

“Because carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is long lived, it can effectively lock the Earth and future generations into a range of impacts, some of which could become very severe. Therefore, emissions reductions choices made today matter in determining impacts experienced not just over the next few decades, but in the coming centuries and millennia.”

-National Academy of Sciences, 2010¹

Climate Change

Consistent with our commitment to the speaking out for endangered wildlife, natural habitats, and threatened cultures, Restoring Eden believes that global climate change is something that must be addressed quickly. The facts are conclusive – humankind’s burning of fossil fuels has been a key contributor to climate change in the past 150 years. We believe that urgent action must be taken to cut our meddling in God’s providential systems. **THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.**

In the agrarian times of the Bible, the Israelites understood rain and favorable weather to be signs of God’s providence. After all, without a steadily favorable climate, there would be no food. It is no wonder so many pagan cults worshipped the weather as a god! Yet the Lord isn’t the weather, but its sovereign Creator.

But today, industrial civilization is threatening to upset this delicate meteorological administration of God’s providence. Humanity’s reckless burning of fossil fuels is already changing the patterns of the heavens, and so also the fruitfulness of the rest of creation below. Even scarier, climate change may lead to rapid “snaps” in major climate systems such as shutting down the North Atlantic Current which keeps much of Europe so temperate, farmable, and beautiful.

WHAT EXACTLY IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

‘Greenhouse gases’ in our atmosphere (namely, carbon dioxide or CO₂ and methane) act as global insulators by reflecting the heat back at God’s good earth. There is a direct correlation between more CO₂ and global warming throughout Earth’s history, and scientists overwhelmingly agree that humans are responsible for the drastic increase in atmospheric CO₂ in the past 100+ years. Burning fossil fuels like gasoline, diesel, and coal releases billions of pounds of CO₂ annually and has tipped the climatic scales toward radical warming – what we refer to as climate change.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Climate change is affecting everything from collapsing coral reef ecosystems below the sea to melting glaciers at the top of the world. Fish, trees, and other wildlife are left thirsty in the springtime with lower runoffs from thinner snow packs. Farmers similarly have to get by with less water for their crops. Fragile tidal ecosystems may be destroyed as ocean levels rise – to say nothing of the hundreds of millions of people living in coastal towns and cities.

Why Do Christians Care?

As Christians we have a responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation. The effects of climate change will be disastrous for God’s creation – we will be faced with rising ocean levels, permanent droughts, collapsing climate systems, melting glaciers and ice caps, and habitat loss. We are already witnessing effects on the global environment. According to the International Panel on Climate Change we’re already seeing increasing average temperatures, more warm days and nights and fewer cold days and nights, more heat waves, changing rainfall patterns, melting glaciers, and sea level rise. By failing to pass strong climate change legislation, we also fail at our role as stewards by not protecting the most threatened of God’s species and their critical habitats.

We are also called as Christians to faithfully speak truth to power and to *“Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Defend the rights of the poor and needy.”* (Proverbs 31:8-9) We are deeply concerned that the poor and vulnerable in our country and around the world will have little or no voice in this vital discussion. As a result of climate change, some groups of people are much more likely to be harmed than others. The most vulnerable tend to be the youngest and the oldest among us, and the poor, both domestically and internationally. These brothers and sisters have the fewest resources and capacity to escape the costs of climate change. We all know too well who is left behind and who pays the greatest price when disaster, floods or droughts occur.

Feeling the Effects

In fall of 2009, Restoring Eden brought Rev. Tafue Lusama of Tuvalu and Sara Kaweesa of Uganda to the United States to alert Christians here of the damage that climate change is causing to their homelands, and to call for our help as brothers and sisters in Christ...

UGANDA:

A nation highly and directly dependent on the land, Uganda has begun to experience extreme drought in recent years due to climate change. Most people depend on what is growing in their yard for sustenance, so when growing seasons become unpredictable and water is lacking, their livelihoods are frighteningly jeopardized. And when they cannot feed themselves or their family, the price paid for the effects of climate change is gravely high. Sara tells us that she has seen people commit suicide because they could not bear to watch their children die of starvation.

Responsibility lies with the developed nations who are spewing out greenhouse gases with no discretion or regulation. Sara commented during her presentation, "Forgive me, but Africa bears the brunt, but has not been the source." She recognizes that there are many differences in theologies in the Church that make it difficult for us to unite over the issue of climate change, but that is why we must unite over our foundation of Christ.

TUVALU:

This small island in the South Pacific near Fiji is already experiencing the effects of climate change. The highest point of the island being a mere 3 meters above sea level, any rise in ocean levels causes disastrous harm to the people and land living there. The island has already started to "sink" as the water levels creep higher, and is facing total inundation, meaning the people of Tuvalu will be forced to relocate and leave behind the ruins of the land they once called home. Scientists have said that a 40% reduction in carbon emissions from 1990 levels by the year 2020 is necessary to save the nation of Tuvalu from sinking.

What can you do?

- **IN A WORD, LESS!** Cutting emissions of greenhouse gasses from our vehicles, industries, homes, and churches is the most meaningful step to turn the deadly tide of global warming. Another solution includes "carbon sequestration," which is a fancy way of saying "replanting forests to reabsorb CO₂ from the atmosphere."
 - **Focus on the small things** affecting climate change that you are responsible for and can be conscious about: food, energy, transportation, and consumption
 - **FOOD:** Eat locally grown food; buy basic, whole, unprocessed foods; look for products with less packaging
 - **ENERGY:** Use less; unplug unused appliances
 - **TRANSPORTATION:** Ride a bike, use public transportation, carpool
 - **CONSUMPTION:** Buy second-hand items, buy less
 - **WATER:** Stop buying bottled water and use the tap (filter if you prefer)
 - **Plant trees** to recapture carbon dioxide
 - Sponsor a reforestation project in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, or Central America through Plant with Purpose: www.plantwithpurpose.org
 - Find a volunteer project in your community to help plant trees through the Arbor Day Foundation: www.arborday.org
- **GET YOUR CHURCH INVOLVED!**
 - Find out how to measure and reduce your congregations carbon footprint at www.coolcongregations.com
 - Become an Energy Star certified congregation: http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business.sb_congregations
 - Support local food & agriculture by starting a community garden at your church or supporting a local CSA farm
- **SPEAK UP!** The EPA, the President, your U.S. representative and senators, and other public leaders need to hear that you demand action on the threat of global warming. Be sure to tell them you're a Christian! We must pass strong climate change legislation that includes:
 - The strongest emissions standards in line with science
 - Funding for climate change adaptation for the poor -both domestically and internationally.
 - Support for green jobs, renewable energy, and energy conservation and efficiency
 - Protection of the most threatened of God's species and their critical habitats.

OTHER RESOURCES:

- 'Climate Stabilization Targets: Emissions, Concentrations, and Impacts over Decades to Millennia (A report by the National Academy of Sciences. Download a PDF at: <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12877.html>)
- "A Climate for Change," a book by Katharine Hayhoe.
- Micah Challenge International: www.micahchallenge.org
- Tearfund: www.tearfund.org



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