



CLIMATE CHANGE RESOLUTION

Adopted by the Vestry of All Saints Church, Pasadena, on June 28, 2016

Be it resolved that the Rector, the Wardens and the Vestry lead All Saints Church Pasadena in combating the causes and consequences of anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change.¹

We Will:

1. Strive to dismantle the toxic narratives of consumerism, and all of the narratives supporting the myth that we exist separately from nature and from one another.
2. Nurture the traditional narratives that honor the primacy of nature and confirm humanity's role as a steward of God's creation.
3. Engage in political actions and advocate for policies that apply economic leverage to reward and encourage the development and use of renewable energy sources and recognize the true costs of consuming fossil fuels.
4. Be in dialogue and collaboration with other faith and secular communities on the topic of climate change.
5. Be mindful that marginalized people and people of color in our nation and people in the developing world are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, and advocate for policies that lift people out of poverty without aggravating the climate crisis.
6. Stand in solidarity with those whose lives will be disrupted by the inevitable catastrophes that will result from climate change, and recognize our complicity in contributing to their misery.
7. Incorporate the language of climate change into our liturgical activities, and provide educational opportunities that will inform our parishioners of the reality and the severity of the climate crisis.
8. Formulate an action plan to make the operations and activities of All Saints Church carbon-neutral by a date certain.
9. Encourage and assist the members of the parish and the All Saints Community to become carbon-neutral in their households and in their daily living.

¹ This Resolution is being made in response to a presentation given at the Staff /Vestry Conference on February 26, 2016. A copy of that presentation is appended to this document.

FAITH and MORAL IMPERATIVE

Many Christians have grown up hearing Genesis 1:28 mistranslated as God giving humankind “*dominion* over the earth.” This mistranslation has led to a destructive narrative in which we believe that the world’s resources are ours to exploit without consequence. A more appropriate translation gives humankind “*stewardship* over the earth”, and it is in this context that our understanding of the climate crisis must be framed. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis, quoting his predecessor says, “The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any instance higher than ourselves, when we see nothing but ourselves.”

Our sense of fair play would dictate that every human being has the right to an equal share of the earth’s atmosphere. But people living in the industrial nations of the northern hemisphere are “consuming” the atmosphere (as a sink for greenhouse gases) at a rate that is nine times that of the rest of humanity. “Thou shall not steal” (*Ex* 20:15) is a fundamental tenet of Judeo-Christian teaching, and of all faith traditions, yet our disproportionate use of the very air we breathe amounts to theft, not only from the poor and marginalized people now living on the Earth, but from future generations as well.

The inevitable consequences of anthropogenic climate change are horrifying, and will cause untold human misery. The increased energy in the atmosphere has already started to create more numerous and more serious weather events, and this will continue to get worse. Massive displacement of people by floods, famine and the loss of human habitat will create widespread social instability and ever-larger tides of refugees, and lead to regional conflicts and wars. In the face of this suffering, we are compelled to re-evaluate our consumer culture and heed Jesus’ call to “love your neighbor as yourself” (*Mk* 12:31).

The dignity of every human being and the value of all the creatures of the Earth are implicit in the notion that they were created by God’s love. (*Ps* 24:1). Psalm 104 reminds us that “the Lord rejoices in all his works” (*Ps* 104:31). In addition to the toll it will take on human beings, the ravages of climate change will, of course, affect many other of the Earth’s creatures. We are losing species to extinction on an unprecedented scale as we systematically destroy their habitats. This, too, is antithetical to the biblical mandate to be stewards of God’s creation.

In summary, we believe it is our moral responsibility to the Earth, to ourselves and to others to care for creation, and to act purposefully in ways that preserve, protect and promote the health of the Earth.

