for God's creation and all God's creatures. The right relationship embodied in the everlasting covenant to which Isaiah refers. There can be no justice without right relationships of creatures with one another and with all of creation. Eco-justice is the vision of the garden in Genesis -- the realm and the reality of right relationship. God has given humans tremendously creative capacities. The development of science has enabled us to understand the inherent capabilities of the resources God gave. Modern scientific technology has provided thousands of ways of applying scientific knowledge to improve our lives. It is a powerful tool, and one of the gifts God has given us. Technology holds the possibility of both good and evil, life and death. We are given the responsibility to choose: "I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then so that you and your descendants may live..." (Deuteronomy 30:19). It is our responsibility as stewards to require that technology be used for the good and that the harmful effects of its use (or misuse) be mitigated or prevented.

Responsibility -- Individual and Corporate

The image of God within us makes it possible for people to be aware and responsive to God's self-revelation in the creation. We have the gift of God which enables us to perceive and reflect upon the life within us and around us. The distinctive human vocation is to bring creation's beauty and order to consciousness and to express God's image within us by caring for the creation.

In the ability God has given us to make choices also lies inherent danger. We can choose to disobey, to be irresponsible, to disrupt and disturb the peaceable relationship of creature and creation. We can choose to use nature's resources only for what we perceive is our own immediate interest. Such action is sin. It is a violation of the basic covenant wherein we are called to stewardship. It is an unfaithful refusal of the responsibility entrusted to us. Often we tend to think of sin in terms of individual actions. Yet decisions and actions which we make as groups, communities and societies constitute corporate sin. These corporate decisions and actions reflect values and interests which conflict with the vision of shalom and eco-justice consistent with created order. Our task is to discern the conflict and to choose ways of living which build an eco-just community and world.

Jesus -- A Model for Taking Sides

Jesus' ministry provides a model for choosing sides. He is clear about where his loyalty lies. In his earliest reported reading of scripture in public, he chooses, Luke tells us, to read from the prophet Isaiah. He proclaims that his mission is to serve the poor, the captives and the downtrodden -- the

victims of social injury. He further states that he will "proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." This is the Jubilee Year of Leviticus 25, a year of land reform. It is a recognition that all land basically and ultimately belongs to God, and that no person or group has the right to destroy it or to use it unendingly for unjust personal or institutional gain.

American Baptist Policy Statement on Ecology (from 1989)

The study of ecology has become a religious, social and political concern because every area of life is affected by careless use of our environment. The creation is in crisis. We believe that ecology and justice, stewardship of creation and redemption are interdependent. Our task is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ until the coming of the Kingdom on Earth. All God's people must be guided by the balance of reverence, the acknowledgment of our interdependence, the integrity of divine wholeness and the need for empowerment by the Holy Spirit to image God by our dominion over creation (Mark 10:43-45). If we image God we will reflect in our dominion the love and the care that God has for the whole creation, "for God so loved the world..." (John 3:16, Romans 8:21-22, Matthew 5:43-48). Jesus told us to let your light so shine that others may see the good things you do and praise God (Matthew 5:16). The Bible affirms, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). As Christians we believe that the whole universe reveals God's manifold works. God continues to create as well as to redeem. God asks us not only to call persons to redemption but also to teach them to be wise stewards, tenderly caring for God's creation.

Today the human race faces an unprecedented challenge to rediscover the role of steward in a time of extraordinary peril and promise. The explosive growth of population, the depletion of nonrenewable resources, tropical deforestation, the pollution of air, land, and water, waste of precious materials and the general assault of God's creation, springing from greed, arrogance and ignorance present the possibility of irreversible damage to the intricate, natural systems upon which life depends. At the same time nuclear weapons threaten the planet. They have the capability not only of destroying human life on a massive scale but also of poisoning and altering the environment in ways that would render much of the planet incapable of sustaining life. The danger is real and great. Churches and individual Christians must take responsibility to God and neighbor seriously and respond (Eph. 2:10).

Ironically, science and technology have multiplied many times the ecological threat. The very instruments that brought great blessing--and still hold much promise--now threaten to bring disaster unless they are used in concert rather than in conflict with the created order.

God made a world that is good in reality and potential, but our enslavement to modern industrial images of civilization hinders our ability to envision God's created order. According to our Native-American Christian sisters and brothers, we are causing the earth to self-destruct, and then we are dying of loneliness for our ruined lands. This loneliness is best understood as an alienation from Creator and creation (Job 41:1-11, 42:5-6). We are dealing with the classic theological issues of a good Creator and creation, human sin and the fall into evil which requires radical repentance in response to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation cannot come to creation unless we repent and turn away from former lifestyles (Romans 8:12-14, 18-23).

The Creator-Redeemer seeks the renewal of the creation and calls the people of God to participate in saving acts of renewal. We are called to cooperate with God in the transformation of a fallen world that has not fulfilled its divinely given potential for beauty, peace, health, harmony, justice and joy (Isa. 11:6-9, Micah 4:3-4, Eph. 2:10, Rev. 21:1-5). Our task is nothing less than to join God in preserving, renewing and fulfilling the creation. It is to relate to nature in ways that sustain life on the planet, provide for the essential material and physical needs of all humankind, and increase justice and well-being for all life in a peaceful world. A wise and responsible people will recognize the increasing interdependence of all humankind in an emerging planetary society. In our time we must provide opportunities for all to grow and thrive. The fortunate who tolerate misery, strife and terrorism elsewhere, can stay safe themselves no longer. In a quest for survival, justice, and peace, we are "members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). The neighbor whom we are commanded to love is everyone (Luke 10:27), including those yet to be born who depend on us to leave them a habitable earth. Because God is our deliverer, we must recognize sin and refuse to participate in it. Ecology and justice are inseparable. The threat to the global environment presents American Baptists with a call for prompt and vigorous response. As Christians and faithful stewards, we bear the responsibility to affirm and support programs, legislation, research and organizations that protect and restore the vulnerable and the oppressed, the earth as well as the poor. This responsibility for a habitable environment is not just for human life, but for all life. A stewardship that will fulfill this responsibility will be guided by the norms of solidarity, as we stand with the vulnerable creation and work with its defenders; sustainability, as we devise social systems that maintain the balance of nature, and sufficiency, as we devise social systems that maintain the balance of nature, and sufficiency, as we give priority to basic sustenance for all life.

Therefore, we call on all of the members of the American Baptist Churches of the USA to:

1. Affirm the goodness and beauty of God's creations.
2. Acknowledge our responsibility for stewardship of the Creator's good earth.
3. Learn of the environmental dangers facing the planet.
4. Recognize that our practices and styles of life have had an effect on the environment.
5. Pursue a lifestyle that is wise and responsible in light of our understanding of the problems.
6. Exert our influence in shaping public policy and insisting that industries, businesses, farmers and consumers relate to the environment in ways that are sensible, healthy and protective of its integrity.
7. Demonstrate concern with "the hope that is within us," as despair and apathy surround us in the world (Rom. 12:21).
8. Become involved in organizations and actions to protect and restore the environment and the people in our communities.

We call upon the National Boards, Regions and institutions of our denomination to:

9. Promote an attitude affirming that all nature has intrinsic value and that all life is to be honored and revered.
10. Seek ways and means to alert the churches to present and impending environmental threats.

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Southern Baptist Convention

A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change (2008)

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

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!

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Christian Church, Disciples of Christ

For a complete listing of Disciples Resolutions visit:

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/environment/env-resources/general-assembly-resolutions/>

STATEMENT ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE (2009)

Passed by the General Assembly, 2009

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ENV0921.pdf>

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change defines climate change as follows:

“Climate change refers to a statistically significant variation in either the mean state of the *climate* or in its variability, persisting for an extended period (typically decades or longer). Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or *external forces*, or to persistent *anthropogenic* changes in the composition of the *atmosphere* or in *land use*. Note that the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), in its Article 1, defines “climate change” as: “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.” The UNFCCC thus makes a distinction between “climate change” attributable to human

activities altering the atmospheric composition, and “climate variability” attributable to natural causes.”¹; and

WHEREAS, as people of faith, we 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 United States, Canada and in developing countries; and

WHEREAS, as people of faith, we heed the call to be faithful stewards and caretakers of God’s creation by limiting future impacts of climate change on God’s Earth; and

WHEREAS, as people of faith, we want to ensure that efforts to curb climate change prevent further environmental and societal tragedies; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, we are called by Scripture to acknowledge our place within God’s creation and our responsibility to creation:

The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it ...
Psalm 24:1

... you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.
Psalm 36:6;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana July 29, 2009 – August 2, 2009, encourages all expressions of the church to educate themselves, their communities and their locally and nationally elected officials on the consequences of climate change; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that we Disciples begin to look at our own actions to determine if they are contributing or mitigating factors to climate change and faithfully and conscientiously to act accordingly.

St. Andrew Christian Church, Olathe, Kansas, United States
Church of the Covenant (Disciples-UCC), Lynchburg, Virginia, United States
Summerville Christian Church, Summerville, Nova Scotia, Canada
Milton Christian Church, Milton, Nova Scotia, Canada

Background

The resolution text is based on the set of principles developed by the National Council of Churches in 2008 to outline those elements we need to address if we are to mitigate the worst-case scenarios of global climate change.

The authors of the original principles refer to global warming. In this set of principles, we have opted for the more comprehensive term, climate change. According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), global warming refers to “the increase in Earth’s average surface temperature due to rising levels of greenhouse gases,” while climate change refers to “a long –term change in the Earth’s climate, or of a region on Earth” and “scientific research on climate change encompasses far more than surface temperature change.”²

Statement of Principles

Justice: As people of faith, we 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 Canada, the United States, and in developing countries. As a leading industrialized nation that has disproportionately contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, it is incumbent upon us in the United States and Canada to rectify this injustice. To reach our goal of justice, we are called to:

1. Include mechanisms in governmental legislation that mitigate the impacts of climate change particularly for vulnerable populations in Canada, the United States, 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 United States, Canada, and around the world living in poverty. (According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, climate change is a major contributor to forced displacement.)
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: As people of faith, we 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 are called to:

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, our governmental legislation and our actions should include comprehensive 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. and Canadian carbon emissions to reach a 15 to 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, make disaster and relief responses more difficult, 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. Hold major emitters responsible for their actions and work to significantly reduce their carbon emissions.

Sustainability: As people of faith, we want to ensure that efforts to curb climate change prevent further environmental and societal tragedies. Sustainability requires that we prevent biological and social systems that nurture and support life from being depleted or poisoned. To reach our goal of sustainability, we are called to:

1. Maintain God's creation by creating governmental policies that sustain and restore vibrant eco-systems with economic justice so that communities of life can flourish for generations to come and abolishing those governmental policies that compromise the integrity of creation.
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 not destructive 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. As people of faith, we cannot achieve significant reductions in climate change emissions unless we make significant changes in our lifestyles (see the Alverna Covenant at end), particularly in energy consumption. To support the goal of sufficiency, we are called to:

1. Conserve energy in our homes, our communities, and our places of worship.
2. Conserve energy in national transportation and distribution systems and commercial

enterprises.

3. Encourage governments to lead through research and example in the practice and implementation of energy conservation.

The Alverna Covenant (orig. 1981)

Whereas:

God has created the world with finite resources;

God has given to us the stewardship of the earth;

God has established order through many natural cycles;

And it is evident that:

We are consuming resources at a rate that cannot be maintained;

We are interrupting many natural cycles;

We are irresponsibly modifying the environment through consumption and pollution;

We are populating the earth at a rate that cannot be maintained;

As a member of the human family and a follower of Jesus Christ, I hereby covenant that:

I will change my lifestyle to reduce my contribution to pollution;

I will support recycling efforts

I will search for sustainable lifestyles;

I will work for public policies which lead to a just and sustainable society;

I will share these concerns with others and urge them to make this covenant.

Footnotes:

¹ “Climate Change.” Glossary of Terms used in the IPCC Third Assessment Report. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, <http://www.ipcc.ch/glossary/index.htm>.

² “What’s in a Name? Global Warming vs. Climate Change” Erik Conway, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, http://www.nasa.gov/topics/earth/features/climate_by_any_other_name.html

More information on the Alverna Covenant (1981)

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/environment/the-alverna-covenant/>

“EarthBible” Resource: <http://www.webofcreation.org/earth-bible>

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Eastern Orthodox Church

Messages from the Patriarchate of Constantinople

<https://www.patriarchate.org/ecological-messages>

Message by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for World Environment Day (June 5, 2009)

Today's World Environment Day is an opportunity as well as an invitation for all of us, irrespective of religious background, to consider the ecological crisis.

In our time, more than ever before, there is an undeniable obligation for all to understand that environmental concern for our planet does not comprise a romantic notion of the few. The ecological crisis, and particularly the reality of climate change, constitutes the greatest threat for every form of life in our world. Moreover, there is an immediate correlation between protection of the environment and every expression of economic and social life.

For our Orthodox Church, the protection of the environment as God's creation is the supreme responsibility of human beings, quite apart from any material or other financial benefits that it may bring. The almighty God bequeathed this "very beautiful" world (Gen. 1.26) to humanity together with the commandment to "serve and preserve" it. Yet, the direct correlation of this divine mandate for the protection of creation to every aspect of contemporary economic and social life, ultimately enhances the global effort to control the problem of climate change by effectively introducing the ecological dimension into every aspect of life.

With the opening of this third millennium, environmental issues – already evident since the 20th century – acquired a new intensity, coming to the forefront of daily attention. According to the theological understanding of the Orthodox Christian Church, the natural environment is part of Creation and is characterized by sacredness. This is why its abuse and destruction is a sacrilegious and sinful act, revealing prideful despise toward the work of God the Creator. Humanity, too, is part of this Creation. Our rational nature, as well as the capacity to choose between good and evil, bestow upon us certain privileges as well as clear responsibilities. Unfortunately, however, human history is filled with numerous examples of misuse of these privileges, where the use and preservation of natural resources has been transformed into irrational abuse and, often, complete destruction, leading occasionally to the downfall of great civilizations.

Indeed, the care for and protection of Creation constitutes the responsibility of everyone on an individual and collective level. Naturally, the political authorities of each nation have a greater responsibility to evaluate the situation in order to propose actions, measures and regulations that will convince our communities of what must be done and applied. Yet, the responsibility of each individual is also immense both in one's personal and family life but also in one's role as an active citizen.

Thus, we call everyone to a more acute sense of vigilance for the preservation of nature and all creation, which God made in all His wisdom and love. And, from the See of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we invoke God's blessing for World Environment Day, offering praise to the Creator of all, to whom is due all glory, honor and worship.

Encyclical from Patriarch Bartholomew (1999)

<http://www.goarch.org/news/1999-09-02-patriarchalencyclical/>

BARTHOLOMEW, BY THE MERCY OF GOD,
ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE, NEW ROME, AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
TO THE PLEROMA OF THE CHURCH: GRACE AND PEACE FROM THE CREATOR OF ALL
CREATION OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Brothers and Sisters and beloved children in the Lord,

When Paul the Apostle to the Nations advised the Thessalonians to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 5:18), he also counselled them to "always rejoice, and pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:16-17), thus demonstrating that thanksgiving as prayer and everlasting joy go together and coexist inseparably. Truly, the one who gives thanks experiences the joy that comes from the appreciation of that for which he or she is thankful, and from the overabundance of joy they turn toward the giver and provider of the good things received in grateful thanksgiving. Conversely, the person who does not feel the internal need to thank the Creator and Fashioner of all the good things of this very good world, but ungratefully and egocentrically receives them -- when the person is indifferent toward the one who provided these good things and thus worships the impersonal creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25) -- that person does not feel the deep joy of receiving the gifts of God, but only sullen and animalistic satisfaction. Such a person is given over to irrational desires, to covetousness, and to "robberies from injustice" (Isaiah 61:8) that are despised by God. As a result, that person will undergo the breaking "of the pride of his power" (Leviticus 26:19), and will be deprived of the sublime, pure, and heavenly joy of the one who gives thanks gratefully.

The belief that every creature of God created for communion with human beings is good when it is received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:3-4), leads to respect for creation out of respect for its Creator; it does not fashion an idol out of creation itself. The person who loves the Creator of a given work cannot be disrespectful toward it nor maliciously harm it; but certainly neither does a person worship it while disregarding the Creator (Romans 1:21). Rather, by honoring it, one honors its Creator.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, having ascertained that natural creation commonly referred to as "the environment," which in recent times has to a great extent been maliciously harmed, has undertaken an effort that strives to sensitize every person -- especially Christians -- to the gravity of this problem for humanity and particularly to its ethical and theological dimension. For this reason, the Patriarchate has established the first day of September each year, which is the natural landmark of the yearly cycle, as a day of prayer for the environment. This prayer, however, is not merely a supplication and petition to God for the protection of the natural environment from the impending catastrophe that is being

wrought by humankind, but it is also in thanksgiving for everything that God in His beneficent providence offers through creation to both the good and the wicked, the just and the unjust.

The saints of the Christian Church and other sensitive souls, illumined by the divine light that enlightens everyone who comes into the world (John 1:9), providing that he or she sincerely and unselfishly desires to receive this light (John 1:11-12), have acquired great sensitivity to all evil that harms any creature of God, and consequently to every element that makes up our natural environment.

The saints are models for every faithful Christian to imitate, and their sensitive character is the ideal character toward which we all are obliged to strive. However, because not everyone has this same refinement, those who are responsible for the education of the people must continually teach them what must be done. In light of this, we applaud with great satisfaction the proposal of the Committee on the Environment of the World-wide Federation of Organizations of Engineers, which met in Thessalonike during the Third International Exhibition and Conference on Technology of the Environment, that a binding "Global Code of Ethics" for the environment be drafted.

For its part, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in addition to proclaiming September 1 as the annual day of prayer for the environment, successfully organized "Symposium II: the Black Sea in Crisis," in collaboration with other interested parties. In continuation of this effort, the Patriarchate established the Halki Ecological Institute, which was held successfully this year, and which aims at preparing capable people in the countries and churches surrounding the Black Sea to strive in their respective regions to rouse their leaders and people concerning the danger of the impending death of the Black Sea and the general threat of irreparable and harmful damage to the environment. For this reason, the Patriarchate is currently preparing a Third International Ecological Symposium, this time on the Danube, which is a significant source of the pollution for Black Sea, and which has also undergone enormous ecological alterations and disasters because of the recent dramatic bombings.

In addition to the ecological and environmental disasters effected by humankind, natural ones have also occurred, such as the recent earthquakes that have struck Turkey. Despite the fact that oftentimes the consequences of these natural occurrences are determined by factors for which humans are responsible, the Church fervently beseeches God to show mercy and compassion on human responsibility, and to show His righteousness and goodness both to those responsible and those not responsible.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate is fully aware that the end of the second Christian millennium has been sealed by sad and exceptionally destructive occurrences which transpired mainly in Yugoslavia and Turkey, but which also continue to occur in varying degrees in other parts of our planet. This is principally due to the fact that the internal spiritual environment of the conscience of each person has not become good, nor has it changed for the better by the grace of God, due to the human ego opposing the beneficent influence of this grace. For this reason, along with the invitation to all that they respect the natural environment each for his or her own benefit since it is a gift from God to all humankind, the Ecumenical Patriarchate appeals to all that they amend their feelings toward their fellow human beings. Only in this way will the eternal, unchangeable, all-compassionate and merciful God be able to positively influence the free will of the human person and avert the disastrous man-made activities

upsetting the balance of the environment.

We recognize that heaven and earth pass away, but the laws of God are eternal and unchangeable as is God Himself. But we also know that the law of God is found in the authority of man to determine, to a great extent, the path his life takes.

For this reason, we summon both ourselves and each other to work toward the good in all areas, and especially in the area of the environment, which in the final analysis is that realm which refers first of all to our fellow human beings, and then to natural creation.

In closing, we invoke the grace and blessing of God upon everyone who works toward the good, and upon those who out of ignorance or human weakness do evil, we invoke divine illumination and the great mercy of God, so that they might come to full knowledge and be converted. Amen.

September 1, 1999

Your beloved brother in Christ and fervent supplicant before God,
Bartholomew

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Inter-Orthodox Conferences and Consultations

***Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection
Report, Crete, 1991*** <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8060>

ARTICLE I

In 1989 His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Dimitrios I, issued a Patriarchal Message calling for thanksgiving and supplications for all creation to be offered on the first day of September each year, the first day of the ecclesiastical year in the Orthodox church. He called for this day to be a day of special prayer for the salvation and protection of God's creation. This Message of the Ecumenical Patriarch created considerable interest within the Orthodox Church and beyond. In response to this interest His All Holiness the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I invited the Heads of all the autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches to appoint official representatives, one of them a hierarchy, who would meet to discuss the consensus of the Orthodox Church as a whole on the problem of the protection of the natural environment. This led to the convocation of an inter-Orthodox conference for that purpose.

This conference was held at the Orthodox Academy of Crete from 5th to 11th November 1991 under the Chairmanship of the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Eminence Metropolitan John of Pergamon. It was blessed by the presence of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria Parthenios III. His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh and International President of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) gave the opening address and spoke about the nature of the ecological crisis facing the world. Representatives of eleven autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches took part. Observers from other Churches and international organizations also attended. Specialists in various areas of theology and the natural sciences participated.

The participants in the conference had the opportunity to share in common worship of the Triune God, the creator and preserver of all, and to take part in the liturgical life of the Church of Crete. The papers read at the conference and the discussion that followed centred on the following broad areas:

- general introductory examination of the causes, nature and importance of the ecological crisis;
- environmental problems;
- theological approaches to humanity's relationship with the natural environment;
- spiritual aspects of the problem, with particular reference to the Orthodox monastic tradition;
- practical suggestions. In the context of the work of the conference, the participants heard with pleasure the announcement of the foundation by the Orthodox Academy of Crete of an Institute of Theology and Ecology.

ARTICLE II

The Conference reached the following main conclusions concerning the fundamental principles emerging from a consideration of the Orthodox position with regard to the ecological problem: The Orthodox Church shares the sensitivity and the concern of those who are distressed about the increasing burden on the natural environment due to human abuse, which the Church names as sin, and for which it calls all human beings to repentance. There is a tendency to seek a renovation of ethics while the Orthodox Church believes the solution is to be found in the liturgical, eucharistic and ascetic ethos of the Orthodox tradition.

The Orthodox Church is not to be identified with any ecological movement, party or organization either from the point of view of ideology and philosophy or from that of the method or programmes to be applied for the solution of the ecological problem. The Orthodox Church, being the Church, constitutes a presence and a witness to a new mode of existence following its specific theological outlook of human beings' relationship with God, with one another and with nature.

ARTICLE III

Once these general principles are borne in mind, the participants of the Inter-Orthodox Conference would like to call respectfully upon their Churches to consider the following proposals:

That the Church draw attention to the Orthodox eucharistic and ascetic ethos which is a hallmark of the Orthodox Church's relationship with nature. The Churches should offer once more this simple, just, yet fulfilled way of life to its own believers as well as to the wider world. Humanity needs a simpler way of life, a renewed asceticism, for the sake of creation.

That each autocephalous and autonomous Church dedicate the 1 September to be a day of special prayers and supplications for all creation - as a day for the protection of all God's creation.

That each Church undertake programmes of Christian environmental education. This should include all aspects of theological education; the construction of courses and resources for catechetical schools and the preparation of appropriate materials for use in religious education in secular schools. These materials could also be used in those countries where the Church runs primary or secondary schools. In particular, it is recommended that the 1 September be seen as an appropriate time for special emphasis in both teaching and preaching, on our need to care for God's creation.

In those places where the Church has higher education establishments, the Church should foster and encourage research into areas beneficial to the environment - such as alternative energy sources.

That each Church should engage in projects or local initiatives which lead to the enhancement of all creation. Each Church is requested to undertake such projects and initiatives at the local, diocesan and Church levels. For example:

In parishes:

To organise recycling programmes for paper, glass, metals and compostable organic waste;

To encourage water conservation;

To encourage less use of the car.

To conserve energy within Church buildings by proper insulation and control of lighting;

In dioceses:

To consider opportunities for the production and use of alternative energy (solar, wind or biomass) as an immediate and practical action;

To support the creation and further extension of nature reservations.

That each Church should examine its use of land, buildings and investments which it controls or influences, to ensure that they are used in a way which will not cause environmental damage, but will improve the environment.

That each Church should hold gatherings of members of the Church, covering fields from theology to environmental sciences, in order to aid the Church in further practical involvement in environmental and bioethical issues. Such a gathering should also seek to reach out, with the insights of the Orthodox Church, to those involved in scientific and ecological work, who are not members of the Orthodox Church, asking, in return, for their knowledge and expertise in helping the Church.

That the autocephalous and autonomous Churches in a region collaborate on specific environmental issues which transcend individual Church boundaries.

That the Orthodox Church make a formal appeal to the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) to be held in Brazil in June 1992. The appeal would ask for instance:

That in conformity with our Lord's saying in Luke 6:31 "As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them", no product or industry should be exported and no waste product should be deposited in any country, which the country of origin would not accept on its own territory.

That in conformity with the Christian call for the proper stewardship of resources, all possible assistance be given to the efficient use of energy. This may require the removal of taxes on insulation and the removal of subsidies on the production and use of particularly environmentally damaging non-renewable sources of energy. It may also require the increase of taxes to restrict use of fuels in order to induce a more thoughtful use of such resources as coal and petrol.

That the Orthodox Church encourage and support young people to initiate projects and programmes of environmental action, such as workcamps related to environmental issues, and education programmes.

SYNDESMOS, the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth, should encourage Orthodox youth organizations to act in these areas, and could serve as a coordinating body for the development of Orthodox youth projects around the world.

10 November 1991, Crete

Copyright: Printed by Orthdruk Orthodox Printing House, Bialystok, Poland, 1996.

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***Inter-Orthodox Consultation, World Council of Churches (1987),
Sofia, Bulgaria, October 1987 (Excerpts)***

<http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8050>

CREATION AND HOLY TRINITY

1. We believe that the created world itself is a 'mystery' originating in the sovereign will of God accomplished by the action (*energia*) of the Holy Trinity. We confess in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed (325/381) that the Father is the "Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible", the Son "He through whom all things were made", and the Holy Spirit, the "Creator of life" (*zoopion*). Thus, the three persons created together the world, which is the fruit of the common action of the Holy Trinity issuing out of the one essence.
2. As St. Basil the Great said, "We should understand in the creation the original cause of the Father as a founding cause, the cause of the Son as a creative, and the cause of the Spirit as an implementing one." Thus the Father is the "Creator of all things", the Son is the one "through whom all things were made", and the Holy Spirit is the one "in whom are all things". Everything that he (God the Creator) had made ... was very good" (Gen. 1:31), because "first He conceived, and His conception was a work carried out by His Word, and perfectly by His Spirit.
3. Thus, the action of the Holy Spirit, rooted in the Father, is presented as the 'economy' of the Son and the Spirit: the former bringing God's desire into existence and the latter perfecting it in goodness and beauty; the one calling the creation and leading it to the Father, and the other helping the creation to respond to His call and communicating perfection to it. Thus, the creation is the result of the communion (*koinonia*), close relationship and cooperation of the Holy Trinity. The community of three Persons participates actively in the execution of the whole of God's plan.

CREATION OF THE COSMOS- INTEGRITY OF THE WORLD

6. God is the Creator of the world. The world as cosmos, i.e. a created order with its own integrity, is a positive reality. It is the good work of the good God (Gen. 1), made by God for the blessed existence of humanity. The Cappadocian Fathers teach that God first creates the world and beautifies it like a palace, and then leads humanity into it. The genesis of the cosmos, being in becoming, is a mystery (*mysterion*) for the human mind, a genesis produced by the Word of God. As such, the world is a revelation of God (Rom. 1:19-20). Thus, when its intelligent inhabitants see it as cosmos, they come to learn about the Divine wisdom and the Divine energies. The cosmos is a coherent whole, a created synthesis, because all its elements are united and interrelated in time and space. A serious study of the mystery of creation, through faith, prayer, meditation and science, will make a positive contribution to the recognition of the integrity of creation. The daily office of the Church (vespers) begins with a

psalm which exalts the beauty of this mystery (Ps. 103), while the Fathers of the Church often comment on the various biblical passages which describe the integrity of the creation.

VALUE OF THE CREATION

7. The value of the creation is seen not only in the fact that it is intrinsically good, but also in the fact that it is appointed by God to be the home for living beings. The value of the natural creation is revealed in the fact that it was made for God (something which is beautifully expressed in Orthodox iconography), i.e. to be the context for God's Incarnation and humankind's deification, and as such, the beginning of the actualization of the Kingdom of God. We may say that the cosmos provides the stage upon which humankind moves from creation to deification. Ultimately, however, the whole of the creation is destined to become a transfigured world, since the salvation of humankind necessarily involves the salvation of its natural home, the cosmos.

HUMAN BEING AS A MICROCOSM

8. The fact that Adam and Eve were created by God last of all the other created beings and in a different way - not just by the utterance of a Divine Word but by the direct involvement and action of God - indicates not only the outstanding position of the human in the whole of the creation, but also its special relation to God. According to the Church Fathers, Genesis 1:26 ff, "...Let us make man ...(*poiesomen anthropon*) shows that the creation of the human being was the result of a Trinitarian act. Particularly significant in this connection is the statement that "man was made according to the image and the likeness of God". The reference to "the image of God" is to be understood in terms of Jesus Christ, since he is explicitly identified with it (2 Cor.4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3 ff). Thus for mankind to be in the image of God means to be in, or assimilated to, Christ. This is a matter of grace and act and not a matter of nature, because only Christ is by nature God's image as God's eternal and natural offspring, his only begotten Son. The "likeness of God" is often connected with the grace of the Spirit who assimilates us to Christ.

9. In the created world only the human being combines material and spiritual elements. Human existence is thus differentiated from non-human creation in a qualitative way. In light of this fact, the Church Fathers often speak of the human being as a "little world", a "microcosm" of the whole of the creation. Using this notion, the Church Fathers teach that the human body contains in it all levels of existence of the natural world which preceded it in order of the creation, and considered the physical elements which make up the human body as in no way different from those which constitute the physical world. This means that the natural world is fully integrated with the human being and the whole of the creation.

10. At the same time, the Fathers' use of the notion of microcosm means that humanity, created in God's image and likeness, transcends the material world because it participates in God spiritually and consciously, unlike the rest of the creation. Humankind then stands on the boundary (*methorion*) between the material and the spiritual worlds as a connecting link. It is directly related to the earthly aspect of created existence as well as to the untreated existence of the Creator. As such, on the one hand, it directly influences our thinking about the integrity of creation, and on the other hand it gives to

human nature a dynamic spiritual dimension.

11. St. Gregory the Theologian says that we are fully involved with the material creation by virtue of our physical existence, and that the material created reality is deeply involved with us. If we move to the direction of deification, our human nature, progressing towards God, will somehow carry the created material world with it. If, however, we move to the opposite direction, the created world will suffer with us as well (cf. Rom. 8:19-22). This means that we are called to exercise dominion over all creatures on earth (cf. Gen. 1:28), i.e. to be stewards (*oikonomoi*) of God's material world, caring for it, maintaining it in its integrity and perfecting it by opening it up to God through our own deification.

THE INCARNATION AS THE RENEWAL OF THE CREATION

12. God's will, wisdom and love for the creation in general and for humankind in particular are revealed in the Incarnation in an inexpressible way. The Son of God, as the one through whom the process of creation was fulfilled, came down from heaven into the world and became fully man, i.e. assumed human nature in its integrity and led it to the fulfillment of its God-given destiny, deification. The Orthodox Church teaches that the Virgin Mother of God, the Theotokos, is the model of the renewal of humankind and the creation in Christ. In her receiving of the Son of God, the whole humankind and the whole of the creation participate. In the Incarnate God the Father "made known. His will ... as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him (Christ), things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). In other words, Jesus Christ, the Son of God became man, restored and renewed humanity and the whole of the creation, uniting both of them with the Creator in and through Himself. One of the Trinity, thus, became Incarnate, became man, revealing his Lordship over the whole of the creation, and showing humanity a Lordship in stewardship and service.

II. DISINTEGRATED CREATION

The human fall and the disintegration of creation

13. Before their fall the first human beings experienced the creation as one harmonious whole. It was like a beautiful garden (*paradeisos*, Gen. 2:8) which they tended with care and love. The human fall, however, which was essentially a sinful exercising of human freedom, introduced forces of disintegration into the body of creation. Humanity experienced a two-fold alienation. On the one hand, it was estranged from the Creator, since Adam and Eve tended to hide themselves away from the sight of God (cf. Gen. 3:8) as their communion with the source of life and light was broken. On the other hand, humanity lost its capacity to enter into a proper relation with nature and with the body of the creation. Enmity between the natural world and human beings replaced the relationship of harmony and care. Domination and exploitation of the creation for selfish ends by greedy human beings became the order of history. Thus, manifold forms of disintegration set in which converged in the fact of death and corruption. Fear of death instilled anxiety, acquisitiveness, greed, hatred and despair in human beings. Modern forms of economic exploitation, racial oppression, social inequalities, war, genocide, etc. are all consequences of the fear of death and collective signs of death.

The environmental crisis

(...) 18. Environmental issues like air and water pollution, depletion of non-renewable resources,

destruction of the ozone layer, increasing nuclear radiation, deforestation and desertification of vast areas, etc. threaten the life itself on this planet. The gifts of science and technology are being misused by human beings to the extent of abusing nature and turning today's life on earth into a hell, not only for the many millions of existing people but also for the generations to come. The voice of those who call for a just development, equal distribution of resources and ecological lifestyles is being systematically suppressed. Advances in bio-technology and genetic engineering need to be seen in the light of the Holy Spirit because without adequate knowledge of the transcendent (divine) vocation and spiritual nature of humanity, these new techniques run the risk of initiating biological disruption leading to a disastrous mutations that are extremely dangerous for the true life on earth. While human creativity and freedom can be armed as supreme gifts of God, it should also be emphasized that they should be rooted in divine wisdom and in human spiritual maturity.

A reintegrated environment

(...) 37. The environmental crisis is a sin and a judgement upon humanity. We need to find ways, as churches, to support sound programmes which seek to preserve from pollution air, water and land. To speak of the reintegration of creation today is first to speak words of repentance and to make commitments toward the formation of a new way of living for the whole of humanity. The contemporary world must repent for the abuses which we have imposed upon the natural world, seeing it in the same kind of relationship to us as we see the unity of our human nature in both body and soul. We must begin to undo the pollution we have caused, which brings death and destruction to the mineral, vegetable and animal dimensions of the world environment. We must work and lobby in every way possible to us in our different situations to encourage the scientific community to dedicate the good potentials of science and technology to the restoration of the earth's integrity. For ourselves, this means a recommitment to the simple life which is content with necessities and - with the Church Fathers - sees unnecessary luxuriousness as the deprivation of necessities owed to the poor. In all of its aspects, concern for the reintegration of the creation calls Christians to a new affirmation of self-discipline, a renewal of the spirit of asceticism appropriate to Christians, regardless of their status, position or condition. In short, we must see the created world as our own home, and every person in it as our brother and sister whom Christ loves.

