

- 51 • Antarctica ice shelves that have been in existence for at least 12,000 years as floating ice (and
52 125,000 years as ice grounded on the ocean floor) have disappeared completely.^{iv}
53 • Mountain glaciers worldwide are in retreat; at least one quarter are predicted to vanish by mid-
54 century.^v
55 • Indigenous Arctic cultures, polar bears, and large marine mammals, dependent on floating sea ice
56 have been affected by the 10% per decade decline in Arctic sea ice since 1979.^{vi}
57 • Twenty percent of coral reefs have already been destroyed by warmer oceans and other human-
58 induced stresses with most reefs at risk of dying by mid-century.^{vii}
59 • Extreme rainfall events are increasing in frequency in the Northern Hemisphere, leading to more
60 flooding.^{viii}
61 • Insect and mammalian species across the northern hemisphere are migrating to cooler climates. ^{ix}
62 • Globally more people are victims of heat stress mortality and the number of people exposed to
63 vector-borne (e.g., malaria and dengue) and water-borne (e.g., cholera) diseases is rising. The
64 World Health Organization estimates that at least 150,000 deaths each year are attributable to the
65 effects of climate disruption and that over the next 25 years, that risk will rise substantially. ^x
66

67 In addition, ongoing scientific research and climate models strongly suggest that:

- 68 • Tropical storm intensity and duration is linked to the recent ocean warming trends associated with
69 global warming. The destructive power of storms has doubled in the Atlantic and Pacific
70 Oceans.^{xi}
71 • Increases in global temperatures are disrupting ecosystems and this will likely result in loss of
72 species diversity, as species that cannot adapt die off. The first comprehensive assessment of the
73 extinction risk from global warming found that more than one million species could be committed
74 to extinction by 2050 if global warming is not curtailed. ^{xii}
75 • Earth's land area experiencing serious drought has more than doubled since the 1970's, correlating
76 with the predictions of global climate models.^{xiii}
77
78

79 Earth's climate system has sensitive thresholds. Of great concern is the possibility that abrupt,
80 irreversible climate catastrophe may occur once an unknown threshold in temperature is reached. This
81 could result in

- 82 • The collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet causing the global sea level to rise as much as 16 feet
83 leading to vast flooding of coastal areas throughout the world ^{xiv}
84 • The disruption of the Gulf Stream, resulting in cooling of the climate of northern Europe; ^{xv}
85 • The thawing of the permafrost and peat bogs of Siberia resulting in and massive and self
86 perpetuating release of the greenhouse gas methane. ^{xvi}
87

88 The balance of scientific evidence and ongoing research demands that we begin immediately to take
89 effective steps toward a 60 to 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare for the
90 already unavoidable effects of global warming.
91

92

93 **A Matter of Policy**

94

95 Public policy, particularly in the United States, has not kept up with the scientific consensus on the need
96 for immediate and significant actions to reduce greenhouse gasses. Many nations, including the United
97 States, ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992. Subsequent
98 efforts proposed in 1998, known as the Kyoto Protocols, have now (as of September 2005) been approved
99 by 156 nations and regional organizations. The United States must join other greenhouse gas-emitting
100 nations to establish mitigation commitments.

101
102 The Federal government must follow the lead of the increasing number of states, city, and local
103 government who have adopted initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - initiatives that provide
104 economic and quality-of-life benefits such as reduced energy bills, green space preservation, air quality
105 improvements, reduced traffic congestion, improved transportation choices, and economic development
106 and job creation through energy conservation and new energy technologies. In the business sector
107 recognition and support must be given to American companies that have adopted greenhouse gas
108 reduction programs to demonstrate corporate social responsibility and who have publicly expressed
109 preference national mandatory emissions targets and timetables as a means by which to remain
110 competitive in the international marketplace.

111
112 It is an integral part of our Unitarian Universalist principles to publicly express our faith response to
113 public policy actions, and to work diligently to promote policy that builds sustainable and just solutions to
114 the Global Warming threat. It is time for a national energy policy based on ethical principles, including
115 respect for and justice within the interdependent web of life.

116
117
118 **A Matter of Justice**

119
120 Climate change is not an equal opportunity threat. It will impact earliest and hardest those living in
121 places already beset by poverty, disease, and social unrest and least able to respond or assert their right to
122 justice and equal access to resources. Even in our own country, economically disadvantaged and
123 culturally marginalized people will bear the brunt of negative impacts, a fact that was all too clear in the
124 aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

125
126 Climate change also impacts non-human species, accelerating the crisis of species extinction and
127 multiplying the danger to all of life. We must recognize that any concept of justice is incomplete or
128 inadequate if it fails to extend to all of creation – to all beings whose lives are shadowed by the burdens
129 imposed upon them by the inappropriate, unsustainable, and destructive life-styles of just one species.

