

## RELIGIOUS DECLARATION OF UNPRECEDENTED HUMAN EMERGENCY

ver. April 4, 2019

- §1. The climate change problem we face today is unlike any previous challenge confronted by society because it is largely irreversible “for 1,000 years after emissions stop” with “profound impacts on global climate, ecosystems and human societies for the next ten millennia and beyond.”<sup>1</sup> The shocking truth is that decisions we make now could, in the words of climate economist Ross Garnaut, “haunt humanity until the end of time.”<sup>2</sup> Nuclear war, while also irreversible, is only a possibility. Human-induced climate change is underway now, and its impacts are greater and more extensive than scientific models predicted. We will significantly alter the future of civilization as we know it and may eventually cause its collapse if we continue down this path.
- §2. As people of faith, we believe that our planet – which nurtures and sustains life – is a gift, and that we have a responsibility to cultivate a world in which all beings can thrive, physically and spiritually. We are committed to safeguarding the Earth entrusted to our care. Protecting God’s Creation is a spiritual and moral imperative, not an ideological or narrow partisan issue. We recognize that the National Council of Churches, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Central Conference of American Rabbis, National Association of Evangelicals, and the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops have all called on policymakers and elected officials to take strong action to address global climate change.
- §3. We are seeing great suffering caused by extreme storms, heat waves, massive wildfires, floods and drought, crop failures, rising and acidifying seas, food and water shortages, the spread of vector-borne diseases, and conflicts over scarce resources. Climate migrants are already on the move – with millions more likely to be uprooted in the near future.
- §4. Human civilization emerged during an extensive period of stable climactic conditions. Climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels and the logging of forests could rapidly destabilize civilization as billions of people worldwide find themselves in an increasingly desperate struggle for survival. The multiple, simultaneous consequences of climate change could break down human societies and push them toward civil unrest, anarchy, tyranny, and war, including nuclear war. This is why more than one Secretary General of the United Nations has called the world’s present course “suicidal,” and why the Pentagon has classified climate change as a threat to national security.
- §5. Scientists have been warning for decades, with increasing certainty and alarm, about the dire consequences of continuing to burn coal, gas, and oil and release methane. Nevertheless, the United States, responsible for 26% of cumulative fossil fuel greenhouse gas emissions despite being less than 5% of the world’s population, has failed to take these warnings

seriously. Leadership in the United States has proposed inadequate solutions, has denied scientific and economic consensus<sup>3</sup> and continues to promote fossil fuel extraction. Mainstream media has betrayed its role as the fourth estate by confusing the public. For instance, Fox News has made misleading statements about climate change 72% of the time, and CNN 30% of the time.<sup>4</sup>

- §6. Decades of delay on climate action have made small corrective measures and incremental approaches useless. Those who are invested in maintaining the status quo, or who put forth proposals that are clearly incompatible with what climate science demands, are condemning innocent young people – including their own children and generations to come – to a future of unimaginable suffering: the mass death of human populations and the extinction of species.
- §7. Further delay in addressing climate change is a radical evil that as people of faith we vigorously oppose.
- §8. We support the bold direction of the Green New Deal, or other similar science-based proposals, as an opportunity for this country to commit to stabilizing the climate while creating “unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States.” This specifically includes low-income communities, communities of color, and those that have historically been marginalized or underserved. The Green New Deal is the first resolution that addresses the climate crisis with the urgency, focus, and comprehensiveness that the situation requires. Our nation mobilized every part of society during World War II and the Great Depression. Like the Greatest Generation, we must rise to the occasion and commit to doing what science says it takes to avoid irreversible catastrophic climate chaos and make a rapid and just transition to a clean energy economy. Today, renewable-energy-with-storage technology is out-bidding all other energy options.<sup>5</sup> Broadly and quickly implemented, this could provide an unequalled and sustainable economic boom.
- §9. We recognize the need for a robust debate addressing the mix of strategies that will best accomplish these goals – strategies including: carbon pricing; governmental intervention; divestment from fossil-fuel based industries and investment in sustainable alternatives; carbon sequestration by terminating logging in our national forests; extensive reforestation and native grass replanting; alternative energy incentives; methane leakage restrictions; increased renewable and battery research; and greenhouse gas targeted regulations. That said – we strongly support bipartisan legislation that puts a price on carbon in a way that will reduce emissions quickly, accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy, and protect low-to-middle income communities from financial harm. While the means are open for debate, the end of preserving a stable climate is not.
- §10. We are committed to responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor. The harsh and often deadly impacts of climate change increasingly weigh upon the human spirit. Therefore, the undersigned call upon elected officials, faith communities, and the public-at-large to combat climate change at the scale and pace this emergency requires.

We demand that policy-makers work together to reach the science-based climate goals of the IPCC to cut greenhouse gas emissions to at least 45% below 2010 levels by 2030. We also urge policy-makers to work together to ensure a just transition that protects the safety, health, and dignity of low-income and historically under-served communities. We look forward to the spiritual, health, and economic benefits of living more simply, gently, and lovingly on God's good Earth.

Count: 993

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Notes:

1. Susan Solomon, Gian-Kasper Plattner, Reto Knutti, Pierre Friedlingstein, (2009) Irreversible Climate Change Due to Carbon Dioxide Emissions,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 106 (6) 1704-1709, at 1704; DOI:10.1073/pnas.0812721106; and Peter U. Clark et al, (2016). Consequences of Twenty-First-Century Policy for Multi-Millennial Climate and Sea-Level Change. Nature Climate Change. 6.10.1038/nclimate2923
2. [http://www.garnautreview.org.au/pdf/Garnaut\\_Chapter24.pdf](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/pdf/Garnaut_Chapter24.pdf) 597 (last lines of the review)  
<https://cosmosmagazine.com/climate/ross-garnaut-s-bright-idea>
3. Dana Nuccitelli, “95% consensus of expert economists: cut carbon pollution,” The Guardian, January 4, 2016, [www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2016/jan/04/consensus-of-economists-cut-carbon-pollution](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2016/jan/04/consensus-of-economists-cut-carbon-pollution)
4. “Science or Spin? Assessing the Accuracy of Cable News Coverage of Climate Science (2014), Union of Concerned Scientists, [www.ucsusa.org/global-warming/solutions/fight-misinformation/cable-news-coverage-climate-change-science.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming/solutions/fight-misinformation/cable-news-coverage-climate-change-science.html)
5. [www.pv-magazine-usa.com/2018/03/12/worlds-largest-batteries-hiding-in-colorado-bids/](http://www.pv-magazine-usa.com/2018/03/12/worlds-largest-batteries-hiding-in-colorado-bids/)

Signatures