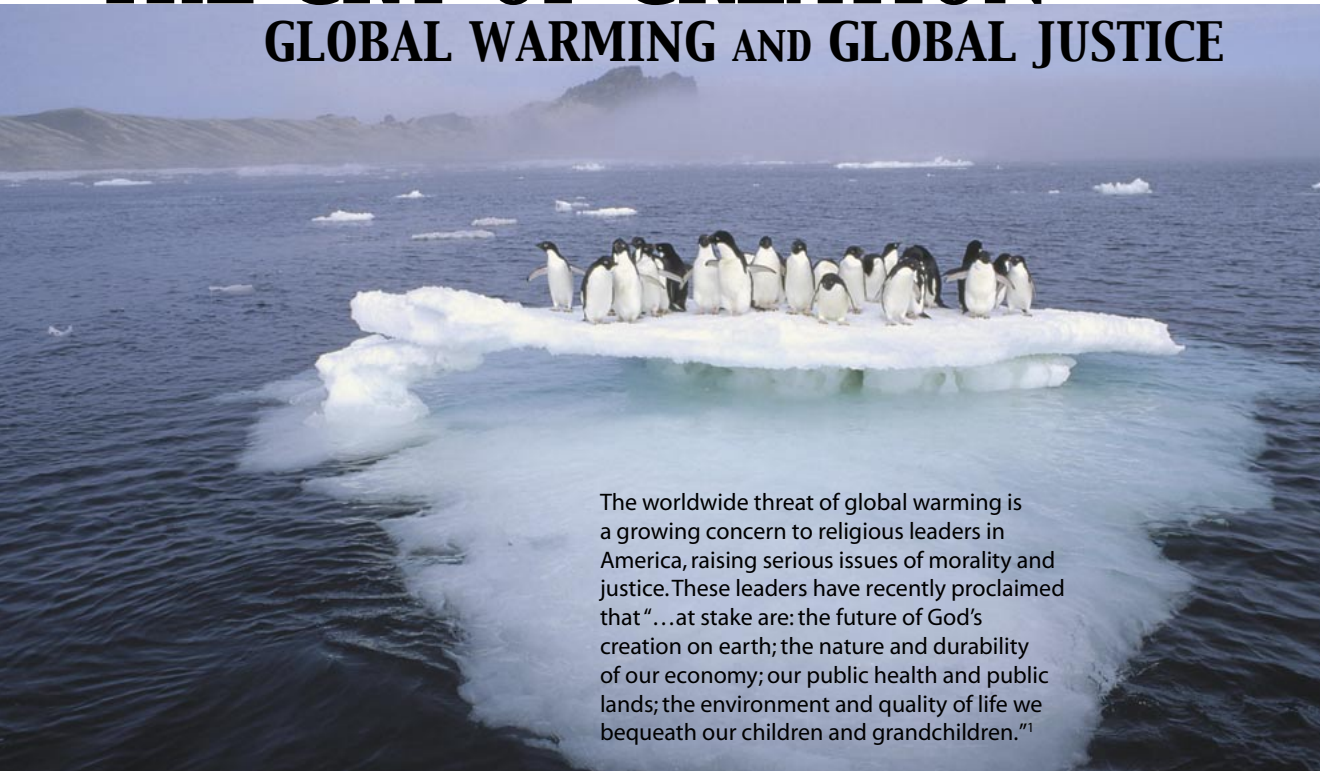


# THE CRY OF CREATION

## GLOBAL WARMING AND GLOBAL JUSTICE



The worldwide threat of global warming is a growing concern to religious leaders in America, raising serious issues of morality and justice. These leaders have recently proclaimed that "...at stake are: the future of God's creation on earth; the nature and durability of our economy; our public health and public lands; the environment and quality of life we bequeath our children and grandchildren."<sup>1</sup>

Global warming will harm people all around the world, especially the world's poor. It is estimated that over 150,000 people die every year, most in developing nations, from the side-effects of global warming ranging from malaria to malnutrition, and the numbers could almost double by 2020.<sup>2</sup> The United States, with its great economic and technical strengths, has the ability to lead the global effort necessary to tackle global warming. We can develop solutions, but our failure to adopt an action program that recognizes the enormity of the problem keeps solutions on the shelf and puts millions in peril.

