

The House of Bishops
Province VIII
of the Episcopal Church

April 29, 2009

Beloved in Christ,

We are writing to each of you about one of the most urgent issues facing our world today: global climate change, a crisis caused by rapid increases in the emissions of global warming gasses such as carbon dioxide. Most leading climate scientists believe that we have a very limited time in which to address this situation effectively. We must act quickly and decisively if we are to avert catastrophic and irreversible changes to life on this planet. Climate change is already affecting people around the world, particularly those living in or near poverty.

Our recent meetings at Canterbury with colleagues from across the Anglican Communion at Lambeth have caused us to become more acutely aware of the gravity of the challenge that we face. We know what is ahead if we don't find a way to change course quickly: more droughts and floods around the world, more severe storms, a rise in infectious diseases, desperate shortages of fresh water, millions of environmental refugees, and, as one study recently reported, a possible sea level rise of seven feet within this century.

As Christians, we proclaim that God created the Earth and that God delights in it ("God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good," Genesis 1:31). God entrusted the Earth to human care, and as faithful stewards of God's Creation, we need to understand the devastating impacts that global climate change will have and is already having on human communities around the world. As faithful witnesses to the power of the Risen Christ, we need to work together to become healers of God's Creation and to do everything in our power to reduce the world's output of greenhouse gas pollution.

We ask each of you as members of this province, as dioceses, as family members, neighbors, and citizens to respond to this crisis in ways that bring healing to our Earth and all its creatures. We appeal to you:

- As members of a congregation

We ask that you establish a faith and environment group in your congregation. We ask you to support it in determining your church's carbon footprint (your production of greenhouse gases from lights, heat, and other sources) and in completing an energy audit of all your buildings. We ask you to take measures to increase energy efficiency and conservation throughout your church, and to educate each other about sustainable living. We ask that you engage in this work with our young members, those who will live out their lives in the world we leave for them.

- As members of a household

We ask that you assess your personal and family carbon footprints, and find ways to decrease and offset your greenhouse gas pollution. For instance, where possible, walk rather than drive, or use public transportation. Turn the heat down; avoid or turn up the air conditioner. Re-use, re-cycle, and buy products that are re-cycled. Use compact fluorescent bulbs, and turn off unneeded lights.

- As citizens

We encourage you to advocate for public policies at local, regional, national, and international levels that serve to decrease global warming emissions, conserve fossil fuels, and build an economy that is based on clean, safe, and renewable energy. We urge you to vote for political candidates who will help our country make a swift transition to clean, safe, and renewable energy. We urge you to support the Millennium Development Goals developed by the United Nations, which include preserving the natural environment as an essential part of relieving human suffering around the world. As Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori commented in her testimony to the U.S. Senate in 2007, "We cannot triumph over global poverty... unless we also address climate change, as the two phenomena are intimately related."

- As Episcopalians preparing for General Convention

We urge you to support the Genesis Covenant, an initiative by which the Episcopal Church will commit to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from every facility it maintains by a minimum of 50% in ten years

(<http://genesiscovenant.org>). We urge you to encourage delegates not to buy bottled water, but instead to bring metal or ceramic water bottles that can be refilled with tap water.

There are numerous resources available to support us. Some dioceses have formed diocesan-level Care for Creation groups, such as the Bishop's Committee for the Environment in the Diocese of Olympia. Province VIII also has a Faith and Environment network that will gladly assist you in identifying which measures to take, and in networking with other congregations and dioceses that want to become better stewards of God's Creation. (Chris Christensen convenes this network; she can be reached at chrischris11@msn.com.)

The Genesis Covenant website offers a helpful list of theological and practical resources for greening congregations and households, such as David Gershon's Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds [<http://genesiscovenant.org/resources.htm#general>]. The website of The Regeneration Project and Interfaith Power and Light offers a wide range of resources, including an online store for energy-efficient products and a tool for calculating your church's carbon footprint (<http://www.theregenerationproject.org>).

This is a crucial moment in human history, a time when people of faith have a powerful opportunity to bear witness to hope. As author and environmentalist Bill McKibben has observed, this is the kind of time for which the church was born.

We ask that you pray about this challenge, that you seek wisdom and guidance for your decisions and responses, and that you trust in God's goodness and love for each of you.

Emboldened by the Spirit given to us by the crucified and risen Christ, we have an opportunity to proclaim: our reverence for the Earth that God has given us to cherish and protect; our commitment to the poor, who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change; and our concern for future generations, who depend on us to pass on to them a habitable world.

With God, In Christ and By the Holy Spirit,

The Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, Bishop of California

The Rt. Rev. Barry Beisner, Bishop of Northern

The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Assisting Bishop of California

The Rt. Rev. Dan Edwards, Bishop of Nevada

The Rt. Rev. Sanford Hampton, Assisting Bishop of Oregon

The Rt. Rev. Carolyn Irish, Bishop of Utah

The Rt. Rev. James Mathes, Bishop of San Diego

The Rt. Rev. Mary Gray-Reeves, Bishop of El Camino Real

The Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel, Bishop of Olympia

The Rt. Rev. Nedi Rivera, Bishop Suffragan, Diocese of Olympia & Bishop of Eastern Oregon

The Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith, Bishop of Arizona

The Rt. Rev. Brian Thom, Bishop of Idaho

The Rt. Rev. James E. Waggoner, Bishop of Spokane