

A Statement by Religious Leaders in Iowa on Global Climate Change

April 2017

As religious leaders representing diverse faith traditions in Iowa, we believe that global climate change is one of the most pressing moral challenges facing our world today. On this Earth Day, we feel an obligation to speak on behalf of the most vulnerable in our society and to act in love for our neighbors both locally and globally.

The relationship between Earth and all of its inhabitants is beautiful and complex. When one part of that relationship is threatened, ultimately it is all threatened. According to 97 percent of the world's actively publishing climate scientists, carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels is a major driver of global climate change that threatens the health of our families, the well-being of our communities, and ultimately almost all life on Earth.¹ Current impacts include severe storms, deadly heat waves, drought, flooding, and wildfires.

According to scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), global surface temperature in 2016 was the warmest since official records began in 1880. It was the third year in a row to set a new heat record, and the fifth time the record has been broken since the start of the 21st century.² The current rate of global climate change is unprecedented in human history and has few if any precedents in the history of Earth.³ We urge people of faith to acknowledge these scientific findings and to take seriously their ethical implications.

Carbon pollution is an environmental justice issue. Historically many power plants have been located near low-income neighborhoods, near communities of color, and in Midwest farm communities. These areas contribute much less to the problem and yet are being hit the hardest in terms of health and climate impacts. These communities also have fewer resources to adapt to climate change or access clean energy such as solar or energy efficiency upgrades. As faith leaders, we believe that no community should be left behind in our transition to a clean energy economy.

As people of faith, we look for signs of hope in moving toward the future. As Iowans, we have seen firsthand the benefits of increasing our use of clean energy. With wind energy providing more than 36 percent of our electric generation, the highest percentage of any state in the nation, and providing more than 6,000 jobs for Iowans⁴, we do not have to choose between what is good for our planet and what is good for our economy. When combined with energy efficiency and solar, clean energy investment creates opportunities to alleviate rural poverty through good-paying jobs and other economic benefits to small communities.

We know that effective action requires leadership at the local, state, national, and international levels to form policies and strategies that promote sustainable energy use. We urge all decision-makers to work together for solutions to lower our carbon emissions and build a clean energy future. We urge all Iowans to support efforts to lower their energy use and to advocate for clean energy. Finally, we urge all people of faith to provide leadership on this issue and act in the interest of the common good.

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>.

² National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, retrieved on March 9, 2017 from <http://www.noaa.gov/climate>.

³ "Current pace of environmental change is unprecedented in Earth's history," retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-01-current-pace-environmental-unprecedented-earth.html>.

⁴ American Wind Energy Association, retrieved on March 9, 2017 from <http://www.awea.org/resources/statefactsheets.aspx?itemnumber=890&navItemNumber=5067>



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The Rev. Timothy Button-Harrison
District Executive
Northern Plains District Church of the Brethren

The Rev. James Koopman
Executive Presbyterian
Presbytery of Des Moines

Bishop Laurie Haller
Resident Bishop
Iowa Area of the United Methodist Church

The Most Reverend Richard Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Roman Catholic Diocese of Des Moines

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Iowa Conference Minister
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The Right Reverend Alan Scarfe
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa

Rev. William Spangler-Dunning
Regional Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper
Midwest

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Grinnell

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First Christian Church
Des Moines

Rev. Mara Bailey
Smith Chapel of Simpson College
Indianola

Rev. Darline Balm-Demmel
St. Timothy's United Methodist Church
Cedar Falls

Rev. Philip Barrett
Presbytery of Des Moines
Atlantic

The Rev. Canon Cathleen Bascom
Episcopal Diocese of Iowa
Forest City

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Sisters of St. Francis
Dubuque

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Walnut Hills United Methodist Church
Urbandale

Rev. William Bernau
St. James Lutheran Church
Des Moines

Rev. Judy Brandon
St. John United Church of Christ
Melbourne

Rev. Lindsey Braun
Plymouth Church
Des Moines

Rev. Candice Brown
Capitol Hill Christian Church
Des Moines

Rev. Wallace Bubar
Central Presbyterian Church
Des Moines

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Aldersgate United Methodist Church
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Northwest District Superintendent
Iowa Annual Conference of the United
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Storm Lake

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Sisters of St. Francis
Clinton

Pastor John Chaplin
Urbandale United Church of Christ
Urbandale

Rev. Dick Clark
Walnut Hills United Methodist Church
Urbandale

Rev. Teresa Clark
Bethany United Church of Christ
Ankeny

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St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
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Iowa Chapter Coordinator
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Decorah

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Decorah Zen Center
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The Rev. Maureen Doherty
Trinity Episcopal Church
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Dubuque

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Secular Franciscans
Fort Madison

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Rev. Robert Fread
Ripley United Church of Christ
Hudson

Rev. Joan Wooters Fumetti
Foods Resource Bank
Windsor Heights

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Wesley Foundation
Ames

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Pastor Debbie Griffin
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Unity Church of Ames
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Blessed Virgin Mary
Dubuque

Sister Karen Jasper
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Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
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Zen Fields
Ames

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Retired
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Cedar Falls

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First Unitarian Church
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Waukee United Methodist Church
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*The listing of faith community names is
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