*Interfaith*  
**CLIMATE CHANGE NETWORK**  
JOINING TOGETHER IN PROTECTING CREATION

## GLOBAL WARMING – WHAT IS IT?

Global warming threatens our health and our environment. The problem is pollution from cars and power plants. When we burn fossil fuels like coal and oil, we pump carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This creates a thickening layer of pollution, trapping in heat around the world. We have the know-how to start fixing the problem. But unless we start now, the planet we leave our children will be hotter and less hospitable, with dirtier air and water, more severe droughts and floods, and more wildfires.

Eighteen of the twenty hottest years on record have occurred since 1980; nine of the top ten since 1990. Scientists say that unless global warming emissions are reduced, average temperatures could rise another 3 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit in the United States by the end of the century – with far-reaching effects:

- Air pollution will get worse.
- Heat waves will be more frequent and intense.
- Sea levels will rise, flooding coastal areas.
- Droughts and wildfires will occur more often.
- Some species will be pushed to extinction.<sup>3,4</sup>

Many of these impacts are already occurring. If we do not begin to reduce global warming pollution now, we will leave our children and grandchildren a world with an unfriendly and perilous climate. The good news is that we have solutions to fix the problem, like cleaner cars and cleaner energy choices.



## GLOBAL WARMING AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE WORLD'S POOR

More than one billion people live in abject poverty, and a further two billion people live on less than \$2 a day. Although the last century saw massive declines in poverty, it remains a scourge on the face of humanity. Sadly, the impacts of global warming will fall most heavily on the world's poor. Poor peoples' food and livelihoods are particularly dependent on the natural environment, which in turn is vulnerable to higher temperatures, more intense storms, and more severe droughts, all expected effects of global warming. The poor are also more vulnerable to infectious diseases that can spread as the climate changes. All of these impacts threaten to create waves of environmental refugees.

Countries already struggling with limited institutional and financial capacity will be simply unable to cope with the additional problems raised by global warming. The cumulative effects threaten to undo decades of development and poverty-reduction efforts. Disaster relief to respond to these expected impacts diverts scarce money and resources from other poverty reduction efforts. Global warming will profoundly harm the livelihoods and health of exactly those who can least afford it, making it ever harder for the world's poor to escape from poverty.

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## FAMINE

Global warming threatens agriculture, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions. Droughts, flooding and severe storms are already primary causes of famine for millions of people throughout the developing world. A changing climate will affect the productivity of certain critical crops, and any large-scale, adverse alteration in agricultural production, supply and distribution – particularly for developing world populations – will have a severe impact. Malnutrition and starvation will increase unless new crops, supply lines and distribution systems can be put into place. And with resources already stretched to their limits, the success of such adaptation is extremely uncertain. For example, researchers predict serious shortages of corn, one of the world's most basic foods, could affect up to 140 million people in the developing world within 50 years.<sup>5</sup>

## DISEASE

Global warming is expected to increase death and illness from infectious diseases such as dengue fever and other diseases related to contaminated water supplies, inadequate sanitation, and food-borne illnesses. In developing nations, death rates would be highest for children, who are most vulnerable to malnutrition, diarrhea and malaria, conditions that will spread in the wake of higher temperatures, floods and droughts. Other health impacts from rising temperatures include increased mortality and illness from heat stress and worsened air pollution. Poor people without adequate health care are more vulnerable to these diseases in the first place, and overloaded health systems are going to be even less able to cope with an increase in such health problems.