CONCLUSIONS

(...) 45. We confess that God is the creator of all that exists, beautifully and wonderfully made, a fitting manifestation of His glory (cf. Ps. 103). But we stand today before a wounded creation which suffers under distorted conditions which are the result of the sin of humanity. In our selfishness and greed we have used our otherwise good technological abilities to exploit God's creation, to destroy the balance of nature and to deform what God originally made to be in wholesome communion with us and with Him. Creation is no longer integrated with humanity nor is it in harmony with God. In fact, it stands in danger of conflagration, in the face of nuclear war.

46. The creation needs to be reintegrated, but this can happen only as it is brought once again into communion with the Lord, so that it may find its fullness of purpose and its transfiguration. Humanity can no longer ignore its responsibility to protect it and preserve it. In order to do this, however, humanity must learn to treat the creation as a sacred offering to God, an oblation, a vehicle of grace, an

incarnation of our most noble aspirations and prayers.

47. Just as bread and wine are linked up as an offering for the sanctification of the world and all people in the Eucharist, a sacramental approach to the creation is needed for its reintegration.

49. The Lord God created His universe and all that is in it as an integrated whole. Today, we have brought about disintegration in what God intended to be integrated. We call upon individuals, nations and churches to give effect to a vision of the rightful harmony between the human dimension and the mineral, plant and animal dimensions of the creation. In spirit and in body, we are called to offer the whole of God's creation back to Him as a sacrament and as an offering cleansed, purified, restored for His sanctification of it.

50. O God, "the things that are Yours, we offer them to You according to all things and for all things. Amen." May this be our prayer for the "integrity of God's creation".

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Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics (Orthodox and Catholic)

of Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20020610_venice-declaration.html

Monday, 10 June 2002

We are gathered here today in the spirit of peace for the good of all human beings and for the care of creation. At this moment in history, at the beginning of the third millennium, we are saddened to see the daily suffering of a great number of people from violence, starvation, poverty and disease. We are also concerned about the negative consequences for humanity and for all creation resulting from the degradation of some basic natural resources such as water, air and land, brought about by an economic and technological progress which does not recognize and take into account its limits.

Almighty God envisioned a world of beauty and harmony, and He created it, making every part an expression of His freedom, wisdom and love (cf. Gen 1:1-25).

At the centre of the whole of creation, He placed us, human beings, with our inalienable human dignity. Although we share many features with the rest of the living beings, Almighty God went further with us and gave us an immortal soul, the source of self-awareness and freedom, endowments that make us in His image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-31; 2:7). Marked with that resemblance, we have been placed by God in the world in order to cooperate with Him in realizing more and more fully the divine purpose for creation.

At the beginning of history, man and woman sinned by disobeying God and rejecting His design for creation. Among the results of this first sin was the destruction of the original harmony of creation. If we examine carefully the social and environmental crisis which the world community is facing, we

must conclude that we are still betraying the mandate God has given us: to be stewards called to collaborate with God in watching over creation in holiness and wisdom.

God has not abandoned the world. It is His will that His design and our hope for it will be realized through our co-operation in restoring its original harmony. In our own time we are witnessing a growth of an ecological awareness which needs to be encouraged, so that it will lead to practical programmes and initiatives. An awareness of the relationship between God and humankind brings a fuller sense of the importance of the relationship between human beings and the natural environment, which is God's creation and which God entrusted to us to guard with wisdom and love (cf. Gen 1:28).

Respect for creation stems from respect for human life and dignity. It is on the basis of our recognition that the world is created by God that we can discern an objective moral order within which to articulate a code of environmental ethics. In this perspective, Christians and all other believers have a specific role to play in proclaiming moral values and in educating people in ecological awareness, which is none other than responsibility towards self, towards others, towards creation.

What is required is an act of repentance on our part and a renewed attempt to view ourselves, one another, and the world around us within the perspective of the divine design for creation. The problem is not simply economic and technological; it is moral and spiritual. A solution at the economic and technological level can be found only if we undergo, in the most radical way, an inner change of heart, which can lead to a change in lifestyle and of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. A genuine conversion in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act.

First, we must regain humility and recognize the limits of our powers, and most importantly, the limits of our knowledge and judgement. We have been making decisions, taking actions and assigning values that are leading us away from the world as it should be, away from the design of God for creation, away from all that is essential for a healthy planet and a healthy commonwealth of people. A new approach and a new culture are needed, based on the centrality of the human person within creation and inspired by environmentally ethical behavior stemming from our triple relationship to God, to self and to creation. Such an ethics fosters interdependence and stresses the principles of universal solidarity, social justice and responsibility, in order to promote a true culture of life.

Secondly, we must frankly admit that humankind is entitled to something better than what we see around us. We and, much more, our children and future generations are entitled to a better world, a world free from degradation, violence and bloodshed, a world of generosity and love.

Thirdly, aware of the value of prayer, we must implore God the Creator to enlighten people everywhere regarding the duty to respect and carefully guard creation.

We therefore invite all men and women of good will to ponder the importance of the following ethical goals:

1. To think of the world's children when we reflect on and evaluate our options for action.
2. To be open to study the true values based on the natural law that sustain every human culture.

3. To use science and technology in a full and constructive way, while recognizing that the findings of science have always to be evaluated in the light of the centrality of the human person, of the common good and of the inner purpose of creation. Science may help us to correct the mistakes of the past, in order to enhance the spiritual and material well-being of the present and future generations. It is love for our children that will show us the path that we must follow into the future.

4. To be humble regarding the idea of ownership and to be open to the demands of solidarity. Our mortality and our weakness of judgement together warn us not to take irreversible actions with what we choose to regard as our property during our brief stay on this earth. We have not been entrusted with unlimited power over creation, we are only stewards of the common heritage.

5. To acknowledge the diversity of situations and responsibilities in the work for a better world environment. We do not expect every person and every institution to assume the same burden. Everyone has a part to play, but for the demands of justice and charity to be respected the most affluent societies must carry the greater burden, and from them is demanded a sacrifice greater than can be offered by the poor. Religions, governments and institutions are faced by many different situations; but on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity all of them can take on some tasks, some part of the shared effort.

6. To promote a peaceful approach to disagreement about how to live on this earth, about how to share it and use it, about what to change and what to leave unchanged. It is not our desire to evade controversy about the environment, for we trust in the capacity of human reason and the path of dialogue to reach agreement. We commit ourselves to respect the views of all who disagree with us, seeking solutions through open exchange, without resorting to oppression and domination.

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, with God's help and blessing.

Rome - Venice, 10 June 2002

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Lutheran Churches

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

A Social Statement on: Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice (1993)

Adopted by the Churchwide Assembly on August 28, 1993

<http://www.elca.org/en/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation>

PROLOGUE

Christian concern for the environment is shaped by the Word of God spoken in creation, the Love of God hanging on a cross, the Breath of God daily renewing the face of the earth. We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are deeply concerned about the environment, locally and globally, as members of this church and as members of society. Even as we join the political, economic, and scientific discussion, we know care for the earth to be a profoundly spiritual matter.

As Lutheran Christians, we confess that both our witness to God's goodness in creation and our acceptance of caregiving responsibility have often been weak and uncertain. This statement:

- offers a vision of God's intention for creation and for humanity as creation's caregivers;
- acknowledges humanity's separation from God and from the rest of creation as the central cause of the environmental crisis;
- recognizes the severity of the crisis; and
- expresses hope and heeds the call to justice and commitment.

This statement summons us, in particular, to a faithful return to the biblical vision.

I. THE CHURCH'S VISION OF CREATION

A. God, Earth, and All Creatures

We see the despoiling of the environment as nothing less than the degradation of God's gracious gift of creation.

Scripture witnesses to God as creator of the earth and all that dwells therein (Psalm 24:1). The creeds, which guide our reading of Scripture, proclaim God the Father of Jesus Christ as "maker of heaven and earth," Jesus Christ as the one "through [whom] all things were made," and the Holy Spirit as "the Lord, the giver of life" (Nicene Creed).

God blesses the world and sees it as "good," even before humankind comes on the scene. All creation, not just humankind, is viewed as "very good" in God's eyes (Genesis 1:31). God continues to bless the world: "When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground" (Psalm 104:30). By faith we understand God to be deeply, mysteriously, and unceasingly involved in what happens in all creation. God showers care upon sparrows and lilies (Matthew 6:26-30), and brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26).

Central to our vision of God's profound involvement with the world is the Incarnation. In Christ, the Word is made flesh, with saving significance for an entire creation that longs for fulfillment (Romans 8:18-25). The Word still comes to us in the waters of baptism, and in, with, and under the bread and wine, fruits of the earth and the work of human hands. God consistently meets us where we live, through earthy matter.

B. Our Place in Creation

Humanity is intimately related to the rest of creation. We, like other creatures, are formed from the earth (Genesis 2:7, 9, 19). Scripture speaks of humanity's kinship with other creatures (Psalm 104, Job 38-39). God cares faithfully for us, and together we join in singing the "hymn of all creation" (Lutheran Book of Worship, page 61; Psalm 148). We look forward to a redemption that includes all creation (Ephesians 1:10).

Humans, in service to God, have special roles on behalf of the whole of creation. Made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth. God's command to have dominion and subdue the earth is not a license to dominate and exploit. Human dominion (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 8), a special responsibility, should reflect God's way of ruling as a shepherd king who takes the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), wearing a crown of thorns.

According to Genesis 2:15, our role within creation is to serve and to keep God's garden, the earth. "To serve," often translated "to till," invites us again to envision ourselves as servants, while "to keep" invites us to take care of the earth as God keeps and cares for us (Numbers 6:24-26).

We are called to name the animals (Genesis 2:19-20). As God names Israel and all creation (Isaiah 40:26; 43:1; Psalm 147:4) and as the shepherd calls by name each sheep (John 10:3), naming unites us in a caring relationship. Further, we are to live within the covenant God makes with every living thing (Genesis 9:12-17; Hosea 2:18), and even with the day and night (Jeremiah 33:20). We are to love the earth as God loves us.

We are called to live according to God's wisdom in creation (Proverbs 8), which brings together God's truth and goodness. Wisdom, God's way of governing creation, is discerned in every culture and era in various ways. In our time, science and technology can help us to discover how to live according to God's creative wisdom.

Such caring, serving, keeping, loving, and living by wisdom sum up what is meant by acting as God's stewards of the earth. God's gift of responsibility for the earth dignifies humanity without debasing the rest of creation. We depend upon God, who places us in a web of life with one another and with all creation.

II. THE URGENCY

A. Sin and Captivity

Not content to be made in the image of God (Genesis 3:5; Ezekiel 28:1-10), we have rebelled and disrupted creation. As did the people of ancient Israel, we experience nature as an instrument of God's judgment (cf., Deuteronomy 11:13-17; Jeremiah 4:23-28). A disrupted nature is a judgment on our unfaithfulness as stewards.

Alienated from God and from creation, and driven to make a name for ourselves (Genesis 11:4), we become captives to demonic powers and unjust institutions (Galatians 4:9; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 13:1-4). In our captivity, we treat the earth as a boundless warehouse and allow the powerful to exploit its bounties to their own ends (Amos 5:6-15). Our sin and captivity lie at the roots of the current crisis.

B. The Current Crisis

The earth is a planet of beauty and abundance; the earth system is wonderfully intricate and incredibly complex. But today living creatures, and the air, soil, and water that support them, face unprecedented threats. Many threats are global; most stem directly from human activity. Our current practices may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner we know.

Twin problems—excessive consumption by industrialized nations, and relentless growth of human population worldwide—jeopardize efforts to achieve a sustainable future. These problems spring from and intensify social injustices. Global population growth, for example, relates to the lack of access by women to family planning and health care, quality education, fulfilling employment, and equal rights.

Processes of environmental degradation feed on one another. Decisions affecting an immediate locale often affect the entire planet. The resulting damages to environmental systems are frightening:

- depletion of non-renewable resources, especially oil;
- loss of the variety of life through rapid destruction of habitats;
- erosion of topsoil through unsustainable agriculture and forestry practices;
- pollution of air by toxic emissions from industries and vehicles, and pollution of water by wastes;
- increasing volumes of wastes; and
- prevalence of acid rain, which damages forests, lakes, and streams.

Even more widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide, are:

- the depletion of the protective ozone layer, resulting from the use of volatile compounds containing chlorine and bromine; and
- dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide.

The idea of the earth as a boundless warehouse has proven both false and dangerous. Damage to the environment eventually will affect most people through increased conflict over scarce resources, decline in food security, and greater vulnerability to disease.

Indeed, our church already ministers with and to people:

- who know firsthand the effects of environmental deterioration because they work for polluting industries or live near incinerators or waste dumps;
- who make choices between preserving the environment and damaging it further in order to live wastefully or merely to survive; and
- who can no longer make their living from forests, seas, or soils that are either depleted or protected by law.

In our ministry, we learn about the extent of the environmental crisis, its complexities, and the suffering it entails. Meeting the needs of today's generations for food, clothing, and shelter requires a sound environment. Action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short.

III. THE HOPE

A. The Gift of Hope

Sin and captivity, manifest in threats to the environment, are not the last word. God addresses our predicament with gifts of "forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation" (Luther, Small Catechism). By the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God frees us from our sin and captivity, and empowers us to be loving servants to creation.

Although we remain sinners, we are freed from our old captivity to sin. We are now driven to God's promise of blessings yet to come. Only by God's promise are we no longer captives of demonic powers or unjust institutions. We are captives of hope (Zechariah 9:11-12). Captured by hope, we proclaim that God has made peace with all things through the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:15-20), and that the Spirit of God, "the giver of life," renews the face of the earth.

Captured by hope, we dream dreams and look forward to a new creation. God does not just heal this creation wounded by human sin. God will one day consummate all things in "new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home" (2 Peter 3:13). Creation—now in captivity to disruption and death—will know the freedom it awaits.

B. Hope in Action

We testify to the hope that inspires and encourages us. We announce this hope to every people, and witness to the renewing work of the Spirit of God. We are to be a herald here and now to the new creation yet to come, a living model.

Our tradition offers many glimpses of hope triumphant over despair. In ancient Israel, as Jerusalem was under siege and people were on the verge of exile, Jeremiah purchased a plot of land (Jeremiah

32). When Martin Luther was asked what he would do if the world were to end tomorrow, he reportedly answered, “I would plant an apple tree today.” When we face today’s crisis, we do not despair. We act.

IV. THE CALL TO JUSTICE

Caring, serving, keeping, loving, and living by wisdom—these translate into justice in political, economic, social, and environmental relationships. Justice in these relationships means honoring the integrity of creation, and striving for fairness within the human family.

It is in hope of God’s promised fulfillment that we hear the call to justice; it is in hope that we take action. When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice. We serve and keep the earth, trusting its bounty can be sufficient for all, and sustainable.

A. Justice through Participation

We live within the covenant God makes with all living things, and are in relationship with them. The principle of participation means they are entitled to be heard and to have their interests considered when decisions are made.

Creation must be given voice, present generations and those to come. We must listen to the people who fish the sea, harvest the forest, till the soil, and mine the earth, as well as to those who advance the conservation, protection, and preservation of the environment.

We recognize numerous obstacles to participation. People often lack the political or economic power to participate fully. They are bombarded with manipulated information, and are prey to the pressures of special interests. The interests of the rest of creation are inadequately represented in human decisions.

We pray, therefore, that our church may be a place where differing groups can be brought together, tough issues considered, and a common good pursued.

B. Justice through Solidarity

Creation depends on the Creator, and is interdependent within itself. The principle of solidarity means that we stand together as God’s creation.

We are called to acknowledge this interdependence with other creatures and to act locally and globally on behalf of all creation. Furthermore, solidarity also asks us to stand with the victims of fire, floods, earthquakes, storms, and other natural disasters.

We recognize, however, the many ways we have broken ranks with creation. The land and its inhabitants are often disenfranchised by the rich and powerful. The degradation of the environment occurs where people have little or no voice in decisions — because of racial, gender, or economic discrimination. This degradation aggravates their situation and swells the numbers of those trapped in urban or rural poverty.

We pray, therefore, for the humility and wisdom to stand with and for creation, and the fortitude to support advocates whose efforts are made at personal risk.

C. Justice through Sufficiency

The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord. No person or group has absolute claim to the earth or its products. The principle of sufficiency means meeting the basic needs of all humanity and all creation.

In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough means that those with more than enough will have to change their patterns of acquisition and consumption. Sufficiency charges us to work with each other and the environment to meet needs without causing undue burdens elsewhere.

Sufficiency also urges us to care for arable land so that sufficient food and fiber continue to be available to meet human needs. We affirm, therefore, the many stewards of the land who have been and are conserving the good earth that the Lord has given us.

We recognize many forces that run counter to sufficiency. We often seek personal fulfillment in acquisition. We anchor our political and economic structures in greed and unequal distribution of goods and services. Predictably, many are left without resources for a decent and dignified life.

We pray, therefore, for the strength to change our personal and public lives, to the end that there may be enough.

D. Justice through Sustainability

The sabbath and jubilee laws of the Hebrew tradition remind us that we may not press creation relentlessly in an effort to maximize productivity (Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 25). The principle of sustainability means providing an acceptable quality of life for present generations without compromising that of future generations.

Protection of species and their habitats, preservation of clean land and water, reduction of wastes, care of the land—these are priorities. But production of basic goods and services, equitable distribution, accessible markets, stabilization of population, quality education, full employment—these are priorities as well.

We recognize the obstacles to sustainability. Neither economic growth that ignores environmental cost nor conservation of nature that ignores human cost is sustainable. Both will result in injustice and, eventually, environmental degradation. We know that a healthy economy can exist only within a healthy environment, but that it is difficult to promote both in our decisions.

The principle of sustainability summons our church, in its global work with poor people, to pursue sustainable development strategies. It summons our church to support U.S. farmers who are turning to sustainable methods, and to encourage industries to produce sustainably. It summons each of us, in

every aspect of our lives, to behave in ways that are consistent with the long-term sustainability of our planet.

We pray, therefore, for the creativity and dedication to live more gently with the earth.

V. COMMITMENTS OF THIS CHURCH

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America answer the call to justice and commit ourselves to its principles—participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability. In applying the principles to specific situations, we face decisions made difficult by human limitation and sin. We act, not because we are certain of the outcome but because we are confident of our salvation in Christ.

Human behavior may change through economic incentive, guilt about the past, or fear about the future. But as people of biblical faith, who live together in trust and hope, our primary motivation is the call to be God's caregivers and to do justice.

We celebrate the vision of hope and justice for creation, and dedicate ourselves anew. We will act out of the conviction that, as the Holy Spirit renews our minds and hearts, we also must reform our habits and social structures.

A. As Individual Christians

As members of this church, we commit ourselves to personal life styles that contribute to the health of the environment. Many organizations provide materials to guide us in examining possibilities and making changes appropriate to our circumstances.

We challenge ourselves, particularly the economically secure, to tithe environmentally. Tithers would reduce their burden on the earth's bounty by producing ten percent less in waste, consuming ten percent less in non-renewable resources, and contributing the savings to earthcare efforts. Environmental tithing also entails giving time to learn about environmental problems and to work with others toward solutions.

B. As a Worshiping and Learning Community

1. The Congregation as a Creation Awareness Center

Each congregation should see itself as a center for exploring scriptural and theological foundations for caring for creation.

Awareness can be furthered by many already in our midst, for example: Native people, who often have a special understanding of human intimacy with the earth; scientists, engineers, and technicians, who help us to live by the wisdom of God in creation; experts in conservation and protection of the environment; and those who tend the land and sea. We also will learn from people suffering the severe impact of environmental degradation.

2. *Creation Emphases in the Church Year*

Congregations have various opportunities during the year to focus on creation. Among these are Thanksgiving, harvest festivals, and blessings of fields, waters, and plants and animals. Many congregations observe Earth Day or Soil and Water Stewardship Week. As a church body, we designate the Second Sunday after Pentecost as Stewardship of Creation Sunday, with appropriate readings (as a development of the traditional Rogationtide).

3. *Education and Communication*

This church will encourage those who develop liturgical, preaching, and educational materials that celebrate God's creation. Expanded curricula, for use in the many contexts of Christian education, will draw upon existing materials. We will promote reporting on the environment by church publications, and encourage coverage of this church's environmental concerns in public media.

4. *Programs throughout This Church*

This church commends the environmental education taking place through synodical and regional efforts; camps and outdoor ministries; colleges, seminaries, and continuing education events; and the churchwide Hunger Program. We especially commend this church's Department for Environmental Stewardship in the Division for Church in Society, for its network of caregivers, its advice to church members and institutions on innovative caregiving, and its materials for use in environmental auditing.

C. As a Committed Community

As congregations and other expressions of this church, we will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life. We will advocate the environmental tithe, and we will take other measures that work to limit consumption and reduce wastes. We will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation. We will undertake environmental audits and follow through with checkups to ensure our continued commitment.

D. As a Community of Moral Deliberation

As congregations and other expressions of this church, we will model the principle of participation. We will welcome the interaction of differing views and experiences in our discussion of environmental issues such as:

- nuclear and toxic waste dumps;
- logging in ancient growth forests;
- personal habits in food consumption;
- farming practices;
- treatment of animals in livestock production, laboratory research, and hunting;
- land-use planning; and
- global food, development, and population questions.

We will examine how environmental damage is influenced by racism, sexism, and classism, and how the environmental crisis in turn exacerbates racial, gender, and class discrimination. We will include in

our deliberation people who feel and suffer with issues, whose economic security is at stake, or who have expertise in the natural and social sciences.

We will play a role in bringing together parties in conflict, not only members of this church but also members of society at large. This church's widespread presence and credibility provide us a unique opportunity to mediate, to resolve conflict, and to move toward consensus.

E. As an Advocate

The principles of participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability will shape our advocacy—in neighborhoods and regions, nationally and internationally. Our advocacy will continue in partnership, ecumenically and with others who share our concern for the environment.

Advocacy on behalf of creation is most compelling when done by informed individuals or local groups. We will encourage their communication with governments and private entities, attendance at public hearings, selective buying and investing, and voting.

We will support those designated by this church to advocate at state, national, and international levels. We will stand with those among us whose personal struggles for justice put them in lonely and vulnerable positions.

1. Private Sector

This church will engage in dialogue with corporations on how to promote justice for creation. We will converse with business leadership regarding the health of workers, consumers, and the environment. We will invite the insights and concerns of business leadership regarding responsible environmental actions. We will urge businesses to implement comprehensive environmental principles.

Government can use both regulations and market incentives to seek sustainability. We will foster genuine cooperation between the private and public sector in developing them.

2. Public Sector

This church will favor proposals and actions that address environmental issues in a manner consistent with the principles of participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability.

These proposals and actions will address: excessive consumption and human population pressures; international development, trade, and debt; ozone depletion; and climate change. They will seek: to protect species and their habitats; to protect and assure proper use of marine species; and to protect portions of the planet that are held in common, including the oceans and the atmosphere.

This church will support proposals and actions to protect and restore, in the United States and Caribbean, the quality of:

- natural and human habitats, including seas, wetlands, forests, wilderness, and urban areas;

- air, with special concern for inhabitants of urban areas;
- water, especially drinking water, groundwater, polluted runoff, and industrial and municipal waste; and
- soil, with special attention to land use, toxic waste disposal, wind and water erosion, and preservation of farmland amid urban development.

This church will seek public policies that allow people to participate fully in decisions affecting their own health and livelihood. We will be in solidarity with people who directly face environmental hazards from toxic materials, whether in industry, agriculture, or the home. We will insist on an equitable sharing of the costs of maintaining a healthy environment.

This church will advance international acceptance of the principles of participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability, and encourage the United Nations in its caregiving role. We will collaborate with partners in the global church community, and learn from them in our commitment to care for God's creation.

Claiming the Promise

Given the power of sin and evil in this world, as well as the complexity of environmental problems, we know we can find no "quick fix"—whether technological, economic, or spiritual. A sustainable environment requires a sustained effort from everyone.

The prospect of doing too little too late leads many people to despair. But as people of faith, captives of hope, and vehicles of God's promise, we face the crisis.

We claim the promise of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1), and join in the offertory prayer (Lutheran Book of Worship, page 109): "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

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Resources: **Lutherans Restoring Creation**, including a Creation Care Commentary on the Lectionary: <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org>

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Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod

Together with All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth 2010 (Short Version)

An Appendix to the Expanded Statement:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.lcms.org%2FDocument.fdoc%3Fsrc%3Dlcm%26id%3D341&ei=1eGPVZayBsP5-AHr8ID4Cg&usg=AFQjCNEC4WbS5kcYRpSlkDaUfNSjsjPZeQ&bvm=bv.96783405.d.cWw>

In the last two centuries, we have acquired a mastery over the earth never before seen in human history. That mastery, fueled by the scientific and technological revolutions, has brought about dramatic improvements in human health and well-being but has also come with a heavy cost. The environmental movement has drawn attention to the way in which our domination has diminished the beauty of God's earth, damaged the health of its ecosystems, and pushed many of our fellow creatures to the brink of extinction. The environmental movement has also aroused people to take action by alarming them with doom and gloom scenarios that would take place if we do not act to avert them. But can the movement also shape long term attitudes and behavior? For that, we need nothing less than a fundamental reorientation in the way we see ourselves and our relationship to the earth. And for this, we need the Christian story.¹

Two thousand years ago, Christianity gave western society a vision of the earth, rooted in the Old Testament, as a good creation brought into existence by a gracious God. In an age shaped by Greek philosophy, many considered the earth to be a prison and our bodies to be tombs. But in the Apostles' Creed Christians confessed that God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). This Creator sent His Son into the world to become a human creature (John 1:1, 14) so that our bodies would be raised up on the last day (1 Cor 15:51–57). Christians need to reclaim the Creed's vision for the twenty-first century. Today we have come to see ourselves either as masters of the universe (given our technological powers) or as the worst thing ever to happen to the universe (given our ecological destructiveness). Instead we must articulate a view of human creatureliness that identifies where we fit within God's living earth and how to live generously with our fellow creatures.

Where Do We Fit Within God's Living Earth?

"God has made me together with all creatures . . ." — Martin Luther

The various ecological issues of our day raise more questions about *us* than about the environment. How do we see ourselves and our place within creation? The answer to that question will shape how we live on God's earth. For example, if we distinguish ourselves too sharply from creation we might seek to free ourselves from the constraints of the earth or to control it for purely self-centered purposes. If we identify ourselves too closely with the earth we might lose our distinctive identity to the point that we value nonhuman life above human life. The Christian story avoids these two alternatives by affirming our common creatureliness as well as our distinctive creatureliness. Within this story we confess that God has called us to care for His earth as creatures among fellow creatures.

In the Company of Fellow Creatures

“The whole creation, the entire cosmos, is on tiptoe with expectation for God’s glory to be revealed to his children.”

— N. T. Wright’s paraphrase of Romans 8:21

The way we tell the Christian story says something about the way we see ourselves and our life on earth. Does that story include or exclude our fellow creatures of the earth? Are other creatures simply background scenery for our story or fellow participants in that story? So how do we tell the story? Does it go something like this?

God created us in His image, but Adam and Eve sinned and brought God’s judgment upon the whole human race. God then sent His Son Jesus to die for us so that when we die we will be with Jesus in heaven.

This is certainly true as far as it goes. But there is more to the story. The story continues and expands to include the resurrection of our bodies and the renewal of God’s entire creation.

When God created us, He formed us and our fellow creatures from the soil of the earth (Gen 1:24; 2:7; 3:19; Job 10:9). We are all made of the same “stuff,” as it were. We share a bond with other creatures by way of the earth. God provided all His creatures with food from the earth.

We share a common table. God blessed all His creatures and so we share with our fellow creatures a common pattern of life. We mate, procreate, and raise our young. God gave all His creatures a place to live. We share the earth as a common home. God created all of His creatures for His delight and glory. He liked what He made and declared that it was all good. With our fellow creatures we praise God by living as the creatures God made us to be. While we do not think of birds, animals, and fish as our brothers and sisters, they are our fellow creatures and, in a certain sense,

Not only do we share a common bond with other creatures by virtue of God’s creative act, our futures are linked together as well. We see this in the sin of Adam and Eve. Their rebellion reverberated across the earth and brought down the judgment of God. Adam and Eve found themselves subject to death and decay when God cursed the ground (Gen 3:17–18). They would struggle to live, only to return to the earth from which they had been made. The earth and all of the creatures that live upon it now suffer with us in bondage to corruption. The severed relationship between humans and God ripped apart the fabric of creation. It pitted humans against each other and humans against their nonhuman fellow creatures. Fear, suffering, and violence replaced the peace and tranquility that had characterized God’s creation.

In spite of human sin, God continued to care for all of the creatures, both human and nonhuman, that made up His living earth. He continued to bless them so that they would procreate. He continued to provide them with food and shelter (Psalms 65 and 104; Ps 145:15).

And consistent with His work of creation, God included the entire earth in His promise of the new age to come! In language reminiscent of Genesis 1, God bound Himself to a covenant with every living

creature that flies, swims, or moves across the earth (Genesis 9; Hos 2:18–22). The prophets describe the new creation as a time when the wolf and the lamb will lie down together (Is 11:6; Is 65:25) and rivers will water the parched wilderness (Is 43:20). It will be a time when the mountains and the hills break out in singing and the trees clap their hands (Isaiah 55). In brief, God will bring forth new heavens and a new earth (Is 65:17–25).

The promised messianic age dawned when the Son of God became a human creature with the incarnation of Jesus Christ. As a human creature, He shared the same DNA as His mother Mary. This DNA reached back through His ancestors to Adam and Eve, whose very bodies came from the soil of the earth itself. In Jesus, the Creator bound Himself to His creation in a most intimate way. He drank the water, breathed the air, and ate the food of the earth. When He embarked upon His messianic work, He went out to be "with the wild animals" (Mark 1:13) which did not harm Him during His forty days of fasting. The Messiah had come to restore His creation (Is 43:20). That work would center on those who had brought about its ruin—God's human creatures. Jesus fed, healed, and restored people in both body and soul. He died to reconcile them to God, and together with them reconciled all things to Himself (Eph 1:10; Col 1:15–20). When He rose from the dead, He became the vanguard of the new creation.

As the Lord of creation, Jesus Christ now works through the Holy Spirit to gather and renew His human community, to make them the children of God (Rom 8:16). God begins the renewal of creation at the point where its ruin began. The rest of creation groans and sighs in the pains of childbirth as it eagerly longs for the day when the children of God will be glorified. For at that time the earth and its creatures will also be released from their bondage to corruption. All of creation will then share in the glory of the children of God. In the meantime, we too groan inwardly as we await the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:19–23). Until that day, we live in an age of ambiguity. We see all around us a beautiful yet frustrated creation. Its beauty and goodness hint at the glory to come when creation is renewed. Yet we can hear its groaning in bondage to corruption as it longs to be freed in the age to come.

When Christ returns He will raise up His human creatures from the dead and will renew His entire creation. Just as Christ's resurrected and glorified body was the same body that He had assumed from His mother's womb, so Paul states that our resurrection bodies will be transformed and glorified (Phil 3:21). The same appears to happen with the wider creation as it is freed from its corruption, for "when humans are put right, creation will be put right."² The new creation will then come forth much as a butterfly from a chrysalis. Like Christ's body, it will be the same creation but transformed and glorified. The visions of the eschatological age described by Isaiah and the prophets will be brought to their full manifestation when the new Jerusalem comes down to the new earth. God will wipe away every tear and dwell with us here on the new earth (Revelation 21).

Caring for God's Living Earth

"The care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility."—Wendell Berry

So in light of Scripture's story, in which God reclaims His creation in Jesus, how do we live within this groaning creation? On the one hand, the groaning of creation in bondage to corruption calls us to repentance, for on account of us the earth suffers under the curse and under human destructiveness. On the other hand, the groaning of creation in anticipation of its renewal calls us to embrace the goodness of creation and the goodness of our creatureliness. As new creatures raised with Christ, we have been set free from the need to possess the earth for our own selfish purposes. We are set free to recover our place within creation as those whom God created to live in a unique relationship with Him and with our fellow creatures.³ God called us to care for His living earth.

He made us unique creatures among all of the creatures who share this earth. He made us in His image. God gave Adam and Eve a commission that was equally unique among all of His creatures (Psalm 8). He gave them the task of looking after His creation. Genesis 1 describes this responsibility in terms of subduing the earth and exercising dominion over "the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28). Genesis 2 describes the responsibility in terms of tending or cultivating the earth and protecting or preserving the earth. We might summarize these four related tasks by saying that God gave man and woman the commission to care for His living earth. This calls upon us to make room on God's earth and in our lives for all of His creatures, both human and nonhuman, so that they all may flourish (Ps 72:16).⁴ What does this mean?

First, God calls us to care for His creation. Yes, God gave the earth to His human creatures (Ps 115:16). But He did not give it to us in such a way that He absented Himself from His creation or relinquished His ownership of it. The earth and every creature within it still belong to Him (Dt 10:14; Ps 24:1; Ps 95:4–5, 7), including every wild animal of the forest (Ps 50:9–12). Because this is His earth, it is a treasure to be cherished by us. In addition, God affirms it to be "good" or "very good" on six occasions. Scripture repeatedly declares that the earth is filled with and declares the glory of God (Ps 72:19; Psalm 19). We are responsible to God for the way we deal with the earth and treat His creatures so as not to diminish God's delight in His creation or the glory of His work. "We must not use the world as though we created it ourselves."⁵ We do not have the right to do with it as we like.

Second, God calls us to enter into His own work of caring for and preserving the earth. God cares for it and He has committed himself to it. At the same time, God has enlisted us to serve as the gloves on His hands as He tends to His creation. Our activity should reflect God's own compassionate care for all creatures (Ps 145:9; Ps 36:6). Caring for the earth and our fellow creatures requires commitment and sustained effort. To restore impoverished farmland back to health or bring whooping cranes back from the brink of extinction may take decades. Such efforts require the sacrifice of time, energy, and resources. This is not to say that we place the lives of our nonhuman fellow creatures above the lives of humans. But it may mean that we choose to live in ways that promote the health of the earth or at the very least minimize the damage inflicted upon it.

