



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on Climate Change

“To imagine the fullness of God is to talk about energy. From beginning to end, the Bible is replete with images of energy and divine activity. In the first verses of Genesis “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” inaugurating God’s creation of the world (Gen. 1:2). In the last chapter of Revelation “the river of the water of life” flows from the throne of God to water the trees of life which grow along its banks, and whose twelve kinds of fruit are for the healing of the nations (Revelations 22).

God provides energy in abundance for all whom God has made (Ps. 145:15). Both the birds of the air and the fish of the sea first receive the same blessing God bestows on human beings—to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:22). As the people of God wander in the wilderness after the Exodus, God sends “enough” manna each day to sustain the community (Exodus 16). The jubilee legislation in Exodus and Leviticus stressed the needs of the poor and wild animals to eat from fields left fallow every seven years because all creatures are entitled to the energy they need to live. In the Gospel of John, Jesus proclaims that he has come so that all “may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Jesus demonstrates this in the feeding of the five thousand, where all are fed and there are twelve baskets of food left over (Mark 6:39–44). Paul summarizes: “God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8).

Today, heavy reliance on these fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) has produced grave threats to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation...There are also serious environmental problems associated with our heavy reliance on fossil fuels. Oil spills around the world despoil waters and harm wildlife. Mountaintop coal mining in Appalachia erodes hillsides, ruins scenic lands, and degrades surface streams and groundwater supplies. Nitrous oxide emissions and particulate matter from fossil fuel combustion play havoc with respiratory systems. Volatile organic compounds in petroleum fuels produce cancers and other diseases. Sulfur dioxide emissions from the burning of coal produce acid rain that destroys forests and significantly reduces agricultural production around the world. While these are all serious problems, they pale in comparison to the perils posed by global warming and climate change. The related challenges posed by global climate change are unprecedented in human history. If the world takes a business-as-usual approach and continues a fossil fuel-intensive energy path during the 21st century, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects current concentrations of greenhouse gases could more than quadruple by the year 2100. Under this scenario, the IPCC projects the global-average surface temperature will increase 4.0° Celsius (7.2° Fahrenheit) by the end of the 21st century. Put into perspective, the global-average surface temperature only increased 0.6°C (1.1°F) during the 20th century.

Together with people all around the world, Christians at the outset of the 21st century must respond to this climate crisis by developing a new way of living in harmony with Earth’s energy resources and in solidarity with all of God’s creatures. This moral obligation involves our commitment to the poor and marginalized among the present generation, but it especially includes our responsibilities to future generations. Actions taken or not taken today will impact the welfare of the planet for centuries to come.”

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