## UNNATURAL DISASTERS

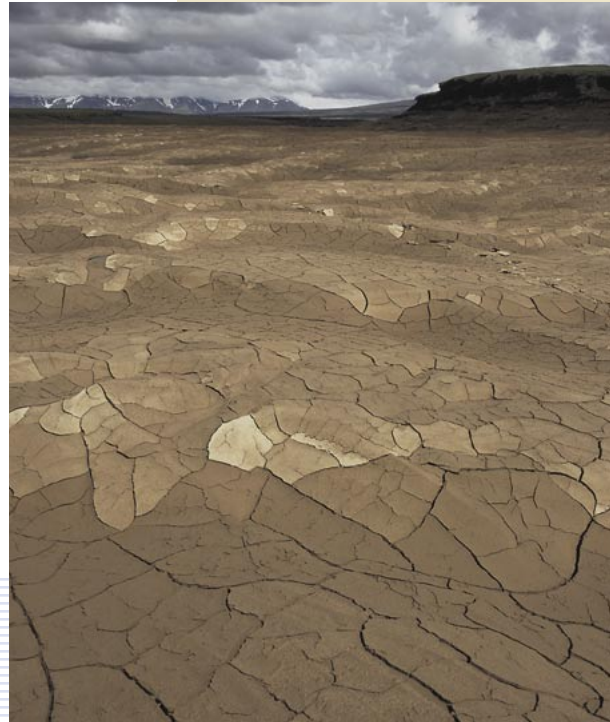
Billions of people will be at risk from storms, floods and droughts as a result of global warming. By 2025, half the world's population will be living in areas that are imperiled. Rising sea levels are a particularly serious threat to coastal regions. Sea level rise can inundate some coastal areas and make others more vulnerable to severe storms. Population centers, coastal fisheries, and low-lying arable land can all be damaged. In already crowded areas there is nowhere for displaced people to go and no new land on which to grow crops. Island nations and countries such as Bangladesh face stunning losses. Richer countries may be able to afford protective measures, but those less fortunate will bear the brunt of these disasters.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES

As global warming makes desperate situations even worse in extremely volatile regions of the world, there will be an inevitable increase in “environmental refugees.” There are approximately 50 million environmental refugees around the world – people driven from their homes by drought, floods and other environmental problems. As global warming disproportionately impacts poorer regions, the numbers of refugees will increase dramatically, helping to further destabilize and antagonize host countries. Over the past two decades, floods and other weather-related disasters

have already caused nearly 10 million people to migrate from Bangladesh to India, creating immense population pressures.

**Billions of people will be at risk from storms, floods and droughts as a result of global warming.**



## THE ELDERLY, YOUNG, AND POOR IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES ARE ALSO VULNERABLE

Global warming effects are by no means limited to developing countries. Even in the United States, with high personal income levels and a relatively strong public health infrastructure, global warming will affect vulnerable populations. Heat waves are predicted to increase in number and severity as global warming increases. Because of higher temperatures, we could see an increase in the incidence of heat stress cases— some of them fatal — particularly among the elderly, children and low-income populations.

**The United States, with its great economic and technical strengths, has the ability to lead the global effort necessary to address global warming.**

especially if they lack adequate health care. We've already seen the impact of high temperatures in Chicago, where more than 500 people died – most of them from poor neighborhoods – within days during an extended heat wave in 1995; and this last summer in France where over 15,000 died during the heat wave.



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## WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE AS STEWARDS OF CREATION AND SOLVE GLOBAL WARMING

The United States, with its great economic and technical strengths, has the ability to lead the global effort necessary to address global warming. Moreover, we have a responsibility to demonstrate good stewardship of the earth and its resources. It starts with actions to control our own global warming pollution using advanced technologies.

The U.S. is the largest contributor to global warming, accounting for 25 percent of the world's carbon pollution with only 4 percent of the world's population. On average, an American is responsible for 80 times more global warming pollution per person than a Kenyan, and over 5 times the world average. Furthermore, since 1900 more than 30 percent of global warming pollution from fossil fuels has come from the United States, as compared with just two and a half percent from Africa.

## SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT CREATION

The good news is that we can start solving the problem TODAY by reducing global warming pollution. The answer is less-polluting cars and cleaner energy choices. Solutions like wind and solar power; more energy efficient homes and businesses; clean hybrid-electric vehicles; technologies that capture pollution from power plants. America is the largest source of global warming pollution and the world's leading technology innovator.

