

West Virginia Sustainable Energy Charter

Summary

Because we have a responsibility as people of faith towards all of God's family and creation, therefore we affirm:

- We are Christians, Jews, Muslims, and members of other faith groups, united by our common belief in the preciousness of all life. The West Virginia Interfaith Global Climate Change Campaign is one of many state campaigns active in a national Interfaith Climate & Energy Campaign.
- There is scientific consensus that global warming is already affecting weather and climate. Furthermore, this warming is, in significant part, caused by human activity. By far the largest cause is burning of fossil fuels. This destructive manipulation of the environment is unprecedented in human history.
- Impacts will become much worse over time. These include more frequent and severe weather events, heating and drought, wild land fires, reduction of agricultural productivity, immense ecological destruction, massive species extinctions, and serious and spreading human health problems.
- Power plant emissions and automotive emissions pose a growing threat to human health. We have a responsibility towards our own children and grandchildren as well as generations to come. Their health tomorrow is affected by the harmful air pollution that is produced today.
- The ethical imperative is clear—we must reduce these harms. We must respond with a powerful yet straightforward ethic of responsibility. Present and future human well being and ecosystem health are at stake.
- Ethical and religious norms of justice, security, family, peace, stewardship, reverence and respect are served by this sustainability ethic.
- The sustainable energy ethic supports giving sustainable energy significant preference in public policy, and transitioning from use of fossil fuel into sustainable alternatives for our energy.
- The transition to sustainable energy should be guided by the following themes: creation stewardship, institutional responsibility, strategic planning, justice, leadership and responsibility.





- Principles for transitioning and moving energy decision-making onto the right path include:
 - Promote energy efficiency.
 - Give preference to sustainable energy in public policy and citizen consumption.
 - Require reductions in emissions of the four major power plant pollutants: carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and mercury.
 - Set definite time frames for bringing older plants into compliance.
 - Encourage and use alternative, more efficient and effective energy sources for vehicles, buildings and power plants.
 - Protect wild and traditional lands from exploitation that destroys ecosystems and thereby creates more climate warming.
 - Recognize and promote the linkage between energy conservation, efficiency and sustainable livelihood.

Preamble

A Call for a Responsible Sustainable Energy Policy to Address Global Warming

Sustainability, in environmental terms, can be defined as the ability of an eco-system to maintain itself in healthy existence indefinitely. Similarly, a sustainable energy system is one that is renewable, efficient, and clean. It relies as much on conservation in energy use as it does on the use of renewable energy sources—such as the sun, wind, or tides—that are inexhaustible and non-polluting.

Most scientists, religious leaders, environmental organizations,

public health experts, architects and a growing constellation of businesses support sustainable energy. An increasing number of elected officials have also come to realize that the common good requires it. Sustainable energy is moving more into the economic mainstream. It needs the kind of policy and fiscal preferences that fossil and nuclear energy have enjoyed for far too long.

In the very deepest sense, the transition and ultimate turn to sustainable energy is a test of our political and moral vision as a society.

We need visionary leaders to move society beyond business as usual. **All of us need to be those leaders.** “We must be the change we wish to see” (*Mahatma Gandhi.*) We do not wish to pass to our children, grandchildren and generations to come, a world where ever more species are extinct, air is unfit to breathe, food and fresh water supplies fall short, wild lands are no more, and where economic and political insecurity is rampant.

Global warming threatens and harms our health and ecosystem and affects our very freedom. The state of West Virginia is in dire need of change, with our many coal-based power plants, increasing vehicular traffic, citizens suffering from poor health, and our beautiful wild forests in need of protection.

It is time to move to Sustainable Energy!

West Virginia can become a leading state in the move toward sustainable energy. We have the capacity and resources available to make this transition. We must seize

the opportunity to transition toward alternative sources for energy—and thereby support an economy based on cleaner energy. Economic development derived from alternative, cleaner sources will also allow us to open up new national treasures, while at the same time treating our natural resources with respect.