God has not only called us to care for His earth, but He has called us to care for it as creatures among fellow creatures. We care for the earth not as "outsiders" but as "insiders." God did not give this task of dominion to angels who are not made from the earth. He gave it to creatures who themselves came from the earth and are thus members of the entire community of life that comprises creation. If we forget this, dominion becomes domination. God gives us responsibility for the well-

being of creation as those who live within creation.⁶ Approaching our care of the earth and its inhabitants by respecting them as “fellow creatures” can alter the way we regard them and feel connected to them.⁷ Francis Schaeffer, a strong advocate for the Christian faith, argues that we need to relate to other creatures both intellectually and psychologically. Intellectually, “I can say, ‘Yes, the tree is a creature like myself.’” But psychologically, “I ought to feel” that “the tree has a real value in itself being a creature made by God.”⁸ What does this mean?

First, as creatures among fellow creatures, we best care for creation by nurturing those webs of support that bind us together with our fellow creatures as members of God’s living earth. This feature of human existence accords well with the central insight of ecology that nothing lives in isolation; everything is interconnected. On the one hand, we cannot care for each other apart from the nonhuman creation upon which we depend. For through the earth God provides us with “clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home.”⁹ Through creation He provides us with inspiration for our art, literature, and music. On the other hand, our fellow nonhuman creatures cannot flourish apart from the spaces, habitats, water, and food upon which they depend. They cannot survive, much less thrive, apart from the deliberate choices that we make regarding our use or non-use of the earth.

Second, as creatures among fellow creatures, we best care for the earth by bringing our thinking and acting into harmony with God’s ordering of creation. We do not *manage* the earth so much as work *with* the earth by cooperating with God’s arrangement and ordering of His creation. This suggests that we need to “humble ourselves before nature’s processes,”¹⁰ and attend to the neighborhoods and particular places where we live alongside our fellow earth-born creatures (Ex 23:10–11). In the process, we must learn how this community of creatures can best live together in a groaning creation. As members of that community of creatures, we need to wrestle with the complex connections that exist between God’s human and non-human creatures, between culture and nature, forest and orchard, prairie and field, between troublesome creatures and pleasant ones. “*All neighbors are included.*”¹¹

So how do we see ourselves? Where do we fit within creation? We are neither separated from creation nor indistinguishable from creation. We share a bond with God because we are made in His image. We share a bond with all the creatures of the earth because we are formed from the earth. These two features of our existence are brought to fulfillment in the new creation ushered in by Christ’s resurrection.

As Christians we now carry out God’s commission to proclaim the Gospel (Matt 28:19–20). We also carry out His commission to care for creation (Gen 1:28; Gen 2:15), all the while longing for the renewal of creation at Christ’s return.

How Do We Best Care for God’s Living Earth?

“Delight is the basis of right use.”— Joseph Sittler

Taking care of God’s earth and our fellow creatures with whom we share it involves more than following a list of do’s and don’ts. Such an approach can too easily become legalistic and develop into a new secular piety. One is then moved more by fear than joy. Instead, we need a fundamental orientation to God’s creation that aligns us with His view of things. God liked what He had made. He

took pleasure in it. It was very good (Gen 1:31). As His image-bearing co-workers, God invites us to delight in His good work as well. God's own pleasure in what He had made as good provides an avenue for our proper use and enjoyment of all created things. Delight brings us into accord and harmony with God's own view of His living earth.

Delighting in the Bond We Share with Our Fellow Creatures

" . . . life itself, which is membership in the living world, is already an abundance."— Wendell Berry

Many of us have lost touch with the land. We feel more at home surrounded by television screens, computers, and phones than we do in God's creation. In order to delight in God's earth as a treasured gift, we need to reconnect with it by rediscovering it and experiencing the wonder that comes from observing His handiwork (Job 38–39; Psalm 8; Prov 6:4–8). We have assistance in science and in field guides that help us develop an observant eye regarding the workings of creation. Nature writing and photography can help us experience its subtle beauty. Literature, poetry, and history can show us the interaction of creation and culture. Scripture and theology help open the eyes and ears of faith to hear the groaning of creation even as we see in it the promise of its renewal.¹²

We begin our exploration with the discovery of our own creaturely bond to the earth. "God has made me . . . He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses."¹³ Our body joins us completely to the earth. We inhale the air that circulates around the earth. We drink the water that evaporates from oceans and falls to the earth as rain. We consume the energy of the sun that has been photosynthesized by plants. We ingest the minerals of the soil in the foods we eat. Take these away and we die. Our senses interact with the full range of phenomena in creation, thus connecting us more closely to the earth. By means of our senses we hear the howling of wolves in winter, smell the scent of lilacs in spring, feel a cool spring breeze on our face, taste the sweetness of watermelon on a hot day, and watch flocks of sand hill cranes coming in to roost for the night. We are attached to the earth not only physically, but also emotionally, psychologically, and even spiritually. Many of us find ourselves drawn to parks and beaches where our troubles drift away. Others of us are drawn to forests and mountains where we experience inner healing, spiritual refreshment, and even something of the presence of God. In some ways this should not surprise us. God approaches us through His creation not only to feed and shelter us, but to refresh and restore us, to humble and inspire us, and to elicit thanks and praise (Psalm 148). Yet even as we are drawn to God's world, we can find it a troubling and frightening place. For we also encounter hurricanes and tornadoes, tsunamis and typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanoes. In all of this, we can hear creation groaning beneath the corruption to which it was subjected. So together with our fellow creatures we are "prisoners of the splendor and travail" of creation.¹⁴

As we expand our exploration outward we quickly discover that we are not alone. We are members of a large community of creatures on the earth that includes cranes and woodpeckers, snow leopards and tigers, whales and dolphins, prairie dogs and raccoons, and countless others. It is a world filled with a rich diversity of creatures. Genesis describes this eloquently. During the first three days of creation God carved out spaces for His creatures. He made room in the air, land, and water. During the next three days, He filled those spaces so that they are "teeming" with creatures of every kind. The Bible itself lists over a hundred different kinds of

creatures (e.g., Is 11:6–9; Job 39:19–27). Scientists today estimate that between one million and ten million species of creatures live on earth. Many of them have yet to be discovered, and of those that have been named there is so much more to learn.

As we find ourselves members of a larger living world, we also realize that we are emotionally connected to our fellow creatures. There is something about the sight of other creatures that lifts our spirits (Prov 30:18–19). We find ourselves drawn to them and take pleasure in them. Again, this should not surprise us. God did not create us to live in a “mirror-lined box.”¹⁵ He created us to live in the company of other creatures. God gave Adam the task of interacting with and naming his fellow creatures. Yet as we find ourselves drawn to those creatures we hear disharmony in creation. Some creatures pose a threat to human life and livelihood as predators, pests, and carriers of diseases. We in turn have responded by making less and less room for them on God’s earth and within our lives, thereby pushing some into extinction.

Finally, we can expand our discovery by exploring the wider ecology of the home that we share. Here we learn that not only has God created an amazing variety of different and beautiful creatures, He has also given each a place and purpose within creation. We might think of the earth as a home we share with many different roommates. In this home each creature has been given its own room in which to live out God’s created purposes. Within the economy of the household each has its assigned chores. Psalm 104 lyrically describes the ecology of our shared home. God has arranged everything to work harmoniously. Some animals come out by night to hunt for their food and the humans go in to sleep. Then the humans go out by day to farm and harvest and the animals go in to sleep (Ps 104:20–23). Each has its place. Each has its purpose. Each is cared for by God.

Of course, things did not turn out the way God intended. Violence and suffering, death and decay fill His earth. Yet God continues to create life in and through His earth and all its creatures. Despite the violence, pain, and suffering that are everywhere evident throughout creation, God has enabled His creatures to adjust and adapt and even to cooperate with each other for their mutual benefit. God’s original word of blessing continues to nudge life into every nook and cranny of our world.¹⁶ Today we see that the cycles of life in ecosystems work through death and decay. Death and decay return a creature to the ground and the organic material from which God which first created it. Out of that material God brings forth new life, despite the destructiveness and wastefulness of human activity.

Living in Creaturely Humility

“Learning to be creatures may be the most important work we have to do.”— Ellen Davis

Once we have rediscovered our bond with God’s creation and embraced it as a delightful gift, we can begin to consider how best to care for His living earth. When we embrace our membership in God’s living world we can begin to learn how to live as creatures within a community of creatures. We need not rise above or seek to transcend our creatureliness to become like God. Nor do we need to seek ways by which we can possess and control creation. God is the Creator. We are His creatures. As such, we need to recognize that we are dependent upon God’s gifts and that life is best lived within the boundaries of our creatureliness as God designed it.

As creatures we are limited by our creaturely capacities and by the needs of the other creatures who call this earth their home. But as human creatures, God created us uniquely in that He gave us the ability to make choices about the way we live on the earth with our fellow creatures. Other creatures lack that capacity. They act out of necessity and instinct. But we can moderate our freedom out of respect for creation in the same way that family members voluntarily limit their freedom out of love for others. Unfortunately, when we seek to overcome the limits of our creatureliness we act in unrestrained ways. In so doing we repeat the original sin of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). Limits and boundaries are not bad. God established those boundaries as something good in creation (Job 38:8–11). The Son of God embraced those boundaries when He became a human creature for us (Luke 2:51–52).

To live within our creaturely limits, then, means to live responsibly with God's gifts— such as technology—which may help us to bear the burden of sin's curse. But at times we need to ask, “Just because we *can* do something does it mean we *should*?” Our actions can exceed the boundaries of our vision and cause unintended long term damage for short term gains.

To act responsibly, we need to act in ways that do not exceed our vision.¹⁷ The same applies to the way we consume, which can have as much of an impact upon our fellow creatures as anything we do. Do we take care of and repair what we have? Similarly, does it make sense to become a culture in which we value the disposable for the sake of convenience? What can more dishonor God's own work than to throw away what He has made? Ultimately, we need to ask, how much is enough? What constitutes a life well-lived?

God has not only given us the capacity to voluntarily restrain ourselves, He has also given us the capacity to act kindly and generously in our treatment of the earth so as to serve the well-being of all God's creatures. All creatures need food, water, habitat, and space. We are called to reflect God's own warm-hearted goodness toward creation as He cares for seemingly worthless sparrows (Matt 10:29–31; Luke 12:6–7) and unclean ravens (Luke 12:24). This involves living in “practical harmony” with the way God designed His creation to function.¹⁸ It means becoming better acquainted with its processes and rhythms, and more astute in observing its needs and capacities. To be sure, in this age there will never be a time when we do not cause some damage. But we can seek to limit that damage and patiently work to heal that damage as we await the final renewal of all things.

In order to work in harmony with God's earth we need to work with the distinctive features and needs of the land (Dt 20:19–20; Lev 19:9–10; Lev 23:10–11). Do we adapt ourselves to creation's rhythms by respecting rivers and flood plains or do we try to control and transform them? Do we exhaust water supplies in the dry southwest in order to have verdant lawns? In many ways, we interact most directly with creation through the act of eating. How we eat determines how our food is raised and how the earth is treated. God has allowed us to eat animals. But do we allow them to live their lives as God created them (Dt 5:14; Dt 22:4; Dt 25:4; Ex 23:5, 11–12; Prov 12:10)? How do we live with wild creatures? God made space on His earth for all of His creatures to live. Do we transgress those boundaries when we crowd them out until there is no longer any room for them to live or move along their ancient migration routes (Dt 22:6; Lev 25:7)?

Finally, we best take care of God's living earth when we do so to the glory of God. It would seem that our work of caring for creation should be aimed at highlighting the beauty of God's own work. After all, with our work we enter into His own work. G. K. Chesterton noted that His is a work that brings all things into existence out of nothing.¹⁹ Our work involves taking God's created things and refashioning them into art, music, architecture, technology, and culture. But the things of creation that we refashion still belong to Him. Everything we do involves in some way a reworking of God's own creaturely works. Our work should be aimed at shedding light on God's own good work (like polishing granite or staining wood in order to bring out their hidden beauty). It should include producing things of both beauty and function that endure.

All that we do culminates in the sabbath restful delight. God finished His work on the seventh day, blessed the day, and sanctified it. Later, Exodus 31:17 describes that day as a time when God rested and was "refreshed" or "inspired." We might say that God found delight in what had made. The Jewish rabbis thus said that God created the Sabbath as a day of shalom, delight, joy, tranquility, and harmony. This reflects the sense of walking by the "still waters" of Psalm 23. Our work should also culminate in restful delight in what God has made, as well as in what we have made from His work (Ex 20:11). Times of rest and refreshment provide opportunity to give "thanks and praise" for all that God has made. In that regard, God has given us the honor of leading creation in that praise much as a conductor leads a symphony orchestra. All creation praises God by being what it is, His good creation.

Summary

The Christian story provides a compelling—and much needed—vision for how we see our place and purpose within creation. God has called us to care for His earth as creatures among fellow creatures. Having made us new creatures and adopting us as His children in Jesus Christ, He has set us free to care once again for His creation as He first intended. But we care for a very different creation today. It is a creation that groans under the curse imposed on account of human sin and beneath the weight of human abuse. It is a creation that longs for its complete renewal when we, God's children, are revealed in glory. In the meantime the Gospel has set us free to embrace our human creatureliness, and with it, our care for all of our fellow creatures, both human and nonhuman. "Our faith should be at home with this earth, which after all is the realm of the new creation through Christ's work of redemption."²⁰

So Where do We Begin?

In his explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed, Martin Luther leads us by the hand outward in a series of concentric circles, like ripples in a pond. He first helps us discover our own bodies as gifts from God. Then He leads us to discover the basic necessities of life, and finally the wider world. We might follow that same movement here as well. We begin with our bodies and their connection to the earth. Then we move to our homes. We expand our concern and action to church and community and from there out into the wider creation. Each of these widening circles will provide opportunities to reconnect with God's creation and to live as responsible creatures within creation.

1. Our Body: Food and Drink.

- Learn about the ways in which our food is currently raised and produced. Few activities connect us to nature as does eating. How and what we eat affects our health and shapes the way food is produced.

- Learn about the foods, fruits, and vegetables native to your area and when different foods come into season by shopping at local farmers' markets.
- Learn about the genetic engineering of plants and what effect that might have on ecosystems, the diversity of flora and fauna, and on food.
- Purchase and eat a diversity of foods (grains, fruits, vegetables). These products will encourage the production of different varieties.
- Consider purchasing some certified, organically raised dairy products, eggs, cereals, fruit, and vegetables or range-fed beef, pork, and poultry.
- Purchase shade-grown coffee to help preserve the natural canopy of rain-forests for migratory birds.
- When you eat, pause and reflect on where your food came from and how long it took to grow. Give thanks.

2. House and Home.

- Choose to live within or even below your means.
- Distinguish between needs and wants. Ask yourself, "What constitutes a life well-lived?"
- Replace clothes, furniture, televisions, and computers, etc., only when they are worn out and beyond repair.
- Purchase fewer but higher quality items that last a lifetime, rather than things that need to be thrown away within months, only to end up in our landfills.
- Choose energy efficient appliances (refrigerators, ovens, washing machines, etc.) and home heating/air-conditioning systems.
- Purchase products, whenever possible, from recycled materials. Recycled milk jugs have been transformed into materials
- for decks, bird feeders, and other items.
- Purchase recycled paper products, such as towels, toilet paper, and writing paper to support the preservation of the boreal forests of the north.
- Learn and be careful
- about what you might unsuspectingly be putting into the
- water supply from pharmaceuticals, detergents, and lawn
- chemicals.
- Take one trip instead of several a week to the supermarket. Carpool to work, use public transportation, or when possible ride your bike to work or to run errands.

3. Garden and Yard.

- Learn how all the local organisms (plants, insects, birds, animals) interact with each other and with the inorganic environment (soil, weather, seasons).
- Learn how yard "waste" can be turned into compost to improve the composition and nutrients of the soil and thus the health of your plants.
- Learn how to fit in with nature and patiently work with the conditions and schedules of nature rather than your own.
- Grow varieties of delicious heirloom vegetables and fruits that are not found in the supermarket.

- Make room in your yard for other creatures by planting native flowers, shrubs, and trees to provide shelter and food for migratory birds and butterflies.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides and pesticides on lawns and gardens as these affect the biotic life of your yard and the waterways into which they are washed.
- Exercise caution when buying invasive plants.

4. Church and School²¹

- Design your worship and classroom spaces to look out upon God's creation. Are the buildings cut off from creation or do they open up to it? Plant trees and shrubs and put up bird feeders.
- Integrate elements of God's creation in the interior design as Solomon did. Use live plants in the worship space and classrooms. Pattern designs from creation into the walls, pillars, and banners.
- Incorporate creation themes into prayers, hymns, and sermons in worship and chapel services, especially at the traditional times of planting, rogation tide, and harvest²²
- Celebrate Earth day during the Easter season in order to draw attention to the new creation ushered in by Christ's resurrection.
- Plant a memorial garden where people can plant trees or shrubs in honor of marriage, the birth of a child, or the death of a loved one.
- Replace landscaping shrubs with native shrubs and plants. How can one maximize the green space? Replace the grass and create a little garden sanctuary.
- Plant a community garden. Invite the neighborhood to participate in the planting and harvest. Take excess produce from the harvest to food pantries and homeless organizations.
- Celebrate the harvest with a meal/festival. In the Bible festivals and communities were built around the raising, preparation, and eating of foods.
- Participate in local or community cleanups. Participate in local park gatherings. Adopt a river or pond for cleanup.
- Conduct an energy audit. Become more energy efficient, recycle service folders, and avoid the use of Styrofoam.
- Connect with the community by cleaning the city's green spaces. Partner with other organizations in your area that work for the well-being of creation.
- Include creation care in mission programs here and overseas.

5. Neighborhood and Community.

- Use all your senses when you walk outside. Listen to birds singing, feel the wind on your face, smell the scents of the air, and feel the rise and fall of the ground.
- Identify and learn the names of the trees, plants, birds, and other animals that live in your area. Which are native? Which are invasive?
- Learn about the natural and cultural history of your community, state, and region.
- Participate in citizen science projects such as Feederwatch (Cornell Lab of Ornithology).
- Seek out a local garden club or wildlife conservation organization (e.g., Audubon Society).
- Volunteer your time at a local Humane Society or other pet and wildlife rescue groups within your area.
- Explore the kind of ecosystem in which your region resides: grasslands? wetlands? mountains? What is your watershed?

- How has land use where you live (agriculture, forestry, suburban development, etc.) disrupted or restored the area's ecosystems?
- Listen to the "groaning" of creation as you become more aware of the violence, suffering, and death found throughout the natural world.

6. The Whole Creation

- Learn about the needs, habitats, and threats to various creatures around the country due to over-harvesting, invasive species, and habitat loss.
- Learn about the rich diversity of life on God's earth. It will teach you about different species, their lives, and the various habitats in which they live.
- Think about the beauty of nature in broader terms than the grand vistas of national parks. Think of it in the structure and functioning of ecosystems. You will then discover beauty even in grasslands, marshes, and swamps.
- Learn about the threats to our ecosystems from invasive species (e.g., the Purple Loosestrife, Kudzu, Zebra Mussel, Carp, etc.) (www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov).
- Take a course or read a textbook on environmental science or conservation biology. You will learn about ecosystems (forests, rivers, oceans) and ecosystem services (food, medicine, soil stabilization, flood mitigation, etc.).
- Study and learn about both sides of the climate change debate.
- Become an advocate or supporter for one particular species, bird, marine creature, land animal, tree, or plant.
- Contribute to the Humane Society of the United States or other organizations that offer protection to animals.
- Purchase Migratory Bird Stamps (Duck stamps). They provide a good way to support one our best kept secrets, namely, the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Identify and select a conservation organization to support such as the Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, the American Bird Conservancy, etc. Check CharityNavigator.org to see how they spend their money.

Conclusion

In the end, do what you can. No individual and no one congregation or school can single-handedly take on all the challenges facing us. Explore the possibilities and select a project or a cause that fits your interests and abilities. Then go for it! It may not seem like much. But as in baseball, the little things count. God has not called us to save the world. He has called us to tend our "little patch of earth" in accordance with the gifts and wisdom He has given us.

Endnotes

1. Max Oelschlaeger contends, "There are no solutions for the systemic causes of ecocrisis, at least in democratic societies, apart from religious narrative." *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 5. Al Gore has acknowledged this as well in *Our Choice: A Plan to Solve the Climate Crisis* (Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale Press, 2009), 305–10.
2. N. T. Wright, "Jesus is Coming—Plant a Tree!" in *The Green Bible* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008), I-75.
3. "Not only our relationship to God and ourselves is made new through justification by faith but at the same time our relationship with 'all creatures' is renewed." Oswald Bayer, "Justification as Basis and Boundary of Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 15 (2001): 274.

4. See Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
5. Wendell Berry, "The Gift of Good Land," in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. Norman Wirzba (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2002), 296.
6. Richard Bauckham, "Human Authority in Creation," in *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 174.
7. Francis A. Schaeffer and Udo Middelman, *Pollution and the Death of Man* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1970), 53.
8. Schaeffer and Middelman, 78.
9. Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism, Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 322.
10. Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 138.
11. Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 15 (emphasis original).
12. Martin Luther points out that faith enables us to see creation as "our Bible in the fullest sense, this our house, home, field, garden and all things where God does not only preach by using his wonderful work, but also taps on our eyes, stirs up our senses, and enlightens our heart at the same time." Quoted in Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 111.
13. Luther, *The Small Catechism, LSB*, 322.
14. Elizabeth Coatsworth, ed., *The Best of Beston: A Selection from the Natural World of Henry Beston from Cape Cod to the St. Lawrence* (Boston: David Godine, 2000), 18.
15. David Midgley, ed., *The Essential Mary Midgley* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 377, cf. 374–75.
16. Coatsworth, 18.
17. Wendell Berry, "The Use of Energy," in *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 83–84.
18. Wendell Berry, "A Practical Harmony," in *What Are People For?* (New York: North Point Press, 1990), 103–108.
19. G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World* (Peru, Ill.: Sherwood, Sugden and Company, 1942), 35.
20. Joel Kurz, "A Few Words on Behalf of Creation," *The Cresset* (Easter I, 2007): 59.
21. See Edward R. Brown, *Our Father's House: Mobilizing the Church to Care for Creation* 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008).
22. Rogationtide (days of prayer) refers to those days just prior to the Ascension when the congregation would process through the fields around the church and pray that God would bless the fields and crops, send good weather and rain, and protect all from pestilence and disaster. See for example, one of Luther's rogationtide prayers in *Luther's Works, Devotional Writings I* vol. 42 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1969), 87–93.

Methodist and Wesleyan Churches

United Methodist Church (UMC)

UMC Social Principles

<http://umc-gbcs.org/social-principles/160-i.-the-natural-world>

160 I. The Natural World

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. Economic, political, social, and technological developments have increased our human numbers, and lengthened and enriched our lives. However, these developments have led to regional defoliation, dramatic extinction of species, massive human suffering, overpopulation, and misuse and overconsumption of natural and nonrenewable resources, particularly by industrialized societies. This continued course of action jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to place a high priority on changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation.

160.A Water, Air, Soil, Minerals, Plants

We support and encourage social policies that serve to reduce and control the creation of industrial byproducts and waste; facilitate the safe processing and disposal of toxic and nuclear waste and move toward the elimination of both; encourage reduction of municipal waste; provide for appropriate recycling and disposal of municipal waste; and assist the cleanup of polluted air, water, and soil. We call for the preservation of old-growth forests and other irreplaceable natural treasures, as well as preservation of endangered plant species. We support measures designed to maintain and restore natural ecosystems. We support policies that develop alternatives to chemicals used for growing, processing, and preserving food, and we strongly urge adequate research into their effects upon God's creation prior to utilization. We urge development of international agreements concerning equitable utilization of the world's resources for human benefit so long as the integrity of the earth is maintained. We are deeply concerned about the privatization of water resources, the bottling of water to be sold as a commodity for profit, and the resources that go into packaging bottled water. We urge all municipalities and other governmental organizations to develop processes for determining sustainability of water resources and to determine the environmental, economic, and social consequences of privatization of water resources prior to the licensing and approval thereof.

160.B Energy Resources Utilization

The whole earth is God's good creation and as such has inherent value. We are aware that the current utilization of energy resources threatens this creation at its very foundation. As members of The United Methodist Church we are committed to approaching creation, energy production, and especially

creation's resources in a responsible, careful and economic way. We call upon all to take measures to save energy. Everybody should adapt his or her lifestyle to the average consumption of energy that respects the limits of the planet earth. We encourage persons to limit CO₂ emissions toward the goal of one tonne per person annually. We strongly advocate for the priority of the development of renewable energies. The deposits of carbon, oil, and gas resources are limited and their continuous utilization accelerates global warming. The use of nuclear power is no solution for avoiding CO₂ emissions. Nuclear power plants are vulnerable, unsafe, and potential health risks. A safe, permanent storage of nuclear waste cannot be guaranteed. It is therefore not responsible to future generations to operate them. The production of agricultural fuels and the use of biomass plants rank lower than the provision of safe food supplies and the continued existence for small farming businesses.

160.C Animal Life

We support regulations that protect and conserve the life and health of animals, including those ensuring the humane treatment of pets, domesticated animals, animals used in research, wildlife, and the painless slaughtering of meat animals, fish, and fowl. We recognize unmanaged and managed commercial, multinational, and corporate exploitation of wildlife and the destruction of the ecosystems on which they depend threatens the balance of natural systems, compromises biodiversity, reduces resilience, and threatens ecosystem services. We encourage commitment to effective implementation of national and international governmental and business regulations and guidelines for the conservation of all animal species with particular support to safeguard those threatened with extinction.

160.D Global Climate Stewardship

We acknowledge the global impact of humanity's disregard for God's creation. Rampant industrialization and the corresponding increase in the use of fossil fuels have led to a buildup of pollutants in the earth's atmosphere. These "greenhouse gas" emissions threaten to alter dramatically the earth's climate for generations to come with severe environmental, economic, and social implications. The adverse impacts of global climate change disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions. We therefore support efforts of all governments to require mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and call on individuals, congregations, businesses, industries, and communities to reduce their emissions.

160.E Space

The universe, known and unknown, is the creation of God and is due the respect we are called to give the earth. We therefore reject any nation's efforts to weaponize space and urge that all nations pursue the peaceful and collaborative development of space technologies and of outer space itself.

160.F Science and Technology

We recognize science as a legitimate interpretation of God's natural world. We affirm the validity of the claims of science in describing the natural world and in determining what is scientific. We preclude science from making authoritative claims about theological issues and theology from making authoritative claims about scientific issues. We find that science's descriptions of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution are not in conflict with theology. We recognize medical, technical, and scientific technologies as legitimate uses of God's natural world when such use enhances human life and enables all of God's children to develop their God-given creative potential without violating

our ethical convictions about the relationship of humanity to the natural world. We reexamine our ethical convictions as our understanding of the natural world increases. We find that as science expands human understanding of the natural world, our understanding of the mysteries of God's creation and word are enhanced. In acknowledging the important roles of science and technology, however, we also believe that theological understandings of human experience are crucial to a full understanding of the place of humanity in the universe. Science and theology are complementary rather than mutually incompatible. We therefore encourage dialogue between the scientific and theological communities and seek the kind of participation that will enable humanity to sustain life on earth and, by God's grace, increase the quality of our common lives together.

160.G Food Safety

We support policies that protect the food supply and that ensure the public's right to know the content of the foods they are eating. We call for rigorous inspections and controls on the biological safety of all foodstuffs intended for human consumption. We urge independent testing for chemical residues in food, and the removal from the market of foods contaminated with potentially hazardous levels of pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides; drug residues from animal antibiotics, steroids, or hormones; contaminants due to pollution that are carried by air, soil, or water from incinerator plants or other industrial operations. We call for clear labeling of all processed, genetically created, or genetically altered foods, with pre-market safety testing required. We oppose weakening the standards for organic foods. We call for policies that encourage and support a gradual transition to sustainable and organic agriculture.

160.H Food Justice

We support policies that increase access to quality food, particularly for those with the fewest resources. We affirm local, sustainable, and small-scale agriculture opportunities that allow communities to feed themselves. We decry policies that make food inaccessible to the communities where it is grown and the farmworkers involved in its growth.

UMC Resolution on Climate Change (2008)

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/resolution-on-global-warming>

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 <<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/glossary.html>>, which can contribute to changes in global climate patterns."¹ 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;² and

WHEREAS, a greenhouse gas is "any of the atmospheric gases which contribute to the greenhouse effect."³ Carbon dioxide, water vapor, and methane are three such examples. The greenhouse effect is "the overall warming of the earth's lower atmosphere <<http://www.weather.com/glossary/a.html>> primarily due to carbon dioxide <<http://www.weather.com/glossary/c.html>> and water vapor

<<http://www.weather.com/glossary/w-html>>, which permit the sun's rays to heat the earth, but then restrict some heat-energy from escaping back into space.”⁴ “The greenhouse effect is unquestionably real and helps to regulate the temperature of our planet,” making life on Earth possible.⁵ 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).⁶ 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 <<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/img/climate/globalwarming/sio-mlgr.gif>> from fossil fuel (coal, oil, gas) combustion;⁷ and

WHEREAS, the largest international body critically examining issues related to greenhouse gases and global warming is the Intergovernmental 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.⁸ 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.⁹ The concentration of CO₂ in our atmosphere today has not been exceeded in the last 420,000 years <<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/carbdiox.html>>, and likely not in the last 20 million years.¹⁰ 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);¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.

ADOPTED 2008, RESOLUTION #1031, 2008 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS,
See Social Principles, ¶ 160D.

Footnotes:

1. US Environmental Protection Agency, Climate Change: Basic Information, December 2006.
<<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/basicinfo.html>>
2. Ibid.
3. The Free Dictionary by Farlex, Definition of global warming as found in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Fourth Edition), 2003. <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/greenhouse+gas>>
4. The Weather Channel, Weather Glossary, 2007. <<http://www.weather.com/glossary/g.html>>
5. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Global Warming: Frequently Asked Questions, February 2006.
<<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/globalwarming.html#Q1>>
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers, 2007. <http://www.ipcc.ch/SPM2feb07.pdf>
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11. Ibid.
12. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers, 2007. <http://www.ipcc.ch/SPM2feb07.pdf>
13. US Environmental Protection Agency, Climate Change: Basic Information, December 2006.
<<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/basicinfo.html>> . Copyright © 2012 by The United Methodist Publishing House.

UMC Resolution on Environmental Stewardship (rev. 2000)

http://archives.umc.org/interior_print.asp?ptid=4&mid=962

I. A Theology of Stewardship and the Environment

All creation is under the authority of God and all creation is interdependent. Our covenant with God requires us to be stewards, protectors, and defenders of all creation. The use of natural resources is a universal concern and responsibility of all as reflected in Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

In the Bible, a steward is one given responsibility for what belongs to another. The Greek word we translate as steward is *oikonomos*, one who cares for the household or acts as its trustee. The word *oikos*, meaning household, is used to describe the world as God's household. Christians, then, are to be stewards of the whole household (creation) of God. *Oikonomia*, "stewardship," is also the root of our word "economics." *Oikos*, moreover, is the root of our modern word, "ecology." Thus in a broad sense, stewardship, economics, and ecology are, and should be, related.

The Old Testament relates these concepts in the vision of *shalom*. Often translated "peace," the broader meaning of *shalom* is wholeness. In the Old Testament, *shalom* is used to characterize the wholeness of a faithful life lived in relationship to God. *Shalom* is best understood when we experience wholeness and harmony as human beings with God, with others, and with creation itself. The task of the steward is to seek *shalom*.

Stewards of God's Creation. The concept of stewardship is first introduced in the creation story. In Genesis 1:26, the Bible affirms that every person is created in God's image. But this gift brings with it a unique responsibility. Being created in God's image brings with it the responsibility to care for God's creation. God chose to give human beings a divine image not so we would exploit creation to our own ends, but so we would be recognized as stewards of God. To have dominion over the earth is a trusteeship, a sign that God cares for creation and has entrusted it to our stewardship. Our stewardship of all the world's resources is always accountable to God who loves the whole of creation and who desires that it exist in *shalom*. The intention of creation was that all should experience *shalom*, to know the goodness of creation. In the Old Testament, "fullness of life" means having enough, sufficient, to experience the goodness of creation. By contrast, our age has come to define "fullness of life" as more than enough. The desire of many for excess begins to deny enough for others, and *shalom* is broken. That all should participate in creation's goodness is a fundamental of stewardship.

Another theme of *shalom* is that in creation we are all related. Humans are not self-sufficient. We need God, others, nature. The story of the garden (Genesis 2) attempts to picture the complete and harmonious interrelatedness of all creation. There is *shalom* only when we recognize that inter-relatedness and care for the whole. When we violate the rules of the garden, we are dismissed. In ecological terms, when we violate the principles of ecology, we suffer environmental damage.

As the story of the garden shows, God's intention of *shalom* was not carried out. Sin intervened, and the *shalom* was broken. But God offered a way to restore *shalom* - redemption. And as God's stewards we have a role in that redemption. Stewardship, then, is to become involved wherever wholeness is lacking and to work in harmony with God's saving activity to reconcile, to reunite, to heal, to make whole.

Stewardship has to do with how we bring all of the resources at our disposal into efficient use in our participation in the saving activity of God. Environmental stewardship is one part of our work as God's stewards. As stewards of the natural environment we are called to preserve and restore the air, water, and land on which life depends. Moreover, we are called to see that all life has a sufficient share of the resources of nature. With new hope rooted in Christ and with more obedient living as stewards of the earth, we can participate in God's healing of creation.

II. United Methodist Historical Concerns

Since the beginnings of the Methodist movement, there has been a concern with what we today call "environmental concerns." Wesley's emphasis on "cleanliness" came as he observed a land of open sewers, impure water, unplanned cities, and smoke-filled air. In the mines and mills, squalor and filth were everywhere, as was disease. The substantial decline in the death rate in England from 1700 to

1801 can be traced to improvements in environment, sanitation, and a wider knowledge of concepts of basic health such as those advocated by Wesley.

III. Principles for Christian Stewardship of the Environment A. Responsible and Equitable Use of Natural Resources.

We support measures which will lead to a more careful and efficient use of the resources of the natural world. We urge United Methodists to analyze their consumption patterns and to seek to live a simple and less resource-dependent life.

We encourage programs which will recycle solid materials of all sorts—paper, glass, wood, building materials, metals, plastics, etc.

We urge United Methodists to participate actively in community recycling programs and urge the establishment of such programs in communities without these programs.

We believe that natural resources, outside the control of different nations, from the genes that form life to the air and outer space, are the common heritage of all humanity, and therefore must be developed and preserved for the benefit of all, not just for the few, both today and for generations to come.

