

# Resource Guide: Christians and Climate Change

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To understand why, as Christians, we should care about and respond to global warming, we must have an understanding of 1) the details of global warming, both the facts of its occurrence and how it impacts the world as a whole; 2) knowledge of Scriptures and other parts of our traditions that speak to these details; and 3) knowledge of what we can do in response to the first two points, both within our specifically religious practices and within our daily life.

This guide is structured to provide information on all three points which may be useful in planning an event for the National Campus Day of Prayer and Reflection on Global Warming. Please consider including all three of these elements in your event to keep a clear perspective on why this is an important issue for Christians. Points 1 and 2 are addressed in the “Study and Understanding” section, point 3 in “Further Reflection and Response.”

All web resources mentioned in this document have their respective URLs listed on the last two pages; where present within the guide a hyperlink has been made available.

## Study and Understanding

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### I. The facts of global warming

We have included information about the process of global warming, and the impact of climate change on the earth as well as on human communities, in our chapter “The Scientific Basis and Policy Solutions.” Thus, our focus here will be on just a few points. Web links to sources with more detailed information on each point are available on the next page.

1. There is a scientific consensus that global warming is happening, that it is caused by human activity, and that the effects will be negative.
2. The potential effects of global warming are:
  - a rise in sea level, causing damage to coastal cities and destruction of habitat for many non-human animals
  - flooding in some areas, and drought in others, leading to disrupted agricultural production
  - intensified storm activity, including stronger hurricanes
  - possible refugee situations as a result of all three changes above
  - water shortages, as many fresh water sources are depleted (for instance, when glaciers located at river headwaters melt completely away)
3. Global warming is caused by human activity, meaning that that we, as individuals and as communities, are responsible for this change. The disproportionate amount of carbon dioxide now in our atmosphere is caused by our daily actions. These include:
  - driving automobiles of all sorts (small cars as well as SUVs)
  - consumption of foods that require energy-intensive production, such as meat (particularly beef) and non-locally produced foods requiring long stretches of refrigeration and transport
  - use of energy-intensive items in our homes, including electronics, refrigerators, stoves, and air conditioners
  - consumption of products that add to deforestation, including lumber and all wood products harvested through clear-cutting and without replanting, and disposable paper products (an

issue because our forests help regulate the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere)

## **Global Warming Web Resources**

1. For another introduction to global warming, see “[The Top Ten Things You Need to Know About Global Warming](http://hdgc.epp.cmu.edu/teachersguide/teachersguide.htm#topten),” a short primer on climate change for teachers provided by Carnegie Mellon University. <http://hdgc.epp.cmu.edu/teachersguide/teachersguide.htm#topten>
2. The Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI) and the Evangelical Environment Network (EEN) both have resources about climate change and particularly about the urgency of the situation and the impact of global warming on the world's poor:
  - Evangelical Climate Initiative's “[Call to Action](#)”
  - ECI's [FAQ](#) (Including answers to “What is climate change?” and “Why is it urgent?”)
  - Evangelical Environment Network's [briefing on climate change](#)
  - EEN [resources on climate change, including fact sheets and slide shows](#)
  - EEN's document “[Hurricanes, Climate Change, and the Poor](#)”
3. Protecting Creation, an interfaith climate justice group, also has many resources. See particularly their document “[The Cry of Creation: Global Warming and Global Justice](#).”
4. There are also many web resources available for understanding our personal contribution to climate change. You can learn about how much carbon dioxide your lifestyle creates using carbon calculators, such as those available at [SafeClimate](#) or [CarbonCounter.org](#).

## **II. Scriptural and Traditional Basis for Thinking about Global Warming**

While the Bible and our different denominational traditions may not say anything directly about global warming or climate change, we can see various themes in the issue of global warming that are addressed by our traditions. Most notably, global warming involves our relationship to the earth, our relationship to others, and our relationship to the material items we use and own in the way in which we live our daily lives. We have included passages here that speak to these three themes, along with discussion questions, which you might use to further prepare your own material for holding a Bible study, service, or other event during the Day of Prayer. All selections are from the New Revised Standard Version. Web links to collections of passages also addressing these themes are also below.

