



COOLING OUR FUTURE: A Declaration by Young Evangelicals on Climate Change

MAY 2006

THE DECLARATION

As young Christians committed to Jesus Christ, we are deeply concerned about the degradation of God's creation and "the least of these" in peril around the world as a result of global warming pollution. We accept our responsibility to examine our generation's role in pursuing solutions, and to consider the impact of our own lives.

We add our voices to those of the leaders in the Evangelical Climate Initiative who issued *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action* in February 2006 and we affirm their commitment to solve the problem of global warming.

This is God's world, and the call for creation care in the Bible is plain to us. We've grown up understanding the importance of stewardship of life and resources. But we are distressed at

what seem to be unremitting and sometimes even irreversible signs of degradation of His world that He entrusted to us.

We see this as an assault on our future. In Genesis we read of God's covenant "with me and you and every living creature that is with you for all generations to come" (Gen. 9:12 NIV). Indeed, solving the global warming crisis is an intergenerational responsibility.

We issue this declaration on global warming to affirm the Christian leaders who have taken a stand, to proclaim our own willingness to act, and to call on those leaders who have not yet spoken to join us. We are your children and from us will come your children's children. We ask you to bless our future with wise actions today.

We declare and affirm these seven points, elaborated in the following pages:

- 1. There is overwhelming evidence that global warming is real and will become increasingly deadly.**
- 2. We believe care for the poor and for all of God's creation is a sacred moral duty for all followers of Jesus Christ.**
- 3. We commit ourselves to living in a way that honors God, cares for people, and preserves God's creation.**
- 4. We believe public policies that protect God's creation and reduce global warming pollution are good for our economy and good for America.**
- 5. We call for prophetic leadership from our Christian leaders on creation care in general and global warming in particular.**
- 6. We call on our elected representatives to provide leadership through legislation to reduce global warming pollution.**
- 7. We urge our generation to lead the movement to protect God's creation where many of those who have come before us have not.**

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DISCUSSION

We declare and affirm the following:

1. There is overwhelming evidence that global warming is real and will become increasingly deadly.

As Christian young adults we believe that there is clear and overwhelming evidence that the world's climate is changing and that global warming will pose a grave danger to our own and future generations. We make these declarations primarily as serious Christian students and younger adults who recognize the quality of the scholarship that shows relentless global warming.

The evidence is overwhelming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's most authoritative body of scientists and policy experts on the issue of global warming, has been studying this issue since the late 1980s. It has documented the steady rise in global temperatures, projects that the average global temperature will continue to rise in the coming decades, and attributes most of the recent warming to human activities.¹ The U.S. Academy of Sciences has joined the National Academies of the world's 11 major powers in concurring with these judgments.

We encourage still more research about the threat of global climate change, but we do not need absolute scientific certainty to live-out our moral duty. Since there is enough evidence that our present actions will impact humanity's future well-being, we must take precautionary and preventive action. With our future health and habitat possibly at stake, the burden of proof lies with those who believe we can afford to wait. We contend that there is no moral argument for putting conspicuous consumption and reckless pollution above creation care.

2. We believe care for the poor and for all of God's creation is a sacred moral duty for all followers of Jesus Christ.

If the Earth's systems are in danger as a result of climate change, as the evidence shows, Christians young and old have a sacred moral duty to lead the fight to protect our earthly home for love of God and neighbor.

This is a moral crisis. If we don't alter our actions, global warming is likely to kill millions of people as a result of more severe droughts, ferocious disasters, and enhanced breeding grounds for disease. The most severely impacted will be the poor, and Jesus said that what we do to "the least of these" we do to him (Mt. 25:40, 45). Jesus calls us to care for "the least of these." We're proud to belong to Christian communities that are striving to set an example of service to the world's poor and most defenseless. In that same tradition, we are especially moved when we realize the impact of global warming will fall most heavily on the poor, the most vulnerable, and the least prepared to face the rising sea levels, heat waves, droughts, and floods to follow. Global warming is an urgent matter of conscience for every Christian.

The principles of stewardship and prudence require/demand that we take action now. Proverbs 3:27: "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act." Care for the poor and vulnerable has always been where we see our Christian faith most deeply expressed (James 1:27). As such, we declare that creation care is one of the "first things" for evangelical young people. We are not limited to a few issues, as some of the previous generation would suggest. We will stand firm on all of the priorities of our holy God. We focus on climate change and life stewardship not as a substitute for other "first things" such as evangelism, discipleship and worship, but as part of the entirety of Christian service and devotion to God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

¹ The summary of the group's findings are at http://www.grida.no/climate/ipcc_tar/wg1/007.htm. For the confirmation of the IPCC's findings from the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, see *Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions* (2001); <http://fermat.nap.edu/html/climatechange/summary.html>.

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3. We commit ourselves to living in a way that honors God, cares for people, and preserves God's creation.

We admit that strong efforts to stop global warming must begin with each of us personally, and we commit to pursuing personal and community lifestyles and habits that will honor the Lord, serve others and ourselves, and help protect water, air, and natural resources as stewards of what God has given us. Specifically, we intend to reduce the amount of energy we use through our daily lives. Our responses will include actions that may seem small, but if multiplied can make an enormous impact. These include buying clean energy, driving fuel-efficient vehicles, reducing automobile and air travel, and increasing our use of public transportation.

We want to model lives of stewardship for our own families and the world, and we want to be a part of churches that live out the mission and ministry of creation care.

4. We believe public policies that protect God's creation and reduce global warming pollution are good for our economy and good for America.

We are entering the workplace and we have no desire to diminish the vibrancy of the American economy that holds our financial future in its hands. But we believe that in the long run environmental responsibility is good for everyone's business. We agree with many business leaders that America can find ways to protect our future while at the same time maintaining a vibrant economy and reducing our dependence on oil—thereby enhancing our national security. This approach is one that recognizes God's sovereignty, our responsibility, and the wisdom of solutions that consider the best for today's world and the one we will live in tomorrow. We seek a secure nation that is economically and environmentally sound for generations to come.

5. We call for prophetic leadership from our Christian leaders on creation care in general and global warming in particular.

We commend evangelical leaders who have elevated our concern for creation care and for the earth's health. We are deeply grateful to the more than 100 pastors, college presidents and faculty, and world relief workers of the ECI who showed the courage to address complex questions on global warming with answers rooted in our faith. We respect the leaders who have come to different positions based on their own convictions, but we are disappointed that some of our leaders have muted or stilled their prophetic voices on the moral responsibility to stop global warming. It is time for leadership.

6. We call on our elected representatives to provide leadership through legislation to cut global warming pollution.

Some of us are not old enough to vote or have just begun voting, but many of us are politically active, and we will live for years with the consequences of today's governmental decisions. Our public legacy to our children and grandchildren cannot be the massive destruction and social chaos caused by unmitigated global warming.

We call today for the federal government to finalize and pass legislation that will require limits on the greenhouse gasses that are causing global warming. We are the voices of tomorrow's evangelical voters. We agree with the leaders who signed the ECI statement that the most important immediate step that can be taken at the federal level is to pass and implement national legislation requiring sufficient economy-wide reductions in carbon dioxide emissions through cost-effective, market-based mechanisms.

7. We urge our generation to lead the movement to protect God's creation where many of those who have come before us have not.

This call is not only for those who have come before us, but also for our colleagues and classmates, to act on the clear scriptural directive for followers of Christ to care for His world as an expression of our love of God and neighbor.