We support the concept of common heritage where people have the right to enough of the resources of the universe to provide for their health and well-being; and we believe that God's creation is intended to be used for the good of all as a precious gift, not for warfare or economic oppression of others.

B. Right to Live in a Community Free of Toxic and Hazardous Substances.

We advocate that governments:

- (a) aggressively assess the extent of possible toxic and hazardous waste disposal problems within their jurisdictions;
- (b) require that the entity or entities responsible for the problem pay for hazardous waste cleanup and for any health damages caused by the improper or inadequate disposal of such substances; and
- (c) severely penalize those convicted of illegal disposal of hazardous and toxic materials.

We encourage measures to minimize the use of toxic and hazardous substances.

We oppose the practice of exporting materials banned in one nation for use in another nation.

We advocate that all parties with information on the health effects of a potentially toxic or hazardous substance make these data available to users of the substance.

We support measures to strengthen the public's right-to-know about chemical substances in their communities. Communities have a right to know whether their water, air, soil, or food is clean and free of toxic pollution.

We support applying the "Precautionary Principle," shifting the burden of proof to polluters to show that their air and water emissions are safe, rather than making citizens prove that emissions pose a health threat.

We support the right of those groups that would be affected by a nuclear, toxic, or hazardous material waste repository or incinerator to be involved actively in all decisions to locate such repositories or incinerators in their neighborhoods or jurisdictions.

We urge a halt to nuclear and toxic waste disposal at sea and stringent controls on toxic waste disposal in the soil.

C. Right to Clean Air.

We believe clean air is a basic right and necessity for all life. We must clean up and prevent air pollution, which threatens the health of our families and the survival of all life on the planet.

To ensure that we protect future generations and our natural environment from the harmful effects of air pollution and leave a legacy of clean air:

We advocate the adoption and strict enforcement of adequate standards (health-based air quality standards to protect vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and people with asthma) to control outdoor air pollutants such as vehicle and industrial smokestack emissions.

We urge all United Methodists to car pool, use mass transit, drive fuel efficient cars, and find other ways of reducing vehicle and industrial emissions.

We must give special attention to the long-term effects of air pollution, such as the depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, and acid rain; we support international and bilateral efforts to eliminate the cause of these problems.

We advocate that all large polluters, specifically power plants, refineries and chemical manufacturers, irrespective of age or fuel use, meet standards based on the least polluting process in each industrial sector.

We advocate the adoption and strict enforcement of adequate standards to control indoor air pollutants, such as chemical fumes from gas stoves and furnaces, pesticides, cleaning materials, formaldehyde, candles, paint, photocopy machines, radon and carpets, as well as particulates such as dust, mold, and asbestos fibers.

We advocate prohibiting smoking and providing adequate fresh air ventilation in all indoor facilities.

D. Minimization of Chemical Use.

We recommend the concept of integrated pest management, natural control systems, and crop rotation.

We urge that greater restrictions be placed on the export of restricted agricultural chemicals and that development and aid agencies encourage the use of agricultural techniques which rely less heavily on agricultural chemical use.

We recommend that industry, consumer groups, and governmental agencies aggressively investigate and study the long-range effects of chemicals used for the processing and preservation of food products, since many of these chemicals are harmful to animals and humans.

E. Responsible Land Use.

We encourage economic and farming practices which conserve and promote the improvement of topsoil.

We urge that governments provide farmers with incentives for more careful management of this precious resource.

We urge that the careful maintenance of the productivity of farm land be the central goal of all management of agricultural lands.

We urge governments to preserve the most productive soils for agricultural purposes.

We advocate for the preservation of forests (including reforestation), wetlands and wild areas for ecological balance, wildlife production, water quality, air quality, and the human spirit

F. Preservation of the Diversity of Life.

We believe that the wondrous diversity of nature is a key part of God's plan for creation. Therefore, we oppose measures which would eliminate diversity in plant and animal varieties, eliminate species, or destroy habitats critical to the survival of endangered species or varieties.

We support national and international efforts to protect endangered species and imperiled habitats.

G. Right to Abundant and Clean Water.

The water on this planet is a sacred gift from God. To ensure that water remains pure and available to all:

We urge that steps be taken by all people to ensure more careful management and preservation of ground water sources.

We support the right of native peoples to the first use of waters on their lands.

We urge that industrial, municipal, agricultural and individual consumers of water develop and use water-conserving technology and practices.

We believe that water is a gift from God that needs to be kept clean. We advocate measures that will address polluted runoff that is threatening to public health; protection of waters for future generations; wetlands preservation to clean water and sustain wildlife; the public's right to know that their water is safe for drinking, swimming, and fishing; and effective enforcement against illegal pollution.

H. Responsible and Ethical Use of Technology.

We urge that the ethical and environmental effects of new technologies be fully examined before these technologies are used on a widespread basis. We acknowledge the constantly imperfect state of our knowledge of the effects of new technology and urge the development of those technologies most in accord with God's plan of wholeness for all creation.

I. Minimization of the Military's Impact on the Environment.

We oppose the production and testing of weapons designed to destroy or harm God's creation, such as all chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

We urge the abolishment of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons and urge the cleanup of sites contaminated by chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons waste.

IV. Involvement

We urge all United Methodists, their local churches, boards and agencies to examine their roles as stewards of God's earth and to study, discuss, and work to implement this resolution. All general agencies shall develop appropriate resources to implement this resolution.

ADOPTED 1984, REVISED AND READOPTED 2000, See Social Principles, ¶ 160B.
From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church* — 2004. Copyright © 2004 by The United Methodist Publishing House.

Visit UMC Network: “Caretakers of God’s Creation” for more resources:

<http://www.umccreationcare.org>

Resources for local events and study can be found at United Methodist Women’s site:

<http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/environment>

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The Wesleyan Church

A Wesleyan View of Creation Care

<https://www.wesleyan.org/236/a-wesleyan-view-of-creation-care>

PREAMBLE

The psalmist wrote “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1). Yet any honest reader of the newspaper or thoughtful observer of current events must acknowledge that all is not well with this earth that belongs to our God. As the earth’s population grows and humanity’s ability to impact the created order increases, we face an increasing and intensifying cluster of environmental concerns.

The Wesleyan Church believes that creation care is an important social issue of our day and that the time has come for us to take energetic, intentional steps toward more effective environmental stewardship. Our concern for the environment is not driven by any political agenda, but rather by what the Bible clearly teaches about God and His creation.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

The very first thing the Bible teaches us about God is that He created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). The opening chapter of Genesis is a cosmic call to worship this God who is so amazing, majestic and powerful that simply by speaking He brings the world into existence. Speaking of Christ’s work in creation, the New Testament affirms God as the Creator: “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). Fundamental to the Christian understanding of God is that He is not a part of nature, but that He stands over and above it as its all-powerful Creator. This world in which we live is His handiwork. The Bible reveals, however, that God’s interest in creation did not stop when the work of creation was completed. To the contrary, the Scriptures show us a God who has an ongoing interest in and care for His creation:

God delights in His creation. At the close of each day of creation, God looks at what He has made and sees that it is good (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

When God first makes a covenant with His children, that covenant also includes “every living creature on earth” (Genesis 9:10). The covenant was not just with Noah and his offspring, but also with the broader created order.

God speaks to human beings through His creation: “the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1; see also Romans 1:20, Psalm 8:3-8). Creation is a rich testimony to the goodness and power of God.

God cares for His creation (Psalm 104:10-30; Job 38:25-28).

God provides for His creation, even the smallest sparrow (Matthew 6:26).

God calls all of His creation to worship (Isa. 55:12-13).

God is actively involved in sustaining His creation - “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).

The final redemption of all things will include the redemption of God’s creation. The Apostle Paul says: “...in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). God’s purpose in Christ is to bring healing and reconciliation not just to humans, but to everything in the created order.

Encourage our local churches to adopt policies and practices that minimize environmental damage and reflect good environmental stewardship.

Include environmental stewardship as a topic for teaching and discussion in our churches, so that Wesleyans might be equipped to take action appropriate to their setting and context.

Advocate for reasonable public and governmental policies which will protect and preserve the environment.

Lovingly communicate that all of these efforts are motivated by our love for our Creator and our desire to steward what He has entrusted to our care.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, The Wesleyan Church recognizes the responsibility of all people to be good stewards of God’s resources entrusted to our care, which includes our natural environment;

Resolved, That the position statement on creation care be adopted by the North American General Conference and be recommended for implementation in each of our local congregations.

Ronald D. Kelly, Secretary

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Peace Churches (Brethren, Mennonite, Quaker)

Church of the Brethren

Church of Brethren Study Guide on Climate Change (2012)

<http://www.brethren.org/peace/documents/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>

Climate Change and Christian Witness

Approved by General Board of the Church of the Brethren (2001)

<http://www.webofcreation.org/ncc/statements/cob.html>

The threat to creation by global warming/climate change is a cause for concern for everyone on the planet, but for Christians the issue is more than a matter of self preservation; it is a matter of faithfulness.

Throughout its history, the Church of the Brethren has been concerned with good stewardship of God's creation. We are increasingly aware of the interrelatedness of all life. We acknowledge that energy use is linked to the ecological crisis facing the Earth, the health consequences for us and future generations, and spiritual well-being in relation to other species and our Creator.

Climate change is an issue of justice. The industrialized nations, representing less than 20 percent of the world's population, are responsible for 75 to 80 percent of the annual greenhouse gas emissions. Yet those who live in poor and developing countries will be most seriously affected by global warming.

A major challenge facing humankind is an equitable standard of living for this and future generations: adequate food, water, energy, safe shelter and a healthy environment. Human-induced climate change, along with land degradation, loss of biological diversity, and stratospheric ozone depletion, threatens our ability to meet these basic human needs.

An overwhelming majority of scientific experts, while recognizing that scientific uncertainties exist, believe that Human-induced climate change is occurring. Indeed, during the last few years, many parts of the world have suffered heat waves, flood, droughts, fire, and extreme weather events leading to significant economic losses and loss of life. In the past century, much of the world's polar and mountain ice has melted, and in the past few decades the melting has accelerated. While individual events cannot be directly linked to human-induced climate change, the frequency and magnitude of such events are predicted to increase in a warming world.

In recently revised estimates scientists conclude that if greenhouse emissions (produce mainly by burning fossil fuels) are not curtailed, the Earth's average surface temperatures may increase from 2.7 degrees to nearly 11 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century, substantially more than the estimated 6.3 degrees in a 1995 report.*

The good news is, however, that the majority of experts believe that significant reductions in net greenhouse gas emissions are feasible due to an extensive array of technological and policy measures in the energy supply, energy demand, and agricultural and forestry sectors. In addition, the projected adverse effects of climate change on socioeconomic and ecological systems can, to some degree, be reduced through proactive adaptation measures.

Citizens of the United States of America have a particular obligation to address the threat of climate change. The US with 4.5 of the world population emits nearly 30 percent of the world's greenhouse gases.

WHEREAS the church, as the people of God, is called to be environmentally responsible in caring for God's creation as God's gift; and

WHEREAS the Annual Conference statement *Creation Called to Care* challenges us to take seriously our role as stewards of the Earth and to work for renewal of creation; and

WHEREAS our vastly increased use of fossil fuels has the potential to bring about irreversible changes in the climate and immense suffering for the poor and for people living in the coastal areas around the world;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Church of the Brethren General Board, meeting in New Windsor, Maryland on March 10-13, 2001, affirm the following principles:

Human societies must learn to draw on energy sources in ways that do not damage ecosystems or compromise the capacity of the Earth to meet the needs of current or future generations;

The generation and use of energy must be determined primarily by the needs of all people for a good quality of life, placing priority on appropriate and accessible energy for the world's poor;

Compliance with international trade agreements should not be given precedence over compliance with international environmental agreements or prevent the US from adopting measures to reorient its energy policy;

Energy policy in the US should be based on ethical principles of respect for and justice within the One Earth Community, focusing not on expanding supply through mega-projects but on managing the demand and development of renewable, alternative sources. Specifically, the US should:

move beyond its dependence on high carbon fossil fuels that produce emissions leading to climate change,

ratify the Kyoto Protocol under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change,

concentrate on reducing carbon dioxide emissions within the US and not rely on mechanisms such as emission trading with other countries to meet our targets for emission reductions under international agreements,

reduce our reliance on nuclear power, a technology for which there are still unresolved problems such as the safe disposal or safe storage of high level waste of nuclear reactors,

manage demand through high priority on conservation and energy efficiency,

significantly increase research and development into such renewable energy sources as solar, wind, biomass, etc.,

support development and utilization of appropriate technologies for small-scale, decentralized energy systems, and
provide necessary support for individuals, families, and communities adversely affected by a transition away from fossil fuels, nuclear power, and large-scale hydro in order to allow for alternative economic development, retraining, relocation, etc.

As members of the Church of the Brethren, we are encouraged to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels; to build and renovate our homes, church facilities, and camp structures to be energy efficient; to initiate new programs of energy conservation and awareness; to use public transportation, carpooling, and teleconferencing to reduce fossil fuel consumption; to become ecologically aware by using diets and products that consume less energy in production, transportation, packaging, and use; to separate and recycle household goods and to reduce waste and toxic materials.

God redeems us to live in community with the created Earth. We will care for God's Earth in ways that are sustainable (Statement on *Simple Life*, 1996 Annual Conference minutes, p. #326).

Be it further resolved that the General Board ask staff to give priority to the issue of global warming/climate change; and provide models and educational resources for congregations, institutions, and members to study the issues; and take commensurate actions.

Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation

Approved by General Board of the Church of the Brethren, October 21, 1991

http://support.brethren.org/site/DocServer/1991_Global_Warming_and_Atmospheric_Degradation.pdf?docID=922

WHEREAS our vastly increased use of fossil fuels is substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gases, thereby enhancing the strong possibility of catastrophic warming of the earth's surface, and

WHEREAS the negative consequences of the greenhouse effect are likely to intensify human suffering especially in the developing countries, and

WHEREAS the Annual Conference statement "Creation: Called to Care" challenges us to take seriously our role as stewards of the earth, and to work for the renewal of creation, and

WHEREAS the General Board is committed to study and action on issues of justice, peace, and integrity of creation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Church of the Brethren General Board, meeting in Elgin, Illinois on October 19-22, 1991 commits itself and urges Brethren congregations, institutions and members to:

Reaffirm our belief

- That we are called by God to live in harmony with all of creation, and that our covenantal relationship to care for the creation requires us to be aware of present and impending threats to our environment and to take action to preserve the integrity of creation.

Join together

- In the search for ways to live together in harmony with God's creation;
- In addressing the causes and dealing with the consequences of atmospheric destruction locally and globally; and
- In praying for the strength to reduce consumption and reject the myths of unlimited resources and economic growth.

Work together through global, local, and personal efforts to safeguard the world's reliance on fossil fuels, and by

- Increasing awareness of the negative ecological consequences of continuing reliance on fossil fuels, and by expanding ongoing educational efforts that lead to action;
 - Encouraging the building and renovating of our homes and church facilities and camp buildings to be energy efficient and initiating new programs of energy conservation and awareness, including alternatives to fossil fuels;
 - Striving to eliminate the use of products that contain ozone-depleting Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs);
 - Using public transportation, carpooling, and telephone conferencing in order to reduce fossil fuel consumption;
 - Becoming ecologically aware consumers by using diets and products that consume less energy in production, transportation, packaging, and use;
 - Devoting maximum effort to the separation and recycling of household goods, while also reducing waste and toxic materials;
 - Encouraging office energy audits and recycling programs (particularly paper and paper products).
- Pledge ourselves to address the causes and reverse the consequences of global warming by
- advocating the passage of legislation, at all appropriate levels, that reduce carbon dioxide output and set reduction targets for other greenhouse gases;
 - supporting research and development of energy alternatives to fossil fuels. And supporting the passage of mandatory higher fuel efficiency for new vehicles and the phasing out of older, less efficient vehicles;
 - supporting the expansion and promotion of rail transportation and other systems of mass transit, including subsidies for public transportation;
 - combating forest destruction domestically and internationally through programs of preservation and reforestation and through responsible consumption of wood and wood products;
 - engaging with corporations in dialogue and shareholder resolutions on such issues as reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, phasing out of CFCs increased energy efficiency and fuel conservation, environmental cost accounting and other issues affecting global warming;
 - calling for the adoption to limit the production of greenhouse gases worldwide;
 - working to implement fair trade and economic relationships so that forms of development that minimize global warming are available to all nations.

FURTHER the General Board commits itself to;

- support and participate in national and international networks of religious bodies and other non-governmental

- organizations addressing the greenhouse effect; and
- continue through its program staff, within the context of a theology based on caring for the earth, and educational effort to acquaint the members of the Church of the Brethren with the nature, causes, and consequences of the greenhouse effect, including suggestions for individual and collective action to help address the problem. This will include the promotion of the use of the General Board's study resource, *Creation in Crisis: Responding to God's Covenant*, in all congregations. We will elicit the cooperation of District Executive as agents within each district to work directly with pastors to reach the membership of the church.

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Mennonite Church USA

Creation Care Resolution for Mennonite Church USA March 1, 2013

<http://www.mennocreationcare.org/sites/default/files/0-ResolutionFINAL.pdf>

Introduction:

The purpose of this resolution, submitted to Mennonite Church USA, is to advance the commitment of congregations and members in caring for creation as part of the good news of Jesus Christ. The resolution is set in the context of: 1) our biblical belief statements; 2) our growing awareness of diverse forms of environmental degradation; 3) our location in North America, where complicity, power, and environmental benefits and harms remain unjustly distributed; and 4) our desire to be faithful to our missional vision as followers of Jesus Christ.

1. In 1995 we affirmed the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, which articulates MC USA's biblical understanding and commitments. The following are several statements that were made regarding our relationship with God's creation.

"We believe that the universe has been called into being as an expression of God's love and sovereign freedom alone." (Article 5)

"Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation." (Article 6)

"We believe that the church is called to live now according to the model of the future reign of God. Thus, we are given a foretaste of the kingdom that God will one day establish in full. The church is to be a spiritual, social, and economic reality, demonstrating now the justice, righteousness, love, and peace of the age to come." (Article 24)

2. The realities and impact of environmental issues are named in the MC USA Purposeful Plan (2012). These excerpts remind us of the breadth of issues that we face as a church, as well as the opportunity for us to respond.

"Along the same line, a dramatic shift in global weather patterns has raised deep concerns about a lack of water, leading to a food crisis with its most dramatic effect in the global south. In addition to these events, the disastrous April-July 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico brought

renewed urgency to a creation care movement concerned about the damage or depletion of natural resources. These disasters point to the importance of having Mennonite Church USA commit itself to increasing creation stewardship and to remain in vital partnership with relief and development agencies such as Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Disaster Service. Environmental disasters provide significant opportunities for the church to engage in holistic witness.” (p. 13)

“The dramatic changes in our world, even the deep crises that affect us in very negative ways, carry with them the seeds of renewal. The crises that bring us to our knees can point us back to our most basic commitments and help us see new ways to live these values in a changing world. Some of the most creative and life giving developments in the church have come about in response to a crisis.” (p. 14)

3. The Purposeful Plan outlines many cultural, economic, political, and environmental issues confronting MC USA today. Acknowledging and responding faithfully to today’s environmental crisis requires wrestling more deeply with the impacts—both locally and globally—not only of U.S. economic and environmental policies, but more broadly of the daily patterns of life typical of North Americans. Just as previous resolutions have called Mennonites in North America to confess and repent on issues of racism, poverty, and militarism, so does the current context of ecological degradation and environmental injustice call forth a strengthened resolve among North American Mennonites to confront their sinful complicity and ongoing responsibilities with regard to environmental issues.

4. Our missional vision calls us to action. Eleanor and Alan Kreider (*Worship and Mission After Christendom*, 2011, p. 46) poignantly name reconciliation as the center of our work.

“God’s mission is to bring God’s kingdom, God’s redemptive reign. God’s mission is creation-encompassing: it is to recreate creation, to bring new creation (Isa 65:17; 66:22; Gal 6:15). God’s mission is to make all things new (Col 1:20; Rev 21:5)—humans with “hearts of flesh” in right relationship to God (Ezek 36:26), humans reconciled to their bitterest enemies (Isa 19:23-24), and the whole of creation restored as a place where justice is at home (2 Pet 3:13).”

“Seek, and you will find,” Jesus told his followers (Matt 7:7-8). If we truly want to know Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen one who stands with the suffering (Matt 25: 37-40), we must look for those wounds causing the greatest pain in our times. It is within this context that the following resolution calls us to be faithful in caring for God’s creation.

Resolution:

Be it resolved that members of Mennonite Church USA commit to growing in their dedication to care for God’s creation as an essential part of the good news of Jesus Christ.

We resolve to explore the theological concepts and biblical resources that inform our commitment to creation care. We resolve to discern together how the Bible, our theological understandings, and the realities of the 21st century continue to shape and guide our relationship with creation.

We, as individuals and communally, are resolved to study and discern responses to the following questions during the next two years as part of our goal to be more faithful in caring for the gift of creation that God has entrusted to us.

A. Exploring Biblical and Theological Foundations:

Studying these questions will advance the Christian Formation priority in the Purposeful Plan (p. 21). These initial questions will assist us in exploring our belief that, “As creatures made in the divine image, we have been blessed with the abilities to respond faithfully to God, to live in harmony with other human beings, and to engage in meaningful work and rest.” (Confession of Faith, Article 6)

1. How is caring for creation part of the holistic good news of Jesus Christ? What does that mean for the MC USA vision and mission and our responses to the current environmental crisis?
2. How do biblical understandings of Jesus and creation guide us in discovering the ties that link all created beings to each other and to God?
3. How can we integrate our theological and biblical commitments to creation care into our communal worship, prayer, spirituality, and Sabbath-keeping?
4. How can church practices and spiritual disciplines – such as biblical interpretation, worship, prayer, and social action – teach us about creation? How can discipleship incorporate ecological learning, so that the church grows in its wisdom and delight regarding creation?

B. Choosing a Simple Lifestyle

This set of questions will aid in advancing the priorities of Christian Community and Stewardship in the Purposeful Plan (p. 21 and 23). The questions also guide us in responding to our statement that, “We believe that everything belongs to God, who calls us as the church to live as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us.” (Confession of Faith, Article 21)

1. How should we, as individuals and the corporate church, pursue a simple lifestyle in the 21st century? What are ways that congregations and individuals can be the best stewards of energy resources?
2. How can we practice the sharing of goods (food, money, tools, transportation, houses, etc.) in our church communities?
3. How does our theology shape our view of economics and management of resources?
4. As North Americans inhabiting diverse economic, cultural, and racial contexts, what specific opportunities and challenges do we face as we seek to adopt and advocate simpler lifestyles?

C. Pursuing Justice and Peace

Responding to these questions will advance the Holistic Christian Witness priority in the Purposeful Plan (p. 21). They will also guide us in taking action on our belief that, “The peace God intends for humanity and creation was revealed most fully in Jesus Christ.” (Confession of Faith, Article 22)

1. What do our sisters and brothers in the global church teach us about creation care issues? How will this understanding shape our commitments?
2. What are the creation care issues within 25 miles of our congregations? How can we respond to these issues in missional ways?
3. How can we ensure clean water and air, healthy food systems, and quality shelter for all people?
4. In what ways can we cultivate our witness to governing structures and decision-making at the local, state and national levels?

Following the approval of this resolution, Mennonite Creation Care Network – in collaboration with other MC USA church agencies and related networks – will provide leadership during the next two years to develop resources for study, discernment and response to the concepts in this resolution.

Development and Approval Processes for the Creation Care Resolution

Resolution Development Process

The Mennonite Creation Care Network Council (MCCN) provided the leadership for developing and drafting the creation care resolution for Mennonite Church USA in 2013.

MCCN was established in 2005 to serve as a network for Mennonite people and agencies actively engaged in the care and restoration of God's Creation. Both MC USA and MC Canada affirmed the official role of MCCN for the two denominations. MCCN functions under the MC USA agency umbrella of Everence. Leadership for MCCN comes from Everence and Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College. Financial support for MCCN provided by Everence, Merry Lea, MC Canada, MCC Canada, as well as donations from individuals and congregations.

MCCN encourages the Church to:

- 1) claim its biblical and theological foundation regarding the care of God's Creation;
- 2) discover the ties that link all created beings to each other and to God;
- 3) confess the harm we have caused the natural world and our neighbors; and
- 4) act faithfully to restore the earth.

MCCN seeks to inspire and support creation care efforts in Mennonite congregations, schools, agencies, households, workplaces and neighborhoods.

MCCN has a membership directory of 650 individuals. Currently there are 61 congregations with liaisons to MCCN in the 100 Shades of Green program, which serves to encourage congregations in their creation care efforts. (<http://www.mennocreationcare.org/100-shades-green-congregations>)

The development of the creation care resolution began in December 2012 with preliminary discussions between members of the MCCN Council. In January 2013, MCCN Council members from Goshen, Indiana met with creation care ministry teams from seven congregations in northern Indiana to discuss potential concepts for the creation care resolution. The 17 people present represented the creation care ministry teams, as well as staff, faculty and students from Goshen College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

The members of the MCCN Council wrote and reviewed the creation care resolution in preparation for approval and submission to MC USA.

Congregational Approval Process

The creation care resolution was submitted to Waterford Mennonite Church of Goshen, IN for congregational approval. Luke Gascho, facilitator of MCCN, is a member at Waterford Mennonite Church.

Waterford Mennonite Church has cared about environmental issues for over 50 years. One of the congregation's distinctives is that it owns 63 acres of land with trails through forested wetlands. The interest and involvement of members in creation care activities has been evident in many other ways as well. Examples from the last 10 years include:

- five Sunday school classes studying creation care curriculum for a quarter,
- three classes choosing creation care as a focus of class retreats,
- summer Sunday school electives and Wednesday evening sessions on creation care,
- Creation Care Sunday worship services,
- various its energy efficiency projects
- and the installation of native grass and flower plantings.

In April of 2012, the congregation affirmed the formation of a Creation Care Ministry Team. The team has been active in teaching and promoting creation care in many aspects of congregational life. In December 2012 they conducted a survey of all adult Sunday school classes regarding creation care interests, ideas and hopes. The ministry team is now working to implement many goals recommended from the results of the survey. The goals recommended by the congregation include growing in theological understandings of creation care, starting creation care projects in the community, and promoting simple lifestyle choices.

Approval of the Resolution by Waterford Mennonite Church Governing Bodies

In the governance structure at Waterford Mennonite Church, ministry teams are given high levels of autonomy to act on behalf of the congregation on topics related to the purpose of the ministry team. This governance design was chosen to better advance the missional goals of a large congregation.

Members of the Creation Care Ministry Team approved the creation care resolution for submittal to MC USA. The Ministry Leadership Council (the main governing group of the congregation) also reviewed the resolution and approved submitting it to MC USA. Both groups approved the creation care resolution unanimously. Ministry Leadership Council and the Creation Care Ministry Team will share the actions taken to approve the resolution with all members of the congregation, as well as giving them copies of the resolution. The Creation Care Ministry Team will continue its work of guiding the congregation through discernment process for the questions posed in the resolution.

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Quakers (Society of Friends)

Facing the Challenge of Climate Change: A shared statement by Quaker groups September 2014

<http://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/sept-2014-facing-challenge-climate-change-shared-statement-quaker-groups>

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

As we gather at events surrounding the UN Climate Summit, 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 (due to human activities) climate change to be a symptom of a greater challenge: how to live sustainably and justly on this Earth.

We recognize that current and unprecedented rates of greenhouse gas emissions, if left unchecked, will likely lead to global mean temperature rises of extreme detriment to human beings.

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

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 economic 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 proven 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.

This week, we join the People's Climate March as members of this beautiful human family, seeking meaningful commitments from our leaders and ourselves, to address climate change for our shared future, the Earth, 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.

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)

Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Quakers in Britain

Living Witness

A Quaker Response to the Crisis of Climate Change (2009)

Meeting for Sufferings Britain Yearly Meeting, June 2009

Also endorsed by European and Middle East Sections of Friends World Committee

The crisis of global climate change represents a supreme test of humanity's collective wisdom and courage. Our immoderate use of the Earth's resources violates the entire biosphere, threatening the lives of millions of people and the habitats of thousands of species. Many of the poorest people are already suffering a changed climate; they are asking us all to act.

How has humanity produced this crisis? Our faith response is that prevailing social values have obscured what it means to live authentically on this Earth. In rich European countries we consume more than we need within an economic system that divides us as a society; in much that we do, we cause harm to the planet and each other without enriching our lives.

The Earth is God's work and not ours to do with as we please. We recall Gandhi's saying, often quoted by Quakers: 'Live simply that others may simply live'. As a Quaker community, we do try to live what we believe, guided by the values of simplicity, truth, equality and peace. Too often we fall short of honouring them. Climate change is challenging us to ask anew what our faith leads us to do.

As individuals and as a community, we are now making the difficult decisions and plans necessary to

limit our ecological impact to a sustainable level. With encouragement from one another, we are progressively reducing our reliance on non-renewable resources while stepping up our campaign for wider social change. As a small religious society, we take heart in belonging to a community of faith groups and others working towards the same goals in a hopeful spirit.

We gladly take up our responsibility and call for unprecedented international cooperation to enable the large cuts in global emissions which are required. This will be a difficult road to travel but we are prepared to support decision-makers in taking the radical steps necessary. We appreciate progress made and uphold decision-makers as they navigate conflicting priorities, yet we challenge them to hold faith with the goal and not bend to short-term expediency.

An inequitable global agreement on climate change could lead to forced migrations and serious conflict. Any agreement must put the world's poorest first; it falls to richer countries to bear the greater burden of responsibility for change. The goal is achievable but priorities will need to change: currently, the majority of states commit more resources to warfare than to tackling climate change.

Where we see crisis, we also see opportunity to remake society as a communion of people living sustainably as part of the natural world. By leading the simpler lives of a low-carbon society, we draw nearer to the abundance of peace, freedom and true community. Our faith in common humanity gives hope; love, rather than fear, can still lead us through this crisis.

Quaker “Earth Care Witness” Resources:

<http://www.quakerearthcare.org/engage-and-connect>

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Pentecostal Churches

Assemblies of God

Statement on Environmental Protection

http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/contempissues_02_environment.cfm

This document reflects commonly held beliefs based on scripture, which have been endorsed by the church's Commission on Doctrinal Purity and the Executive Presbytery.

What is the Assemblies of God's position on the environment?

The Assemblies of God believes everyone needs to be good a steward of *all* God's creation—including the earth. As clearly indicated in Scripture, we believe the earth was created by God (Genesis 1:1-31; Isaiah 37:16). We also believe it serves as the temporary home for all members of the human race (God's highest life form, made in His own image; Genesis 1:27) until eternity.

Scripture indicates the earth will one day be consumed by fire and cease to exist (Zephaniah 1:18; Isaiah 51:6). We believe before this occurs Christ will return to earth for His church (those who have accepted and believe in Him). At that time Christians will enjoy a new earth presently unknown to mankind (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13).

In spite of these future events, we feel Christians must act responsibly in their use of God's earth as we rightly harvest its resources. As stated in Genesis 1:27-30, we believe God has given mankind alone complete dominion (authority) over the earth's resources. These resources include the land, the water, the vegetation, and the earth's minerals; as well as the animals, fish, and fowl. Like the earth, we acknowledge these to be gifts from God to mankind; and as gifts they are to be appreciated and cherished. As Christians we believe dominion requires good stewardship of our temporary home—earth.

CONCERNS:

Today in our American culture, many people have turned their adoration from the Creator to the creation. They have gone to the extreme and are now worshiping the earth. We believe *worship* of the land, the sea, the oceans, and other attributes of the earth is an abomination to God—the Creator.

In the apostle Paul's day the worship of created things (idolatry) was a prevailing problem. Paul addressed this subject in his letter to the church in Rome. Some had begun to worship images of man, birds, animals, and reptiles. In Romans 1:21-23 (NIV), Paul wrote, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" [read Romans 1:18-24]. In similar fashion many today have taken issues of the environment to the extreme. Much of this concern is actually driven from the agenda of the New Age Movement, which propagates a belief that the earth possesses deity (is God). Sadly, this pagan religion has been effective in steering society's focus from God and the message of His Word, to the preservation and often worship of His created handiwork—the earth.

A major concern for Christians is the overemphasis of the environment at the expense of spiritual issues effecting life and eternity. The Bible's message declares that spiritual matters (those affecting the hearts of mankind) are the priority issues with God. These and not the environment are the reason He sent His own Son Jesus as a sacrifice to save people. For God did not send His Son to save the earth in a physical sense but to save the people who inhabit it. We believe this must be the main focus and concern for all Christians today....

Church of God (Cleveland, TN)

Resolution: Care of Creation (2008)

http://www.churchofgod.org/resolutions/marriage_and_family_2012

WHEREAS we believe that the triune God is the creator and the sustainer of the cosmos, and

WHEREAS according to the ancient Genesis narrative God surveyed His majestic work of creation (Genesis 2:15), a command for responsible stewardship that extends to all of God's people, and

WHEREAS the Psalms declare that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalms 24:1), and

WHEREAS the gospel of Jesus Christ stands in opposition to any and all forms of gnostic spirituality that deny God's care for the physical world, and instead declares Jesus Christ to be the Lord over the whole earth, and

WHEREAS the Spirit of God himself groans in unison with the Creation for the revealing of the sons of God, and

WHEREAS the apocalypse of John envisions the day when God will complete the work He began in Genesis, where there is no barrier between the new heaven and the new earth as a whole revealing the complete restoration of creation, and

WHEREAS the historic witness of God's church recognizes that "This is my Father's world," and

WHEREAS the creation itself is an extension of the goodness and governance of God, and

WHEREAS the apathy and indifference of much of the world's population has produced unprecedented danger to the creation through shifting climate conditions, pollution, and insufficient quality and quantity of water among the world's poor, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Church of God embrace the call once again to serve and protect God's creation, and encourages its members to act with care, diligence, and responsibility towards the earth, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Church of God supports any reasonable efforts to care for the earth in the name of Jesus Christ as a vital part of Christian worship and stewardship.

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Presbyterian and Reformed Churches

Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

CRC Statements on Creation Care, Approved by Synod in 2010

http://www2.crcna.org/pages/osj_creationstatements.cfm

Introduction

God calls us to be stewards of his good creation. Our contemporary testimony states, "by sovereign appointment we are earthkeepers and caretakers: loving our neighbor, tending the creation, and meeting our needs. God uses our skills in the unfolding and well-being of his world." (Contemporary Testimony, par. 10). But because we have sinned, we have failed in this calling, polluting and destroying much of the creator's work.