### **1. Scripture: Our relationship to Creation**

#### **Genesis 1:24-31**

<sup>24</sup> And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

<sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it;

and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’<sup>29</sup> God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.’<sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so.<sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

### **Leviticus 25:3-6, 18-24**

<sup>3</sup> For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; <sup>4</sup> but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. <sup>5</sup> You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land.

<sup>18</sup> You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you may live on the land securely. <sup>19</sup> The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. <sup>20</sup> Should you ask, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?’ <sup>21</sup> I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for three years. <sup>22</sup> When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the old crop; until the ninth year, when its produce comes in, you shall eat the old. <sup>23</sup> The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. <sup>24</sup> Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.

### **Isaiah 24:4-6**

<sup>4</sup> The earth dries up and withers,  
the world languishes and withers;  
the heavens languish together with the earth.

<sup>5</sup> The earth lies polluted  
under its inhabitants;  
for they have transgressed laws,  
violated the statutes,  
broken the everlasting covenant.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore a curse devours the earth,  
and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;  
therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled,  
and few people are left.

### **Discussion questions**

1. God proclaims the world God has created is good – why is it good? Is its goodness dependent on its value to humans? What does 'dominion' mean? What is our responsibility to creation?
2. What might be the reasons for God's instructions to the Israelites regarding the Year of Jubilee? In what ways might we now provide rest and redemption for the land?
3. What might our relationship to the land say about our relationship to God? Are natural disasters to be considered accidental, or do we attribute them to sin or wrongdoing?

### **2. Scripture: Our relationship to others**

### **Matthew 25:31-46**

<sup>31</sup> ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup> and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup> And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” <sup>40</sup> And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” <sup>41</sup> Then he will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

### **Isaiah 58:1-12**

Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.

<sup>2</sup> Yet day after day they seek me  
and delight to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that practised righteousness  
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgements,  
they delight to draw near to God.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Why do we fast, but you do not see?  
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?’

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day,  
and oppress all your workers.

<sup>4</sup> Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight  
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today  
will not make your voice heard on high.

<sup>5</sup> Is such the fast that I choose,  
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,  
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,  
a day acceptable to the Lord?

<sup>6</sup> Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

<sup>8</sup> Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator shall go before you,  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

<sup>9</sup> Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

<sup>10</sup> if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.

<sup>11</sup> The Lord will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.

<sup>12</sup> Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.

### **Discussion questions**

1. How do we aid the “least of these” with regards to global climate change? How do we make sure the hungry are fed?
2. How do we “raise up the foundations” of future generations knowing the threat of global warming?
3. Isaiah says that the type of fasting Israel has partaken in is not of the right sort. What might be the appropriate kind of fasting for us today, considering global warming? How are personal forms of fasting related to caring for others?

### **3. Scripture: Our relationship to things in our daily life**

#### **Matthew 19:16-26**

<sup>16</sup> Then someone came to him and said, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ <sup>18</sup> He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness;

<sup>19</sup>Honour your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ <sup>20</sup> The young man said to him, ‘I have kept all these; what do I still lack?’ <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ <sup>22</sup> When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’ <sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, ‘Then who can be saved?’ <sup>26</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.’

### **1 Timothy 6:6-9**

<sup>6</sup> Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; <sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; <sup>8</sup> but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. <sup>9</sup> But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What type of riches are to be avoided? Are there any to be pursued? For what purpose does Jesus ask the rich young man to give up his wealth?
2. What riches do we have today that prevent us from following the commandments?
3. How do we achieve contentment with what we have? Would we be content with merely “food and clothing”? What are the consequences of not being content with limited material wealth? Are these linked to the problem of global warming, and how?

