



Fact Sheet

Faith Organizations and Climate Change

December 2012

For years, prominent religious leaders from around the globe, in acknowledging the science behind anthropogenic climate change, have urged governments and citizens to work towards mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Statements on this topic by religious leaders and spiritual organizations representing the major religions found in the United States are listed below.*

World Religions

American Baptist Church

"Global warming affects hunger, access to clean water, environmental stewardship, health and peace. Addressing global warming will make it more possible for all to live the life of possibility that God intends."¹

Anglican Church

"Our response to this [climate] crisis needs to be, in the most basic sense, a reality check."²

"To suggest that God might intervene to protect us from the corporate folly of our practices is as unchristian and unbiblical as to suggest that he protects us from the results of our individual folly or sin."³

— Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury (leader of the Church of England)

Buddhism

"Right now our greatest responsibility is to undo the damage done by the introduction of fossil carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and climate system during the rise of human civilization. We know that we have already exceeded the 350 parts per million that is a safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. In doing so, we have ushered in a global climate crisis."⁴

"This blue, small planet is our only home. We have to take care."⁵

— His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Church of the Brethren

"The U.S. should... move beyond its dependence on high carbon fossil fuels that produce emissions leading to climate change... ratify the Kyoto Protocol under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change... [and] concentrate on reducing carbon dioxide emissions within the U.S."⁶

Eastern Orthodox Church

"Climate change constitutes a matter of social and economic justice...it is a profoundly moral and spiritual problem."⁷

"It is a qualitative element of our faith that we believe in and accept a Creator, who fashioned the world out of love, making and calling it "very good." Tending to and caring for this creation is not a political whim or a social fashion. It is a divine commandment; it is a religious obligation."⁸

— Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch (first in honor) of the Eastern Orthodox Church

Episcopal Church

"[...] the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church recognize[s] that the use of fossil fuels harms air quality and public health and is contributing to changes in the global climate that threaten the lives and livelihoods of our neighbors around the world; and [...] the Convention affirm[s] that our Christian response to global warming is a deeply moral and spiritual issue."⁹

Evangelical Lutheran Church

“God’s exhortation to us to till and keep the earth (Genesis 2:15) urges us to action in the face of a growing body of evidence from scientists around the world that global warming is threatening the future of creation, and the health and well-being of our children and all living things.”¹⁰ — Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, President of the Lutheran World Federation

Hinduism

“We cannot continue to destroy nature without also destroying ourselves. The dire problems besetting our world—war, disease, poverty, and hunger—will all be magnified many fold by the predicted impacts of climate change.”¹¹

Islam

“Pollution and global warming pose an even greater threat than war... the fight to preserve the environment could be the most positive way of bringing humanity together. Environment-related issues ought to be a significant component of educational curricula. It is the duty of all religious scholars to acquaint themselves with the environmental crisis we are facing.” — Sheikh Ali Gomaa, Grand Mufti of Egypt (highest official of religious law).¹²

Judaism

“Minimizing climate change requires us to learn how to live within the ecological limits of the Earth so that we will not compromise the ecological or economic security of those who come after us.”¹³

“The JCPA [Jewish Council for Public Affairs] supports policies to effect the rapid adoption of clean and renewable energy sources and technologies, including solar, wind, fuel cell, and natural gas, and the phasing out of reliance on fossil fuel technologies which contribute to air pollution, respiratory illness, global warming, and the degradation of ecosystems.”¹⁴

Presbyterian Church

The 215th General Assembly wishes to “call on the United States government to join in the world effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”¹⁵

Reformed Church in America

“Since the effects of climate change will fall disproportionately on the poor and on future generations, the issue is a matter of justice.”¹⁶

“We cannot love God and love our neighbors as ourselves, and ignore the potentially disastrous consequences that human-induced climate change may have on future generations, on the poor, and on all of creation.”¹⁷

Roman Catholic Church

“I hope that all members of the international community can agree on a responsible, credible and supportive response to this worrisome and complex phenomenon [of climate change], keeping in mind the needs of the poorest populations and of future generations.”¹⁸ — Pope Benedict XVI

Unitarian Universalist

“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.”¹⁹

United Methodist Church

“As a matter of stewardship and justice, Christians must take action now to reduce global warming pollution and stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world whose land, livelihood and lives are threatened by the global climate crisis.”²⁰

Interfaith Groups

Interfaith Declaration on Climate Change (endorsed by over 100 religious and secular groups)²¹

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

Interfaith Power and Light (encompassing affiliates in 40 states and reaching out to over 14,000 congregations)²²

“Global warming is one of the biggest threats facing humanity today. The very existence of life — life that religious people are called to protect — is jeopardized by our continued dependency on fossil fuels for energy. Every major religion has a mandate to care for Creation. We were given natural resources to sustain us, but we were also given the responsibility to act as good stewards and preserve life for future generations. [...] As people of faith, our mission includes being advocates for vulnerable people and communities that are the most heavily impacted by climate change. From air pollution to droughts to rising seas, it is poor people who are being hit first and worst by global warming. Our goal is to ensure that climate policies provide adaptation and mitigation support for communities domestically and internationally whose health and survival is at stake. We also aim to make sure that all people can participate in and benefit from the growing clean energy economy.”

National Association of Evangelicals (members of 40 denominations representing 45,000 churches)²³

“While others debate the science and politics of climate change, my thoughts go to the poor people who are neither scientists nor politicians. They will never study carbon dioxide in the air or acidification of the ocean. But they will suffer from dry wells in the Sahel of Africa and floods along the coasts of Bangladesh. Their crops will fail while our supermarkets are full. They will suffer while we study.”

“On timescales of several decades to a century, human activity is most likely to be the dominant [climate] driver.”

“If we had to pay the full cost of the energy we use, we would certainly use it more wisely.”

National Council of Churches of Christ (encompassing 100,000 U.S. congregations and 45 million adherents)²⁴

“As a leading industrialized nation that has disproportionately contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, it is incumbent upon us to rectify this injustice.”

“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.”

World Council of Churches (349 Christian denominations representing 590 million people across 150 countries)²⁵

“Pollution, particularly from the energy-intensive wealthy industrialised countries, is warming the atmosphere. A warmer atmosphere is leading to major climate changes. The poor and vulnerable in the world and future generations will suffer the most.”

“We commit ourselves to help reduce the threat of climate change through actions in our own lives, pressure on governments and industries and standing in solidarity with those most affected by climate change.”

Dozens of additional religious statements on climate change have been compiled by the Citizens Climate Lobby for their report, [Faith Based Statements on Climate Change 2012](#)

* These selections are a sample of religious perspectives on climate change. They are in no way meant to be all inclusive. Some religions are not represented because they have not yet made public declarations on climate change, or because such releases could not be located by EESI.

This fact sheet is available electronically at www.eesi.org/papers.

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The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 by a bipartisan Congressional caucus dedicated to finding innovative environmental and energy solutions. EESI works to protect the climate and ensure a healthy, secure, and sustainable future for America through policymaker education, coalition building, and policy development in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy, agriculture, forestry, transportation, buildings, and urban planning. EESI is funded primarily by foundations and other private donors.

ENDNOTES

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