However, in Christ we find redemption, not only for people, but also for the rest of creation, which suffers from the consequences of human sin. For God's purpose in Christ is to heal and bring to wholeness not only persons but the entire created order.

As we wait for the restoration of the creation to wholeness, we commit ourselves to work vigorously to protect and heal that creation for the glory of the Creator. This includes the commitment to work for responsible public policies which embody the principles of biblical stewardship of creation.

Synodical Statements

Synod has taken significant action on creation care four times over the past two decades. First, in response to various overtures the early 1990s, the Synodical Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment examined the use of resources at the denominational level, and Synod commissioned CRC Publications to produce study guides on the ethical framework of environmental stewardship.

Second, the 1997 Synod alerted churches to the Reformed Ecumenical Council's report, "The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation," which includes guidelines and recommendations that can be used by churches, classes, and institutions.

Third, in 2008, an overture requested clear guidelines for CRC institutions, agencies, and congregations to implement practices that respect God's creation. In response, Synod approved Article 38 which states that the denomination has "...[No need for] further analysis regarding the extent and often uncritical use of the finite resources provided by God through the earth," affirming that, "...it is clear that we are only beginning to understand the consequences of maintaining the increasing consumption of finite resources and our waste disposal." Synod then instructed the BOT to establish

and maintain a webpage with up-to-date eco-justice resources, which can be found on the Office of Social Justice's "Creation Care page" [see link below].

Finally, in 2010, Overture 7 asked for the identification of the CRC's position on anthropogenic global warming. Synod 2010 responded by reaffirming the significant contribution that humans make to environmental problems world wide, accepting the Micah Declaration the "Micah Network Declaration" on creation stewardship and climate change (see below), and establishing a task force to report on Reformed creation stewardship and climate change at Synod 2012.

Climate Change

Synod 2008 approved an updated version of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* in 2008, which identifies climate change as a creation care issue of importance for the church:

51. We lament that our abuse of creation has brought lasting damage to the world we have been given: polluting streams and soil, poisoning the air, altering the climate, and damaging the earth. We commit ourselves to honor all God's creatures and to protect them from abuse and extinction, for our world belongs to God.

In 2006, Peter Borgdorff - then the Executive Director of the CRCNA - and Andy Ryskamp, the Director of CRWRC, both signed the "Evangelical Climate Initiative statement, Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action." The statement declares that "human-induced climate change is real," and it calls on the U.S. government to pass legislation establishing limits on carbon dioxide emissions. "Christians must care about climate change, because we love God the Creator and Jesus our Lord, through whom and for whom the creation was made. This is God's world, and any damage that we do to God's world is an offense against God himself."

In July 2009, the Office of Social Justice and CRWRC both signed on to a "Micah Network Declaration" on creation stewardship and climate change, calling on world leaders to address climate change and environmental degradation.

In February 2010, the CRCNA Board of Trustees endorsed the Declaration on behalf of the denomination, and Synod 2010 accepted the Declaration "as speaking to its concern for and responsibility toward creation" ("Acts of Synod 2010," p. 871).

The CRCNA Board of Trustees endorsed the Declaration ... on February 2010.

The Micah Network Declaration states that in the beginning God made a creation characterized by just relationships. However, we have often failed in our calling to be faithful stewards of God's creation, which has produced the current environmental crisis and led to climate change. The declaration affirms that "rapidly increasing greenhouse gas emissions are causing the average global temperature to rise, with devastating impacts already being experienced, especially by the poorest and most marginalized groups."

Therefore, we commit to follow God's calling to participate in the renewal of all creation.

"We join with others to call on local, national, and global leaders to meet their responsibility to address climate change and environmental degradation through the agreed intergovernmental mechanisms and conventions, and to provide the necessary resources to ensure sustainable development...[and] to protect the lives and livelihoods of those most vulnerable to the impact of environmental degradation and climate change."

In response to Overture 7 requesting the CRC's position on anthropogenic global warming, Synod 2010 instructed the establishment of a task force that would present a Reformed perspective of creation stewardship—including the issue of climate change—to Synod 2012.

Perspectives from the CRC Mission Field

CRC ministries around the world are extremely worried about the effect that climate change is already having on the poorest of the poor whom we serve. CRWRC staff find that the people they work with who are in vulnerable economic, social, and political conditions are experiencing the impact of climate-related events right now—they are losing access to food, water, work, and are already suffering from the direct effects of environmental degradation. We cannot continue to face our brothers and sisters in Christ while doing – and saying – nothing about what they name as the most important barrier they face: a climate changing before their eyes.

Thus, our Reformed faith demands action on climate change not only to fulfill God's calling to be caretakers of His creation, but also the command that we love our neighbors.

CRC “Care for Creation” Resources: http://www2.crcna.org/pages/osj_creationcare.cfm

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Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA)

Resolution to Approve of a New Energy and Global Warming Policy by the 218th General Assembly of the PCUSA (2008)

1. Approve the study and recommendations, entitled, “The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming,” to revise existing energy policy, “The Power to Speak Truth to Power” (hereinafter, referred to as the “1981 Energy Policy”). [The 1981 Energy Policy was jointly adopted by the 121st General Assembly (1981) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (*Minutes*, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1981, Part I, pp. 122, 413–25), and the 193rd General Assembly (1981) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (*Minutes*, The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1981, Part I, pp. 42, 86, 293–306).]

2. Urge individuals and families in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:

- a) Pray, asking for God's forgiveness and for the power and guidance to enjoy and care for creation in new ways.
 - b) Study energy sources, their advantages and disadvantages, and the impacts they have on human communities, all species, and the ecological systems that support life on Earth.
 - c) Practice energy conservation as a form of thanksgiving and sharing by adjusting thermostats, walking, biking, carpooling, using mass transit, turning off lights and appliances, recycling, minimizing the use of plastic water bottles and other wasteful packaging, etc.
 - d) Purchase energy-efficient appliances and fuel-efficient vehicles for use at home and at work.
 - e) Purchase sustainably grown food and other products from local producers in order to reduce the energy associated with producing, and shipping goods.
 - f) Reduce consumption of meat because the production of grain fed to most livestock is fossil fuel-intensive and their waste emits methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas.
 - g) Purchase Green-e certified energy and/or carbon offsets in the pursuit of a carbon-neutral lifestyle. Green-e certification ensures these payments result in additional installations of renewable energy generation capacity as well as verifiable and permanent environmental benefits.
 - h) Invest personal funds in the renewable energy industry and also in companies that demonstrate concern for the well-being of their workers, their communities, and the environment.
 - i) Advocate for change and leadership within the church and in all forms of government regarding energy policy and global climate change.
3. With regard to the councils, governing bodies, and agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the 218th General Assembly (2008):
- a) Urges synods and presbyteries to become models of energy-efficient institutions and proponents of renewable energy by
 - 1) stocking resource centers with information about energy issues;
 - 2) working with the New Church Development Committee to ensure that all new and remodeled churches meet high-efficiency standards;
 - 3) strengthening support for Stewardship of Creation Enablers, inviting them to provide workshops on energy and related concerns, and consulting with them to provide carbon-neutral meeting sites and transportation plans whenever possible;
 - 4) advocating before local, state, and federal governments for public policies that encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; and
 - 5) adopting environmental education and energy conservation as high priorities at all Presbyterian camps and conference centers.
 - b) Urges the "Restoring Creation" program to establish a Presbyterian Green Energy Fund, which would help congregations and other organizations in our church reduce their carbon footprint through investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy production, and Green-e certified carbon offsets.

- c) Urges the Office of the General Assembly to make future meetings as carbon neutral as possible (considering climate, travel requirements, amenities, and energy conservation efforts by hotels, conference centers, and academic institutions).
- d) Urges the General Assembly Council, the Presbyterian Foundation, and the Board of Pensions to continue to improve the energy efficiency of the Louisville, Jeffersonville, Philadelphia, and other national agency offices.
- e) Urges the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to expand efforts to engage businesses on energy efficiency and conservation in manufacturing, transport, and product design; to work with companies on appropriate technology applications, including co-generation, wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, and low-head hydroelectric; to support solutions to the problem of nuclear waste; and to advocate that utilities establish incentives to reduce electricity, oil, and gas usage while also eliminating barriers for small power producers to interconnect with the power grid.
- f) Urges the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., to continue to encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy technologies, and new and mixed uses such as adding generating capacity or housing to underused city facilities.
- g) Urges presidents of Presbyterian-related colleges and universities to consider becoming a signatory of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, which obligates these schools to become carbon neutral in the future and to integrate sustainability into the curriculum.
- h) Urges Presbyterian-related seminaries and conference centers to make environmental education on global climate change and energy a part of their curricula; to take measures to reduce energy consumption; and to encourage holistic thinking about the relationships between technology and nature.
- i) Urges the Stated Clerk and other people representing the PC(USA) in ecumenical programs and initiatives to explore and develop whenever possible joint statements and studies on energy policy with other communions or councils of communions, and the General Assembly agencies to join in appropriate coalitions with non-church bodies to reinforce these measures of practical discipleship.

4. Concerning the church's social responsibility regarding U.S. energy policy, the 218th General Assembly (2008):

- a) Endorses and approves the following principles and stances that will guide our church's advocacy work regarding policy discussions and legislative proposals to revise energy policy in the context of global climate change:

With our Lord, we will stand with “the least of these” (Matt. 25:40) and advocate for the poor and oppressed in present and future generations who are often the victims of environmental injustice and who are least able to mitigate the impact of global warming that will fall disproportionately upon them.

As citizens of the United States, which has historically produced more greenhouse gases than any other country, and which is currently responsible for over a fifth of the world’s annual emissions, we implore our nation to accept its moral responsibility to address global warming.

In agreement with four prior General Assemblies (202nd, 210th, 211th, and 215th) that have called on the U.S. government to ratify the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, we ask the U.S. government to do nothing less than repent of its efforts to block consensus and to work with the international community as it develops a binding agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012.

As advocates for justice, we reject the claim that all nations should shoulder an equal measure of the burden associated with mitigating climate change. Industrialized nations like the United States that have produced most of the emissions over the last three centuries deserve to shoulder the majority of the burden. Rapidly industrializing nations like China and India with very low per capita rates of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions should not be expected to bear an equal share of the burden. Our church challenges all nations to embrace their common but different responsibilities with regard to dealing with climate change.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth’s temperature to 2 degrees Celsius or less from pre-industrial levels. Legislation should focus on the short-term goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent from 1990 levels by 2050.

In order to achieve these targets, we support legislative and policy proposals that... [10 are listed, all noted in “Power to Change” document below)

- b) Expresses gratitude to climate scientists in government, industry, academia and the United Nations, and to environmental public-interest groups and far-sighted political leaders, for their steadfast commitment to the common good and future welfare of all species.
- c) Directs the Stated Clerk, the Presbyterian Washington Office, the Presbyterian United Nations Office, the Environmental Justice Office, and other General Assembly representatives to advocate for this approach to national energy policy before Congress, the Executive branch, state legislatures, and regulatory agencies, including those specifically involved in the areas of climate change and international cooperation, with the goal of restoring the United States of America to a leadership position in taking responsibility for reducing the scale and speed of global climate change.

Call to be Carbon Neutral: Approved by the 217th General Assembly of the PCUSA (2006)

1. Direct the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to make a study of personal responsibility and carbon-neutrality available as a working paper on the website of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as soon as possible, in order to share its concrete, effective action steps for Presbyterians to take to reduce their energy consumption. This working paper will highlight the threats posed by accelerated climate change and lift up ways for individuals, families, and congregations to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases produced in heating, air conditioning, transportation and food production, packaging, and shipment. In addition, this paper will suggest policy measures being considered in greater depth by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy and several consultant theological ethicists and political scientists for eventual report to the 218th General Assembly (2008).”
2. Finds that the Christian mandate to care for creation and the biblical promise of the restoration of right relationships between God, human beings, and the rest of creation impels and inspires us to act to reduce our energy usage.
3. Finds that the urgency, injustice, and seriousness of this issue calls us as Christians to act NOW and to act boldly to lead the way in reducing our energy usage.
4. Strongly urges all Presbyterians to immediately make a bold witness by aspiring to live carbon neutral lives. (Carbon neutrality requires our energy consumption that releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere be reduced and carbon offsets purchased to compensate for those carbon emissions that could not be eliminated.)
5. Directs the ACSWP to make the current draft of the report and recommendations, “A Christian Witness on Energy” available to all Presbyterians, and to the General Assembly Council, at the earliest possible time in order to share its concrete, effective action steps for Presbyterians to take to reduce their energy consumption.
6. Directs the General Assembly Council to assign the appropriate staff to inform all Presbyterians, governing bodies, and churches of the urgent need for them to reduce their energy consumption and the injustice of our current energy practices while ACSWP completes its work.
7. Directs the General Assembly Council, upon receipt of “A Christian Witness on Energy” report, to assign the appropriate staff to prepare an implementation plan for a church-wide carbon neutral program.
8. Calls upon all Presbyterians to take this seriously, to pray asking for God’s forgiveness and guidance, to study this issue, to calculate your carbon emissions, to educate others, and to use less energy, striving to make your life carbon neutral.

Resources: "Guide to Going Carbon Neutral." <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/guide-going-carbon-neutral/>
 "The Power to Change" http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/acswp/pdf/energyreport.pdf

PC(USA) Environmental Policy Framework (1990)

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/pcusa-environmental-policy/>

Note: This 1990 policy is a foundational policy for the work of the PCUSA. It has inspirational language useful for liturgies, personal prayer, and reflection. Here are some excerpts:

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 work in creation is 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 non-human.

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 affirmed 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 sufficient, 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....

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Reformed Church in America

RCA Perspective on the Environment (1982-1995)

<https://www.rca.org/environment>

In 1982 the Christian Action Commission sent a major report to General Synod on "Care for the Earth: Theology and Practice" (MGS 1982, pp. 63-70). In response, General Synod passed several resolutions urging "the vigilant protection of the earth's resources." The Christian Action Commission report examined Old Testament teachings about the relationship of the people to the land. "God's gift of land to the people of Israel was conditional. It depended upon their living in a way that acknowledged the land to be the Lord's land and themselves to be the Lord's people. Because they chose instead to grasp and possess the land as if it were their own, they lost it....We, too, are called to treat the land as God's gift rather than as our possession." The report concluded that "humanity was created by God to live in 'shalom' (the Hebrew word for harmony/peace/wholeness/ justice) with each other and all creation. While this relationship was broken by the Fall, it is being restored in Christ, who reigns over and is reconciling all creation....The restoration of God's shalom...requires changes in our attitudes, in our values, and in our lives."

The report drew attention to the loss of farmland, the degradation of soil and air quality, the problem of nuclear waste disposal and the need for the conservation of water and other precious resources. The resolutions passed by General Synod in 1982 included the following:

- To affirm the vocation of farming, commend farming as a career choice and as a way of life for our young men and women, and encourage those within our denomination who are already farming to be steadfast in their calling and aware of its great potential as a way of Christian service in a hungry world;
- To call on Reformed Church members to support the adoption and implementation of measures designed to preserve agricultural land;
- To encourage Reformed Church farmers to use agricultural methods which care for and preserve the earth entrusted to them, and to support both private and governmental programs of research into soil-conserving agricultural techniques;
- To oppose any weakening of the Clean Air Act, and to urge that provisions of that act be expanded to control the human causes of acid rain and to place limits on fine particulates and toxic chemicals in our atmosphere;

- To urge the Environmental Protection Agency to be active, in cooperation with the states, to prevent further contamination of groundwater resources;
- To urge our government officials and agencies to treat nuclear waste disposal as an urgent and critical concern, and to curtail the production of nuclear waste until satisfactory disposal methods are adopted;
- To urge the Reagan administration and Congress to develop a national policy which will insure the wise conservation of natural resources and the vigilant protection of the earth's resources.

In 1994 the Office of Social Witness reported to General Synod on continuing environmental problems like the extinction of hundreds of animal species, deforestation, and the greenhouse effect, and urged that "responsible Christian witness in the light of the environmental crisis is becoming increasingly important." General Synod passed a resolution to "encourage RCA pastors, consistories, and Christian educators to place renewed emphasis on the stewardship of creation in the preaching, teaching and witness ministries of RCA congregations, and further, to encourage RCA congregations to utilize available RCA resources from Reformed Church World Service, the RCA hunger education program, the Office of Social Witness, and the Institute for Development Training" (MGS 1994, pp. 95-96).

RCA "Restoring Eden" Resources: <http://restoringeden.org/about>

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United Church of Christ (UCC)

Resolution on Energy and Climate by 29th General Synod of the UCC (2013)

http://macucc.s3.amazonaws.com/9E0333C91BC344ADBF4B4DFBA1F517D2_6-Resolution_June30_2013.pdf

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ raises its prophetic voice regarding the urgency of healing the climate of the earth, our home and God's gift for the future of all life, both human and all other life,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon all Members, Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, Agencies, Associated, Affiliated and Covenanted Ministries (and their successor bodies) to —

- a) Commit to using a spectrum of strategies to reduce the use of fossil fuels, our carbon foot print, and our complicity with the fossil fuel industry
 - make lifestyle changes to reduce the use of fossil fuels in our lives, our homes, our businesses and our churches
 - demand action from legislators and advocate for the creation and enforcement of carbon-reducing laws

- publicly witness to and create educational programs that highlight the dangers of climate change
 - engage in activities, boycotts, and shareholder actions with companies, up to and including divestment
- b) Make shareholder engagement on climate change an immediate, top priority for the next five years by:
- demanding transparency regarding climate change legislation lobbying,
 - insisting that companies' operations and products conform to achieve the goal of scientifically understood safe levels of CO² and methane, and
 - requiring companies to examine and disclose their carbon assets that are at risk of being stranded in the event of a carbon tax or some other executive or legislative action.
- c) Seek out fossil-fuel free investment vehicles and call on both United Church Funds and the Pension Boards to create and promote an investment vehicle free of fossil fuel companies for qualified investors within 18 months.
- d) As a way to maintain the trajectory of accomplishments of the 4/1 Earth campaign, report updates on progress made and actions taken in the implementation of this resolution that will be sent to a national UCC database to be established immediately by the United Church of Christ Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon both United Church Funds and the Pension Boards to accomplish the following to the fullest extent allowable by applicable law –

- a) By Synod 2015, complete whatever research is necessary to identify “best in class” fossil fuel companies (if any); to report these findings to Synod in 2015, along with a plan whereby, by June 2018, none of either the Pension Boards nor UCF directly held assets will include holdings of either public equities or corporate bonds in fossil fuel companies except those either the Pension Boards or UCF identifies as “best in class.” This research process should be conducted on a periodic basis and the research metrics used should continually reference the newest climate science as a permanent way to analyze fossil fuel companies. The Pension Boards and UCF should hold in their portfolios only those companies that they deem “best in class.”
- b) Report actions taken as a result of this research to the United Church of Christ Board on an annual basis to be shared with future General Synod delegates. These actions should always be compatible with a “just and sustainable world”, as identified by the Core Purpose of the United Church of Christ.
- c) Provide quarterly updates, available to the public, detailing research undertaken, progress made and actions taken in the implementation of this resolution to the national database created by the United Church of Christ Board. Whenever possible, communicate these actions to the

media to hasten the revocation of the social license which the fossil fuel companies depend on to stay in business.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ commits each of the next five General Synods to hold a hearing focusing on climate change; progress made by UCF, the Pension Boards, and other UCC entities to fulfill this resolution; and how the vocation of the church is and must change in the context of climate change.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ to inform those fossil fuel companies of the passage and implementation of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ asks the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ to engage leaders of other religious traditions and relevant organizations to explore ways that they and their constituents might join the UCC in this action.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ remains profoundly concerned about the disproportionate impact climate change is already having on those living in poverty and in the least developed countries, the elderly and children and those least responsible for the emissions of greenhouse gases, and recognizes the moral mandate for humanity to shift to a sustainable energy plan in a way that is both just and compassionate.

For Study: Report to 26th General Synod (UCC) on Energy and Climate by Environment and Energy Task Force (2006) http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/427/Report-to-the-26th-General-Synod-Energy-and-Climate-Work-Gr-small.pdf?1418423821

Resolution on Climate Change by General Synod of the UCC (2007)

http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_synod-resolutions_a-resolution-on-climate

WHEREAS, the impact of global warming, as currently predicted and understood by leading scientists and scientific bodies around the world in reports of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as well as in reports of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Academy of Sciences, will dramatically and negatively alter God's gracious gift of creation;

WHEREAS, the effects of global warming are already clearly evidenced in the melting of glaciers and shrinking of the polar caps, threatening the polar bear with extinction and the Native Peoples of the Arctic with loss of food resources, land, ancient traditions and ways of being in the world;

WHEREAS, experts speak with a profound sense of urgency and clearly state that the window of opportunity to avoid catastrophic climate change is rapidly diminishing;

WHEREAS, the predicted impact of global warming will have a disproportionate impact on those living in poverty, least developed countries, the elderly and children and those least responsible for the emissions of greenhouse gases;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ admits Christian complicity in the damage human beings have caused to the earth's climate system and other planetary life systems, and urges recommitment to the Christian vocation of responsible stewardship of God's creation, and expresses profound concern for the pending environmental, economic, and social tragedies threatened by global warming, to creation, human communities and traditional sacred spaces;

WE FURTHER RESOLVE that the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges the United States Government to respond to global warming with great urgency and firm leadership by supporting mandatory measures that reduce the absolute amount of green house gas emissions, and in particular emissions of carbon dioxide, to levels recommended by nationally and internationally recognized and respected scientific bodies;

WE FURTHER RESOLVE that the Twenty-sixth Synod of the United Church of Christ urges state and local governments to support and invest in energy conservation and, specifically, in sustainable, renewable and affordable systems of transportation, and calls on business and industry to lead in responses to global warming through increased investments in efficient and sustainable energy technologies that are economically accessible and just;

WE FURTHER RESOLVE that the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges all segments of the Church to address global warming in their decisions and investments and in their educational and advocacy efforts;

TO THAT END, the Twenty-sixth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ, specifically Wider Church Ministries and Justice and Witness Ministries, to address the severe nature of this global warming crisis as one of the most urgent threats to humankind and, indeed, all of God's precious planet earth and that Local Church Ministries develop materials to help churches "green" their buildings.

Link to UCC Resource: How to Become a “Green Justice Congregation”

http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_just-green-congregations

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The Roman Catholic Church

Papal Encyclicals and Addresses

Pope Francis I

Pope Francis Encyclical Laudato Si' 2015 (Introduction)

Full text: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

1. “LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”.^[1]

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

Nothing in this world is indifferent to us

3. More than fifty years ago, with the world teetering on the brink of nuclear crisis, Pope Saint John XXIII wrote an Encyclical which not only rejected war but offered a proposal for peace. He addressed his message Pacem in Terris to the entire “Catholic world” and indeed “to all men and women of good will”. Now, faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet. In my Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, I wrote to all the members of the Church with the aim of encouraging ongoing missionary renewal. In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.

4. In 1971, eight years after Pacem in Terris, Blessed Pope Paul VI referred to the ecological concern as “a tragic consequence” of unchecked human activity: “Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation”.^[2] He spoke in similar terms to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations about the potential for an “ecological catastrophe under the effective explosion of industrial civilization”, and stressed “the urgent need for a radical change in the conduct of humanity”, inasmuch as “the most extraordinary scientific advances, the most amazing technical abilities, the most astonishing economic growth, unless they are accompanied by authentic social and moral progress, will definitively turn

against man”.[3]

5. Saint John Paul II became increasingly concerned about this issue. In his first Encyclical he warned that human beings frequently seem “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption”.[4] Subsequently, he would call for a global ecological conversion.[5] At the same time, he noted that little effort had been made to “safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology”.[6] The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in “lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies”.[7] Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system”.[8] Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is.[9]

6. My predecessor Benedict XVI likewise proposed “eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment”.[10] He observed that the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since “the book of nature is one and indivisible”, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth. It follows that “the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence”.[11] Pope Benedict asked us to recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. Both are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless. We have forgotten that “man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature”.[12] With paternal concern, Benedict urged us to realize that creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves”.[13]

United by the same concern

7. These statements of the Popes echo the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups, all of which have enriched the Church’s thinking on these questions. Outside the Catholic Church, other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections on issues which all of us find disturbing. To give just one striking example, I would mention the statements made by the beloved Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, with whom we share the hope of full ecclesial communion.

8. Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet, for “inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage”, we are called to acknowledge “our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation”.[14] He has repeatedly stated this firmly and persuasively, challenging us to acknowledge

our sins against creation: “For human beings... to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins”.^[15] For “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God”.^[16]

9. At the same time, Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. He asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which “entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion”.^[17] As Christians, we are also called “to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet”.^[18]

Saint Francis of Assisi

10. I do not want to write this Encyclical without turning to that attractive and compelling figure, whose name I took as my guide and inspiration when I was elected Bishop of Rome. I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.

11. Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human. Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them “to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason”.^[19] His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists. His disciple Saint Bonaventure tells us that, “from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, he would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of ‘brother’ or ‘sister’”.^[20] Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behaviour. If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up

spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.

12. What is more, Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. “Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker” (Wis 13:5); indeed, “his eternal power and divinity have been made known through his works since the creation of the world” (Rom 1:20). For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty.^[21] Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.

My appeal

13. The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world’s poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.

14. I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: “Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation”. ^[22] All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.

15. It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter, which is now added to the body of the Church’s social teaching, can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face. I will begin by briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis, with the aim of drawing on the results of the best scientific research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows. I will then consider some principles drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition which can render our commitment to the environment more coherent. I will then attempt to get to the roots of the present situation, so as to consider not only its symptoms but also its deepest causes. This will help to provide an approach to

ecology which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings. In light of this reflection, I will advance some broader proposals for dialogue and action which would involve each of us as individuals, and also affect international policy. Finally, convinced as I am that change is impossible without motivation and a process of education, I will offer some inspired guidelines for human development to be found in the treasure of Christian spiritual experience.

16. Although each chapter will have its own subject and specific approach, it will also take up and re-examine important questions previously dealt with. This is particularly the case with a number of themes which will reappear as the Encyclical unfolds. As examples, I will point to the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle. These questions will not be dealt with once and for all, but reframed and enriched again and again....
[see link at top of this section for full text]

Footnotes:

- [1] Canticle of the Creatures, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila, 1999, 113-114.
- [2] Apostolic Letter Octogesima Adveniens (14 May 1971), 21: AAS 63 (1971), 416-417.
- [3] Address to FAO on the 25th Anniversary of its Institution (16 November 1970), 4: AAS 62 (1970), 833.
- [4] Encyclical Letter Redemptor Hominis (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 287.
- [5] Cf. Catechesis (17 January 2001), 4: Insegnamenti 41/1 (2001), 179.
- [6] Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus (1 May 1991), 38: AAS 83 (1991), 841.
- [7] Ibid., 58: AAS 83 (1991), p. 863.
- [8] JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (30 December 1987), 34: AAS 80 (1988), 559.
- [9] Cf. ID., Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus (1 May 1991), 37: AAS 83 (1991), 840.
- [10] Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See (8 January 2007): AAS 99 (2007), 73.
- [11] Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009), 687.
- [12] Address to the Bundestag, Berlin (22 September 2011): AAS 103 (2011), 664.
- [13] Address to the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone (6 August 2008): AAS 100 (2008), 634.
- [14] Message for the Day of Prayer for the Protection of Creation (1 September 2012).
- [15] Address in Santa Barbara, California (8 November 1997); cf. JOHN CHRYSSAVGIS, *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, Bronx, New York, 2012.
- [16] Ibid.
- [17] Lecture at the Monastery of Utstein, Norway (23 June 2003).
- [18] "Global Responsibility and Ecological Sustainability", Closing Remarks, Halki Summit I, Istanbul (20 June 2012).
- [19] THOMAS OF CELANO, *The Life of Saint Francis*, I, 29, 81: in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila, 1999, 251.
- [20] The Major Legend of Saint Francis, VIII, 6, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 2, New York-London-Manila, 2000, 590.
- [21] Cf. THOMAS OF CELANO, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, II, 124, 165, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 2, New York-London-Manila, 2000, 354.
- [22] SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, Pastoral Statement on the Environmental Crisis (5 September 1999).

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Pope Benedict XVI

Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2010 http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html

IF YOU WANT TO CULTIVATE PEACE, PROTECT CREATION

1. At the beginning of this New Year, I wish to offer heartfelt greetings of peace to all Christian communities, international leaders, and people of good will throughout the world. For this XLIII World Day of Peace I have chosen the theme: If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation. Respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because “creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God’s works”,^[1] and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of mankind. Man’s inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development – wars, international and regional conflicts, acts of terrorism, and violations of human rights. Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect – if not downright misuse – of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us. For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen “that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying”.^[2]

2. In my Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, I noted that integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from man’s relationship with the natural environment. The environment must be seen as God’s gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations. I also observed that whenever nature, and human beings in particular, are seen merely as products of chance or an evolutionary determinism, our overall sense of responsibility wanes.^[3] On the other hand, seeing creation as God’s gift to humanity helps us understand our vocation and worth as human beings. With the Psalmist, we can exclaim with wonder: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you have established; what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Ps 8:4-5). Contemplating the beauty of creation inspires us to recognize the love of the Creator, that Love which “moves the sun and the other stars”.^[4]

3. Twenty years ago, Pope John Paul II devoted his *Message for the World Day of Peace* to the theme: Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation. He emphasized our relationship, as God’s creatures, with the universe all around us. “In our day”, he wrote, “there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened ... also by a lack of due respect for nature”. He added that “ecological awareness, rather than being downplayed, needs to be helped to develop and mature, and find fitting expression in concrete programmes and initiatives”.^[5] Previous Popes had spoken of the relationship between human beings and the environment. In 1971, for example, on the eightieth anniversary of Leo XIII’s Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Paul VI pointed out that “by an ill-considered exploitation of nature (man) risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation”. He added that “not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace – pollution and refuse, new

illnesses and absolute destructive capacity – but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family".[6]

4. Without entering into the merit of specific technical solutions, the Church is nonetheless concerned, as an "expert in humanity", to call attention to the relationship between the Creator, human beings and the created order. In 1990 John Paul II had spoken of an "ecological crisis" and, in highlighting its primarily ethical character, pointed to the "urgent moral need for a new solidarity".[7] His appeal is all the more pressing today, in the face of signs of a growing crisis which it would be irresponsible not to take seriously. Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of "environmental refugees", people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? All these are issues with a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development.

5. It should be evident that the ecological crisis cannot be viewed in isolation from other related questions, since it is closely linked to the notion of development itself and our understanding of man in his relationship to others and to the rest of creation. Prudence would thus dictate a profound, long-term review of our model of development, one which would take into consideration the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications. The ecological health of the planet calls for this, but it is also demanded by the cultural and moral crisis of humanity whose symptoms have for some time been evident in every part of the world.[8] Humanity needs a profound cultural renewal; it needs to rediscover those values which can serve as the solid basis for building a brighter future for all. Our present crises – be they economic, food-related, environmental or social – are ultimately also moral crises, and all of them are interrelated. They require us to rethink the path which we are travelling together. Specifically, they call for a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity, with new rules and forms of engagement, one which focuses confidently and courageously on strategies that actually work, while decisively rejecting those that have failed. Only in this way can the current crisis become an opportunity for discernment and new strategic planning.

6. Is it not true that what we call "nature" in a cosmic sense has its origin in "a plan of love and truth"? The world "is not the product of any necessity whatsoever, nor of blind fate or chance... The world proceeds from the free will of God; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, in his intelligence, and in his goodness".[9] The Book of Genesis, in its very first pages, points to the wise design of the cosmos: it comes forth from God's mind and finds its culmination in man and woman, made in the image and likeness of the Creator to "fill the earth" and to "have dominion over" it as "stewards" of God himself (cf. Gen 1:28). The harmony between the Creator, mankind and the created world, as described by Sacred Scripture, was disrupted by the sin of Adam and Eve, by man and woman, who wanted to take the place of God and refused to acknowledge that they were his creatures. As a result, the work of "exercising dominion" over the earth, "tilling it and keeping it", was also

disrupted, and conflict arose within and between mankind and the rest of creation (cf. Gen 3:17-19). Human beings let themselves be mastered by selfishness; they misunderstood the meaning of God's command and exploited creation out of a desire to exercise absolute domination over it. But the true meaning of God's original command, as the Book of Genesis clearly shows, was not a simple conferral of authority, but rather a summons to responsibility. The wisdom of the ancients had recognized that nature is not at our disposal as "a heap of scattered refuse".[10] Biblical Revelation made us see that nature is a gift of the Creator, who gave it an inbuilt order and enabled man to draw from it the principles needed to "till it and keep it" (cf. Gen. 2:15).[11] Everything that exists belongs to God, who has entrusted it to man, albeit not for his arbitrary use. Once man, instead of acting as God's co-worker, sets himself up in place of God, he ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, "which is more tyrannized than governed by him".[12] Man thus has a duty to exercise responsible stewardship over creation, to care for it and to cultivate it.[13]

7. Sad to say, it is all too evident that large numbers of people in different countries and areas of our planet are experiencing increased hardship because of the negligence or refusal of many others to exercise responsible stewardship over the environment. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council reminded us that "God has destined the earth and everything it contains for all peoples and nations".[14] The goods of creation belong to humanity as a whole. Yet the current pace of environmental exploitation is seriously endangering the supply of certain natural resources not only for the present generation, but above all for generations yet to come.[15] It is not hard to see that environmental degradation is often due to the lack of far-sighted official policies or to the pursuit of myopic economic interests, which then, tragically, become a serious threat to creation. To combat this phenomenon, economic activity needs to consider the fact that "every economic decision has a moral consequence" [16] and thus show increased respect for the environment. When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed – environmentally and socially – as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred. The international community and national governments are responsible for sending the right signals in order to combat effectively the misuse of the environment. To protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate, there is a need to act in accordance with clearly-defined rules, also from the juridical and economic standpoint, 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.

