A Statement by Religious Leaders in Iowa on Global Climate Change
April 2015

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18b)

"And the heavens He has raised high and set up a measure, that you may not transgress the measure. So weigh all things in justice and fall not short of the measure." (Quran, Surah 55: 8-10)

"The wise see knowledge and action as one; they see truly." (Bhagavad Gita)

Love, justice, and wisdom beat at the heart of the world's religious traditions. People of faith around the world and within our state are drawing on all three of these fundamental moral values to face the unprecedented challenges posed by global climate change.

Two recent studies released since our last faith leaders statement are ringing loud alarm bells. The Third National Climate Assessment for the United States reveals the average temperature in different regions of the United States has increased by 1.3°F to 1.9°F since 1895, with most of this increase occurring since 1970. The report projects U.S. temperatures will rise another 2°F to 4°F in most areas of the nation over the next few decades, but warns that temperatures could rise 5°F to 10°F if present trends continue.[1]

The Fifth Assessment Report[2] of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finds "recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history." It warns: "Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems."[3]

In order to limit warming to 3.6°F (2°C), the U.N. report states global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced 40%–70% below pre-industrial levels by 2050, and by the end of the 21st century the nations of the world would have to remove more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than they are emitting. Given the current rapid increase in emissions, such a reduction seems almost impossible but also clearly vital.

As people of faith, we are called to love our neighbors who are near and far in place and time, to seek justice for all who are imperiled by climate change, and to act with wisdom on the basis of the knowledge we possess. We urge Iowans to take actions to reduce the threat of global climate change by practicing energy conservation, purchasing energy efficient vehicles and appliances, and investing in renewable energy systems for their homes, businesses, and houses of worship.

The global nature of the problem, however, means that effective action requires leadership at the local, state, national, and international levels. 2015 will be a pivotal year for climate policy. This summer the EPA will finalize rules related to its Clean Power Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 30% in the electric power sector. In December, delegates from almost every nation on Earth will meet in Paris to negotiate a new global agreement regarding greenhouse gas emissions.

Leadership and action flow out of disciplined prayer and meditation. We encourage all people of faith to be involved actively in advocacy around these key decisions, and to consider strengthening their resolve by engaging in some form of a fast for climate justice. This might be a traditional fast from food to focus one's energy on prayer and advocacy for climate justice, and it might also include a carbon fast from use of all forms of transportation and fuel that produce greenhouse gas emissions.

May love, justice, and wisdom guide all of us as we respond to the unprecedented challenges posed by global climate change.

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[1] Melillo, Jerry M., Terese (T.C.) Richmond, and Gary W. Yohe, eds., 2014: *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment.* U.S. Global Change Research Program, http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/.
[2] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5.
[3] IPCC Secretariat, "Headline Statements from the Summary for Policymakers," *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report,* http://www.ipcc.ch.

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Roman Catholic Diocese of Davenport

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General Presbyter
Presbytery of Des Moines

Rev. Michael Burk, Ph.D.
Bishop, Southeastern Iowa Synod
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Rev. Tim Button-Harrison
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Church of the Brethren

Rev. Rebecca David
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Bishop Alan Scarfe
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa

Bishop Julius C. Trimble
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Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church
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Rev. Jerry Avise-Rouse
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Rev. Darline Balm-Demmel
St. Timothy's United Methodist Church
Cedar Falls

Rev. W. Michael Biklen
United Methodist Church, Retired
Muscatine

Rev. Mike Blair
Campus Pastor
Luther College
Decorah

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

Rev. Dr. John M. Caldwell
First United Methodist Church
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Sister Deanna Carr
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Dubuque

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Trinity United Presbyterian Church
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United Methodist
Simpson College
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Foods Resource Bank
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Lay Minister Nora Giese
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Judy Giesen
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North Liberty

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*The listing of faith community names is for identification purposes only.

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