130
131 It is a bitter irony and a grave injustice that economically developed countries like the United States
132 possess the wealth, technology, and infrastructure to allow those who have done the most harm to protect
133 themselves, at least in the near term, while those who have the least benefits will have the largest burdens
134 to bear. Carbon emissions in the United States are five and one half times more per person than the
135 global average. Those of us with the resources and privileges of the industrial world have a moral
136 responsibility to use them to slow global warming and to mitigate the consequences for the rest of the
137 world and ourselves.

138
139 The strong principles upon which we rest our faith call us to a leadership role in preparing society for the
140 difficult ethical decisions that will ultimately face us, both collectively and personally. When resources
141 can no longer meet basic human needs, who shall live and who shall die? It is estimated that in the next
142 30 years there will be 150 million environmental refugees. Where will they go and who will feed and
143 shelter them? Peace and security depend on beginning now, proactively, to seek just solutions which will
144 guarantee the rights to human dignity, healthy food, clean water and air, medical treatment, and shelter to
145 every citizen of this planet. We as UU's, inhabiting the largest, richest, most powerful nation, must
146 prepare to stand witness for justice.

147
148
149 **A Matter of Faith**

150

151 As Unitarian Universalists we understand ourselves to be inextricably woven into the web of life. We
152 voice our awe and gratitude for the air, water, solid ground, sunlight, and nourishing life forms that
153 sustain our species. We cherish and respect all that lives and hold ourselves deeply responsible for
154 speaking for those who are voiceless. Our shared principles call us act in love for the indigenous, the
155 poor, and the disenfranchised people who will suffer first and most as our climate warms. Our faith calls
156 us to act in love for protection of the abundant diversity of animals who feed and clothe us and for the
157 living, balanced system which they maintain. So, too, must we act in love for green plants which turn
158 sunlight into food and energy to feed and warm us, who create oxygen that we may breathe, and which
159 clean our water and air. If we knowingly continue to live in a manner, which harms Earth and jeopardizes
160 its capacity to support life, we transgress against the interdependent web of all existence.

161
162 Our religious response to the crisis of global warming requires action at all levels of our lives. Spiritually,
163 we are called to reaffirm that our humanity lies within, not separate from, this community of life. As
164 individuals, as congregations, and as an Association of Congregations, Unitarian Universalists are
165 urgently called to acknowledge both our despair and the hubris, which keep us from protecting the planet
166 for future generations.

167
168 There is no single answer that will solve this complex crisis, but our hope is in each other. Together we
169 can transform our individual and congregational lives into acts of religious witness, discarding our habits
170 of mindless consumerism in a culture of economic privilege for new behaviors that will sustain life on
171 Earth.

172
173 We are not alone. We have much to celebrate. We have a thirst for justice. And we have a rich diversity
174 of approaches from which to draw wisdom and strength. We are wealthy beyond words in the face of this
175 challenge. Our world is calling us to respond from our spiritual wealth—to study, to grow in
176 understanding, to realize our possibilities for action, and then to emerge in gracious and assertive
177 leadership, as we have done at critical times in the past on issues where others fear to lead.

178
179

180 **A Call to Action**

181
182 Affirming that we are of this Earth and that humankind has brought about global warming, we, the
183 member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, pledge to ground our missions and
184 ministries in reverence and responsibility for Earth.

185
186 **We commit to promoting these Advocacy Goals:**

- 187
- 188 • An immediate United States policy shift to a leadership role in future global efforts to reduce the
 - 189 sources of and mitigate the results of global warming.
 - 190 • Foreign aid policy that promotes energy efficiency in developing countries and makes renewable
 - 191 energy technologies available at low or no cost.
 - 192 • A set domestic greenhouse gas emissions target (including auto emissions) and implementation of
 - 193 a mandatory reduction program by 2010.
 - 194 • A set national portfolio standard of 20% renewable energy by 2010
 - 195 • A significantly strengthened Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFÉ) standard for
 - 196 automobiles and light trucks by 2010.
 - 197 • Shift of federal subsidies for fossil fuel industries to renewable technologies, and in the transition,
 - 198 funding for research and development of renewable energy technologies.
 - 199 • Adoption of Federal product efficiency standards and manufacturer end-of-life product recycling.
 - 200 • Federal and State subsidies and other incentives for non-polluting, energy-efficient mass transit

201 and urban and suburban development.