8. A greater sense of intergenerational solidarity is urgently needed. Future generations cannot be saddled with the cost of our use of common environmental resources. "We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries; for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us, to enlarge the human family. Universal solidarity represents a benefit as well as a duty. This is a responsibility that present generations have towards those of the future, a responsibility that also concerns individual States and the international community".[17] Natural resources should be used in such a way that immediate benefits do not have a negative impact on living creatures, human and not, present and future; that the protection of private property does not conflict with the universal destination of goods;[18] that human activity does not compromise the fruitfulness of the earth, for the benefit of people now and in the future. In addition to a fairer sense of intergenerational solidarity there is also an urgent moral need for a renewed sense of intragenerational solidarity, especially in

relationships between developing countries and highly industrialized countries: “the international community has an urgent duty to find institutional means of regulating the exploitation of non-renewable resources, involving poor countries in the process, in order to plan together for the future”.[19] The ecological crisis shows the urgency of a solidarity which embraces time and space. It is important to acknowledge that among the causes of the present ecological crisis is the historical responsibility of the industrialized countries. Yet the less developed countries, and emerging countries in particular, are not exempt from their own responsibilities with regard to creation, for the duty of gradually adopting effective environmental measures and policies is incumbent upon all. This would be accomplished more easily if self-interest played a lesser role in the granting of aid and the sharing of knowledge and cleaner technologies.

9. To be sure, among the basic problems which the international community has to address is that of energy resources and the development of joint and sustainable strategies to satisfy the energy needs of the present and future generations. This means that technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency. At the same time there is a need to encourage research into, and utilization of, forms of energy with lower impact on the environment and “a world-wide redistribution of energy resources, so that countries lacking those resources can have access to them”.[20] The ecological crisis offers an historic opportunity to develop a common plan of action aimed at orienting the model of global development towards greater respect for creation and for an integral human development inspired by the values proper to charity in truth. I would advocate the adoption of a model of development based on the centrality of the human person, on the promotion and sharing of the common good, on responsibility, on a realization of our need for a changed life-style, and on prudence, the virtue which tells us what needs to be done today in view of what might happen tomorrow.[21]

10. A sustainable comprehensive management of the environment and the resources of the planet demands that human intelligence be directed to technological and scientific research and its practical applications. The “new solidarity” for which John Paul II called in his Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace [22] and the “global solidarity” for which I myself appealed in my Message for the 2009 World Day of Peace [23] are essential attitudes in shaping our efforts to protect creation through a better internationally-coordinated management of the earth’s resources, particularly today, when there is an increasingly clear link between combatting environmental degradation and promoting an integral human development. These two realities are inseparable, since “the integral development of individuals necessarily entails a joint effort for the development of humanity as a whole”.[24] At present there are a number of scientific developments and innovative approaches which promise to provide satisfactory and balanced solutions to the problem of our relationship to the environment. Encouragement needs to be given, for example, to research into effective ways of exploiting the immense potential of solar energy. Similar attention also needs to be paid to the world-wide problem of water and to the global water cycle system, which is of prime importance for life on earth and whose stability could be seriously jeopardized by climate change. Suitable strategies for rural development centred on small farmers and their families should be explored, as well as the implementation of appropriate policies for the management of forests, for waste disposal and for strengthening the linkage between combatting climate change and overcoming poverty. Ambitious national policies are required, together with a necessary international commitment which will offer important benefits especially in

the medium and long term. There is a need, in effect, to move beyond a purely consumerist mentality in order to promote forms of agricultural and industrial production capable of respecting creation and satisfying the primary needs of all. The ecological problem must be dealt with not only because of the chilling prospects of environmental degradation on the horizon; the real motivation must be the quest for authentic world-wide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good. For that matter, as I have stated elsewhere, “technology is never merely technology. It reveals man and his aspirations towards development; it expresses the inner tension that impels him gradually to overcome material limitations. Technology in this sense is a response to God’s command to till and keep the land (cf. Gen 2:15) that he has entrusted to humanity, and it must serve to reinforce the covenant between human beings and the environment, a covenant that should mirror God’s creative love”.^[25]

11. It is becoming more and more evident that the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our life-style and the prevailing models of consumption and production, which are often unsustainable from a social, environmental and even economic point of view. We can no longer do without a real change of outlook which will result in new life-styles, “in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments”.^[26] Education for peace must increasingly begin with far-reaching decisions on the part of individuals, families, communities and states. We are all responsible for the protection and care of the environment. This responsibility knows no boundaries. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity it is important for everyone to be committed at his or her proper level, working to overcome the prevalence of particular interests. A special role in raising awareness and in formation belongs to the different groups present in civil society and to the non-governmental organizations which work with determination and generosity for the spread of ecological responsibility, responsibility which should be ever more deeply anchored in respect for “human ecology”. The media also have a responsibility in this regard to offer positive and inspiring models. In a word, concern for the environment calls for a broad global vision of the world; a responsible common effort to move beyond approaches based on selfish nationalistic interests towards a vision constantly open to the needs of all peoples. We cannot remain indifferent to what is happening around us, for the deterioration of any one part of the planet affects us all. Relationships between individuals, social groups and states, like those between human beings and the environment, must be marked by respect and “charity in truth”. In this broader context one can only encourage the efforts of the international community to ensure progressive disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, whose presence alone threatens the life of the planet and the ongoing integral development of the present generation and of generations yet to come.

12. The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction. The degradation of nature is closely linked to the cultural models shaping human coexistence: consequently, “when ‘human ecology’ is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits”.^[27] Young people cannot be asked to respect the environment if they are not helped, within families and society as a whole, to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment but also individual, family and social ethics.^[28] Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others.

Hence I readily encourage efforts to promote a greater sense of ecological responsibility which, as I indicated in my Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, would safeguard an authentic “human ecology” and thus forcefully reaffirm the inviolability of human life at every stage and in every condition, the dignity of the person and the unique mission of the family, where one is trained in love of neighbour and respect for nature.[29] There is a need to safeguard the human patrimony of society. This patrimony of values originates in and is part of the natural moral law, which is the foundation of respect for the human person and creation.

13. Nor must we forget the very significant fact that many people experience peace and tranquillity, renewal and reinvigoration, when they come into close contact with the beauty and harmony of nature. There exists a certain reciprocity: as we care for creation, we realize that God, through creation, cares for us. On the other hand, a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the environment will not end by absolutizing nature or by considering it more important than the human person. If the Church’s magisterium expresses grave misgivings about notions of the environment inspired by ecocentrism and biocentrism, it is because such notions eliminate the difference of identity and worth between the human person and other living things. In the name of a supposedly egalitarian vision of the “dignity” of all living creatures, such notions end up abolishing the distinctiveness and superior role of human beings. They also open the way to a new pantheism tinged with neo-paganism, which would see the source of man’s salvation in nature alone, understood in purely naturalistic terms. The Church, for her part, is concerned that the question be approached in a balanced way, with respect for the “grammar” which the Creator has inscribed in his handiwork by giving man the role of a steward and administrator with responsibility over creation, a role which man must certainly not abuse, but also one which he may not abdicate. In the same way, the opposite position, which would absolutize technology and human power, results in a grave assault not only on nature, but also on human dignity itself.[30]

14. If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation. In the light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to the Church’s Tradition, Christians have their own contribution to make. They contemplate the cosmos and its marvels in light of the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of Christ, who by his death and resurrection has reconciled with God “all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Col 1:20). Christ, crucified and risen, has bestowed his Spirit of holiness upon mankind, to guide the course of history in anticipation of that day when, with the glorious return of the Saviour, there will be “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet 3:13), in which justice and peace will dwell for ever. Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all. May this be clear to world leaders and to those at every level who are concerned for the future of humanity: the protection of creation and peacemaking are profoundly linked! For this reason, I invite all believers to raise a fervent prayer to God, the all-powerful Creator and the Father of mercies, so that all men and women may take to heart the urgent appeal: If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.

From the Vatican, 8 December 2009

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Footnotes:

- [1] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 198.
- [2] Benedict XVI, Message for the 2008 World Day of Peace, 7.
- [3] Cf. No.48.
- [4] Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, Paradiso, XXXIII, 145.
- [5] Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace, 1.
- [6] Apostolic Letter Octogesima Adveniens, 21.
- [7] Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace, 10.
- [8] Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 32.
- [9] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 295.
- [10] Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 535 – c. 475 B.C.), Fragment 22B124, in H. Diels-W. Kranz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Weidmann, Berlin, 1952, 6th ed.
- [11] Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 48.
- [12] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus, 37.
- [13] Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 50.
- [14] Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 69.
- [15] Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 34.
- [16] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 37.
- [17] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 467; cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter Populorum Progressio, 17.
- [18] Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus, 30-31, 43.
- [19] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 49.
- [20] Ibid.
- [21] Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, S. Th., II-II, q. 49, 5.
- [22] Cf. No. 9.
- [23] Cf. No. 8.
- [24] Paul VI, Encyclical Letter Populorum Progressio, 43.
- [25] Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 69.
- [26] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus, 36.
- [27] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 51.
- [28] Cf. *ibid.*, 15, 51.
- [29] Cf. *ibid.*, 28, 51, 61; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus, 38, 39.
- [30] Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 70.

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Pope John Paul II

Message of Blessed John Paul II for the celebration of the WORLD DAY OF PEACE, Jan. 1, 1990

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html

PEACE WITH GOD THE CREATOR, PEACE WITH ALL OF CREATION

INTRODUCTION

1. IN OUR DAY, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of DUE RESPECT FOR NATURE, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life. The sense of precariousness and insecurity that such a situation engenders is a seedbed for collective selfishness, disregard for others and dishonesty.

Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. The public in general as well as political leaders are concerned about this problem, and experts from a wide range of disciplines are studying its causes. Moreover, a new ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS is beginning to emerge which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programs and initiatives.

2. Many ethical values, fundamental to the development of a PEACEFUL SOCIETY, are particularly relevant to the ecological question. The fact that many challenges facing the world today are interdependent confirms the need for carefully coordinated solutions based on a morally coherent world view.

For Christians, such a world view is grounded in religious convictions drawn from Revelation. That is why I should like to begin this Message with a reflection on the biblical account of creation. I would hope that even those who do not share these same beliefs will find in these pages a common ground for reflection and action.

I. "AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD"

3. In the Book of Genesis, where we find God's first self-revelation to humanity (Gen 1-3), there is a recurring refrain: "AND GOD SAW IT WAS GOOD". After creating the heavens, the sea, the earth and all it contains, God created man and woman. At this point the refrain changes markedly: "And God saw everything he had made, and behold, IT WAS VERY GOOD" (Gen 1:31). God entrusted the whole of creation to the man and woman, and only then—as we read—could he rest "from all his work" (Gen 2:3).

Adam and Eve's call to share in the unfolding of God's plan of creation brought into play those abilities and gifts which distinguish the human being from all other creatures. At the same time, their call established a fixed relationship between mankind and the rest of creation. Made in the image and likeness of God, Adam and Eve were to have exercised their dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28) with wisdom and love. Instead, they destroyed the existing harmony BY DELIBERATELY GOING AGAINST THE CREATOR'S PLAN, that is, by choosing to sin. This resulted not only in man's alienation from himself, in death and fratricide, but also in the earth's "rebellion" against him (cf. Gen 3:17-19; 4:12). All of creation became subject to futility, waiting in a mysterious way to be set free and to obtain a glorious liberty together with all the children of God (cf. Rom 8:20-21).

4. Christians believe that the Death and Resurrection of Christ accomplished the work of reconciling humanity to the Father, who "was pleased ... through (Christ) to reconcile to himself ALL THINGS, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19-20). Creation was thus made new (cf. Rev. 21:5). Once subjected to the bondage of sin and decay (cf. Rom. 8:21), it has now received new life while "we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pt 3:13). Thus, the Father "has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery ... which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite ALL THINGS in him, all things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10).

5. These biblical considerations help us to understand better THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN ACTIVITY AND THE WHOLE OF CREATION.

When man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order. If man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace: "Therefore the land mourns and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and even the fish of the sea are taken away" (Hos 4:3).

The profound sense that the earth is "suffering" is also shared by those who do not profess our faith in God. Indeed, the increasing devastation of the world of nature is apparent to all.

It results from the behavior of people who show a callous disregard for the hidden, yet perceivable requirements of the order and harmony which govern nature itself.

People are asking anxiously if it is still possible to remedy the damage which has been done. Clearly, an adequate solution cannot be found merely in a better management or a more rational use of the earth's resources, as important as these may be. Rather, we must go to the source of the problem and face in its entirety that profound moral crisis OF WHICH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IS ONLY ONE TROUBLING ASPECT.

II. THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: A MORAL PROBLEM

6. Certain elements of today's ecological crisis reveal its moral character. First among these is the INDISCRIMINATE APPLICATION of advances in science and technology. Many recent discoveries have brought undeniable benefits to humanity. Indeed, they demonstrate the nobility of the human vocation to participate RESPONSIBLY in God's creative action in the world. Unfortunately, it is now clear that the application of these discoveries in the fields of industry and agriculture have produced harmful long-term effects. This has led to the painful realization that WE CANNOT INTERFERE IN ONE AREA OF THE ECOSYSTEM WITHOUT PAYING DUE ATTENTION BOTH TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH INTERFERENCE IN OTHER AREAS AND TO THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related "greenhouse effect" has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants,; all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands.

While in some cases the damage already done may well be irreversible, in many other cases it can still be halted. It is necessary, however, that the entire human community—individuals, States and international bodies—take seriously the responsibility that is theirs.

7. The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of RESPECT FOR LIFE evident in many patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic

interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples. In these cases, pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which at times leads to a genuine contempt for man.

On another level, delicate ecological balances are upset by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources. It should be pointed out that all of this, even if carried out in the name of progress and well-being is ultimately to mankind's disadvantage.

Finally, we can only look with deep concern at the enormous possibilities of biological research. We are not yet in a position to assess the biological disturbance that could result from indiscriminate genetic manipulation and from the unscrupulous development of new forms of plant and animal life, to say nothing of unacceptable experimentation regarding the origins of human life itself. It is evident to all that in any area as delicate as this, indifference to fundamental ethical norms, or their rejection, would lead mankind to the very threshold of self-destruction.

RESPECT FOR LIFE, AND ABOVE ALL FOR THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON, IS THE ULTIMATE GUIDING NORM FOR ANY SOUND ECONOMIC, INDUSTRIAL OR SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS.

The complexity of the ecological question is evident to all.

There are, however, certain underlying principles, which, while respecting the legitimate autonomy and the specific competence of those involved, can direct research towards adequate and lasting solutions. These principles are essential to the building of a peaceful society; no peaceful society can afford to neglect either respect for life or the fact that there is an integrity to creation.

III. IN SEARCH OF A SOLUTION

8. Theology, philosophy, and science all speak of a harmonious universe, of a "cosmos" endowed with its own integrity, its own internal, dynamic balance. **THIS ORDER MUST BE RESPECTED.** The human race is called to explore this order, to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity.

On the other hand, the earth is ultimately **A COMMON HERITAGE, THE FRUITS OF WHICH ARE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL.** In the words of the Second Vatican Council, "God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all peoples" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 69). This has direct consequences for the problem at hand. It is manifestly unjust that a privileged few should continue to accumulate excess goods, squandering available resources, while masses of people are living in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence. Today, the dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the extent to which greed and selfishness—both individual and collective—are contrary to the order of creation, an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence.

9. The concepts of an ordered universe and a common heritage both point to the necessity of a **MORE INTERNATIONALLY COORDINATED APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE EARTH'S GOODS.** In many cases the effects of ecological problems transcend the borders of

individual States; hence their solution cannot be found solely on the national level. Recently there have been some promising steps towards such international action, yet the existing mechanisms and bodies are clearly not adequate for the development of a comprehensive plan of action. Political obstacles, forms of exaggerated nationalism and economic interests—to mention only a few factors—impede international cooperation and long-term effective action.

The need for joint action on the international level DOES NOT LESSEN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH INDIVIDUAL STATE. Not only should each State join with others in implementing internationally accepted standards, but it should also make or facilitate necessary socio-economic adjustments within its own borders, giving special attention to the most vulnerable sectors of society. The State should also actively endeavor within its own territory to prevent destruction of the atmosphere and biosphere, by carefully monitoring, among other things, the impact of new technological or scientific advances. The State also has the responsibility of ensuring that its citizens are not exposed to dangerous pollutants or toxic wastes. THE RIGHT TO A SAFE ENVIRONMENT is ever more insistently presented today as a right that must be included in an updated Charter of Human Rights.

IV. THE URGENT NEED FOR A NEW SOLIDARITY

10. The ecological crisis reveals the URGENT MORAL NEED FOR A NEW SOLIDARITY, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized. States must increasingly share responsibility, in complimentary ways, for the promotion of a natural and social environment that is both peaceful and healthy.

The newly industrialized States cannot, for example, be asked to apply restrictive environmental standards to their emerging industries unless the industrialized States first apply them within their own boundaries. At the same time, countries in the process of industrialization are not morally free to repeat the errors made in the past by others, and recklessly continue to damage the environment through industrial pollutants, radical deforestation, or unlimited exploitation of non-renewable resources. In this context, there is urgent need to find a solution to the treatment and disposal of toxic wastes.

No plan or organization, however, will be able to effect the necessary changes unless world leaders are truly convinced of the absolute need for this new solidarity, which is demanded of them by the ecological crisis and which is essential for peace. THIS NEED PRESENTS NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING COOPERATIVE AND PEACEFUL RELATIONS AMONG STATES.

11. It must also be said that the proper ecological balance will not be found without DIRECTLY ADDRESSING THE STRUCTURAL FORMS OF POVERTY that exist throughout the world. Rural poverty and unjust land distribution in many countries, for example, have led to subsistence farming and to the exhaustion of the soil. Once their land yields no more, many farmers move on to clear new land, thus accelerating uncontrolled deforestation, or they settle in urban centers which lack the infrastructure to receive them. Likewise, some heavily indebted countries are destroying their natural heritage, at the price of irreparable ecological imbalances, in order to develop new products for export. In the fact of such situations it would be wrong to assign the responsibility to the poor alone for the negative environmental consequences of their actions. Rather, the poor, to whom the earth is entrusted

no less than to others, must be enabled to find a way out of their poverty. This will require a courageous reform of structures, as well as new ways of relating among peoples and States.

12. But there is another dangerous menace which threatens us, namely, war. Unfortunately, modern science already has the capacity to change the environment for hostile purposes.

Alterations of this kind over the long term could have unforeseeable and still more serious consequences. Despite the international agreements which prohibit chemical, bacteriological and biological warfare, the fact is that laboratory research continues to develop new offensive weapons capable of altering the balance of nature.

Today, any form of war on a global scale would lead to incalculable ecological damage. But even local or regional wars, however, limited, not only destroy human life and social structures, but also damage the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning soil and water. The survivors of war are forced to begin a new life in very difficult environmental conditions, which in turn create situations of extreme social unrest, with further negative consequences for the environment.

13. Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it TAKES A SERIOUS LOOK AT ITS LIFESTYLE. In many parts of the world society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage which these cause. As I have already stated, the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis. If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest in others and in the earth itself. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.

AN EDUCATION IN ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY is urgent: responsibility for oneself, for others and for the earth. This education cannot be rooted in mere sentiment or empty wishes. Its purpose cannot be ideological or political. It must not be based on a rejection of the modern world or a vague desire to return to some "paradise lost". Instead, a true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior.

Churches and religious bodies, non-governmental and governmental organizations, indeed all members of society, have a precise role to play in such education. The first educator, however, is the family, where the child learns to respect his neighbor and to love nature.

14. FINALLY, THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF CREATION CANNOT BE OVERLOOKED. Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God (cf. Gen 1:4ff; Ps 8:2; 104:1ff; Wis 13:3-5; Sir 39:16, 33; 43:1, 9). More difficult perhaps, but no less profound, is the contemplation of the works of human ingenuity. Even cities can have a beauty all their own, one that ought to motivate people to care for their surroundings. Good urban planning is an important part of environmental protection, and respect for the natural contours of the land is an indispensable prerequisite for ecologically sound development. The relationship between a good aesthetic education and the maintenance of a healthy environment cannot be overlooked.

V. THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: A COMMON RESPONSIBILITY

15. Today the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERYONE. As I have pointed out, its various aspects demonstrate the need for concerted efforts aimed at establishing the duties and obligations that belong to individuals, peoples, States and international community. This not only goes hand in hand with efforts to build true peace, but also confirms and reinforces those efforts in a concrete way. When the ecological crisis is set within the broader context of THE SEARCH FOR PEACE within society, we can understand better the importance of giving attention to what the earth and its atmosphere are telling us: namely, that there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and that the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations. I wish to repeat that THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS IS A MORAL ISSUE.

Even men and women without any particular religious conviction, but with an acute sense of their responsibilities for the common good, recognize their obligation to contribute to the restoration of a healthy environment. All the more should men and women who believe in God the Creator, and who are thus convinced that there is a well-defined unity and order in the world, feel called to address the problem. Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith. As a result, they are conscious of a vast field of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation opening up before them.

16. At the conclusion of this Message, I should like to address directly my brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church, in order to remind them of their serious obligation to care for all creation. The commitment of believers to a healthy environment for everyone stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God (cf. Ps 148:96).

In 1979, I proclaimed Saint Francis of Assisi as the heavenly patron of those who promote ecology (cf. Apostolic Letter *Inter Sanctos*: AAS 71 [1979], 1509f). He offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation. As a friend of the poor who was loved by God's creatures, Saint Francis invited all of creation—animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon—to give honor and praise to the Lord. The poor man of Assisi gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples.

It is my hope that the inspiration of Saint Francis will help us to keep ever alive a sense of "fraternity" with all those good and beautiful things which Almighty God has created. And my he remind us of our serious obligation to respect and watch over them with care, in light of that greater and higher fraternity that exists within the human family.

From the Vatican, 8 December 1989

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United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

Global Climate Change A Plea For Dialogue Prudence And The Common Good

A Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 15, 2001

Text, with other resources: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/>

As people of faith, we are convinced that "the earth is the Lord's and all it holds" (Ps 24:1). Our Creator has given us the gift of creation: the air we breathe, the water that sustains life, the fruits of the land that nourish us, and the entire web of life without which human life cannot flourish. All of this God created and found "very good." We believe our response to global climate change should be a sign of our respect for God's creation.

The continuing debate about how the United States is responding to questions and challenges surrounding global climate change is a test and an opportunity for our nation and the entire Catholic community. As bishops, we are not scientists or public policymakers. We enter this debate not to embrace a particular treaty, nor to urge particular technical solutions, but to call for a different kind of national discussion. Much of the debate on global climate change seems polarized and partisan. Science is too often used as a weapon, not as a source of wisdom. Various interests use the airwaves and political process to minimize or exaggerate the challenges we face. The search for the common good and the voices of poor people and poor countries sometimes are neglected.

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both "the human environment" and the natural environment.¹ It is about our human stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us. With these reflections, we seek to offer a word of caution and a plea for genuine dialogue as the United States and other nations face decisions about how best to respond to the challenges of global climate change.

The dialogue and our response to the challenge of climate change must be rooted in the virtue of prudence. While some uncertainty remains, most experts agree that something significant is happening to the atmosphere. Human behavior and activity are, according to the most recent findings of the international scientific bodies charged with assessing climate change, contributing to a warming of the earth's climate. Although debate continues about the extent and impact of this warming, it could be quite serious (see the sidebar "The Science of Global Climate Change"). Consequently, it seems prudent not only to continue to research and monitor this phenomenon, but to take steps now to mitigate possible negative effects in the future.

As Catholic bishops, we seek to offer a distinctively religious and moral perspective to what is necessarily a complicated scientific, economic, and political discussion. Ethical questions lie at the heart of the challenges facing us. John Paul II insists, "We face a fundamental question which can be described as both ethical and ecological. How can accelerated development be prevented from turning against man? How can one prevent disasters that destroy the environment and threaten all forms of life, and how can the negative consequences that have already occurred be remedied?"²

Because of the blessings God has bestowed on our nation and the power it possesses, the United States bears a special responsibility in its stewardship of God's creation to shape responses that serve the entire human family. As pastors, teachers, and citizens, we bishops seek to contribute to our national dialogue by examining the ethical implications of climate change. We offer some themes from Catholic social teaching that could help to shape this dialogue, and we suggest some directions for the debate and public policy decisions that face us. We do so with great respect for the work of the scientists, diplomats, business and union representatives, developers of new technologies, environmental leaders, and policymakers who have been struggling with the difficult questions of climate change for many years.

While our own growing awareness of this problem has come in part from scientific research and the public debate about the human contribution to climate change, we are also responding to the appeals of the Church in other parts of the world. Along with Pope John Paul II, church leaders in developing countries—who fear that affluent nations will mute their voices and ignore their needs—have expressed their concerns about how this global challenge will affect their people and their environment. We also hear the call of Catholic youth and other young people to protect the environment.

Therefore, we especially want to focus on the needs of the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests. Inaction and inadequate or misguided responses to climate change will likely place even greater burdens on already desperately poor peoples. Action to mitigate global climate change must be built upon a foundation of social and economic justice that does not put the poor at greater risk or place disproportionate and unfair burdens on developing nations.

Scientific Knowledge and the Virtue of Prudence

As Catholic bishops, we make no independent judgment on the plausibility of "global warming." Rather, we accept the consensus findings of so many scientists and the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as a basis for continued research and prudent action (see the sidebar: The Science of Global Climate Change). Scientists engaged in this research consistently acknowledge the difficulties of accurate measurement and forecasting. Models of measurement evolve and vary in reliability. Researchers and advocates on all sides of the issue often have stakes in policy outcomes, as do advocates of various courses of public policy. News reports can oversimplify findings or focus on controversy rather than areas of consensus. Accordingly, interpretation of scientific data and conclusions in public discussion can be difficult and contentious matters.

Responsible scientific research is always careful to recognize uncertainty and is modest in its claims. Yet over the past few decades, the evidence of global climate change and the emerging scientific consensus about the human impact on this process have led many governments to reach the conclusion that they need to invest time, money, and political will to address the problem through collective international action.

The virtue of prudence is paramount in addressing climate change. This virtue is not only a necessary one for individuals in leading morally good lives, but is also vital to the moral health of the larger

community. Prudence is intelligence applied to our actions. It allows us to discern what constitutes the common good in a given situation. Prudence requires a deliberate and reflective process that aids in the shaping of the community's conscience. Prudence not only helps us identify the principles at stake in a given issue, but also moves us to adopt courses of action to protect the common good. Prudence is not, as popularly thought, simply a cautious and safe approach to decisions. Rather, it is a thoughtful, deliberate, and reasoned basis for taking or avoiding action to achieve a moral good.

In facing climate change, what we already know requires a response; it cannot be easily dismissed. Significant levels of scientific consensus—even in a situation with less than full certainty, where the consequences of not acting are serious—justifies, indeed can obligate, our taking action intended to avert potential dangers. In other words, if enough evidence indicates that the present course of action could jeopardize humankind's well-being, prudence dictates taking mitigating or preventative action.

This responsibility weighs more heavily upon those with the power to act because the threats are often greatest for those who lack similar power, namely, vulnerable poor populations, as well as future generations. According to reports of the IPCC, significant delays in addressing climate change may compound the problem and make future remedies more difficult, painful, and costly. On the other hand, the impact of prudent actions today can potentially improve the situation over time, avoiding more sweeping action in the future.

Climate Change and Catholic Social Teaching

God has endowed humanity with reason and ingenuity that distinguish us from other creatures. Ingenuity and creativity have enabled us to make remarkable advances and can help us address the problem of global climate change; however, we have not always used these endowments wisely. Past actions have produced both good works and harmful ones, as well as unforeseen or unintended consequences. Now we face two central moral questions:

How are we to fulfill God's call to be stewards of creation in an age when we may have the capacity to alter that creation significantly, and perhaps irrevocably?

How can we as a "family of nations" exercise stewardship in a way that respects and protects the integrity of God's creation and provides for the common good, as well as for economic and social progress based on justice?

Catholic social teaching provides several themes and values that can help answer these questions.

The Universal Common Good

Global climate is by its very nature a part of the planetary commons. The earth's atmosphere encompasses all people, creatures, and habitats. The melting of ice sheets and glaciers, the destruction of rain forests, and the pollution of water in one place can have environmental impacts elsewhere. As Pope John Paul II has said, "*We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well being of future generations.*"³ Responses to global climate change should reflect our interdependence and common responsibility for the future of our planet. Individual nations must measure their own self-interest against the greater common good and contribute equitably to global solutions.

Stewardship of God's Creation and the Right to Economic Initiative and Private Property

Freedom and the capacity for moral decision making are central to what it means to be human. Stewardship—defined in this case as the ability to exercise moral responsibility to care for the environment—requires freedom to act. Significant aspects of this stewardship include the right to private initiative, the ownership of property, and the exercise of responsible freedom in the economic sector. Stewardship requires a careful protection of the environment and calls us to use our intelligence "to discover the earth's productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied." ⁴

We believe economic freedom, initiative, and creativity are essential to help our nation find effective ways to address climate change. The United States' history of economic, technological innovation, and entrepreneurship invites us to move beyond status quo responses to this challenge. In addition, the right to private property is matched by the responsibility to use what we own to serve the common good. Our Catholic tradition speaks of a "social mortgage" on property and, in this context, calls us to be good stewards of the earth. ⁵ It also calls us to use the gifts we have been given to protect human life and dignity, and to exercise our care for God's creation.

True stewardship requires changes in human actions—both in moral behavior and technical advancement. Our religious tradition has always urged restraint and moderation in the use of material goods, so we must not allow our desire to possess more material things to overtake our concern for the basic needs of people and the environment. Pope John Paul II has linked protecting the environment to "authentic human ecology," which can overcome "structures of sin" and which promotes both human dignity and respect for creation. ⁶ Technological innovation and entrepreneurship can help make possible options that can lead us to a more environmentally benign energy path. Changes in lifestyle based on traditional moral virtues can ease the way to a sustainable and equitable world economy in which sacrifice will no longer be an unpopular concept. For many of us, a life less focused on material gain may remind us that we are more than what we have. Rejecting the false promises of excessive or conspicuous consumption can even allow more time for family, friends, and civic responsibilities. A renewed sense of sacrifice and restraint could make an essential contribution to addressing global climate change.

Protecting the Environment for Future Generations

The common good calls us to extend our concern to future generations. Climate change poses the question "What does our generation owe to generations yet unborn?" As Pope John Paul II has written, "there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and . . . the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations." ⁷

Passing along the problem of global climate change to future generations as a result of our delay, indecision, or self-interest would be easy. But we simply cannot leave this problem for the children of tomorrow. As stewards of their heritage, we have an obligation to respect their dignity and to pass on their natural inheritance, so that their lives are protected and, if possible, made better than our own.

Population and Authentic Development

Population and climate change should be addressed from the broader perspective of a concern for protecting human life, caring for the environment, and respecting cultural norms and the religious faith and moral values of peoples. Population is not simply about statistics. Behind every demographic number is a precious and irreplaceable human life whose human dignity must be respected.

The global climate change debate cannot become just another opportunity for some groups—usually affluent advocates from the developed nations—to blame the problem on population growth in poor countries. Historically, the industrialized countries have emitted more greenhouse gases that warm the climate than have the developing countries. Affluent nations such as our own have to acknowledge the impact of voracious consumerism instead of simply calling for population and emissions controls from people in poorer nations.

A more responsible approach to population issues is the promotion of "authentic development," which represents a balanced view of human progress and includes respect for nature and social well-being.⁸ Development policies that seek to reduce poverty with an emphasis on improved education and social conditions for women are far more effective than usual population reduction programs and far more respectful of women's dignity.⁹

We should promote a respect for nature that encourages policies fostering natural family planning and the education of women and men rather than coercive measures of population control or government incentives for birth control that violate local cultural and religious norms.

Caring for the Poor and Issues of Equity

Working for the common good requires us to promote the flourishing of all human life and all of God's creation. In a special way, the common good requires solidarity with the poor who are often without the resources to face many problems, including the potential impacts of climate change. Our obligations to the one human family stretch across space and time. They tie us to the poor in our midst and across the globe, as well as to future generations. The commandment to love our neighbor invites us to consider the poor and marginalized of other nations as true brothers and sisters who share with us the one table of life intended by God for the enjoyment of all.

All nations share the responsibility to address the problem of global climate change. But historically the industrial economies have been responsible for the highest emissions of greenhouse gases that scientists suggest are causing the warming trend. Also, significant wealth, technological sophistication, and entrepreneurial creativity give these nations a greater capacity to find useful responses to this problem. To avoid greater impact, energy resource adjustments must be made both in the policies of richer countries and in the development paths of poorer ones.

Most people will agree that while the current use of fossil fuels has fostered and continues to foster substantial economic growth, development, and benefits for many, there is a legitimate concern that as developing countries improve their economies and emit more greenhouse gases, they will need technological help to mitigate further atmospheric environmental harm. Many of the poor in these countries live in degrading and desperate situations that often lead them to adopt environmentally

harmful agricultural and industrial practices. In many cases, the heavy debt burdens, lack of trade opportunities, and economic inequities in the global market add to the environmental strains of the poorer countries. Developing countries have a right to economic development that can help lift people out of dire poverty. Wealthier industrialized nations have the resources, know-how, and entrepreneurship to produce more efficient cars and cleaner industries. These countries need to share these emerging technologies with the less-developed countries and assume more of the financial responsibility that would enable poorer countries to afford them. This would help developing countries adopt energy-efficient technologies more rapidly while still sustaining healthy economic growth and development.¹⁰ Industries from the developed countries operating in developing nations should exercise a leadership role in preserving the environment.

No strategy to confront global climate change will succeed without the leadership and participation of the United States and other industrial nations. But any successful strategy must also reflect the genuine participation and concerns of those most affected and least able to bear the burdens. Developing and poorer nations must have a genuine place at the negotiating table. Genuine participation for those most affected is a moral and political necessity for advancing the common good.

The Public Policy Debate and Future Directions

Catholic social teaching calls for bold and generous action on behalf of the common good.

"Interdependence," as Pope John Paul II has written, "must be transformed into *solidarity*. . . .

Surmounting every type of *imperialism* and determination to preserve their *own hegemony*, the stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral *responsibility* for the other nations, so that a *real international system* may be established which will rest on the foundation of the *equality* of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences." ¹¹

The common good is built up or diminished by the quality of public debate. With its scientific, technological, economic, political, diplomatic, and religious dimensions, the challenge of global climate change may be a basic test of our democratic processes and political institutions. We respect the inquiry and dialogue which has been carried forward by a wide variety of scientists, diplomats, policy makers, and advocates, not only in the United States but around the world. These efforts should not be demeaned or distorted by disinformation or exaggeration. Serious dialogue should not be jeopardized by public relations tactics that fan fears or pit nations against one another. Leaders in every sector should seek to build a scientifically based consensus for the common good; avoid merely representing their own particular interests, industries, or movements; and act responsibly to protect future generations and the weak.

In the past decade, a continuing process of international diplomacy has led to agreements on principles and increasingly on procedures. In 1992, more than 160 nations, including the United States, ratified the first international treaty on global climate change at Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which was known as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 1997, parties to the UNFCCC including the United States negotiated the Kyoto Protocol, which established mandatory emission reduction targets, market-based procedures for meeting those targets, and timetables for industrialized nations.

