

Putting on the brakes

Critical areas of action for curbing global warming:

- ◆ **Transportation.** Driving a car is a major source of global warming gases. Manufacturing a car creates 4 tons of CO₂. Then every gallon of gas a car burns puts 20 pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere. The typical US household makes 60 car trips a week, which includes a dozen trips under a mile. Our convenience is harming the planet and killing our neighbors. Walk. Bike. Bus. Stay home. *Resource: Trains, Planes, Cars...and Bikes brochure (NCP)*
- ◆ **Good housekeeping.** The home rivals the car as a source of global warming gases. We can make big reductions by adjusting the thermostat for heating, cooling and heating water; hanging clothes up to dry (saves over 1000 pounds of CO₂ per year!); using compact florescent bulbs for lighting; washing clothes in cold water. *Resource: NCP Sustainable Living Homestead*

Replacing one incandescent light bulb with a compact florescent bulb will save 300 pounds of coal—and over 600 pounds of CO₂—in the lifetime of the bulb.

- ◆ **Food.** According to the FAO, global beef production has passed vehicle use as the world's leading emitter of greenhouse gases. Altogether, producing, packaging, shipping and storing food creates over a tenth of a household's global warming impact. Buy locally or raise a garden to save the typical 1500 miles of transport for a food item. Eat less beef. Bike to the store. *Resources: FAO report; Diet for a Hot Planet (Lappé); Eat, Drink and Be Wary . . . (NCP)*
- ◆ **Forests.** Cutting trees releases CO₂. Intact forests soak it up. Producing a pound of paper creates three pounds of CO₂ and requires 3.5 pounds of wood—buy recycled. Join NCP efforts to preserve Amazon rainforest and replant forests in Guatemala and Sudan. *Resource: NCP's If a Tree Falls... reforestation and rainforest preservation program*
- ◆ **Do Without.** Little choices count: bottling, shipping, and disposing of water bottles requires 50 million barrels of oil per year in the US. Use a refillable bottle. Find a fountain. *Resource: Think Outside the Bottle Campaign.*
- ◆ **Refocus.** The most important action we can take is to turn away from “things” and toward our Creator and one another to find happiness and fulfillment in life. *Resources: Holy Bible; Prosperity without Growth (Jackson)*

Global warming is a clear and present danger to the earth, to our neighbors and to future generations. We have done more than our part in creating this problem—now let's do our part in solving it. It's time to turn down the heat!

New Community Project

Peace through Justice/Care for Creation/Experiential Learning

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Turn Down the Heat!

What we all should know—and do—about global warming



“I’m thinking this planet’s not big enough for both of us.”



New Community Project

“...turning the world upside down...”



Challenge of the Century

Barring a nuclear war, global warming will be the critical environmental concern of this century. Climatologists are predicting that in the coming 100 years, average global temperatures may rise by 5-8 degrees Fahrenheit.

This level of increase would bring with it storms of greater severity, displaced rainfall patterns, thawing of polar regions, and a general disruption of the planet's ecological balance. A particularly chilling possibility would be the stalling of the Gulf Stream, as cooler and lighter fresh water from melting Arctic ice caps enters the North Atlantic. Such an event would have catastrophic consequences for many areas of the Northern Hemisphere.

There is good news—possibly. Since global warming is a human-created condition, human action could stop its advances. Will the global consuming class primarily responsible for climate change muster the resolve to curb its warming activities?

People of faith can play a critical role in counteracting global warming. Understanding all life as a gift from the Creator, Christians and those of other faiths can take the lead halting this looming calamity. Such action is an act of respect for the creation, for our impoverished global neighbors who will suffer first and worst, for future generations, and for the Creator.

It's a gas

Global warming is caused by the release of gases such as carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere at a rate beyond the ecosystem's ability to absorb them. The primary sources of these gases are plant decomposition and fossil fuel combustion. Plants have been decaying since their arrival on planet Earth, and the gasses released have been recaptured by the seas, the soil and by photosynthesis.

The problem has come with the introduction of fossil fuel combustion and other human activities, including ranching and deforestation, into the equation. The world currently releases about 26 billion tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere from human sources every year. All told, about one-third more is released than can be captured—or “sequestered”—by the earth's natural carbon sinks (soil and the oceans).

These gases then rise into the atmosphere, creating a blanket of sorts around the earth. This blanket allows the sun's rays to fall on the earth, but then blocks their radiation back into space. In addition, melting polar ice exposes more heat-absorbing sea water.

We're Number One!

The average US citizen is responsible for 19.2 tons of CO₂ per year—altogether, we emit a quarter of the world's total of this primary global warming gas.

The heat is on

Global warming is impacting nearly every major planetary system. Sea levels began to rise in the past century. The world's glaciers are receding at rapid rates. Animals and plants are struggling to adjust their biological clocks to accommodate earlier springs and shorter winters.

The northern polar regions are warming at a faster pace than the rest of the planet. The Gwich'in people of northeast Alaska report drastic changes in the Arctic ecosystem—increased plant growth, thawing permafrost, and disrupted migration patterns of fish and animals—including the caribou upon which their culture depends.

Institutions that stand to be affected by dramatic changes in the climate—property insurers, military planners, disaster responders—are already mapping out strategies to deal with the effects of a disrupted climate, including up to 250 million environmental refugees and widespread famine and disease by the end of the century.

Too hot to handle

In a startling prediction of the effects of warming, biologists warn that as many as one-quarter of all land-based plant and animal species could become extinct by mid-century due to the disruptive influences of climate change. Sea level could rise by over four feet by 2100.

Human lives are also being taken by global warming—160,000 a year, according to the World Health Organization. The causes: heat waves and more severe storms, wider range of disease-carrying insects, water pollution from flooding. Disappearing mountain-top glaciers threaten future dry-season water supplies for half the world's people.

NCP's Undoing Global Warming program provides energy audits for congregations and other groups, while our Sustainable Living Homestead is an example of environmentally-friendly living. Contact NCP's Tom Benevento for more information.