

AFRICAN AMERICAN CLIMATE INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. In these newsletters, we will be providing updates and information about the African American Climate Initiative with a particular focus on our ongoing efforts to highlight the voice of the African American faith community. For more than 3 years, I have been working, at the request of the African American denominations that are part of the National Council of Churches, to provide the opportunity for education and engagement in the ongoing fight for climate justice. Through this work, we are highlighting the disproportionate health and economic impacts that dirty energy (such as coal and oil) and climate change are having on African Americans.

I would like to thank the leaders pastors and members of the following denominations for their support and encouragement over these past three years; African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, United Methodist Church, and Presbyterian Church USA. I would also like to extend a special thank you to the following conventions; National Baptist Convention USA, National Baptist of America, Progressive Nation Baptist Convention, Baptist E&M Convention of SC, General Baptist State Convention of NC and General Missionary Baptist Convention of GA.

Michael A. McClain

A BIT ABOUT REV. MIKE

Rev. Mike is the current pastor of Liberty Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Rock Hill, SC. He has pastored in North Carolina, South Carolina and New Jersey. In addition to his ministerial service, Reverend McClain serves in the following State and National Positions;

- Legislative Representative -Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina
- Chairman–Public Relations Ministry–Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina
- Executive Director–United Black Fund of the Midlands, Inc.
- Deputy Director General – National Baptist Congress of Christian Education

He is currently working with the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA as the Southeast Regional Coordinator for the African American Climate Initiative (part of the Eco-Justice Programs) where he works with African American congregations across the Southeast to educate them and their denominations on climate change, as well as conducts local, state and national workshops on the health and economic hardships that climate change has and will have on people of color.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Last week, Reverend McClain and other faith leaders from Atlanta including Reverend Gerald Durley and Reverend Alan Jenkins testified at an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listening session focuses on greenhouse gases being emitted from new fossil fuel fired power plants and oil refineries. The message they conveyed highlighted that people of faith are committed to protecting the vulnerable and serving as stewards of God's Creation and that communities of color suffer disproportionately from the emissions of power plants and refineries. Here is Reverend McClain's statement as delivered to the EPA:

"Collectively, the nation's roughly 500 fossil fuel-fired power plants and 150 oil refineries emit some 2.4 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases per year—nearly 40 percent of total U.S. emissions. New standards for climate change-causing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and oil refineries have been announced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to take full effect in 2012.

As a pastor and an African American, I believe stronger standards on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and refineries are long overdue. For years, greenhouse gas emissions have been spewing into the air, resulting in poor air quality and in many cases disproportionately affecting communities of color around the country. The moral dimensions of reducing CO2 emissions are of great concern to African American people of faith.

We believe in working towards climate justice so that those with the smallest carbon footprint don't bear the burden for climate change, which currently is the situation. We look for the renewal of creation, not its destruction. I would like to share a passage from Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 8:19-23 (New International Version)

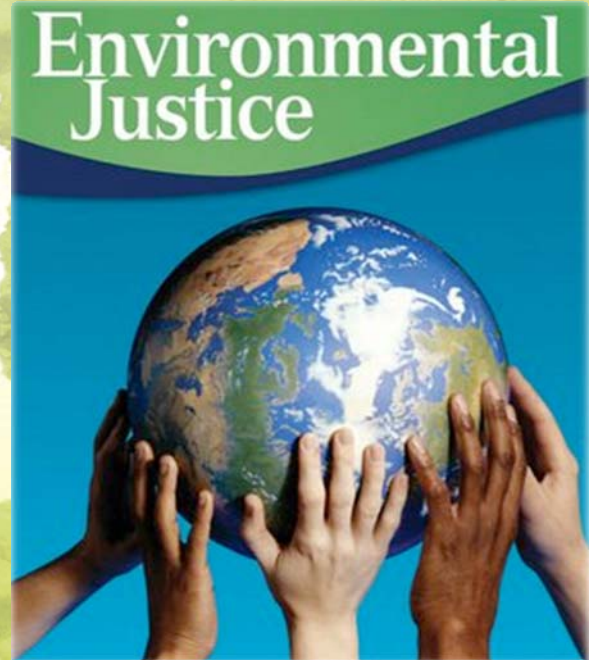
¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to son-ship, the redemption of our bodies.

As people of God, it's critically important that we become real stewards of His creation. As people of color, I can think of no time better than National African American History Month to make a clear statement to honor Creation and to promote laws which protect our people from those who would destroy God's Earth. Thank you."

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW...

- ❖ *African Americans suffer disproportionately from greenhouse gases and carbon emissions and are expected to bear the brunt of the climate change if left unchecked.*
- ❖ *African Americans, particularly in the Southeast, are more likely to live close to dirty and polluting power plants, leading to higher rates of asthma in communities of color.*
- ❖ *The largest municipal areas with coal fired power plants have large African American communities ranging from 25-52% of the population. Coal-fired power plants are among the largest sources in North Carolina of nitrogen oxides, mercury, sulfur dioxides, and other air toxics.*
- ❖ *Low-income communities and communities of color will be disproportionately affected by the increased pollution related to climate change. For example, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation reported that African Americans are twice as likely to die than the general population as a result of a heat wave and nearly three times more likely to die of asthma than Whites.*



Find our state specific fact sheets [here](#). These will provide information about the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions and energy injustices that communities of color are experiencing in Arkansas, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida and Virginia.

MARCH 2011

UPCOMING EVENTS

Caring for Creation 2011 Conference

March 31 ~ April 3, 2011

Lake Junaluska Conference & Retreat Center Lake Junaluska, NC

(Scholarships are available for churches)

For more information contact Loy Lilley, llilley@lakejunaluska.com or 828-454-6750

Community Roundtables coming soon in the following areas

(Dates to be determined. Please contact Rev. Mike if you are interested in participating)

**Charlotte, NC
Savannah GA
Tampa, FL
Richmond VA**

For More Information Contact

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National Council of Churches**

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