### **Bible-focused Web Resources**

Several websites have both lists of passages from Scripture as well as commentary on how we might consider these passages in light of the current threats to our planet and to human and non-human life. Some of these are:

The Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies [“Biblical Principles for Respecting the Integrity of Creation”](#)

EEN's [Scriptural resources for a Biblical perspective on the environment](#)

The Fund for Christian Ecology's [“A Scriptural Call for Environmental Stewardship”](#)

### **4. Tradition: What does your tradition say about global warming?**

Many denominations are beginning to consider how they might respond to global warming, and some have also issued statements specifically addressing climate change. Here are some web resources to help you find what your tradition has said about global warming.

- The National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program has a list of denominational statements available at <http://www.ncecojustice.org/climatestatement.htm>
- A similar list is available from Eco-Justice Ministries, in their list of denominational contact information, which also includes statements made on other environmental issues, and links to the environmental justice offices of many denominations.

## Further Reflection and Response

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### I. Worship

How do we respond to global warming within the practice of our faith? Bringing what we know about global warming, the creation, God as Creator, and our responsibilities to God, the creation, and others into our worship is undoubtedly a necessary step in deepening our understanding of all these items. We want to give briefly here some suggestions for materials that might be used to form a worship service around the climate change issue. In addition to the Biblical materials above, consider using the following:

- Traditional hymns with a focus on the creation and God as Creator. These might include *For the Beauty of the Earth*, *How Great Thou Art*, *This is My Father's World*, or *All Creatures of our God and King*.
- Responsive readings based on praise of God's creation. These are particularly plentiful in the Psalms. You might consider, for instance, Psalm 19, Psalm 104, Psalm 144, and Psalm 148.
- Prayers of praise, petition, confession, repentance, and thanksgiving focused on climate change. Praise God for the beauty of the created world; petition God to help us in keeping it well; confess how we have sinned as individuals and communities in contributing to the damage of God's creation; seek to repent for this sin; and give God thanks for helping us to move beyond our current ways to a better relationship with God's creation.
- A change of scenery. Frequently we worship indoors, away from the natural beauty of God's world. Consider holding an outdoor service at a nearby park, or organizing a weekend retreat to an area where participants will be actively reminded of the creation and creatures they are learning to take into consideration.

### Worship Web Resources

Sermon suggestions, liturgies, prayers, musical worship, and other worship materials can be found at the following websites:

National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Program's [Sermon Suggestions](#)

The Lutheran School of Theology's [Web of Creation's Worship Resources](#)

Quaker Earth Care Witness's ["Ideas for Programmed Meetings and Churches"](#)

ECI's [Creation Care Sunday 2006 Worship Materials](#)

### II. Action

How do we move from reflection into action? Consider action on several levels:

#### 1. Education

Teach others about global warming and its effects on the Earth and humans alike. Consider showing a free movie on your campus or in your congregation, or hosting a speaker to talk about the ethical imperative to respond to climate change. Some possibilities include:

- Screening *The Great Warming*, a film recently produced about the humanitarian consequences

of climate change. The makers of the film have also created a study guide for faith communities to reflect further on what needs to be done. Information can be found in the [“Call to Action”](#) section on their website.

- Screening a slide show or DVD of the presentation made by Sir John Houghton, a leading climate scientist, to the National Association of Evangelicals. Copies of the slides and information about the DVD can be found in EEN's [Resources](#).
- Screening Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, which also has an educational guide available at [ClimateCrisis.net](#).

## **2. Personal and Communal Changes**

As global warming is caused by human activity, our own personal behaviors will have to change if we want to fight climate change. This includes changing personal habits of consumption, and working to shape our communal life so that both our communities and the individuals within it do not have to use as many natural resources. Some basic changes might include:

- Forming habits that prevent energy waste. Are lights turned off when leaving a room in the house? Are computers turned off when not in use, at home, work, or in the church office?
- Changes in transportation. Consider creating carpools to school, church, and work. Contact a car-sharing group to see if one might possibly open a branch in your neighborhood, so that individuals won't need to own cars. Whenever possible, walk, bike, or take public transit.
- Dietary changes. Does the food you or your family consume require more energy than necessary? What about the food served at large church events? To learn more about how our choice of food is related to climate change, see the article [“Global warming: The inconvenient truth about what we eat.”](#)

## **3. Working for Policy Changes**

While we can make changes personally, there are some things outside our individual control. Consider becoming involved in larger efforts to work for policies that will help fight climate change, such as carbon emission caps, fuel efficiency standards for vehicles, and improved public transit. In what way can your church or faith community work together on such issues?