202

203 **We call upon our Denominational leaders to provide:**

204

- 205 • Leadership: by calling upon major political parties to make energy and climate change a central
- 206 topic of debate in state, congressional, and presidential elections.
- 207 • Education: by providing spiritual, educational, and technical resources for congregations and
- 208 individual responses.
- 209 • Justice: by seeking opportunities for public witness for environmental justice, including joining
- 210 interfaith and public events promoting a just response to climate change.
- 211 • Sustainable practices: by investing in energy conservation upgrades for UUA properties, modeling
- 212 appropriate management and purchasing practices, establishing means for certifiably appropriate
- 213 personal and congregational greenhouse gas emission offsets.
- 214 • Support: by creating an exploratory committee to consider the creation of an Office for Earth
- 215 Ministry within the UUA to link our tradition of strong UU social action with the need for global
- 216 environmental justice.
- 217 • Recognition of congregational action: by encouraging, honoring and publicizing the work of UU
- 218 congregations who achieve Green Sanctuary accreditation.
- 219 • Ministry: by empowering professional and lay ministers to speak for hope, not despair for the
- 220 future of life.

221

222 **We call upon Unitarian Universalist Congregations to:**

223

- 224 • Celebrate reverence for the interdependent web of existence in all aspects of congregational life.
- 225 • Seek certification through the Green Sanctuary Program of the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for
- 226 the Earth.
- 227 • Educate on environmental concerns and treat environmentally friendly practices and the quest for
- 228 environmental justice as spiritual disciplines.
- 229 • Seek Third Party Certification , e.g., Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)
- 230 certification, for all new congregational building projects; use LEED guidelines for renovations.
- 231 • Practice environmentally responsible consumption, make maximum use of energy conservation
- 232 technologies, including installation of compact lightbulbs
- 233 • Purchase renewable energy from your utility where available; otherwise support renewable energy
- 234 through certifiably appropriate carbon offsets, green tags, and/or investment in renewable energy.
- 235 • Support and participate in Interfaith Power and Light projects where available

236

237

238 **We call upon individual Unitarian Universalists to:**

239

- 240 • Choose the most efficient transportation means.
- 241 • Contact elected leaders at the federal, state, and local levels and let them know that you are
- 242 serious about bringing global warming under control.
- 243 • Work to elect clean energy candidates in your city, state, and nation and work for energy
- 244 efficiency standards, clean car legislation, and renewable energy incentives
- 245 • Reduce personal energy consumption by 20 % by 2010 or sooner.
- 246 • Consume less, choose products that are rated energy efficient, choose products and materials that
- 247 are made from renewable resources and can be recycled at the end of their usefulness.
- 248 • Where possible choose renewable energy from your utility; otherwise support renewable energy
- 249 development through certifiably appropriate carbon credits, green tags, or other investments in
- 250 renewable energy.
- Plant and preserve trees and choose sustainably harvested wood and wood products.

- 251 • Eat and serve energy-efficient food: eat lower on the food chain, eat more fresh and fewer
252 processed foods, and buy local food.
253
254

255 We have a special part to play at this moment in Earth's history. We undertake this work for the
256 preservation of the endless variety of all flora and fauna and the myriad array of habitats that sustain it. As
257 that part of nature able to reflect upon its own grave situation, we assume with humility and determination
258 our responsibility to remedy global warming through innovation, cooperation, and self-discipline.

ⁱ The Presidents of the National Academies of Science of Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States issued this joint statement in June, 2005. They include all the G8 countries plus Brazil, China and India, the three largest developing nations: <http://nationalacademies.org/onpi/06072005.pdf>

ⁱⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_gas#Duration_of_stay_and_global_warming_potential

ⁱⁱⁱ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Third Assessment Report 2001, Geneva, World Meteorological Organization.

Also: <http://www.nae.edu/nae/bridgecom.nsf/weblinks/KGRG-4X3J2V?OpenDocument>

^{iv} <http://nsidc.org/iceshelves/larsenb2002/index.html>

^v <http://www.geo.unizh.ch/wgms/mbb/mb04/sum04.html>

Also: http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science/early-warning-signs-of-global_warming-glaciers-melting.html

^{vi} http://www.nasa.gov/vision/earth/environment/arcticice_decline.html

^{vii} <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/oct2005/2005-10-25-05.asp>

^{viii} <http://archive.greenpeace.org/climate/arctic99/html/content/factsheets/weather.html>

^{ix} <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/02/tech/main534993.shtml>

^x <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7066/abs/nature04188.html>

^{xi} <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/nature03906.html#a1>

^{xii} <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v427/n6970/abs/nature02121.html>

^{xiii} http://www.ucar.edu/news/releases/2005/drought_research.shtml

^{xiv} <http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/headlines05/0202-04.htm>

Also: http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/News_and_Information/Press_Releases/story.php?id=106

^{xv} http://www.who.edu/institutes/occi/currenttopics/climatechange_wef.html

^{xvi} <http://www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,12374,1546824,00.html>