

Here is the full text of the Climate Change Statement:

**Rev. Dave Steffenson, Coordinator,
For the Wisconsin Interfaith Climate Change Campaign**

Moved by overwhelming scientific assessment that burning fossil fuels is causing the earth to warm – and that such warming if unchecked will cause catastrophic harm - religious leaders and communities across the United States, and here in Wisconsin, have joined together to urge the US government to take action.

In the last few months, we have been dismayed by President Bush's actions with respect to global warming – abandoning a pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and withdrawing the US from the Kyoto Protocol. Today, the President told us that he accepts the findings of the scientific community on climate change. Yet, he still avoids the mandatory emissions reductions believed to be necessary to address the problem. Instead, he has proposed an energy plan that would dramatically *increase* US greenhouse gas emissions, by as much as 35%. His contradictory policies may well condemn our grandchildren to suffer the dreadful effects of accelerating climate change.

President Bush's approach to this urgent and historic challenge is grossly inadequate. A serious approach to global warming is not a voluntary option for our country – it is a moral obligation of the highest order. The President has not committed the US to the dramatic reductions in domestic emissions that we know are both necessary and possible. He focuses too much on research and not enough on bold action now.

The President is not providing leadership at home, and he isn't providing leadership abroad – he is instead delaying domestic action and obstructing international solutions to global warming. Instead of telling the less-developed nations what they must do before we will act, we must lead by example and help them skip over the necessity of using green house gas emitting technologies in their development.

Far more than rolling blackouts and gasoline price increases are at stake: the future of God's creation on Earth; the nature and durability of our economy; our public health and public lands; and the environment and quality of life we bequeath to our children and grandchildren. Lack of clear commitment to lasting policy changes may well condemn our grandchildren to suffer the effects of accelerating climate change and cause serious harm to the poor around the world and the health and well-being of all life on Earth. We are being called to consider national purpose, not just policy.

This is the first debate on energy in a generation, and it takes place under unprecedented circumstances: global warming is a scientific fact; the richest

nations of the world consume resources and emit greenhouse gases at ever increasing rates; and the aspirations of the developing world add to the rising consumption and emissions. Meanwhile, current advances in new technologies for clean and efficient energy now make renewable energy a technological and economic option. We must take time to engage this challenge as a moral people at a pivotal, historic moment.

We are not scientists, energy experts, or policymakers. But because this challenge raises fundamental moral and religious questions, we believe the perspectives of faith and values should help shape a national discussion.

A broad spectrum of religious leaders, have joined together to call for tough action on global climate change. Recently, eleven Wisconsin religious leaders issued a statement calling for the Bush Administration to take leadership in reducing greenhouse gases, and 39 national heads of denominations and major religious leaders expressed their opposition to the Bush-Cheney energy plan.

Urgent action to address climate change is a preeminent expression of faithfulness to our Creator God, rooted in core values:

--Urgent action to address climate change is faithful stewardship. We have a moral obligation to choose the safest, cleanest and most sustainable sources of energy to protect and preserve God's creation.

--Urgent action to address climate change is an intergenerational responsibility. It is immoral to condemn future generations to living in a degraded, unstable, impoverished world.

--Urgent action to address climate change is justice for all peoples and nations. Our continued wanton waste of energy and addiction to fossil fuels in the US will harm poor and vulnerable people around the world. Those who already live on the economic and ecological margin will most suffer from climate change.

With less than 5% of the world's population, our nation generates more than 22% of greenhouse gas emissions. The United States has a unique moral responsibility to lead a transition to a new, sustainable global energy system. We support a national energy policy that moves our economy away from the fossil fuels which global warming and toward clean, safe, sustainable, and renewable energy sources. Specifically, we support a strong international treaty which requires mandatory reduction targets of developed nations' emissions in the near term and domestic programs and policies to ensure that the US meets its targets.

There is no single solution to the present energy challenge. We do not have to sacrifice economic security to assure environmental health. But prudence, the application of moral principle in service to the common good, should guide us to meet immediate needs in such a way as to enhance, not diminish future

sustainability. And where there are genuine risks to health and well-being, the principle of precaution should guide our actions. More investment in renewable energy and fuel efficiency is now a moral imperative, especially because these are technologically feasible and economically viable. Energy conservation is prudent human action.

May our deepest moral and religious convictions guide us and our political leaders as we fulfill our obligation as a nation and as global citizens to take bold action to address global climate change.

#