Solutions must start here, but corporate and government leadership is missing. We have the know-how to meet the challenge, but we need to get moving now.

Fighting global warming means relying more on energy resources that put less carbon pollution into the air. Making and using energy more efficiently and using more renewable energy sources like wind and solar power are the fastest, cheapest, and cleanest ways to reduce global warming. Research is also underway on technologies that capture carbon pollution for storage deep underground.

## POWER PLANT POLLUTION REDUCTIONS

Smog in our cities is creating an epidemic of asthma attacks, keeping more and more children from enjoying regular schoolyard games. The good news is that by using modern technology we can not only reduce the heat-trapping pollution that causes global warming, we can also dramatically reduce other dangerous emissions like soot, smog, and mercury. There are several opportunities for Federal and State actions to start curbing global warming pollution as well as other pollution from power plants today.

## CLEANER, MORE EFFICIENT CARS

Technologies like gasoline-electric hybrids that increase fuel economy and cut global warming emissions 50 percent or more are reaching the market in cars, trucks and SUVs of all sizes. Experts say that average efficiency of new cars and trucks could be increased to 40 miles per gallon in just 10 years, using technology that's already available.<sup>6</sup> That would make a big difference in reducing our dependence on oil from the Persian Gulf and reducing emissions of heat-trapping gases. Federal legislative proposals are being offered to raise the vehicle fuel economy average and to reduce national oil consumption within a decade. Hydrogen fuel cell vehicles may also offer the potential long-term promise of pollution-free operation without using any oil at all.



## RENEWABLE ENERGY

Wind farms across the country are currently generating enough electricity to power one million average American homes. Wind power is clean, creating no air pollution. In Texas, there are wind power plants generating electricity at less cost than new fossil fuel generators. Regions with the highest wind resource potential also tend to be rural and have below average income, such as rural areas of Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota and remote areas of Alaska. A wind farm project in Minnesota provides up to \$500,000 per year lease payments to farmers for placing

wind turbines on their land. Payments to farmers can be several times the annual per acre profit from farming, and still allow farming to continue on practically all the land. As a result, wind energy is poised to become an important new income generator for financially strapped farmers in the United States.

**We can start solving the problem TODAY by reducing global warming pollution. The answer is less-polluting cars and cleaner energy choices.**

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

Global warming is one of the largest moral challenges of the 21st century. The United States has a responsibility to reduce its global warming pollution and lead the transition to a new sustainable global energy future.

We need action now to limit our carbon pollution, sending concrete signals to businesses to start investing in all forms of carbon-free and low-carbon technologies. Action now will also help avoid the need for more drastic pollution cuts later, preventing an unjust burden on future generations.

## THE INTERFAITH CLIMATE AND ENERGY CAMPAIGN

The Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign is a coalition of American religious leaders, institutions and individuals established in response to the energy and global warming challenge. We are working in 21 states and at the national level to educate congregants on the causes and effects of global warming, and to speak out about the religious and moral imperatives to protect God's creation and all of God's children. As a collaborative effort of the National Council of Churches in Christ and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, more than 1,200 leading religious leaders have joined in calling for federal and state policies for energy conservation and global warming justice.

## JOIN THE INTERFAITH CLIMATE CHANGE NETWORK!

The Interfaith Climate Change Network (ICCN) is a collaborative effort of the National Council of the Churches of Christ and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. The ICCN's goal is to pursue justice for the poor around the world and protect all life on Earth by taking action to address global climate change. We hope that you'll become part of the network and make your voice heard in our campaign to protect the Earth's climate. Go to <http://www.ProtectingCreation.org> to join the Interfaith Climate Change Network! We'll send you periodic email updates as well as provide opportunities to take action on critical environmental issues.



# THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SOLVE GLOBAL WARMING

Talk to your Congregation, friends, and elected officials, about the need to fight global warming. Choose products and services that produce less global warming pollution.

