



May 10, 2004

Dear U.S. Senator,

As leaders of America's major faith communities, we write our U.S. senators at a moment of great moral urgency for our nation and the planet – God's children and God's creation. We write in support of clear moral principles as the United States Senate begins debate on the bipartisan Climate Stewardship Act introduced by Senators McCain and Lieberman. We come from many distinct faith perspectives, Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Christian, and Jewish, but we share biblical precepts for care of God's creation – drawing upon various forms of expression.

First, in Genesis, God beholds creation as "very good" (Gen 1:31) and commands us to "till and tend the garden" (Gen 2:15). Humankind is called to stewardship. Second, we read in Psalms, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps 24:1). Creation's gifts are intended for the well-being of all. Third, we have a paramount obligation to "defend the poor and the orphan: do justice to the afflicted" (Ps 82:3) and to care first for "the least of these" (Math 25:35). Care for God's creation requires justice for God's children and not putting innocent lives at risk. Finally, we have an obligation to the future well-being of all life on Earth, God's "covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature for perpetual generations" (Gen 9:12). Protecting our planet's climate is a religious duty because it embraces everything and everyone on Earth.

Concerning global climate change, we have fundamental agreements, based upon these biblical texts, all of which have been stated in formal declarations at the highest levels of governance.

In May 2001, 41 heads of major denominations and senior religious leaders joined in issuing, "Let There Be Light: An Interfaith Call for Energy Conservation and Climate Justice." In this document, they lifted up the moral stakes of sustainable energy and climate policy: "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. We are being called to consider national purpose not just policy." In February 2002, over 1200 American senior religious leaders stated that they support "policies that would include carbon dioxide as a regulated pollutant." And in November 2002 and later throughout 2003 and 2004, America's senior religious leaders and state religious leaders, respectively, further stated that "We are deeply distressed by evidence that...Global greenhouse gas emissions are projected to increase average temperatures by 2.5 to 10.4 degrees

Fahrenheit into the next century --- bringing rising seas, weather and agricultural disruptions, floods, refugees, migrating diseases and other dislocations which most harm the planet's poor and vulnerable. The United States contributes 25% of these world emissions.”

As a result of these statements, we have established Interfaith Climate and Energy campaigns in 21 states that continue educating congregations about the need for energy conservation, renewable energy development and the overall need to limit greenhouse gas emissions to prevent global warming which is causing climate change.

Today, collectively, we have a clear moral obligation and urgency to protect human life, human health, and all of creation, and we agree that now is the time to act upon the fact that there is leading world scientific consensus that global climate change is real. In that spirit, religious consensus calls us to outline four moral principles that should guide future public policy: stewardship, covenant, justice, and intergenerational equity. These moral principals have never seemed more meaningful and mandatory. Environmental isolationism is neither morally acceptable nor faithful to God's Law. Applying our scriptural principles, the following should now guide climate change policy:

- **Justice for all God's children** by addressing the reality that carbon dioxide pollution is causing global warming, that carbon emissions must be significantly reduced, and that we must protect all God's children from the resulting affects of global climate change. Justice for future generations who will be adversely affected by the harmful carbon pollution and other greenhouse gases that are produced today.
- **Solidarity with people who live in poverty** around the world who are more dangerously affected by global climate change and who do not have the resources to adapt to the resulting realities.
- **Stewardship** of the balance of creation which sustains all life on Earth and is in danger by global climate change.

We concur with the world's leading experts that the scientific consensus concerning global climate change is compelling:

- Drawing from the work of thousands of scientists, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in 2001 an international scientific consensus that, “There is new an stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities.”
- A U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) study requested by President Bush in late 2001 supported the IPCC's finding, stating that, “Greenhouse gases are accumulating in the earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise. Temperatures are, in fact, rising.”



- According to Dr. Anthony Busalacchi, Chair of the Climate Research Committee of the NAS, who testified at an October 2003 Senate hearing, “The evidence is there. The time is now to take action.”
- In 2003, more than 1,000 scientists wrote a letter to the Senate, noting that these findings by the IPCC and the NAS “have been reinforced rather than weakened by research” conducted over the past two years, and warning that “temperature increases in most areas of the United States are expected to be considerably higher than the global average of 2.5 to 10.5 degrees expected this century if we fail to act.”
- The Bush Administration submitted a report to the United Nations in 2002 which detailed likely future impacts from climate changes across our country if we fail to reduce emissions, including increased risk of storm damage to coastal communities, declining lake levels in the Great Lakes region, more frequent and intense droughts, decreased snow pack, and disruption and loss of entire ecosystems.
- Scientists at the World Health Organization estimate that, worldwide, roughly 160,000 people already die every year from side-effects of global warming ranging from malaria to malnutrition, and that the numbers could almost double by 2020.

After review of the facts, we urgently call on the U.S. Senate to morally act by significantly reducing the dangerously high level of U.S. greenhouse gas pollution.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions also addresses another crucial issue important to America’s religious community – energy dependence. America needs to reduce its reliance on oil through the rapid adoption and encouragement of clean and renewable energy sources and new technologies.

At a time when the U.S. Senate must show leadership on the issue of global climate change, we are asking you to demonstrate your commitment to protecting all of God’s creation, increasing our national security, promoting our economy, and promising a better future for our children. Together, we can achieve solutions that embody and promote justice, stewardship, and intergenerational responsibility.

Yours faithfully,

Earth Ministry