SCIENTIFIC and ECONOMIC REALITIES of ANTHROPOGENIC CLIMATE CHANGE

- As early as 1906, the Nobel Prize-winning Chemist Svante Arrhenius predicted that CO₂ in the atmosphere could cause a “greenhouse” effect in the earth’s atmosphere. Since then Arrhenius’s predictions have been verified in countless ways.
- In 1987 scientists from around the world gathered in Kyoto, Japan and declared that the release of CO₂ into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels was warming the temperature of the planet.
- The scientific support for the anthropogenic nature of climate change is more than a consensus. It is not just that the work of a single scientist or even a group of scientists working in the same field. Rather, it is a convergence: the work of many groups of scientists working in multiple fields has independently confirmed this.
- Climate change is a feed-forward process in which the changes wrought by initial conditions lead to secondary conditions that drive further changes in the same direction. One example is the melting of permafrost, which releases trapped CO₂ into the atmosphere, leads to further temperature rises and causes more glaciers to melt.
- The climate crisis occupies a unique position at the nexus of science and public policy. In most cases, the lay public tends to over-react to health crises, while scientists are quietly confident that technological solutions can be found. In the case of climate change, the general public is largely indifferent to the problem, while the scientists who understand the problem most thoroughly are literally terrified.
- Many politicians have proposed to let “market forces” solve the problem of climate change. The inherent fallacy in this is that the external costs of consuming fossil fuels are not reflected in the prices we pay for them.
- Corporations in the extractive industries that produce fossil fuels need to prove to their investors that they can continue to produce as much fuel in the future as they are presently. As a result, these corporations have sent teams of geologists around the world to locate deposits of coal, oil, oil shale, and natural gas, and they have purchased the rights to extract them. These “proven reserves” are carried on the balance sheets of these corporations as proof of their continued economic viability. The extraction and burning of these proven reserves will guarantee a rise in global temperatures far in excess of the 2° C goal that was set in Paris in 2015.
- Fossil Fuel companies have known for decades that their activities will lead to catastrophic rises in global temperatures. They also realize that as public awareness of the dire consequences of global warming increases, the economic and political support they have enjoyed for so long will be threatened. As a result, they have embarked on a campaign to discredit the science, and have sought to destroy the reputations of individual scientists who have sounded the warnings.
- There are significant psychological barriers that prevent many of us from acknowledging and taking action on the problem of climate change. Behavioral studies have shown that people must perceive problems as prominent, concrete and imminent in order to feel a motivation to act. For many people, however, the information about climate change seems uncertain, and the problem seems remote in both time and space. The impacts are perceived as taking place in a distant future and affecting people who live far away, while

the costs of addressing the problem seem more immediate and personal. These attitudes are reinforced by the prevailing narratives in our society which emphasize individual gain and perpetuate the myths surrounding racial superiority.

- Many people in the developing world use natural non-fossil fuels for cooking and heating. Because they are non-fossil fuels, burning them does not contribute to the net increase in CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses. Burning these fuels does, however, contribute to the warming of the atmosphere by the production of “brown carbon”, i.e., smoke and ash. Unlike CO₂, which remains in the atmosphere for hundreds or thousands of years, brown carbon remains in the atmosphere for only ten years. As people in the developing nations seek to modernize, they will switch from natural fuels to fossil fuels. A direct conversion from natural fuels to renewable energy sources in the developing world would therefore have the dual effect of removing shorter-lived brown carbon, and preventing additional accumulations of greenhouse gases. This might be the most efficient way for humanity to address climate change, but so far, there have been no successful international efforts to accomplish this.

In the face of the entrenched economic and political barriers to addressing climate change, it is unlikely that national governments or international agencies will take the dramatic actions necessary to avert disaster. Because this is essentially a moral problem, communities of faith are the only organizations with the potential to confront the entrenched interests and motivate the needed changes in priority and behavior. Because of the scope of the problem, the individual efforts of faith communities to be carbon neutral will have negligible effects on averting the climate-change crisis. As people of faith, however, we have a moral imperative to do what we can. By demonstrating that we can lead a truly abundant life without contributing to the destruction of the planet, and working in cooperation with like-minded faith and community organizations, we can serve as a catalyst for a movement to save the earth. All Saints will serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration to a world that desperately needs one.