What We Believe: Energy Policy and Religious Faith

We believe in the following moral imperatives:

- We have a responsibility towards all of God’s family and creation. We have a responsibility towards our own children, grandchildren and generations to come. Their health tomorrow is affected by the harmful air pollution that is produced today. We cannot ignore the plight of those who live in poverty—for, the poorer someone is, the less chance they have to escape the harmful effects of air pollution and global warming. As Psalm 24 reminds us, the Earth and everything in it belongs to God.
- We recognize God’s call for us to be good stewards of the balance of creation that sustains all life on earth. In respecting the Creator, we also respect creation.
- As people of faith, we are being called to consider national purpose, not just policy, in the current energy debate. Far more than rolling blackouts and gasoline prices are at stake: the future of God’s creation on earth; the nature and sustainability of our economy; our public health and public lands; the environment and quality of life we leave our children and grandchildren.



- This is a critical time for decisions about our future. Global warming is an established scientific fact agreed upon by the vast majority of climate scientists worldwide. And yet, the appetite for energy in the industrialized nations (especially the United States) continues to grow unabated.

Compounding the problem is the fact that population growth has added two billion people to the planet in the last twenty years, while the aspirations of the developing world are raising consumption of fossil fuels far more rapidly than expected. A sensible, sustainable energy policy will reduce fossil fuel use as the primary source for greenhouse gases.

Further, a sensible, sustainable energy policy will reduce our dependence on foreign energy sources, thus enhancing our personal, national, and global security.

Advances in new technologies for clean and efficient energy make sustainable choices economically viable. We need to look beyond current finite dirtier sources for the solution to our country's and our state's near-term future energy needs.

But there remains in our country both social and political denial of the ethical and moral ramifications of our energy choices. The market can drive itself, but it cannot steer. Our rich religious traditions can help provide a moral balance to energy development and usage decisions seemingly dictated strictly by dollars and cents. To be silent, will signify our assent to the choices being made.

As our Buddhist brothers and sisters remind us, we should always endeavor to act in ways that will

benefit all the earth's inhabitants. If we cannot do what is of benefit, we can at least do no harm. **We have a moral obligation to choose the safest, cleanest, most healthful, and most sustainable sources of energy to protect the fragile web of life.**

An Ethic to Guide Energy Policy: The Weighted Preference for Sustainable Energy

If well-being is enhanced, and harm reduced with sustainable energy generally, if the moral voice of faith communities is rising to support a sustainable energy path, and if sustainable energy is indeed within the realm of the practical, then a powerful case is made for an ethically based "weighted preference" to foster sustainable energy.

Our current energy fossil fuel and nuclear system have been given preferential treatment for years. Eminent domain, tax write-offs, government subsidies, liability guarantees, highway subsidies—these have been the "weighted preference"—all slanted to an energy system that is now dysfunctional.

Furthermore, if full costing of fossil fuel based and nuclear power was accounted for, if environmental, social and esthetic costs were factored in, these traditional energy sources would appear far more costly than is reflected in market prices.

In sum, the "weighted preference" for sustainable energy merely encourages movement to an ethically preferable energy system, and reduces the historic preference for a now flawed carbon dominated system.

Our religious values call us to the discussion of energy issues for several reasons

- **Care of Creation:** Many of our traditions see the beauty and interdependence of earth's plants and animals, oceans and mountains, flowers and deserts, as the deliberate and purposeful work of a beneficent and loving Creator. **We did not weave this web of life—we are merely strands of it** (Native American concept often attributed to Chief Seattle.) What is done to the web is done to all. Those who abuse or destroy creation show contempt for the Creator.
- **Justice and Equality:** Justice is served when the least powerful are given equal protection from societal and ecological harm. Scientists tell us that the burdens of climate change will fall disproportionately on the poor of the world, who have fewer resources with which to shield themselves from dislocations, health effects, and ecological crises. Concern for the 'least among us' (Matthew 25) and minimizing harm to them must drive our energy policy decisions. Looking toward justice for all will help reduce the threat of international violence due to scarce and diminishing resources.
- **Responsibility to Future Generations:** Many indigenous people have long traditions of weighing their choices on the basis of possible effects on future generations. A similar principle is inherent, if not always acknowledged, in all the world's major faiths. Our habits of prodigal energy use, dependence on polluting fuels, and resistance to



any changes in our lifestyle must give way to concern and justice for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We are responsible for leaving them the beautiful, ecologically sound, and habitable world our ancestors bequeathed to us.

