

Climate Change, Poverty and our Call as Christians

What is Climate Change:

Climate change, as we think of it today, is caused by the overuse of fossil fuels and the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. These gases create a thick layer of pollution near the atmosphere that then traps in the Earth's heat. Recent scientific reports have indicated that in order for the global community to prevent the worst impacts of climate change, the United States must take a leadership role and work to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and energy use.

The Impact of Climate Change on God's Creation:

Scientists have been studying climate change for more than twenty years. Recent reports have indicated that there are literally hundreds of impacts that both God's creation and God's people will be forced to deal with as a result of climate change.

Floods, droughts and an increased number of natural disasters are just a few of these impacts. In addition, families and communities living in poverty will face food and water shortages around the world and coastal communities will suffer from sea level rise, a by product of climate change that result from the melting of glaciers and ice sheets.

The Poverty of Climate Change

Those who are living in poverty in the US and around the world will suffer from the impacts of climate change as they depend on their surrounding physical environment to supply their needs and have limited ability to cope with changes in the climate and their local environment. Some of the impacts that will be felt in the developing world include:

- an additional 600 million individuals affected by malnutrition
- an additional 1.8 billion people living in water scarcity

- an additional 220 millions people infected by malaria

Here in the United States, communities living in poverty will also be impacted by climate change. For example:

- Arctic island communities find themselves relocating to the mainland as a result of erosion from rising sea level and disappearing permafrost.
- More intense storms have ravaged communities across the country, leaving those who are unable to evacuate without homes, food, and support

By addressing both poverty and climate change, we can support the most vulnerable among us through new jobs, local sustainability initiatives, and community supported agriculture that serves both the community while protecting God's Creation.

What You can Do

As those most responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions that have created climate change and its resulting impacts, we must take action in our own lives, in our congregations and as part of a larger community.

- reduce our carbon emissions by driving less, turning your air conditioning up and your heat down
- reduce your congregations carbon footprint – change the lightbulbs to CFLs and turn off lights and heat/air conditioning when not in the building
- speak to your elected officials about the issue – call your congressional members, send them a letter, or have your congregations sign postcards to your congressional member