### **Action Web Resources**

Climate Crisis's [Take Action page](#)

ECI's [Take Action page](#)

National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Program's [What We Can Do page](#)

[Stop Global Warming.org](#)

Wikipedia's article on “Mitigation of global warming”

## **Web Resources**

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The rest of this document has used hyperlinks to reach the following resources. Listed here are the actual URLs for all the above resources, should you wish to print this document to share with others, so that they can also access the above webpages.

### **Global Warming Web Resources**

Climate change primer: “The Top Ten Things You Need to Know About Global Warming”:  
<http://hdgc.epp.cmu.edu/teachersguide/teachersguide.htm#topten>

Evangelical Climate Initiative links:

Call to Action: <http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement>

Frequently asked questions: <http://www.christiansandclimate.org/faq>

Evangelical Environment Network links:

Briefing on climate change: [http://www.creationcare.org/files/global\\_warming\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.creationcare.org/files/global_warming_briefing.pdf)

Extra climate change resources, including facts sheets and slide shows:

<http://www.creationcare.org/resources/sunday/facts.php>

Document on “Hurricanes, Climate Change, and the Poor:

<http://www.creationcare.org/resources/climate/hurricane.php>

Protecting Creation's document “The Cry of Creation: Global Warming and Global Justice”:  
<http://www.protectingcreation.org/documents/CryOfCreation.pdf>

Online Carbon Counters:

SafeClimate: <http://www.safeclimate.net/calculator/>

CarbonCounter.org: <http://www.carboncounter.org/offset-your-emissions/personal-calculator.aspx>

### **Bible-focused Web Resources**

The Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies “Biblical Principles for Respecting the Integrity of Creation”: <http://www.ausable.org/or.resources.online.1.cfm>

EEN's Scriptural resources for a Biblical perspective on the environment:

<http://www.creationcare.org/resources/scripture.php>

The Fund for Christian Ecology's “A Scriptural Call for Environmental Stewardship”:

<http://www.christianecology.org/Stewardship.html>

### **Tradition Web Resources**

Denominational statements, gathered by the NCC's Ecojustice wing:

<http://www.ncccojustice.org/climatestatement.htm>

Eco-Justice.org's denominational contact information: <http://www.eco-justice.org/denom.asp>

### **Worship Web Resources**

National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Program's Sermon Suggestions:

<http://www.ncccojustice.org/globalwarmingresources.htm#sermons>

The Lutheran School of Theology's *Web of Creation's* Worship Resources:

<http://www.webofcreation.org/Worship/index.htm>

Quaker Earth Care Witness's "Ideas for Programmed Meetings and Churches":

<http://www.quakerearthcare.org/SpiritualityandEarthcare/ideas.htm>

ECI's *Creation Care Sunday 2006* Worship Materials:

<http://www.creationcare.org/resources/sunday/theme2006.php>

### **Education Web Resources**

Material to accompany the film *The Great Warming*:

<http://www.thegreatwarming.com/calltoaction/faithcommunities.html>

Material to accompany *An Inconvenient Truth*: <http://www.climatecrisis.net/>

### **Action Web Resources**

Toronto Vegetarian Association's "Eating for the Earth":

<http://www.veg.ca/issues/e-climate-change.html>

Climate Crisis's "Take Action" page: <http://www.climatecrisis.net/takeaction/>

ECI's "Take Action" page: <http://christiansandclimate.org/action>

National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Program's *What We Can Do* page:

<http://www.nccecojustice.org/globalwarmingtodo.htm>

Homepage for StopGlobalWarming.org: <http://www.stopglobalwarming.org/default.asp>

Wikipedia's article on "Mitigation of global warming":

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitigation\\_of\\_global\\_warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitigation_of_global_warming)