Who We Are

We are Christians, Jews, Muslims, and members of other faith groups, united by our common belief of the preciousness of all life. The West Virginia Interfaith Global Climate Change Campaign is one of many

state campaigns active in a national Interfaith Climate & Energy Campaign. This coalition of religious leaders, institutions, and individuals has been working to: a) educate congregants and the general public about the causes and effects of global climate change, and b) to speak out about the religious and moral imperatives to protect all creation human and non-human. Over 1,200 leading religious leaders have joined in calling for federal policies for energy conservation and climate justice.

Concerns about the effects of climate change have also been documented in a report from the current Bush administration to the United Nations and in The Framework Convention of Climate Change, which was signed by the former President Bush and unanimously ratified by the U.S. Senate.

Why We Are Concerned

- Too much carbon dioxide in our atmosphere is changing the Earth's climate.
- The largest source of carbon dioxide in the United States is the electric power industry, which accounts for about 40 percent of all U.S. emissions.
- More than 88 percent of the carbon dioxide emissions come from older coal-fired facilities.
- The older coal-fired power plants are also a source of nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide, which cause smog and asthma and other breathing-related illnesses, and mercury exposure, which can cause birth defects.

Wild Wonderful West Virginia: How Could Climate Change Affect Our State?

- **Human Health:** Heat waves may increase number of heat related deaths and illnesses. Air pollution from power plant increases with higher demand for energy.
- **Forests:** Forested areas could decline by as much as 5-10 percent. Pine and scrub oaks could increasingly replace hardwood forests. Spruce forests could be substantially reduced or disappear.
- **Respiratory Ailments:** Increased concentrations of ground-level ozone could lead to increased respiratory problems such as asthma, respiratory inflammation and reduced lung function.
- **Diseases:** Warming and other climate changes could expand the habitat of disease-carrying insects, thus increasing the potential for transmission of diseases such as malaria.
- **Water Resources:** Warmer climate could lead to earlier spring snowmelt resulting in higher stream flows in winter and spring—and lower in summer. This change could affect whitewater rafting and the growing tourism and recreational industries.
- **Wilderness Areas:** The flora & fauna and animal species of our unique wilderness areas, such as the Monongahela National Forest including Dolly Sods, Otter Creek, North & South Laurel Fork and the Cranberry wilderness, could be severely impacted due to lack of ability to adapt to changes in climate and inability to properly migrate.

Source: "Global Warming—Where You Live", U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). September 2002

Global warming is a threat to all people and all of creation.

A Call for Responsible Power Plant Planning

Fossil fuel power plants pose a growing threat to human health because of green house gas emissions and other pollutants.

What we support: We support the following actions by government and industry related to climate change and the reduction of global warming:

- Reassess the "Cap and Trade" scheme for pollution control.
- Institute other types of incentives to encourage conservation and



for adoption of sustainable energy sources.

- Require reductions in emissions of the four major power plant pollutants (the 4 Ps): carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and mercury.
- Require that all power plants, including older coal-fired plants, meet appropriate modern standards for pollution sources. Set definite time frames for bringing older plants into compliance.
- Eliminate loopholes that allow older power plants to emit high pollution levels.
- Apply these requirements to any planning for new power plants and support the development of new viable jobs and energy sources as alternatives to coal-fired plants.

A Call for Responsible Fuel Economy Planning

Recommendations for West Virginia to Reduce Emissions:

- Encourage the state government, religious communities, and business leaders to make vehicle fuel conservation a matter of policy and all citizens to downsize when purchasing vehicles. These vehicles can initially be hybrids.
- Additionally, it is recommended that the state government encourage purchasing of school buses that use bio fuels—prototypes have been shown to get 52 miles per gallon (mpg.)
- Ask the state government to move toward Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (L.E.E.D.) certification for buildings.
- Business leaders might also consider downsizing in future vehi-

cle choices, as well as greater use of hybrids or super-efficient diesels.

