

The Working Group Responsible for Crafting The Climate Crisis Letter

A group of 11 individuals came together to draft a letter dealing with the climate crisis that clergy could sign. They worked collaboratively and effectively to successfully create a statement that is enormously powerful. They are diverse in composition, with six clergy members and five scientists, resident on two continents.

Before introducing these individuals, I want to thank them for their hard work. Drafting a document addressing such a complex issue is not easy, doing it via committee is even more difficult, and doing it via committee by e-mail is all-but-impossible. And yet these 11 individuals did just that and they did it quickly and well. The missive they wrote will, I trust, generate thousands of signatures, spur people to action, and help shape public discussion both about the climate crisis and about the relationship between religion and science. I can't thank them enough for their efforts.

Congruent with one of the main goals of The Clergy Letter Project, I believe that this effort will help demonstrate how it is possible to have high quality discussions about complex issues.

Here, then, are those impressive individuals who are responsible for The Climate Crisis Letter:

Clark Brown: pastor of St. Timothy Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Monterey, CA

Douglas Griffin: interim pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Rehoboth Beach, DE

Bob Hall: pastor and Ecumenical Officer, Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church

Carl Helrich: professor emeritus of physics at Goshen College and Director of the Goshen Conference on Religion and Science

Zachary Jackson: pastor of Community United Church of Christ, Reading, PA

Karl Jones: a retired United Church of Christ clergy member, currently serving as the Conference Disaster Coordinator of both the PA Southeast Conference and the Penn Northeast Conference of the UCC

David C. Kopaska-Merkel: a geologist working for the Geological Survey of Alabama

Kris Kovarovic: professor of human evolution in the Department of Anthropology at Durham University, England

Rod Richards: minister of Unitarian Universalists San Luis Obispo, CA

Alex Storrs: professor of astronomy at Towson University and actively involved in the Episcopal Church

Irving Wainer: a retired basic scientist who worked at the NIH, McGill University and St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital with expertise in clinical oncology and the discovery/development of new anticancer drugs

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The Climate Crisis: A Clergy Call to Action

We are faced with a crisis today.

A multitude of human activities including the use of fossil fuels, large-scale agriculture, and large-scale land clearance have modified the natural processes that sustain life in every ecosystem and culture on the entire planet. This is no longer a question for debate. The question we (humans) must answer—and the impetus for this letter—is: “How will we respond to this crisis?”

We call on leaders from all of the many faith traditions and ethical communities throughout the world to unite with scientists, activists, and concerned citizens as one voice in calling for humanity to recognize the crisis, our role in creating it, and our collective responsibility to immediately identify and enact solutions.

Scientific understandings and religious teachings alike teach us that we are connected as one human family and, further, we are connected to all life. Thus, our own survival is inextricably connected to the responsible stewardship of the Earth and all its creatures.

The many faith traditions that exist across the world, while differing in specific beliefs and expressions of their convictions, share many common values. One of those is a commitment to care for the disenfranchised. We know that the people with the least access to resources experience the greatest suffering as a result of a changing climate. Ecological insecurity reinforces inequality. We have a moral and ethical responsibility to advocate for those who are vulnerable and/or voiceless.

We clergy signing this letter pledge ourselves to express our love for humanity and for all life on Earth by advocating for an immediate change in our behaviors that continue to threaten the health of the planet, its people, and their varied cultures. We urge you to join us in the education and motivation of our fellow planetary citizens, and to help us unite and to take the steps urgently needed to save our home.

We must remember, in this work, to be kind to one another. It is easy to let the panic, the frustration, and the pain turn us against one another, to speak in harsh judgment, and to act in self-righteous anger, but we will only move forward together. It is not only important *what we do* but *how we do it*. We must acknowledge our shared needs and celebrate our differences in meeting them – but do so with a compassionate, honest, and committed regard for the Earth and its inhabitants. This is what brings us joy in the work and hope for the future.

The climate is changing, but there is also evidence of a changing climate in public opinion and resolve. People are ready to insist on and be a part of the necessary change. People are ready to explore what it takes to remake our societies in response to this challenge; to turn the world around.

Our religious communities should lead in asking a simple question: ***How can we be good ancestors?*** A powerful question. A spiritual practice. A call to action.

Join us in this work. The time is now.