Without endorsing the specifics of these agreements and processes, we Catholic bishops acknowledge the development of these international negotiations and hope they and other future efforts can lead to just and effective progress. However, serious deliberations must continue to bring about prudent and effective actions to ensure equity among nations.

As an act of solidarity and in the interest of the common good, the United States should lead the developed nations in contributing to the sustainable economic development of poorer nations and to help build their capacity to ease climate change. Since our country's involvement is key to any resolution of these concerns, we call on our people and government to recognize the seriousness of the global warming threat and to develop effective policies that will diminish the possible consequences of global climate change. We encourage citizens to become informed participants in this important public debate. The measures we take today may not greatly moderate climate change in the near future, but they could make a significant difference for our descendants.

We also hope that the United States will continue to undertake reasonable and effective initiatives for energy conservation and the development of alternate renewable and clean-energy resources. New technologies and innovations can help meet this challenge. While more needs to be done to reduce air pollution, through the use of improved technologies and environmental entrepreneurship, the United States has made significant environmental gains over the last several decades. Our hope is that these technologies along with other resources can be shared with developing countries.

Within the United States, public policy should assist industrial sectors and workers especially impacted by climate change policies, and it should offer incentives to corporations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and assistance to workers affected by these policies.

We encourage all parties to adopt an attitude of candor, conciliation, and prudence in response to serious, complex, and uncertain challenges. We hope the continuing dialogue within and among the diverse disciplines of science, economics, politics, and diplomacy will be guided by fundamental moral values: the universal common good, respect for God's creation, an option for the poor, and a sense of intergenerational obligation. Since religious values can enrich public discussion, this challenge offers opportunities for interfaith and ecumenical conversation and cooperation.

Finally, we wish to emphasize the need for personal conversion and responsibility. In our pastoral reflection *Renewing the Earth*, we wrote the following:

Grateful for the gift of creation . . . we invite Catholics and men and women of good will in every walk of life to consider with us the moral issues raised by the environmental crisis. . . . These are matters of powerful urgency and major consequence. They constitute an exceptional call to conversion. As individuals, as institutions, as a people, we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our children and for generations yet unborn.¹² Each of us should carefully consider our choices and lifestyles. We live in a culture that prizes the consumption of material goods. While the poor often have too little, many of us can be easily caught up in a frenzy of wanting more and more—a bigger home, a larger car, etc. Even though energy resources literally fuel our economy and provide a good quality of life, we need to ask about ways we can conserve energy, prevent pollution, and live more simply.

Conclusion

Our national debate over solutions to global climate change needs to move beyond the uses and abuses of science, sixty-second ads, and exaggerated claims. Because this issue touches so many people, as well as the planet itself, all parties need to strive for a civil and constructive debate about U.S. decisions and leadership in this area.

As people of religious faith, we bishops believe that the atmosphere that supports life on earth is a God-given gift, one we must respect and protect. It unites us as one human family. If we harm the atmosphere, we dishonor our Creator and the gift of creation. The values of our faith call us to humility, sacrifice, and a respect for life and the natural gifts God has provided. Pope John Paul II reminds us in his statement *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* that "respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God."¹³ In that spirit of praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonders of creation, we Catholic bishops call for a civil dialogue and prudent and constructive action to protect God's precious gift of the earth's atmosphere with a sense of genuine solidarity and justice for all God's children.

The Science of Global Climate Change

The photographs from the Apollo missions show earth glowing in the stillness of space like a blue-white opal on black velvet. Cool and beautiful, it hurries along in the Sun's gravitational embrace. The earth is our home, our whole wide world.

Our enfolding blanket of air, our atmosphere, is both the physical condition for human community and its most compelling symbol. We all breathe the same air. Guarding the integrity of the atmosphere—without which complex life could not have evolved on this planet—seems like common sense. Yet a broad consensus of modern science is that human activity is beginning to alter the earth's atmospheric characteristics in serious, perhaps profound ways. For the past century, researchers have been gathering and verifying data that reveal an increase in the global average temperature. Until recently, scientists could not say with great confidence whether or not this phenomenon was in any way the result of human activity or entirely the result of natural changes over time.

To deal with the difficulty of making precise measurements and arriving at definite conclusions, the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to seek a clear explanation of the causes and possible impacts of this global climate change.¹⁴ Because of the large number of scientists involved in the IPCC and its process of consultation, its reports are considered widely as offering the most authoritative scientific perspectives on the issue. IPCC's findings have met with general—but because of remaining uncertainties, not complete—agreement within the wider scientific community.

In 1996, the IPCC issued its Second Assessment Reports, which summarized the current state of knowledge. The first of these reports concluded that "*the balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate.*"¹⁵ The Third Assessment Reports, approved in early 2001, found even stronger evidence and concluded, "*most of the observed warming over the last 50 years is likely to have been due to the [human-induced] increase in greenhouse gas concentrations*"¹⁶

The IPCC offers convincing evidence that there exists if not a clear and present danger then a clear and future one, and that coming changes will affect all aspects of the environment and societal well-being. Based on measurements taken over both land and sea, the global average surface-air temperature has increased by about one degree Fahrenheit since 1860, building up as the Industrial Revolution was hitting full stride. While this is hardly a frightening increase for a particular geographic location, the temperature change is global in extent, so one must read it against the background of the earth's average temperature during historic times. According to IPCC, the rate and duration of warming in the twentieth century appears to be the largest in the last one thousand years. The twentieth century also experienced precipitation increases in mid- and high-northern latitudes; drier conditions in the subtropics; decreases in snow cover, mountain glaciers, and Arctic sea ice; and a rise of four to eight inches in mean sea level.¹⁷

The "greenhouse effect," though complex in detail, is simple enough in outline. Not considering the internal heating due to radioactive decay and volcanism, the earth draws its thermal energy from the Sun. Atmospheric gases form a protective cover that makes our planet hospitable to life, transmitting visible light, blocking out harmful high-energy radiation like ultraviolet rays, and keeping temperatures comfortable by moderating the escape of heat into space. However, the precise mix of these gases is quite delicate, and changing that mix alters the atmosphere's properties. An increase in the relative abundance of the greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons, tropospheric ozone, and nitrous oxide) causes the earth to trap more of the Sun's heat, resulting in what is called "global warming." Since the beginning of the industrial period, the IPCC reports, the concentration of the principal greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, has increased by 30 % and is now greater than at any time in the past 20 million years.¹⁸ The presence of methane (150 % increase) and nitrous oxide (16 % increase) is also growing. The result is the small but alarming temperature rise science has detected.¹⁹

What causes greenhouse gases to accumulate in the atmosphere? Emissions from cars and trucks, industry and electric plants, and businesses and homes are the largest part of the answer, although other factors such as deforestation contribute. The Industrial Revolution was built on furnaces and engines burning fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, oil, and such derived products as gasoline and heating oil). These fossil fuels now power the U.S. and global economy. Although some of the smoke particles and other pollutants (such as sulfur dioxide) now streaming from chimneys and tailpipes can actually cool the earth if they take an aerosol form, the great bulk of our emissions are contributing a warming influence. Reflecting upon studies completed since its last report in 1996, the IPCC says, "There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities."²⁰

Whatever the extent, severity, or geographical distribution of global warming impacts, the problem is expected to disproportionately affect the poor, the vulnerable, and generations yet unborn. Projected sea level rises could impact low-lying coastal areas in densely populated nations of the developing world. Storms are most likely to strain the fragile housing infrastructure of the poorest nations. The migration of diseases could further challenge the presently inadequate health care systems of these same nations. Droughts or floods, it is feared, will afflict regions already too often hit by famine, hunger, and malnutrition. Because the number of days with high heat and humidity are likely to increase, heat stress impacts will also increase, especially among the elderly, the sick, children, and the poor.²¹

The scientific reports of the IPCC portray the long-term challenge global climate change poses. Its findings, while not complete, are widely accepted in the scientific community. In June 2001, the National Academy of Sciences released a report, prepared at the request of President Bush, summarizing a prestigious panel's understanding of global climate change and an assessment of the work of the International Panel on Climate Change. The panel said that "greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities. . . ." It also found that "we cannot rule out that some significant part of these changes are also a reflection of natural variability. . . . Because there is considerable uncertainty in current understanding of how the climate system varies naturally and reacts to emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols, current estimates of the magnitude of future warming should be regarded as tentative and subject to future adjustments (either upward or downward). . . ." The report noted that while the full implications of climate change remain unknown, the panel "generally agrees with the assessment of human-caused change presented in the IPCC Working Group I scientific report." ²²

Footnotes:

1. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Centesimus Annus)* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1991), no. 38.
2. John Paul II, "International Solidarity Needed to Safeguard Environment," Address by the Holy Father to the European Bureau for the Environment, *L'Osservatore Romano* (June 26, 1996).
3. John Paul II, *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1990), no. 6.
4. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Centesimus Annus)* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1991), no. 32.
5. John Paul II, *On Social Concern (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988), no. 42.
6. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, no. 38.
7. John Paul II, "The Exploitation of the Environment Threatens the Entire Human Race," address to the Vatican symposium on the environment (1990), in *Ecology and Faith: The Writings of Pope John Paul II*, ed. Sr. Ancilla Dent, OSB (Berkhamsted, England: Arthur James, 1997), 12.
8. John Paul II, *On Social Concern*, ch. four. This chapter of the encyclical gives a more complete definition of the concept of authentic development.
9. Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, nos. 50-51, in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, new rev. ed., 1st vol. (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing, 1996).
10. See also *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* (Wash. DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993), 27.
11. *Ibid.*, no. 39.
12. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992), 3. See also treatment of this theme in *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 46.
13. John Paul II, *The Ecological Crisis*, no. 16.
14. To date, the IPCC's work represents the most authoritative estimates and prognosis of current and future climate change data. This statement utilizes the following Second and Third Assessment Reports by the IPCC: 1996a: *Climate Change 1995: The Science of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group I to the Second Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds. J. T. Houghton, L. G. Meira Filho, B. A. Callander, N. Harris, A. Kattenberg, and K. Maskell (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press). 1996b: *Climate Change 1995: Impacts, Adaptations and Mitigation of Climate Change: Scientific-Technical Analyses. Contribution of Working Group II to the Second Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds. R. T. Watson, M. C. Zinyowera, and R. H. Moss (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press). 1996c: *Climate Change 1995: Economic and Social Dimensions of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Second Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds. J. P. Bruce, Hoesund Kee,

- and E. F. Haites (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press). 1996d: *The IPCC Second Assessment Synthesis of Scientific-Technical Information Relevant to Interpreting Article 2 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (Geneva: World Meteorological Organization/United Nations Environment Programme). 2001a: *Climate Change 2001: The Scientific Basis*, eds. J. T. Houghton, Y. Ding, D. J. Griggs, M. Noguer, P. van der Linden, X. Dai, K. Maskell, and C. Johnson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press). 2001b: *Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, eds. J. McCarthy, O. Canziani, N. Leary, D. Dokken, and K. White (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press). 2001c: *Climate Change 2001: Mitigation*, eds. O. Davidson, B. Metz, R. Swart, and J. Pan (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press).
15. IPCC, 1996a, 5.
 16. IPCC, Climate Change 2001: The Scientific Basis, 10.
 17. Ibid., ch. two.
 18. Ibid., 7.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Ibid., 10.
 21. IPCC, Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability.
 22. National Academy of Science, *Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions* (Wash. DC, June 2001).

Catholic Climate Covenant

<http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/>

This organization brings Catholic people and institutions together to care for the people God loves and to live justly on God's Earth. They are involved in education, local events, a solar parish program, advocacy, and provide resources in Catholic social teachings and the environment.

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Seventh Day Adventists

Stewardship of the Environment (1996)

<http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/0/stewardship-of-the-environment/30/>

It is the belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that humankind was created in the image of God, and is thus to represent God as His steward and to manage the natural environment in a faithful and fruitful way. Nature is a gift from God.

Unfortunately, men and women have been increasingly involved in an irresponsible destruction of the earth's resources, resulting in widespread suffering, environmental degradation, and the threat of climate change. While scientific research needs to continue, it is clear from the accumulated evidence that the increasing emission of destructive gasses, the massive destruction of the American rain forests, and the depletion of the protective mantle of ozone (the so-called greenhouse effect), are all threatening the earth's eco-system. There are dire predictions of global warming, rising sea levels, increasing frequency of storms and destructive floods, and devastating desertification and droughts.

These problems are largely due to human selfishness and greed which result in ever-increasing production, unlimited consumption, and depletion of nonrenewable resources. Solidarity with future generations is discussed, but the pressure of immediate interests is given priority. The ecological crisis is rooted in humankind's greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship.

The government and people of Costa Rica are to be commended for their support of a comprehensive policy of sustainable development in harmony with nature.

Seventh-day Adventism advocates a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled over-consumption, accumulation of goods, and production of waste. A reformation of lifestyle is called for, based on respect for nature, restraint in the use of the world's resources, reevaluation of one's needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) for release by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the Annual Council session in San Jose, Costa Rica, October 1-10, 1996

The Dangers of Climate Change (1995)

<http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/0/the-dangers-of-climate-change/30/>

Scientists warn that the gradual warming of the atmosphere as a result of human activity will have serious environmental consequences. The climate will change, resulting in more storms, more floods, and more droughts.

To keep climate change within bearable limits, the emissions of greenhouse gasses, especially carbon dioxide (CO₂), need to be significantly reduced. Industrialized countries are the main source of these emissions, while the first victims are the small island states and low-lying coastal countries.

Despite the clear risks, governments appear slow to act.

The world membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church requests that the governments concerned take steps necessary to avert the danger:

- 1) By fulfilling the agreement reached in Rio de Janeiro (1992 Convention on Climate Change) to stabilize carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000 at 1990 levels,
- 2) By establishing plans for further reductions in carbon dioxide emissions after the year 2000, and
- 3) By initiating more forcefully public debate on the risks of climate change.

In signing this statement, Seventh-day Adventists declare their advocacy of a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled consumerism and production of waste. They call for respect of creation, restraint in the use of the world's resources, and reevaluation of our needs as individuals.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on December 19, 1995.

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Related Communities of Faith

Unitarian/Universalist Church (UU)

Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change

2006 Statement of Conscience

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

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.

UU Environmental Justice Resources: <http://www.uua.org/environment>

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Ecumenical Organizations and Networks

National Council of the Churches of Christ (NCC)

Faith Principles on Global Warming (2009)

<http://72.52.187.58/climate/climateprinciples.php> or <http://www.creationjustice.org/policy-statementsletters.html>

The following principles were developed by the National Council of Churches 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 can not 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.

God's Earth is Sacred: An Open Letter to Church and Society in the United States (2005)

<http://www.eco-justice.org/GodsEarthIsSacred.asp>

God's creation delivers unsettling news. Earth's climate is warming to dangerous levels; 90 percent of the world's fisheries have been depleted; coastal development and pollution are causing a sharp decline in ocean health; shrinking habitat threatens to extinguish thousands of species; over 95 percent of the contiguous United States forests have been lost; and almost half of the population in the United States lives in areas that do not meet national air quality standards. In recent years, the profound danger has grown, requiring us as theologians, pastors, and religious leaders to speak out and act with new urgency.

We are obliged to relate to Earth as God's creation "in ways that sustain life on the planet, provide for the [basic] needs of all humankind, and increase justice."¹ Over the past several decades, slowly but faithfully, the religious community in the United States has attempted to address issues of ecology and justice. Our faith groups have offered rich theological perspectives, considered moral issues through the lens of long-standing social teaching, and passed numerous policies within our own church bodies.

While we honor the efforts in our churches, we have clearly failed to communicate the full measure and magnitude of Earth's environmental crisis – religiously, morally, or politically. It is painfully clear from the verifiable testimony of the world's scientists that our response has been inadequate to the scale and pace of Earth's degradation.

To continue to walk the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly; it is sin. As voiced by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who has taken the lead among senior religious leaders in his concern for creation: “To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation . . . for humans to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands . . . for humans to injure other humans with disease . . . for humans to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances . . . these are sins.”² We have become un-Creators. Earth is in jeopardy at our hands.

This means that ours is a theological crisis as well. We have listened to a false gospel that we continue to live out in our daily habits – a gospel that proclaims that God cares for the salvation of humans only and that our human calling is to exploit Earth for our own ends alone. This false gospel still finds its proud preachers and continues to capture its adherents among emboldened political leaders and policy makers.

The secular counterpart of this gospel rests in the conviction that humans can master the Earth. Our modern way of life assumes this mastery. However, the sobering truth is that we hardly have knowledge of, much less control over, the deep and long-term consequences of our human impacts upon the Earth. We have already sown the seeds for many of those consequences. The fruit of those seeds will be reaped by future generations of human beings, together with others in the community of life.

The imperative first step is to repent of our sins, in the presence of God and one another. This repentance of our social and ecological sins will acknowledge the special responsibility that falls to those of us who are citizens of the United States. Though only five percent of the planet's human population, we produce one-quarter of the world's carbon emissions, consume a quarter of its natural riches, and perpetuate scandalous inequities at home and abroad. We are a precious part of Earth's web of life, but we do not own the planet and we cannot transcend its requirements for regeneration on its own terms. We have not listened well to the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

The second step is to pursue a new journey together, with courage and joy. By God's grace, all things are made new. We can share in that renewal by clinging to God's trustworthy promise to restore and fulfill all that God creates and by walking, with God's help, a path different from our present course. To that end, we affirm our faith, propose a set of guiding norms, and call on our churches to rededicate themselves to this mission. We firmly believe that addressing the degradation of God's sacred Earth is the moral assignment of our time comparable to the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s, the worldwide movement to achieve equality for women, or ongoing efforts to control weapons of mass destruction in a post-Hiroshima world.

Ecological Affirmations of Faith

We stand with awe and gratitude as members of God's bountiful and good creation. We rejoice in the splendor and mystery of countless species, our common creaturehood, and the interdependence of all that God makes. We believe that the Earth is home for all and that it has been created intrinsically good (Genesis 1).

We lament that the human species is shattering the splendid gifts of this web of life, ignoring our responsibility for the well being of all life, while destroying species and their habitats at a rate never before known in human history.

We believe that the Holy Spirit, who animates all of creation, breathes in us and can empower us to participate in working toward the flourishing of Earth's community of life. We believe that the people of God are called to forge ways of being human that enable socially just and ecologically sustainable communities to flourish for generations to come. And we believe in God's promise to fulfill all of creation, anticipating the reconciliation of all (Colossians 1:15), in accordance with God's promise (II Peter 3:13).

We lament that we have rejected this vocation, and have distorted our God-given abilities and knowledge in order to ransack and often destroy ecosystems and human communities rather than to protect, strengthen, and nourish them.

We believe that, in boundless love that hungers for justice, God in Jesus Christ acts to restore and redeem all creation (including human beings). God incarnate affirms all creation (John 1:14), which becomes a sacred window to eternity. In the cross and resurrection we know that God is drawn into life's most brutal and broken places and there brings forth healing and liberating power. That saving action restores right relationships among all members of "the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

We confess that instead of living and proclaiming this salvation through our very lives and worship, we have abused and exploited the Earth and people on the margins of power and privilege, altering climates, extinguishing species, and jeopardizing Earth's capacity to sustain life as we know and love it.

We believe that the created world is sacred – a revelation of God's power and gracious presence filling all things. This sacred quality of creation demands moderation and sharing, urgent antidotes for our excess in consumption and waste, reminding us that economic justice is an essential condition of ecological integrity. We cling to God's trustworthy promise to restore, renew, and fulfill all that God creates. We long for and work toward the day when churches, as embodiments of Christ on Earth, will respond to the "groaning of creation" (Romans 8:22) and to God's passionate desire to "renew the face of the Earth" (Psalm 104:30). We look forward to the day when the lamentations and groans of creation will be over, justice with peace will reign, humankind will nurture not betray the Earth, and all of creation will sing for joy.

Guiding Norms for Church and Society

These affirmations imply a challenge that is also a calling: to fulfill our vocation as moral images of God, reflections of divine love and justice charged to “serve and preserve” the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Given this charge and the urgent problems of our age – from species extinctions and mass poverty to climate change and health-crippling pollution – how shall we respond? What shall we be and do? What are the standards and practices of moral excellence that we ought to cultivate in our personal lives, our communities of faith, our social organizations, our businesses, and our political institutions? We affirm the following norms of social and environmental responsibility:

Justice – creating right relationships, both social and ecological, to ensure for all members of the Earth community the conditions required for their flourishing. Among human members, justice demands meeting the essential material needs and conditions for human dignity and social participation. In our global context, economic deprivation and ecological degradation are linked in a vicious cycle. We are compelled, therefore, to seek eco-justice, the integration of social justice and ecological integrity. The quest for eco-justice also implies the development of a set of human environmental rights, since one of the essential conditions of human well being is ecological integrity. These moral entitlements include protection of soils, air, and water from diverse pollutants; the preservation of biodiversity; and governmental actions ensuring the fair and frugal use of creation's riches.

Sustainability – living within the bounds of planetary capacities indefinitely, in fairness to both present and future generations of life. God's covenant is with humanity and all other living creatures “for all future generations” (Genesis 9:8-17). The concern for sustainability forces us to be responsible for the truly long-term impacts of our lifestyles and policies.

Bioresponsibility – extending the covenant of justice to include all other life forms as beloved creatures of God and as expressions of God's presence, wisdom, power, and glory. We do not determine nor declare creation's value, and other creatures should not be treated merely as instruments for our needs and wants. Other species have their own integrity. They deserve a “fair share” of Earth's bounty – a share that allows a biodiversity of life to thrive along with human communities.

Humility – recognizing, as an antidote to arrogance, the limits of human knowledge, technological ingenuity, and moral character. We are not the masters of creation. Knowing human capacities for error and evil, humility keeps our own species in check for the good of the whole of Earth as God's creation.

Generosity – sharing Earth's riches to promote and defend the common good in recognition of God's purposes for the whole creation and Christ's gift of abundant life. Humans are not collections of isolated individuals, but rather communities of socially and ecologically interdependent beings. A measure of a good society is not whether it privileges those who already have much, but rather whether it privileges the most vulnerable members of creation. Essentially, these tasks require good government at all levels, from local to regional to national to international.

Frugality – restraining economic production and consumption for the sake of eco-justice. Living lives filled with God's Spirit liberates us from the illusion of finding wholeness in the accumulation of material things and brings us to the reality of God's just purposes. Frugality connotes moderation, sufficiency, and temperance. Many call it simplicity. It demands the careful conservation of Earth's riches, comprehensive recycling, minimal harm to other species, material efficiency and the elimination of waste, and product durability. Frugality is the corrective to a cardinal vice of the age: prodigality - excessively taking from and wasting God's creation. On a finite planet, frugality is an expression of love and an instrument for justice and sustainability: it enables all life to thrive together by sparing and sharing global goods.

Solidarity – acknowledging that we are increasingly bound together as a global community in which we bear responsibility for one another's well being. The social and environmental problems of the age must be addressed with cooperative action at all levels – local, regional, national and international. Solidarity is a commitment to the global common good through international cooperation.

Compassion – sharing the joys and sufferings of all Earth's members and making them our own. Members of the body of Christ see the face of Christ in the vulnerable and excluded. From compassion flows inclusive caring and careful service to meet the needs of others.

A Call to Action: Healing the Earth and Providing a Just and Sustainable Society

For too long, we, our Christian brothers and sisters, and many people of good will have relegated care and justice for the Earth to the periphery of our concerns. This is not a competing “program alternative,” one “issue” among many. In this most critical moment in Earth's history, we are convinced that the central moral imperative of our time is the care for Earth as God's creation. Churches, as communities of God's people in the world, are called to exist as representatives of the loving Creator, Sustainer, and Restorer of all creation. We are called to worship God with all our being and actions, and to treat creation as sacred. We must engage our political leaders in supporting the very future of this planet. We are called to cling to the true Gospel – for “God so loved the cosmos” (John 3:16) – rejecting the false gospels of our day.

We believe that caring for creation must undergird, and be entwined with, all other dimensions of our churches' ministries. We are convinced that it is no longer acceptable to claim to be “church” while continuing to perpetuate, or even permit, the abuse of Earth as God's creation. Nor is it acceptable for our corporate and political leaders to engage in “business as usual” as if the very future of life-support systems were not at stake.

Therefore, we ... call on our brothers and sisters in Christ and all people of good will to join us in:

Understanding our responsibilities as those who live within the United States of America – the part of the human family that represents five percent of the world population and consumes 25 percent of Earth's riches. We believe that one of the surest ways to gain this understanding is by listening intently to the most vulnerable: those who most immediately suffer the consequences of our overconsumption, toxication, and hubris. The whole Earth is groaning, crying out for healing – let us awaken the “ears of our souls” to hear it, before it's too late.

Integrating this understanding into our core beliefs and practices surrounding what it means to be “church,” to be “human,” to be “children of God.” Such integration will be readily apparent in: congregational mission statements, lay and ordained ministries, the preaching of the Word, our hymns of praise, the confession of our sins, our financial stewardship and offerings to God, theological education, our evangelism, our daily work, sanctuary use, and compassionate service to all communities of life. With this integrated witness we look forward to a revitalization of our human vocation and our churches' lives that parallels the revitalization of God's thriving Earth.

Advocating boldly with all our leaders on behalf of creation's most vulnerable members (including human members). We must shed our complacency, denial, and fears and speak God's truth to power, on behalf of all who have been denied dignity and for the sake of all voiceless members of the community of life.

In Christ's name and for Christ's glory, we call out with broken yet hopeful hearts: join us in restoring God's Earth – the greatest healing work and moral assignment of our time.

Signed, **Drafters**

Neddy Astudillo, Latina Eco-Theologian, Presbyterian Church USA
 Father John Chryssavgis, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
 Dr. Dieter Hessel, Director of the Ecumenical Program on Ecology, Justice, and Faith
 Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., President, National Council of Churches and Bishop of Louisiana and Mississippi, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
 Dr. Carol Johnston, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture and Director of Lifelong Theological Education at Christian Theological Seminary
 Tanya Marcova-Barnett, Earth Ministry, Program Director
 Bill McKibben, author and scholar-in-residence, Middlebury College
 Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Seattle University
 Dr. James A. Nash, social and ecological ethicist, retired
 Dr. Larry Rasmussen, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics, Union Theological Seminary, New York City
 Rev. Dr. H. Paul Santmire, Author and Teaching Theologian, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Co-signers

Dr. Karen Baker-Fletcher, Associate Professor of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University
 Dr. John B. Cobb, Jr., Emeritus Professor, Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Graduate School
 Dr. Jay McDaniel, Director of the Steel Center for the Study of Religion and Philosophy, Hendrix College
 Dr. Sallie McFague, Carpenter Professor of Theology Emerita, Vanderbilt University Divinity School Distinguished Theologian in Residence, Vancouver School of Theology, British Columbia
 Dr. Barbara R. Rossing, New Testament Professor, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Footnotes:

- 1) American Baptist *Policy Statement on Ecology*, 1989, p. 2.
- 2) “Address of His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew at the Environmental Symposium, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Santa Barbara, California, 8 November 1997,” John Chryssavgis, *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, pages 220-221.

“Creation Care as Ecumenical Witness: Stewardship, Justice, and Redemption” An in-depth Study of Eco-Theology by the NCC

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.vacouncilofchurches.org%2F_literature_39094%2Fchristian_understanding_of_creation&ei=8KiSVeDIOsSfsAXlt5q4DQ&usg=AFQjCNG2ek3jwxjdzePC.IH0xKaWs6L2BQ&bvm=bv.96783405,d.b2w

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World Council of Churches (WCC)

The Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights

Call for Action (2011) <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/climate-change-water/call-for-action-by-geneva-interfaith-forum>

The Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights is an informal group of faith-based NGOs that gathered to reaffirm the responsibility of each faith and spiritual tradition to care for the environment and play a role in addressing climate change and its impact on the human rights of the world's population.

Climate change is and will continue to cause disasters affecting every aspect of human life and nature. Peoples that have a strong and direct link to nature and those that are extremely dependent on their environment are particularly vulnerable such as people living on small islands. Climate change also severely limits the development opportunities of poor countries, which lack the resources and technology to realize human rights progressively in a sustainable manner. The adverse impacts of climate change will, however, affect the whole world.

Thus, it is imperative that the international community and all sectors of civil society urgently mobilize to tackle the hurdles that obstruct adequate and equitable international action on climate change. It becomes vital to act to bring about the changes needed to generate rapid solutions to the consequences of climate change; the cost of delaying further responsible decision making will disrupt the social, economic, political and cultural life of peoples and nation states.

More coordinated action building is urgently needed based on what has already been done. In this context it is important to recall that:

- a) The UN Human Rights Council expressed with resolution A/HRC/RES/7/23 that “climate change poses an immediate and far reaching threat to people and communities around the world and has implications for the full enjoyment of human rights” and recognised that “climate change is a global problem requiring a global solution” and that “the effect of climate change will be felt most acutely by those segments of the population who are already in a vulnerable situation”. Furthermore this resolution requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct a detailed analytical study of the relationship between climate change and human rights.
- b) The resolution A/HRC/RES/10/4 decided that a panel discussion is to be held at its eleventh session on the relationship between climate change and human rights and,
- c) The resolution A/HRC/RES/13/17 called for a Social Forum session that was held 4-6 October 2010 on the adverse effects of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights that contributed positively to the debate.

It is our expectation that the Human Rights Council ensures a follow-up of the actions taken in relation

to climate change and human rights through the establishment of a new special procedure. The mandate should in particular entail a study on the responsibilities of States in the area of climate change, adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and funding; research on the effect of climate change decision making on human rights, the reality of displaced peoples within national boundaries and internationally and suggest measures to be taken for the management of such situations.

As we prepare for the UNFCCC COP 17 in Durban, South Africa, during 2011, the Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights would like to join forces with the NGOs and Civil Society movements that are already working to ensure that future action taken on climate change takes into account human rights.

We urge NGOs, Civil Society movements and government officials to engage in discussions with the aim to consider possible steps and concrete actions to be taken during the upcoming Human Rights Council sessions and other relevant forums.

<p>Contacts: Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) Centre Catholique International de Genève (CCIG) World Council of Churches (WCC) Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council (CEAPI)</p> <p>With the support of: Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço, Brazil (CESE– Ecumenical Coordination of Service) Eldoret-gender based and Development Network (EldoGADNet), Kenya Global Ethics Franciscans International Lutheran World Federation North South XXI United Evangelical Mission, Germany Mouvement International d’Apostolat des Milieux Sociaux Indépendants (MIAMSI) Zonta International-Lawyers.org Al Hakim Foundation Worldwide Organization for Women - WOW World Young Women's Christian Association - World YWCA International Federation of Women Lawyers – FIDA Conseil International des Femmes – International Council of Women</p>	Arab Lawyers Union Union of Arab Jurists General Arab Women’s Federation Geneva International Center for Justice Return to the Earth Rencontre Africaine de Défense pour le Droit de l’Homme – RADDHO Centre Commerce International pour le Développement – CCID Association Apprentissage sans Frontières Universal Esperanto Association – UEA Espace Afrique International Planetary Association for Clean Energy OCAPROCE International International Educational Development International Sustainable Energy Organization Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom – WILPF Women's World Summit Foundation – WWSF CETIM Ius Primi Viri Pax Christi International International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW) National Ethical Service
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Other Ecumenical Groups and Resources

African American Clergy Open Letter on Climate Change (2014)

<http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/environmental-justice/african-american-clergy-open-letter-on-climate-change>

The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it; the world, and all who live in it. Psalm 24:1

We are writing to support and join our political leaders in taking bold action to address climate change. As African-Americans and members of the Christian clergy, we speak from the dual perspectives of a people whose longstanding bond with the Earth is equaled by an abiding commitment to walking by faith—a faith that serves as our moral compass, and directs us to be responsible stewards of the whole of creation. Our perspective is shaped by the life-giving and healing legacy of earth-connectedness passed down by our forbears. A powerful connection to the Earth—among both urban and rural communities—has helped sustain the bodies and souls of our people for generations. Issues related to climate change are already affecting us, and without decisive action to protect our planet and its inhabitants, the hopes we hold for future generations will not be realized.

We affirm the interconnectedness of all humanity, and the importance of respecting and enhancing the lives of each and every one of our sisters and brothers—whether in Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America or South America. We all inhabit the same Earth, are tethered to it by the universal force of gravity, breathe its air and drink its water. When natural resources are degraded or scarce, the deleterious impact on an individual, group, or population is cause for concern, but even more than that, it requires corrective action, and whenever possible, preventive measures. We are well aware of this sad reality: The voices of communities whose inhabitants look like us often are dismissed or disregarded. But the world cannot afford to silence us, and we cannot afford to be—and will not—be silent. Climate change most directly impacts the poor and marginalized, but ultimately, everyone is in jeopardy. We must come together to solve this crisis, which can only be addressed effectively when we seek the good of all and speak candidly about where we are and where we've come from.

We grieve the long, sad history of racial oppression and the legacy of slavery that continues to affect virtually every dimension of life in America. As we assess the state of our country—and world—during the second term of our country's first Black president, we cannot escape the reality that our community has been deeply wounded by the systemic racism that reverberates throughout American society, curtailing opportunity and injuring psyches. We are deeply saddened by ongoing disparities in health care, housing, and economic opportunities, and in the educational and judicial systems. The frequency with which the “I-was-afraid-so-I-had-to-shoot” defense is successfully invoked when people of color are murdered reflects the pervasive impulse of law enforcement (and others) to view us as threatening or menacing, even in the most benign circumstances. We know the horror and fear that comes from knowing that none of us can control another person's perceptions or reactions. And yet, we live in hope—a hope born of faith, reinforced by the progress thus far, and propelled forward by people of good will, committed to ongoing constructive engagement around difficult, pressing issues. Confronting climate change is one of those pressing issues.

We recognize that the church has been instrumental in advancing racial and Environmental Justice. Our desire to further extend that involvement into the realm of Climate Justice leads us to now speak

about the importance of caring for the environment we all share, even as we seek better ways of coexisting with each other. The effects of climate change, which touches every aspect of human life, are already painfully clear: Over 50,000 people died of heat waves in 2010 in Europe; drought and increased wildfires threaten both food supplies and communities throughout the United States and the world; drinking water supplies have been jeopardized, and respiratory illnesses such as asthma are particularly vulnerable to the exacerbation of heat-related illness and stress. Devastating environmental, health, social, and economic consequences imperil our brothers and sisters around the world and in the United States. Today, as we contemplate the gravity of the global climate crisis, we think especially of communities of color and the poor. We are well aware of the disproportionate impact that climate change is taking on these populations the world over. We know it is crucial that our faith communities join with government, the private sector, and nonprofits in mitigation and resiliency planning, as more disruptions and damage caused by massive storms and tornados will continue to take place. This is a humanitarian emergency that requires resources to help vulnerable communities prepare for the dangers ahead and to care for those in harm's way.

