



National Religious Coalition on Creation Care

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CLIMATE CHANGE

An Evangelical Call to Action (abridged)

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. 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 on many issues.... 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.

Over the last several years many of us have engaged in study, reflection, and prayer related to climate change (often called "global warming"). For most of us, this has not been a 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 Christians. But now we have seen enough to offer the following moral argument related to human-induced climate change.

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 the issue that climate change is happening and is being caused by human activities, especially burning of fossil fuels.

Because all religious/moral claims about climate change are relevant only if climate change is real and human-induced, everything hinges on the scientific data. As evangelicals we have hesitated to speak until we could be certain of the science of climate change, but the signatories now believe that the evidence demands action

- o The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's most authoritative scientists on global warming, has been studying this since the 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 global temperature will continue to rise, and attributes "most of the warming" to human activities.

- o The U.S. National Academy of Sciences, as well as all other scientific Academies (Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, Italy, and Russia), has concurred with these judgments.
- o In a 2004 report, the Bush Administration acknowledged the reality of climate change and the likelihood that human activity is the cause....

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

The earth's natural systems are resilient, but not infinitely so, and human civilizations are remarkably dependent on ecological stability. Even small rises in global temperatures will have such impacts as sea level rise; more frequent heat waves, droughts, and extreme weather events such as torrential rains and floods; increased tropical diseases in temperate regions; and more intense hurricanes. It could lead to significant reduction in agricultural output, especially in poor countries. Low-lying regions could find

themselves under water.

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 threats. Millions of people could die in this century because of climate change.

Claim 3: Christian Moral Convictions Demand Our Response

While we cannot review the full range of relevant biblical convictions related to care of creation, we emphasize the following points

- o 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 is an offense against God Himself (Gen. 1; Ps. 24; Col. 1:16).
- o 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...(Mt. 22:34; Mt. 7:12; Mt. 25:31).

- o 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 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 have a role to play in addressing climate change — starting now. The basic task for the world's inhabitants is to find ways now to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels that are the primary cause of human-induced climate change.

There are reasons for urgency. Deadly impacts are being experienced now. The oceans warm slowly, delaying experience of the consequences. The pollution we create now will be visited upon our children and grandchildren. 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 or appliances that will last for 10-20 years, or whether to build coal-burning power plants rather than pursuing energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Numerous positive actions to prevent climate change are being implemented by state and local governments, churches, businesses, and individuals. These commendable efforts focus on energy efficiency, renewable energy, low CO₂-emitting technologies, and the use of hybrid vehicles. These efforts can save money, save energy, reduce global warming pollution as well as air pollution that harm human health, and eventually pay for themselves.

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 we 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.

(Signatories not listed because of limited space)