- Adopt state vehicle exhaust emission standards and annual testing.

Use of Alternative Energy:

- Proceed toward bio fuels (bio diesel)
- Accelerate research and development toward alternative energies, which will not pollute and destroy the environment.

The Following Elements as Basic Guides to Reduce Global Climate Change

** Please refer to the “Addendum” to this document for further explanation and definitions of certain references.*

Sustainability:

Our Livelihoods Depend on Sustainable Development: The goal of moving to sustainable energy use by phasing out fossil fuels contributes to our quality of life and very livelihoods. It protects our environment. We can begin by promoting energy conservation.

Stationary Sources:

Buildings: Move toward Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (L.E.E.D.) certification.

As we renovate and construct new buildings, promote L.E.E.D. certification and N.E.T. metering.

Religious communities: promote leadership in environmentally friendly buildings

Government: Promote L.E.E.D. certification and N.E.T. metering.

Industrial Coal Burning and Nuclear Power Plants:

Critical in this Process: Enforce emission reductions. Move away from use of fossil fuels and nuclear power use and toward sustainable clean energy sources.

Community Development:

Block Grants and other programs: must have a percentage of L.E.E.D. certified building codes attached.

Religious Camps: Educational materials and workshops can encourage citizens and future leaders to utilize Sustainable Model for Urban Development (SMUD).

Churches: Renovations; New Buildings; Conducting educational workshops; Buying hybrid vehicles.

What Can You Do?

The solution to the global climate change crisis is not purely a question of changes in government policy or in the world of big business. It also calls for a commitment to reform on a personal level:

Education: Learn about the science of climate change, and ways to mitigate it. Include the younger generation, with curriculum and projects targeted at them in religious education venues.

Downsize our homes, our vehicles, and our appetites. Move to more efficient appliances, HVAC systems, windows, etc., and even install solar panels for hot water and electricity.

Choose Green Energy (i.e., energy from sustainable, non-polluting sources) where possible. Work to change state law to permit this—make net metering widely



available, and economically feasible to all businesses and individual households.

Addendum

“Cap and Trade”: refers to lowering (and in some cases eliminating) a source of toxic emissions from a coal burning power plant. The designated limit or “cap” on one stack or facility is then “traded” for another source to allow additional emissions that otherwise would be in non-attainment (exceeding the allowed emission standard.)

“At stake: the future of creation on earth; the nature and durability of our economy; our public health and public lands; [and] the environment and quality of life we bequeath our children and grandchildren. We are being called to consider national purpose—not just policy.”

This system of monitoring emissions from power plants is an attempt to meet air quality standards, and not be in violation of “non attainment” and thereby stay within compliance. One facility, or even a ‘stack’ can emit a larger amount if another is reduced, thereby keeping an overall level of emissions for the designated area. We believe this system is very flawed, and each stack at each facility needs to emit the least amount of pollution as possible. New sources cannot be added into the “toxic soup” under one big “bubble”—rather one small “bubble” for each stack.

HVAC Systems: Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning system that has been developed to heat and cool homes or commercial building much more efficiently. This system meets or exceeds Department of Energy standards. The units are high efficiency units that save energy. The system has also been applied to refrigeration units as well (HVACR).

L.E.E.D.: “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design”, refers to a sophisticated US Green Building Council, *voluntary* design evaluation program that seeks to strive for the most efficient and energy frugal designs in buildings. There are several levels obtainable, and a building owner and their designer must submit design drawings, construction methods, materials lists and sources*, extensive documentation and computer analyses to determine what level they have achieved.

** Even the proximity of the site to building sources is taken into consideration. The fuel that the delivery trucks would use is a factor in determining the level of rating! If there was demolition, then how much material was recycled, how and where must be submitted with receipts for transporting and reuse documentation.*

For more information: www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp.

SMUD: refers to the *Sustainable Model for Urban Development*. This model consists of focusing on a sustainable community development model whereby all the elements for sustaining a community economically, environmentally, medical services, are working together.