We pledge to address the issue of climate change in the longstanding social justice tradition of the African-American church, with both spiritual and practical involvement. We especially encourage our civic leaders to help the marginalized and disenfranchised cope with the realities of climate change, and we pledge to work with the college and university systems to help develop solutions. We recognize the “inescapable network of mutuality” that Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. described when he wrote “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. . . . Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” The effects of climate change are significant, and our environment itself is an “inescapable network of mutuality.”

We call for bold action from political leaders at home and abroad, that will: 1. Assure resources for community resiliency and for the use of faith organizations in the face of immediate climate related disasters. 2. Create, promote and enable energy and carbon emission reduction targets. 3. Develop viable local communication networks to explore interfaith and secular solutions for climate challenges. 4. Continue support of grants and research to provide targeted assistance to underrepresented communities impacted by climate change around the world.

The upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations must result in a binding international treaty that:

- Commits signatories to meeting the IPCC-agreed emission reduction levels necessary to keep temperature increases below 2°C;
- Includes financial commitments from wealthy countries to assist developing countries and communities in identifying and implementing adaptation and mitigation strategies;
- Includes a meaningful role in negotiations for those who are most severely impacted by climate change.

We pray for wisdom and courage to attend our elected officials and all political leaders. It is vital that steps are taken now; the consequences of inaction are dire.

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden
to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15*

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Creation Justice Ministries

<http://www.creationjustice.org>

Creation Justice Ministries (formerly the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program) represents the creation care and environmental justice policies of major Christian denominations throughout the United States. We work in cooperation with 37 national faith bodies including Protestant denominations and Orthodox communions as well as regional faith groups, and congregants to protect and restore God's Creation.

Eco-justice includes all ministries designed to heal and defend creation, working to assure justice for all of creation and the human beings who live in it. A major task of Creation Justice Ministries (formerly the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program) is to provide program ideas and resources to help congregations as they engage in eco-justice. Please continue to browse our website to learn more about what we do and the programs we offer.

See their helpful **Educational Resources**: <http://www.creationjustice.org/educational-resources.html>

Eco-Justice Ministries

<http://www.eco-justice.org>

Mission Statement

Eco-Justice Ministries is an independent, ecumenical agency that helps churches answer the call to care for all of God's creation, and develop ministries that are faithful, relevant and effective in working toward social justice and environmental sustainability.

Four interlocking affirmations provide the theological basis for our work. These broad statements about the nature of God's creation, and about faithful life and ministry, inform our work.

God wills *shalom* for the world.

The rich biblical concept of shalom seeks peace with justice on a thriving Earth. Shalom combines ecological sustainability with all forms of social justice -- economic, racial, restorative, etc. -- as expressions of God's love for all of creation.

We live in a world of complex and interdependent relationships.

Our interpersonal relationships are important, and so are our ecological and institutional relationships. The quality of all of those relationships has both practical and moral significance.

Churches are called to be transformative of individuals and society.

Churches that are faithful will make a real difference in the lives of their members, their communities, and in the world. Because of their ministries, individuals, institutions and societies will be transformed in their beliefs, values and behaviors.

The world is limited -- and we find abundance within those limits.

There are limits to what the world can provide for humanity, and what sort of wastes the world can absorb -- and humanity has passed those limits. Theologically and practically, we find abundant living when we discover how to live joyously and sustainably within what God has provided.

Visit their **review of over 90 current curricula** on the environment and religion:

<http://www.eco-justice.org/curricreview.asp>

For a list of **contacts and websites of Ecology programs** in major denominations:

<http://www.eco-justice.org/denom.asp>

The Forum for Religion and Ecology at Yale

<http://fore.yale.edu/>

The Forum on Religion and Ecology is the largest international multireligious project of its kind. With its conferences, publications, and website it is engaged in exploring religious worldviews, texts, ethics, and practices in order to broaden understanding of the complex nature of current environmental concerns. The Forum recognizes that religions need to be in dialogue with other disciplines (e.g., science, economics, education, public policy) in seeking comprehensive solutions to both global and local environmental problems.

For an excellent list of **statements from World Religions**:

<http://fore.yale.edu/publications/statements/>

For one of the best **Resource pages for teachers**:

<http://fore.yale.edu/education/resources/>

The Green Seminary Initiative

<http://www.greenseminaries.org/index.php/aboutus/aboutusmenu>

The Green Seminary Initiative is premised on two convictions: The first is that the religious community has a unique and significant calling to turn back human-caused environmental destruction and to participate in bringing all of creation into health and wholeness. The second conviction is that theological schools should provide clergy and religious leaders with the tools necessary for them to lead their congregations, communities and organizations in meeting their unique call to protect and restore creation.

The Green Seminary Initiative fosters efforts by theological schools and seminaries to incorporate care for creation into the identity and mission of the institution, such that it becomes a foundational part of the academic program and an integral part of the ethos of the whole institution.

They **keep an excellent resource page** at:

<http://www.greenseminaries.org/index.php/resources>

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Green the Church: for Black Churches

http://www.greenforall.org/green_the_church or <http://www.greenfaith.org/resource-center>

Green The Church (GTC) is an initiative designed to tap into the power and purpose of the African American church community, and to explore and expand the role of churches as centers for environmental and economic resilience. Developed in partnership with Carroll Ministries and Pastor Ambrose Carroll (a Green For All Fellow), GTC works to empower church leadership and lay people to develop practical solutions to economic and environmental issues in the Black community.

GreenFaith: Interfaith Partners for the Environment

<http://www.greenfaith.org>

GreenFaith is an interfaith coalition for the environment founded in 1992. We work with houses of worship, religious schools and people of all faiths to help them become better environmental stewards. We believe in addressing environmental issues holistically (with Spirit, Stewardship, and Justice), and are committed to being a one-stop shop for the resources and tools religious institutions need to engage environmental issues and become religious-environmental leaders. Our work is based on beliefs shared by the world's great religions - we believe that protecting the earth is a religious value, and that environmental stewardship is a moral responsibility.

The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development

<http://www.interfaithsustain.com/about-the-organization/#sthash.QF1MLXPe.dpuf>

The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD) works to catalyze a transition to a sustainable human society through the active leadership of faith communities. Based in Jerusalem, ICSD unites faith communities, teachers and leaders to promote co-existence, peace, and sustainability through advocacy, education and action-oriented projects.

For a list of **courses taught on religion and environment** in U.S. (as of 2015)

<http://www.interfaithsustain.com/green-seminaries/>

For a thorough report of courses in being taught at U.S. Seminaries visit:

http://www.interfaithsustain.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Report_Faith_Ecology.pdf

Interfaith Power and Light

<http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org>

An ecumenical organization with this focus: "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."

Excellent resources for congregations and schools: <http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/resources/>

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Evangelical Organizations

The Blessed Earth

<http://www.blessedearth.org/>

Mission and Beliefs: Blessed Earth is an educational nonprofit that inspires and equips people of faith to become better stewards of the earth. They develop, promote, and deliver educational materials, resources, sermons, forums workshops, classes, retreats, and other events.

Blessed Earth believes that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and holds wisdom for us today.

Blessed Earth is motivated by the biblical mandate to care for God's creation.

Blessed Earth promotes individual and group actions that encourage responsible stewardship of resources.

Blessed Earth builds bridges within and beyond the Church that serve the Kingdom and glorify God.

Blessed Earth believes that Sabbath keeping is a key principle of creation care; a foundation of personal, family, and church health; and a unique contribution from the Church in addressing stewardship issues.

Blessed Earth recognizes that degradation of land, air, and water hurts those with the least resources the most. To show true and meaningful love for our neighbors, we are called to live simply and to give generously.

The Evangelical Climate Initiative

Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action (2006)

<http://www.npr.org/documents/2006/feb/evangelical/calltoaction.pdf>

Preamble

As American evangelical Christian leaders, we recognize both our opportunity and our responsibility to offer a biblically based moral witness that can help shape public policy in the most powerful nation on earth, and therefore contribute to the well-being of the entire world.¹ *Whether* we will enter the public square and offer our witness there is no longer an open question. We are in that square, and we will not withdraw.

We are proud of the evangelical community's long-standing commitment to the sanctity of human life. But we also offer moral witness in many venues and on many issues. Sometimes the issues that we have taken on, such as sex trafficking, genocide in the Sudan, and the AIDS epidemic in Africa, have surprised outside observers. While individuals and organizations can be called to concentrate on certain issues, we are not a single-issue movement. We seek to be true to our calling as Christian leaders, and above all faithful to Jesus Christ our Lord. Our attention, therefore, goes to whatever issues our faith requires us to address.

Over the last several years many of us have engaged in study, reflection, and prayer related to the issue of climate change (often called "global warming"). For most of us, until recently this has not been treated as a pressing issue or major priority. Indeed, many of us have required considerable convincing

before becoming persuaded that climate change is a real problem and that it ought to matter to us as Christians. But now we have seen and heard enough to offer the following moral argument related to the matter of human-induced climate change. We commend the four simple but urgent claims offered in this document to all who will listen, beginning with our brothers and sisters in the Christian community, and urge all to take the appropriate actions that follow from them.

Claim 1: Human-Induced Climate Change is Real

Since 1995 there has been general agreement among those in the scientific community most seriously engaged with this issue that climate change is happening and is being caused mainly by human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels. Evidence gathered since 1995 has only strengthened this conclusion.

Because all religious/moral claims about climate change are relevant only if climate change is real and is mainly human-induced, everything hinges on the scientific data. As evangelicals we have hesitated to speak on this issue until we could be more certain of the science of climate change, but the signatories now believe that the evidence demands action:

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's most authoritative body of scientists and policy experts on the issue of global warming, has been studying this issue since the late 1980s. (From 1988-2002 the IPCC's assessment of the climate science was Chaired by Sir John Houghton, a devout evangelical Christian.) It has documented the steady rise in global temperatures over the last fifty years, projects that the average global temperature will continue to rise in the coming decades, and attributes "most of the warming" to human activities.
- The U.S. National Academy of Sciences, as well as all other G8 country scientific Academies (Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, Italy, and Russia), has concurred with these judgments.
- In a 2004 report, and at the 2005 G8 summit, the Bush Administration has also acknowledged the reality of climate change and the likelihood that human activity is the cause of at least some of it.²

In the face of the breadth and depth of this scientific and governmental concern, only a small percentage of which is noted here, we are convinced that evangelicals must engage this issue without any further lingering over the basic reality of the problem or humanity's responsibility to address it.

Claim 2: The Consequences of Climate Change Will Be Significant, and Will Hit the Poor the Hardest

The earth's natural systems are resilient but not infinitely so, and human civilizations are remarkably dependent on ecological stability and well-being. It is easy to forget this until that stability and well-being are threatened.

Even small rises in global temperatures will have such likely impacts as: sea level rise; more frequent heat waves, droughts, and extreme weather events such as torrential rains and floods; increased tropical

diseases in now-temperate regions; and hurricanes that are more intense. It could lead to significant reduction in agricultural output, especially in poor countries. Low-lying regions, indeed entire islands, could find themselves under water. (This is not to mention the various negative impacts climate change could have on God's other creatures.)

Each of these impacts increases the likelihood of refugees from flooding or famine, violent conflicts, and international instability, which could lead to more security threats to our nation.

Poor nations and poor individuals have fewer resources available to cope with major challenges and threats. The consequences of global warming will therefore hit the poor the hardest, in part because those areas likely to be significantly affected first are in the poorest regions of the world. Millions of people could die in this century because of climate change, most of them our poorest global neighbors.

Claim 3: Christian Moral Convictions Demand Our Response to the Climate Change Problem

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

- Christians must care about climate change because we love God the Creator and Jesus our Lord, through whom and for whom the creation was made. This is God's world, and any damage that we do to God's world is an offense against God Himself (Gen. 1; Ps. 24; Col. 1:16).
- Christians must care about climate change 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 as though each was Jesus Christ himself (Mt. 22:34-40; Mt. 7:12; Mt. 25:31-46).
- Christians, noting the fact that most of the climate change problem is human induced, are reminded that when God made humanity he commissioned us to exercise stewardship over the earth and its creatures. Climate change is the latest evidence of our failure to exercise proper stewardship, and constitutes a critical opportunity for us to do better (Gen. 1:26-28).

Love of God, love of neighbor, and the demands of stewardship are more than enough reason for evangelical Christians to respond to the climate change problem with moral passion and concrete action.

Claim 4: The need to act now is urgent. Governments, businesses, churches, and individuals all have a role to play in addressing climate change -- starting now.

The basic task for all of the world's inhabitants is to find ways now to begin to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels that are the primary cause of human-induced climate change.

There are several reasons for urgency. First, deadly impacts are being experienced now. Second, the oceans only warm slowly, creating a lag in experiencing the consequences. Much of the climate change to which we are already committed will not be realized for several decades. The consequences

of the pollution we create now will be visited upon our children and grandchildren. Third, as individuals and as a society we are making long-term decisions today that will determine how much carbon dioxide we will emit in the future, such as whether to purchase energy efficient vehicles and appliances that will last for 10-20 years, or whether to build more coal-burning power plants that last for 50 years rather than investing more in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

In the United States, the most important immediate step that can be taken at the federal level is to pass and implement national legislation requiring sufficient economy-wide reductions in carbon dioxide emissions through cost-effective, market-based mechanisms such as a cap-and-trade program. On June 22, 2005 the Senate passed the Domenici-Bingaman resolution affirming this approach, and a number of major energy companies now acknowledge that this method is best both for the environment and for business.

We commend the Senators who have taken this stand and encourage them to fulfill their pledge. We also applaud the steps taken by such companies as BP, Shell, General Electric, Cinergy, Duke Energy, and DuPont, all of which have moved ahead of the pace of government action through innovative measures implemented within their companies in the U.S. and around the world. In so doing they have offered timely leadership.

Numerous positive actions to prevent and mitigate climate change are being implemented across our society by state and local governments, churches, smaller businesses, and individuals. These commendable efforts focus on such matters as energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy, low CO₂ emitting technologies, and the purchase of hybrid vehicles. These efforts can easily be shown to save money, save energy, reduce global warming pollution as well as air pollution that harm human health, and eventually pay for themselves. There is much more to be done, but these pioneers are already helping to show the way forward.

Finally, while we must reduce our global warming pollution to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, as a society and as individuals we must also help the poor adapt to the significant harm that global warming will cause.

Conclusion

We the undersigned 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.

Footnotes:

1. Cf. "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility," approved by National Association of Evangelicals, October 8, 2004.

2. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001, Summary for Policymakers; (http://www.grida.no/climate/ipcc_tar/wg1/007.htm). For the confirmation of the IPCC's findings from the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, see, *Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions* (2001); (<http://books.nap.edu/html/climatechange/summary.html>). For the statement by the G8 Academies (plus those of Brazil, India, and China) see *Joint Science Academies Statement: Global Response to Climate Change*, (June 2005): <http://nationalacademies.org/onpi/06072005.pdf>. Another major international report that confirms the IPCC's conclusions

comes from the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. See their *Impacts of a Warming Climate*, Cambridge University Press, November 2004, p.2; <http://amap.no/acia/>. Another important statement is from the American Geophysical Union, “Human Impacts on Climate,” December 2003, (http://www.agu.org/sci_soc/policy/climate_change_position.html). For the Bush Administration’s perspective, see *Our Changing Planet: The U.S. Climate Change Science Program for Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005*, p.47; (<http://www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/Library/ocp2004-5/default.htm>). For the 2005 G8 statement, see (<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page7881.asp>).

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The Evangelical Environmental Network

In June 1994, the Evangelical Environmental Network, publisher of *Creation Care Magazine*, held a conference for prominent Evangelical leaders on the Chesapeake Bay to examine the responsibility of Christians to care for the world that God created. Almost 500 leaders signed the following statement.

On the Care of Creation (1994)

<http://creationcare.org/creation-care-resources/evangelical-declaration-on-the-care-of-creation/>

The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof- Psalm 24:1

As followers of Jesus Christ, committed to the full authority of the Scriptures, and aware of the ways we have degraded creation, we believe that biblical faith is essential to the solution of our ecological problems.

Because we worship and honor the Creator, we seek to cherish and care for the creation.

Because we have sinned, we have failed in our stewardship of creation. Therefore we repent of the way we have polluted, distorted, or destroyed so much of the Creator's work.

Because in Christ God has healed our alienation from God and extended to us the first fruits of the reconciliation of all things, we commit ourselves to working in the power of the Holy Spirit to share the Good News of Christ in word and deed, to work for the reconciliation of all people in Christ, and to extend Christ's healing to suffering creation.

Because we await the time when even the groaning creation will be restored to wholeness, we commit ourselves to work vigorously to protect and heal that creation for the honor and glory of the Creator---whom we know dimly through creation, but meet fully through Scripture and in Christ. We and our children face a growing crisis in the health of the creation in which we are embedded, and through which, by God's grace, we are sustained. Yet we continue to degrade that creation.

These degradations of creation can be summed up as 1) land degradation; 2) deforestation; 3) species extinction; 4) water degradation; 5) global toxification; 6) the alteration of atmosphere; 7) human and cultural degradation.

Many of these degradations are signs that we are pressing against the finite limits God has set for creation. With continued population growth, these degradations will become more severe. Our responsibility is not only to bear and nurture children, but to nurture their home on earth. We respect the institution of marriage as the way God has given to insure thoughtful procreation of children and their nurture to the glory of God.

We recognize that human poverty is both a cause and a consequence of environmental degradation.

Many concerned people, convinced that environmental problems are more spiritual than technological, are exploring the world's ideologies and religions in search of non-Christian spiritual resources for the healing of the earth. As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that the Bible calls us to respond in four ways:

First, God calls us to confess and repent of attitudes which devalue creation, and which twist or ignore biblical revelation to support our misuse of it. Forgetting that "the earth is the Lord's," we have often simply used creation and forgotten our responsibility to care for it.

Second, our actions and attitudes toward the earth need to proceed from the center of our faith, and be rooted in the fullness of God's revelation in Christ and the Scriptures. We resist both ideologies which would presume the Gospel has nothing to do with the care of non-human creation and also ideologies which would reduce the Gospel to nothing more than the care of that creation.

Third, we seek carefully to learn all that the Bible tells us about the Creator, creation, and the human task. In our life and words we declare that full good news for all creation which is still waiting "with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God," (Rom. 8:19).

Fourth, we seek to understand what creation reveals about God's divinity, sustaining presence, and everlasting power, and what creation teaches us of its God-given order and the principles by which it works.

Thus we call on all those who are committed to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to affirm the following principles of biblical faith, and to seek ways of living out these principles in our personal lives, our churches, and society.

The cosmos, in all its beauty, wildness, and life-giving bounty, is the work of our personal and loving Creator.

Our creating God is prior to and other than creation, yet intimately involved with it, upholding each thing in its freedom, and all things in relationships of intricate complexity. God is transcendent, while lovingly sustaining each creature; and immanent, while wholly other than creation and not to be confused with it.

God the Creator is relational in very nature, revealed as three persons in One. Likewise, the creation which God intended is a symphony of individual creatures in harmonious relationship.

The Creator's concern is for all creatures. God declares all creation "good" (Gen. 1:31); promises care in a covenant with all creatures (Gen. 9:9-17); delights in creatures which have no human apparent usefulness (Job 39-41); and wills, in Christ, "to reconcile all things to himself" (Col.1:20).

Men, women, and children, have a unique responsibility to the Creator; at the same time we are creatures, shaped by the same processes and embedded in the same systems of physical, chemical, and biological interconnections which sustain other creatures.

Men, women, and children, created in God's image, also have a unique responsibility for creation. Our actions should both sustain creation's fruitfulness and preserve creation's powerful testimony to its Creator.

Our God-given , stewardly talents have often been warped from their intended purpose: that we know, name, keep and delight in God's creatures; that we nourish civilization in love, creativity and obedience to God; and that we offer creation and civilization back in praise to the Creator. We have ignored our creaturely limits and have used the earth with greed, rather than care.

The earthly result of human sin has been a perverted stewardship, a patchwork of garden and wasteland in which the waste is increasing. "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land...Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away" (Hosea 4:1,3). Thus, one consequence of our misuse of the earth is an unjust denial of God's created bounty to other human beings, both now and in the future.

God's purpose in Christ is to heal and bring to wholeness not only persons but the entire created order. "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross" (Col. 1:19-20).

In Jesus Christ, believers are forgiven, transformed and brought into God's kingdom. "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17). The presence of the kingdom of God is marked not only by renewed fellowship with God, but also by renewed harmony and justice between people, and by renewed harmony and justice between people and the rest of the created world. "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isa. 55:12).

We believe that in Christ there is hope, not only for men, women and children, but also for the rest of creation which is suffering from the consequences of human sin.

Therefore we call upon all Christians to reaffirm that all creation is God's; that God created it good; and that God is renewing it in Christ.

We encourage deeper reflection on the substantial biblical and theological teaching which speaks of God's work of redemption in terms of the renewal and completion of God's purpose in creation.

We seek a deeper reflection on the wonders of God's creation and the principles by which creation works. We also urge a careful consideration of how our corporate and individual actions respect and comply with God's ordinances for creation.

We encourage Christians to incorporate the extravagant creativity of God into their lives by increasing the nurturing role of beauty and the arts in their personal, ecclesiastical, and social patterns.

We urge individual Christians and churches to be centers of creation's care and renewal, both delighting in creation as God's gift, and enjoying it as God's provision, in ways which sustain and heal the damaged fabric of the creation which God has entrusted to us.

We recall Jesus' words that our lives do not consist in the abundance of our possessions, and therefore we urge followers of Jesus to resist the allure of wastefulness and overconsumption by making personal lifestyle choices that express humility, forbearance, self restraint and frugality.

We call on all Christians to work for godly, just, and sustainable economies which reflect God's sovereign economy and enable men, women and children to flourish along with all the diversity of creation. We recognize that poverty forces people to degrade creation in order to survive; therefore we support the development of just, free economies which empower the poor and create abundance without diminishing creation's bounty.

We commit ourselves to work for responsible public policies which embody the principles of biblical stewardship of creation.

We invite Christians--individuals, congregations and organizations--to join with us in this evangelical declaration on the environment, becoming a covenant people in an ever-widening circle of biblical care for creation.

We call upon Christians to listen to and work with all those who are concerned about the healing of creation, with an eagerness both to learn from them and also to share with them our conviction that the God whom all people sense in creation (Acts 17:27) is known fully only in the Word made flesh in Christ the living God who made and sustains all things.

We make this declaration knowing that until Christ returns to reconcile all things, we are called to be faithful stewards of God's good garden, our earthly home.

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The Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel

Call to Action, St. Ann, Jamaica, November 2012

http://www.creationcare.org/media.php?what=21&c_id=7

The *Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel* met from 29 Oct – 2 Nov 2012 in St. Ann, Jamaica to build on the creation care components of the *Cape Town Commitment*. We were a gathering of theologians, church leaders, scientists and creation care practitioners, fifty-seven men and women from twenty-six countries from the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania, North America and Europe. We met under the auspices of the Lausanne Movement in collaboration with the World Evangelical Alliance, hosted by a country and region of outstanding natural beauty, where we enjoyed, celebrated and reflected on the wonder of God's good creation. Many biblical passages, including reflections on Genesis 1 – 3, Psalm 8 and Romans 8, informed our prayers, discussions and deliberations on the themes of ***God's World, God's Word and God's Work***. Our consultation immediately followed Hurricane Sandy's devastation of the Caribbean and coincided with that storm's arrival in North America; the destruction and loss of life was a startling reminder as to the urgency, timeliness and importance of this Consultation.

Two major convictions

Our discussion, study and prayer together led us to two primary conclusions:

Creation Care is indeed a “gospel issue within the lordship of Christ” (CTC I.7.A). Informed and inspired by our study of the scripture – the original intent, plan, and command to care for creation, the resurrection narratives and the profound truth that in Christ all things have been reconciled to God – we reaffirm that creation care is an issue that must be included in our response to the gospel, proclaiming and acting upon the good news of what God has done and will complete for the salvation of the world. This is not only biblically justified, but an integral part of our mission and an expression of our worship to God for his wonderful plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Therefore, our ministry of reconciliation is a matter of great joy and hope and we would care for creation even if it were not in crisis.

We are faced with a crisis that is pressing, urgent, and that must be resolved in our generation.

Many of the world’s poorest people, ecosystems, and species of flora and fauna are being deva-stated by violence against the environment in multiple ways, of which global climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, water stress, and pollution are but a part. We can no longer afford complacency and endless debate. Love for God, our neighbors and the wider creation, as well as our passion for justice, compel us to “urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility” (CTC I.7.A).

Our call to action

Based on these two convictions, we therefore call the whole church, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to respond radically and faithfully to care for God’s creation, demonstrating our belief and hope in the transforming power of Christ. We call on the Lausanne Movement, evangelical leaders, national evangelical organizations, and all local churches to respond urgently at the personal, community, national and international levels.

Specifically, we call for:

1. **A new commitment to a simple lifestyle.** Recognizing that much of our crisis is due to billions of lives lived carelessly, we reaffirm the Lausanne commitment to simple lifestyle (*Lausanne Occasional Paper #20*), and call on the global evangelical community to take steps, personally and collectively, to live within the proper boundaries of God’s good gift in creation, to engage further in its restoration and conservation, and to equitably share its bounty with each other.
2. **New and robust theological work.** In particular, we need guidance in four areas:
 - An integrated theology of creation care that can engage seminaries, Bible colleges and others to equip pastors to disciple their congregations.
 - A theology that examines humanity’s identity as both embedded in creation and yet possessing a special role toward creation.
 - A theology that challenges current prevailing economic ideologies in relation to our biblical stewardship of creation.
 - A theology of hope in Christ and his Second Coming that properly informs and inspires creation care.
3. **Leadership from the church in the Global South.** As the Global South represents those affected in the current ecological crisis, it possesses a particular need to speak up, engage issues of creation care, and act upon them. We the members of the Consultation further request that the

church of the Global South exercise leadership among us, helping to set the agenda for the advance of the gospel and the care of creation.

4. **Mobilization of the whole church and engagement of all of society.** Mobilization must occur at the congregational level and include those who are often over-looked, utilizing the gifts of women, children, youth, and indigenous people as well as professionals and other resource people who possess experience and expertise. Engagement must be equally widespread, including formal, urgent and creative conversations with responsible leaders in government, business, civil society, and academia.
5. **Environmental missions among unreached people groups.** We participate in Lausanne's historic call to world evangelization, and believe that environmental issues represent one of the greatest opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ and plant churches among unreached and unengaged people groups in our generation (*CTC II.D.1.B*). We encourage the church to promote "environmental missions" as a new category within mission work (akin in function to medical missions).
6. **Radical action to confront climate change.** Affirming the *Cape Town Commitment's* declaration of the "serious and urgent challenge of climate change" which will "disproportionately affect those in poorer countries", (*CTC II.B.6*), we call for action in radically reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building resilient communities. We understand these actions to be an application of the command to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Christ.
7. **Sustainable principles in food production.** In gratitude to God who provides sustenance, and flowing from our conviction to become excellent stewards of creation, we urge the application of environmentally and generationally sustainable principles in agriculture (field crops and livestock, fisheries and all other forms of food production), with particular attention to the use of methodologies such as conservation agriculture.
8. **An economy that works in harmony with God's creation.** We call for an approach to economic well-being and development, energy production, natural resource management (including mining and forestry), water management and use, transportation, health care, rural and urban design and living, and personal and corporate consumption patterns that maintain the ecological integrity of creation.
9. **Local expressions of creation care,** which preserve and enhance biodiversity. We commend such projects, along with any action that might be characterized as the "small step" or the "symbolic act," to the worldwide church as ways to powerfully witness to Christ's Lordship over all creation.
10. **Prophetic advocacy and healing reconciliation.** We call for individual Christians and the church as a whole to prophetically "speak the truth to power" through advocacy and legal action so that public policies and private practice may change to better promote the care of creation and better support devastated communities and habitats. Additionally, we call the church to "speak

the peace of Christ” into communities torn apart by environmental disputes, mobilizing those who are skilled at conflict resolution, and maintaining our own convictions with humility.

Our call to prayer

Each of our calls to action rest on an even more urgent call to prayer, intentional and fervent, soberly aware that this is a spiritual struggle. Many of us must begin our praying with lamentation and repentance for our failure to care for creation, and for our failure to lead in transformation at a personal and corporate level. And then, having tasted of the grace and mercies of God in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, and with hope in the fullness of our redemption, we pray with confidence that the Triune God can and will heal our land and all who dwell in it, for the glory of his matchless name.

We, the participants of the 2012 Jamaica Creation Care Consultation, invite Christians and Christian organizations everywhere to signify your agreement with and commitment to this Call to Action by **signing this document** as an individual or on behalf of your organization, institution or other church body. Individuals may sign by going to <http://lausanne.org/creationcare> and following the directions given to add their names. Organizational signatories should send a letter or email signed by their leader, board chair, or authorized representative to creationcare@lausanne.org [Questions about this procedure may be sent to the same address.]

Agreed together by the participants of the Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel, St. Ann, Jamaica, 9 November, 2012.

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National Association of Evangelicals

For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility (2004)

<http://transformmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/NAE-For-the-Health-of-the-Nation-Public-Policy.pdf>

We labor to protect God’s creation

As we embrace our responsibility to care for God’s earth, we reaffirm the important truth that we worship only the Creator and not the creation. God gave the care of his earth and its species to our first parents. That responsibility has passed into our hands. We affirm that God-given dominion is a sacred

responsibility to steward the earth and not a license to abuse the creation of which we are a part. We are not the owners of creation, but its stewards, summoned by God to “watch over and care for it” (Gen. 2:15). This implies the principle of sustainability: our uses of the Earth must be designed to conserve and renew the Earth rather than to deplete or destroy it.

The Bible teaches us that God is not only redeeming his people, but is also restoring the whole creation (Rom. 8:18-23). Just as we show our love for the Savior by reaching out to the lost, we believe that we show our love for the Creator by caring for his creation.

Because clean air, pure water, and adequate resources are crucial to public health and civic order, government has an obligation to protect its citizens from the effects of environmental degradation. This involves both the urgent need to relieve human suffering caused by bad environmental practice. Because natural systems are extremely complex, human actions can have unexpected side effects. We must therefore approach our stewardship of creation with humility and caution.

Human beings have responsibility for creation in a variety of ways. We urge Christians to shape their personal lives in creation-friendly ways: practicing effective recycling, conserving resources, and experiencing the joy of contact with nature. We urge government to encourage fuel efficiency, reduce pollution, encourage sustainable use of natural resources, and provide for the proper care of wildlife and their natural habitats.

The Sandy Cove Covenant and Invitation (2004)

History: <http://www.carlstevens.org/subpage44.html>

June 28-30, 2004, evangelical leaders gathered at Sandy Cove Christian Conference Center located in North East, Maryland at the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay for a conference sponsored by members of *Christianity Today*, National Association of Evangelicals, and the Evangelical Environmental Network. The purpose of this gathering was to examine how to care for all of God’s creation. The result of this historic conference was the writing of *The Sandy Cove Covenant*.

For more information about the conference, visit the Evangelical Environmental Network’s website (www.creationcare.org/conference). Their site contains the text of the Covenant and a list of signers, text of presentations, speakers’ brief biographies, Scriptures, photos, and the fall 2004 issue of *Creation Care Magazine*, which was devoted to the Sandy Cove conference.

On December 5, 2004 we were given a commission by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Jr. to convene this meeting at Sandy Cove, Maryland for the purposes hereinafter stated; and This document will ensure the reflection of his commission under the leading of the Holy Spirit; and We express our gratitude to Pastor Stevens for the vision, ministry, and work in imparting the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to us for its further propagation in response to the Great Commission; and We are grateful to our Pastor for almost fifty years of selfless service to Jesus Christ and His Body including his personal investment in each of our lives, we entered into this labor of love to honor him, his life, and that portion of the Body of Christ entrusted to his pastoral care; and It is our desire to acknowledge the challenges and problems we have all experienced; and We desire to reflect the

unity of the Spirit in Eph. 4:3; and Christ is our life and we have a vested interest in the future of this ministry; and We pledge to confront those who would cause division within the Body of Christ through gossip, rumor, and casting suspicion; and It is our desire to protect every individual's spiritual growth and liberty in discipleship unto Christ that has been entrusted to us and that none would be marked in a manner that is unbiblical, and contrary to what we have been taught by our Pastor; and It has come to our attention that many people regrettably have been unbiblically and unjustifiably marked and shunned, including but not limited to the following: Pastor Bill Reed, Pastor Rick LeClair, Pastor Mark Morin, Pastor Tim Kelley, Pastor Brian Williams, Pastor Philip Mawaka, Pastor Rob Prokop; and The ministry's integrity and reputation has been questioned; and We want to publish these truths and make them evident for ourselves and the posterity of the ministry; and We believe that this meeting at Sandy Cove in North East, Maryland is in the providential will of God.

THEREFORE: We followed the biblical process and mandates in resolving issues and problems and established this meeting to address relational and doctrinal issues; and We have gathered together to stand against the wiles of the devil designed to destroy this ministry as well as this meeting; and We made a covenant to protect one another in Biblical integrity and uphold godly character; and We restored and reconciled with one another as we communicated openly and honestly; and We have unanimously agreed to honor the Biblical process of discipline; and We reaffirm the unity, one heart, one spirit, and one message that we have been given by God; and We have experienced the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and His leading in the work of this meeting and thank Him for the love and unity we witnessed; and As undersigned, we, the affiliate pastors and the elders of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore stand united; and We have reviewed doctrines and their proper application relevant to the issues at hand; and We have affirmed and validated our affiliation.

AS A SACRED COVENANT, THEREFORE, in the spirit of I Corinthians 13, we agree to pledge and affirm our loyalties to the above-stated purposes and to each other; and We further reaffirm our commitment to Greater Grace World Outreach, to stand together, and to protect the purpose and plan of this meeting for the future; and We unanimously agreed to pursue a process of reconciliation with Pastor Paul Stevens; and Finally, we unanimously recognize that there are a number of existing problems that are yet to be resolved and we commit to continue to openly discuss and work on them and to develop solutions together as they affect Greater Grace World Outreach.

Signatures of sixty-six elders and affiliate pastors follow the text. You can download the files below to view the signatures of the participating elders.

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