- **Use your vote.** Send a message to your elected officials, letting them know that you vote and want action now. Send a message from the Interfaith Climate Change Network, <http://www.protectingcreation.org/action/>.
- **Choose an efficient vehicle and drive less.** When buying your next car, pick the least-polluting, most efficient vehicle that meets your needs. Go to the "Find and Compare Cars" feature, <http://www.fueleconomy.gov>. When possible, choose alternatives to driving (public transit, biking, walking, carpooling), and bundle your errands together so you'll make fewer trips.
- **Buy energy-efficient appliances.** Use your consumer power when buying appliances by shopping for energy-efficient models. You may spend a little more up front, but you'll save a lot on electricity, and you'll reduce pollution produced by power plants. Look for the *Energy Star* label, which identifies the most efficient appliances, <http://www.energystar.gov/>.
- **Replace your light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.**
- **Weatherize your home or apartment.** For a very small investment, you can cut your heating and cooling expenses and reduce the burning of fossil fuels.
- **Choose renewable energy.** If you live in a state where you can choose your electricity supplier, pick a company that generates at least half its power from wind, solar energy and other clean sources. To find out more go to, <http://www.nrdc.org/air/energy/gcleanen.asp>.
- **Buy clean energy certificates.** Another way to help spur the renewable energy market and cut global warming pollution is to buy "wind certificates" or "green tags," which represent clean power you can add to the nation's energy grid in place of electricity from fossil fuels. For information, see Green-e, [http://www.green-e.org/your\\_e\\_choices/trcs.html](http://www.green-e.org/your_e_choices/trcs.html). Another innovation that's catching on is calculating the global warming pollution associated with your everyday activities, then buying enough certificates to offset them and become "climate neutral." Two places to learn how are NativeEnergy's WindBuilders<sup>sm</sup> program (<http://www.nativeenergy.com/windbuilders.html>) and Bonneville Environmental Foundation's Green Tags program (<https://www.greentagsusa.org/GreenTags/index.cfm>).

## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> Interfaith Climate Change Network, *Let There Be Light: Energy Conservation and God's Creation*, An open letter to the President, to Congress, and the American People, <http://www.protectingcreation.org/about/documents/20020109042634.asp>.

<sup>2</sup> The World Health Report - 2002, World Health Organization (2002), *Reducing Risk, Promoting Healthy Life*, <http://www.who.int/whr/2002/en/>.

<sup>3</sup> National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences (2001), *Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions*, <http://books.nap.edu/html/climatechange/climatechange.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Climate Action Report – 2002, U.S. Department of State (2002), [http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/UniqueKeyLookup/SHSU5BWHU6/\\$File/uscar.pdf](http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/UniqueKeyLookup/SHSU5BWHU6/$File/uscar.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Jones, P.G. and Thornton, P.K. (2003), *The potential impacts of climate change on maize production in Africa and Latin America in 2055*, Global Environmental Change, Volume 13, Issue 1, pp. 51-59.

<sup>6</sup> National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences (2002), *Effectiveness and Impact of Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standards*, <http://books.nap.edu/openbook/0309076013/html/index.html>.

## God of all Creation,

We unite as Your children -  
as faithful-partners who are called to  
reveal Your Will for Creation.

National and International actions have been made  
that impact the Earth's Climate, our Partner-family,  
and all of Your good Creation.

We have prayed & we continue to pray  
for guidance.

And we pray for Stewardship  
Stewardship over

Our internal spirit  
Responsibility for our moral voice to society and  
new imagination for a World that strives for the  
Righteousness of justice and peace.

We also pray for energy.

The energy of Your Spirit that enlivens each one of us.

And for physical energy  
that can bring responsible value to  
utility

economy  
and productivity.

And we pray for the realization that energy can bring  
dirt & asthma

global warming pollution  
poverty  
and even war.

We pray for the former!

Collectively, we are Your children.

Please, God, be our Parent!

And calm our fears,

End our fighting,

Nurture our heart, and

Teach us wisdom.

Believing this, moves us to act!

AMEN

*By Douglas Grace  
National Director  
Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign*