



MOVING FORWARD

A Guide to Climate Action For Your Congregation and Community



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Cover: People of faith from many religious traditions gather at the 2017 People’s Climate March in Washington, DC. Courtesy of The Evangelical Lutheran Church In America

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WELCOME

Our vocations come from a desire to serve God and our fellow human beings, to pursue peace in our communities, and to work for justice in society. **Now our callings have an added urgency.**

Changes to our climate reach into communities across the United States and around the world. These changes touch us all, especially impacting the most vulnerable among us. That is why **climate change is often called the greatest moral imperative of our time.**

Few of us take leadership roles in our faiths specifically to solve climate change. However, if we are called to support the most vulnerable, to work for justice, and to care for creation, then we are called to respond to climate change.

The solutions are within reach. This guide was created to provide you with resources to reduce energy use, to build resilient houses of worship as a refuge from a changing climate, and to encourage support for policies that better care for creation.

Join with millions of faithful people spread across the Earth who are already leading on climate change today. Become a part of the movement to heal the world and to protect future generations.

This is just the start. Sign up for the monthly newsletter at BlessedTomorrow.org to get fresh ideas and resources regularly, including webinars and more detailed guides. And please share your thoughts with us along your path to care for creation and address climate change. **With God, we can do this together!**

In peace,



Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe
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THE CALL TO CARE FOR CREATION

We are called **to love God and our neighbors**. These are fundamental principles shared by people of many faiths. Our neighbors are those we meet in our places of worship, in our daily lives, those in our local communities, in our nation, and around the world.

We all have noticed that our world is changing: flowers bloom earlier, coastlines are shifting, heatwaves are more common and more severe, some regions are wetter, others are drying out. We see stronger and more frequent storms and hurricanes and record-breaking wildfires. Our climate is becoming less stable, and our neighbors are suffering.

Many of these changes are harmful. They can damage our health, destabilize our communities, and burden our budgets. They are especially harmful to low-income families, to some communities of color, to those living with disabilities, and to those who are particularly vulnerable such as children and the elderly.

We have a responsibility **to be good stewards** and **to make moral choices for the good of all creation** in order **to bring about a more just society**. It is time, **today**, for us all to embrace this opportunity to **serve God, to work alongside the most vulnerable, and to live out our faith by working toward the health of our environment**.

Our shared principles also give us a solid foundation for meaningful multi-faith work. **We must lead the way**, serving as **the conscience of our culture** by reducing energy use, preparing for climate change, and advocating for solutions on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors.

This guide will show you new ways to serve God, love your neighbor, be good stewards, act for the good of creation, live out your faith, work for justice, help make your congregation more financially stable, and strengthen your moral witness to the world.

“Let us all stand in solidarity, all people of faith, united for the preservation of the Earth and the bounty and beauty it was created to sustain.”

— Rev. John C. Dorhauer,
President of the United Church of Christ

LEADING THE WAY IN FAITH

“If we are not willing to lead on climate change, then we are not willing to lead a world that is the best for our children.”

— Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, Chair, Social Action Committee,
African Methodist Episcopal Church

“If we really truly rejoice in the splendor of God’s creation; if we mean it when we say The Earth is God’s and the fulness thereof; if we truly believe we have been enjoined to be stewards of the Earth — then atone we must. For human activity has led to a warming of our planet, a rising of the seas, a poisoning of our soil, seas, and air.”

— Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director,
The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

“This is not secular do-goodism, this is the Jesus movement. As followers of Jesus, we care for God’s world because God cares for God’s world, and this means that we care about climate change.”

— Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop,
The Episcopal Church

“The challenge of climate change is a call for us to pursue personal, social, and civic righteousness.”

— Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary, The United
Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

“Climate change requires change in behavior. Let’s do it. Let us preach, let us teach, let us leave a world for our children better than the world we found.”

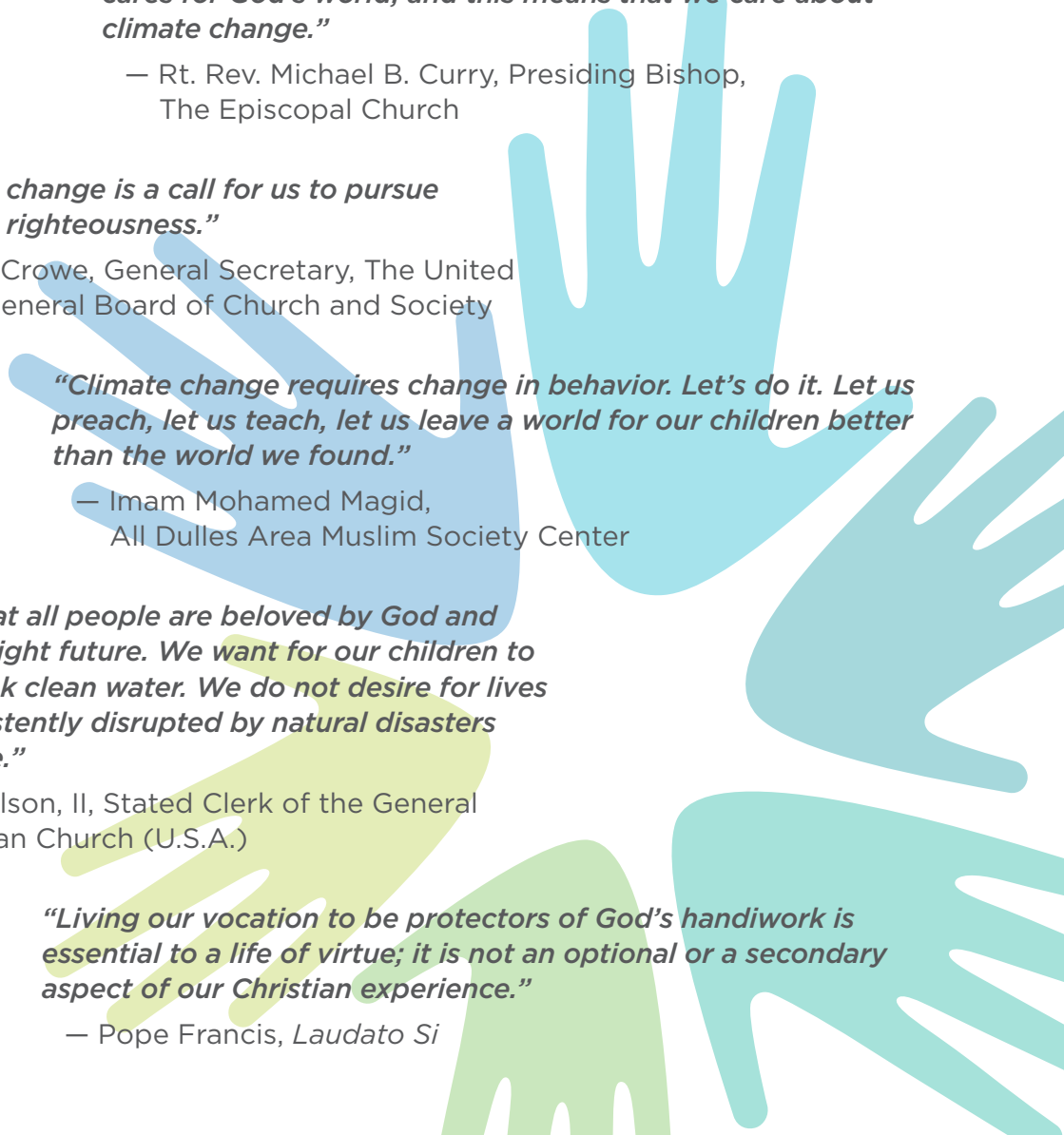
— Imam Mohamed Magid,
All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center

“Presbyterians believe that all people are beloved by God and deserving of a healthy, bright future. We want for our children to breathe clean air and drink clean water. We do not desire for lives and churches to be consistently disrupted by natural disasters caused by climate change.”

— Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General
Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

— Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*



WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

Climate change is a moral issue and a responsibility for each of us. We can choose to harm nature, pollute ourselves, and jeopardize the future for our children, or we can take simple steps to head toward a healthier, more just, more compassionate society.

Children, the elderly, and other disadvantaged communities, including lower-income families and communities of color here in America and around the world, are harmed more by climate change. They have more difficulty responding to climate change's health and financial consequences, are often the most directly impacted, yet are also the least responsible for its causes.

You provide leadership on moral issues. It's time to include climate change as a personal and congregational priority. Many faiths are already leading the way.

When we address climate change, we benefit. Lower temperatures, fewer dangerous storms, and shorter allergy, asthma, and tick seasons all lead to healthier lives. We are a part of God's magnificent creation. When nature thrives, we flourish.

We must be sure that our solutions acknowledge the challenge for people and communities that rely on jobs and tax revenue from fossil fuel production. They deserve our support as we transition to a clean fuel economy. Clean energy investments can provide part of the path forward.

Our changing climate is a universal moral issue. Politics sometimes divide us. We may not share the same values on all issues, but climate change should and does unite us.

Reducing pollution in our congregations and homes requires some investment. The first steps to reducing energy use are often no- or low-cost, creating savings that can be reinvested into additional improvements that yield substantial long-term savings. Places of worship can also call on the time and God-given talents of their committed members to alleviate many of the costs.

We can make a difference. People of faith are already preparing for climate impacts, bearing witness for common-sense solutions, and moving to clean energy. Your call to act may go beyond your place of worship to the broader community, both near and far.

We are not alone. National faith groups and congregations are already doing a lot. Caring people in all parts of society are making progress. Cities from Los Angeles to London, from Salt Lake City to Charlotte, are setting aggressive targets to move to 100% clean energy. Major corporations like Apple Computers and Kaiser Permanente are leading by example. National faith institutions are doing their part by making climate change a priority. They are making commitments to transition headquarters to 100% clean energy, divesting from fossil fuels, providing congregational support programs, and committing to sustainability in faith gatherings and conferences. We can all make a bigger impact by working together. Momentum is building.



Become an Ambassador for climate in your community. Go to BlessedTomorrow.org to learn more and signup.

👉 Visit BlessedTomorrow.org.

Photo Below: Blessed Tomorrow's National Climate and Faith Leadership Forum 2018



WHAT WE CAN DO



Greenburgh Hebrew Center installed a solar energy system at no cost, saving \$4,000 per year. Their Green Team initiated a community-supported agriculture location. Members organized and picked up their share of fruits and vegetables – reinforcing a sense of community and supporting local farmers.

Photo Courtesy: Dr. Mirele B. Goldsmith. “Greening Synagogues: Lessons from the Jewish Greening Fellowship,” *Synergy* 2016

Be thankful for the goodness of God in creation. Take time to experience and celebrate the beauty of the Earth. Remember that the abundance of the Earth gives us energy to fulfill our callings.

Pray for guidance as you think about how your faith community can deepen its commitment to care for creation, who can help, and how to approach the planning process.

Find support in your congregation from people who will join new efforts on creation care. Ask their advice on the best way to approach the congregation as a body. See who would be willing to lead efforts in the future. Hold conversations with people with a variety of backgrounds and perspectives to help you develop an inclusive approach.

Talk to your congregation about the relationship between faith and creation care openly and often in sermons, talks, educational programs, and public meetings. This will make it a priority issue and motivate your congregation to action.

Assemble a Creation Care team comprised of laypeople, facilities management staff, clergy, respected community leaders, and others. The team will be responsible for designing and implementing climate action priorities, addressing roadblocks, and ensuring accountability. Consider representation that is reflective of the diversity of the congregation.

Use this guide to plan in order to work effectively for the good of God’s creation. This guide will walk your team through creation care in three areas: **good stewardship, creating refuge, and bearing witness**. Your efforts in each of these areas strengthen one another. For an example, see the story of our fictional friends at St. Usquam’s Church on page 17. 🔍

Get started on visible, inexpensive, and easy changes and highlight your successes and savings publicly. For instance, encourage behavior changes that reduce energy use and other waste, ask your power company about clean and renewable energy, or start purchasing carbon offsets (page 11) right away.

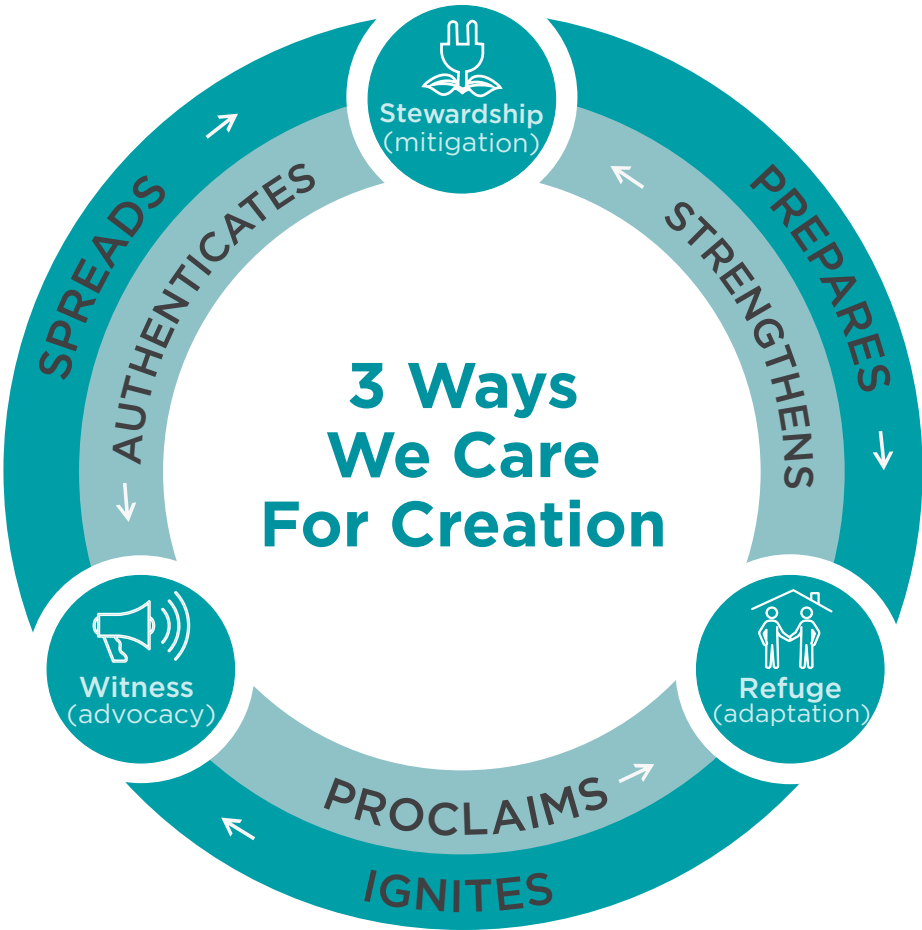
Roll the savings forward. Once you start reducing energy use, you should see savings. Prioritize creation care as a ministry by establishing a ‘Creation Care Capital Fund.’ Invest all or part of your efficiency savings into the fund so you can plan for larger projects. Commit to a yearly

investment in your budget and open the fund to donations from congregants. All improvements will increase the value of your property and save money over time.

Make a public congregational commitment to creation care.

This will inspire others, provide a clear path of action, and establish accountability for any efforts you undertake and implement as a faith community. Your public commitment could be a statement that is announced at a special service.

Communicate and build on success. Any successful action plan includes efforts to keep congregants up to date on what has been done and what remains. A bulletin, newsletter, or regular update during services can set the tone for climate action as a priority, cultivate goodwill, and demonstrate momentum toward solutions.



GOOD STEWARDSHIP: MITIGATION

You can care for God's creation by eliminating pollution, conserving energy, and transitioning to clean power, like wind and solar, which doesn't come from fossil fuels. Stewardship of God's creation leads to smart financial savings which can be used for other ministries. Start here to make your congregation and community cleaner, healthier, more prosperous, and more just. The roadmap can also be shared with congregants to act in their own homes.*

Step 1: Get a baseline for your energy use. Every year you set a budget which includes money to pay for electric and gas bills, vehicles, and travel. Take note of your monthly and yearly expenditure. Reducing energy use reduces your bills. Your bills will be a benchmark for progress. Once you know your baseline, it's time to start making changes.

Step 2: Conserve energy and lower your emissions by up to 30%. The following actions are low- or no-cost, and they can generate significant savings on energy bills. LED bulbs cut lighting costs by 80% or more. Wrap your water heater to conserve energy. Weatherization, like simple insulation, and temperature adjustments can save 30% of heating and cooling costs. Encourage congregation members to carpool. Show that creation care is a priority by investing any difference between your budgeted and actual energy expenditures in your Creation Care Capital Fund (page 8). Find more energy saving ideas in the EPA Energy Star Congregational Toolkit.

Step 3: Invest in your house of worship, with the potential to lower your emissions by another 30%. When it comes time to replace your HVAC, use your Creation Care Capital Fund to get one which is Energy Star approved. Install a tankless water heater. Consider higher efficiency windows. If your congregation owns vehicles, when it comes time to replace them, buy hybrid or electric.

Step 4: Invest in renewable energy and get as close to zero carbon emissions as possible. Consider generating renewable energy on your property and determine costs and savings. See if your power company offers clean electricity and change your purchases accordingly. Explore other options such as Arcadia Power, which offers clean energy to individuals nationwide through renewable energy credits.

* If you rent, you can review this section of the guide with your landlord, and ask them what they are doing to reduce pollution and save money.

Step 5: Purchase Blessed Tomorrow Carbon Offsets, powered by Cool Effect. After you do as much as you can to reduce energy use and move to clean energy sources, you may have remaining carbon emissions. For step 5, or anytime along this path, you can “offset” these remaining emissions. A carbon offset is when you pay someone else to reduce their carbon emissions, or to capture carbon, in order to cancel out your emissions so that you have zero, or even negative, net emissions.

Other Ways to Care for Creation

While we focus on carbon pollution as the main driver of the urgent moral problem of climate change, there are other ways to care for creation and walk gently on the Earth. You can:

- Develop water permeable surfaces on your property, including concrete removal.
- Install rain barrels and rain gardens.
- If possible, create green spaces, plant trees, and clear dead wood and brush.
- Reduce waste and start composting.
- Eat fewer processed and more plant-based foods.

Going further with EPA Portfolio Manager

Join the EPA’s Energy Star Program and set your energy baseline in the free, online Portfolio Manager tool for precise measurements of your progress. Worship facilities are scored on a 1-100 scale compared to other U.S. congregations. It accounts for weather fluctuations by Zip Code and calculates greenhouse gas emissions for your worship facility. Your secure account takes a couple of hours to set up and is backed by extensive free training and a great help desk.



Offset any emissions you cannot eliminate. Go to BlessedTomorrow.org for a link to the calculator for houses of worship.

📍 Visit BlessedTomorrow.org

SELECTED RESOURCES: GOOD STEWARDSHIP

[EPA Energy Star Action Workbook for Congregations and Portfolio Manager:](#)
Free, online guide for houses of worship to increase energy efficiency through realistic, cost-effective energy improvements, incorporating the online tool, Portfolio Manager, to benchmark your

energy use and track progress over time.

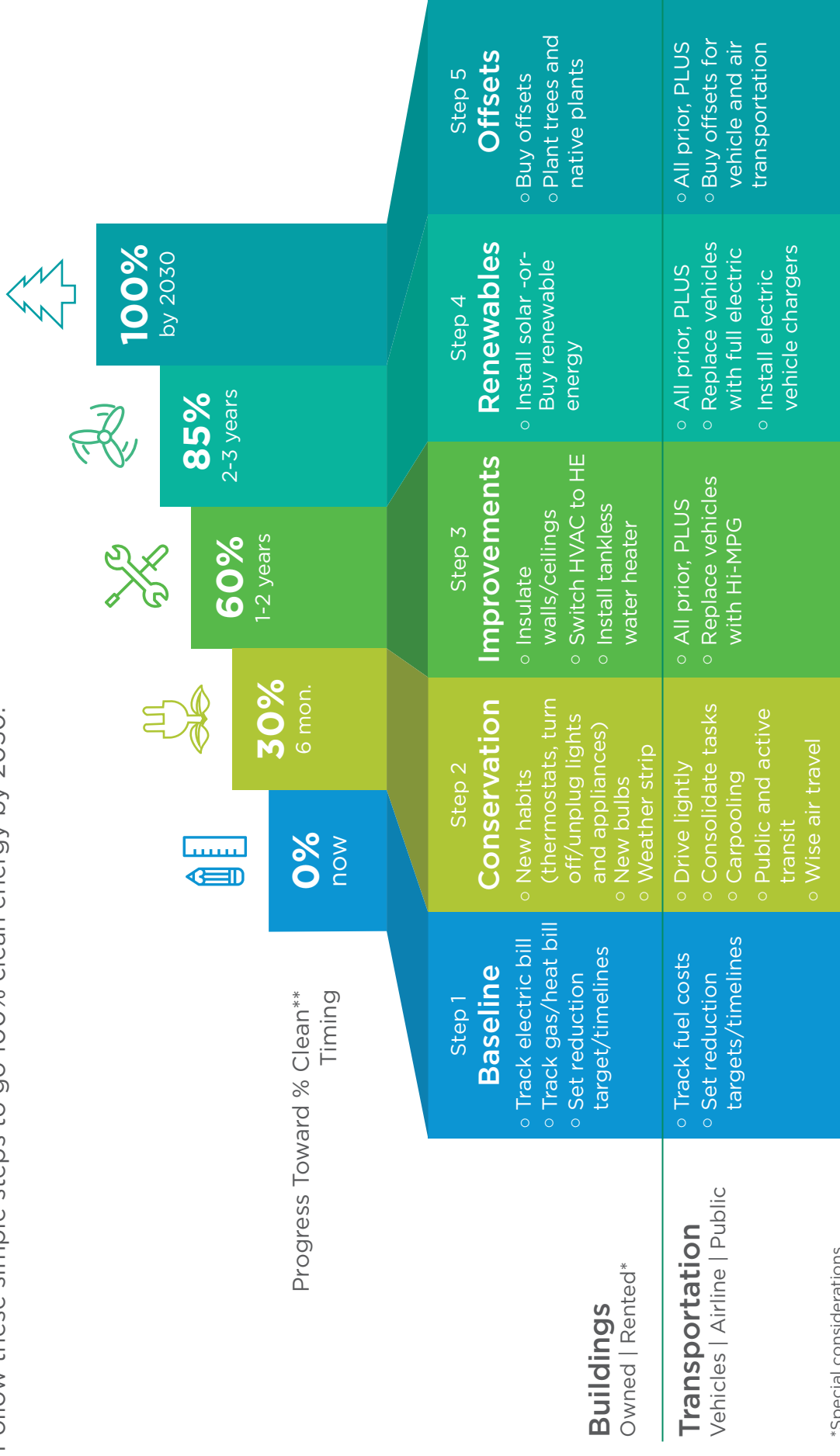
[Interfaith Power and Light’s Cool Congregations Program:](#)
Designed to support faith communities as they “walk the talk” by reducing their own carbon footprint.

[Creation Justice Ministries Earth Day Sunday Resources:](#)
Resources for individuals and congregations to celebrate and protect God’s Creation.

[GreenFaith Living the Change:](#)
An international, multi-faith, sustainable living initiative with ideas for people of faith.

ROADMAP TO 100% CLEAN BY 2030

Follow these simple steps to go 100% clean energy by 2030.



*Special considerations

** Percentages may vary by location. Guidance given are national average estimates.

CLEAN ENERGY SAVINGS WORKSHEET

Calculate your climate savings.



1 Baseline Annual Costs		2 Conservation Savings		3 Building Improvements		4 Buy Clean Energy		5 Offset The Rest	
Review and total the amount of your current energy bills		Take quick, easy steps that save <i>Target 30% Energy Savings</i>		Invest savings into improvements <i>Target 30% Energy Savings</i>		Make it yourself or buy clean energy from a utility		Purchase offsets, or plant trees or native species	
Electric Bill	\$	CFL or LED Light Bulbs	\$	Insulate	\$	Install Wind or Solar	\$	Offset Purchase	\$
Gas/Heat Bill	\$	Thermostats Down/Up	\$	Better HVAC	\$	Purchase Clean	\$	Tree/Native Planting	\$
Vehicle Fuel	\$	Energy Conservation	\$	Higher MPG vehicles	\$	Electric Vehicles	\$		
Airline Trips	\$	Wise Travel	\$	Install tankless water heaters	\$	Install electric vehicle chargers	\$		
TOTAL COST	\$	TOTAL SAVINGS	\$	TOTAL INVESTMENT	\$	TOTAL INVESTMENT	\$	TOTAL INVESTMENT	\$

CREATING REFUGE: ADAPTATION

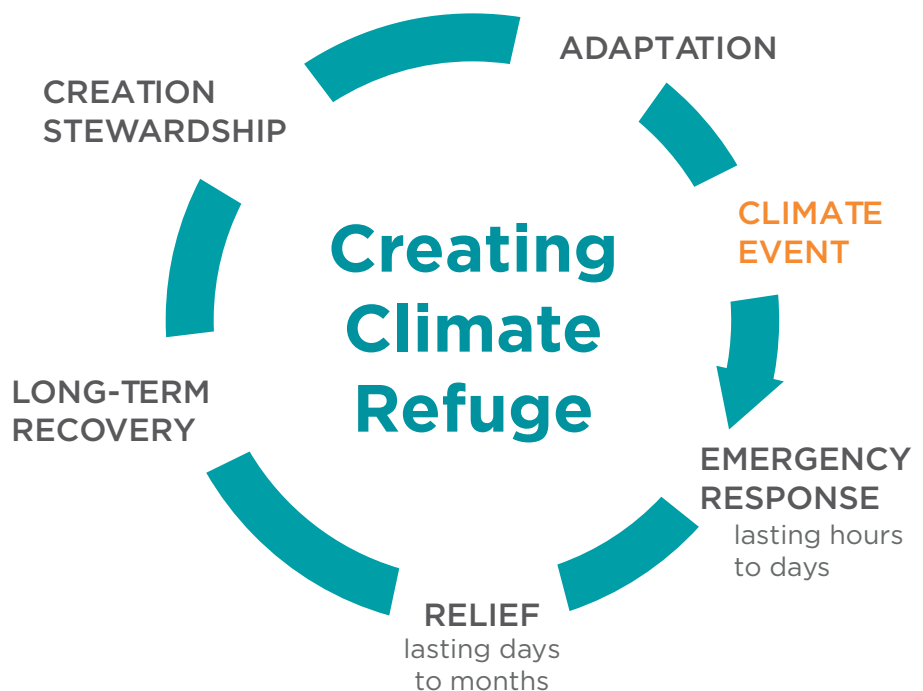
Houses of worship serve as places of sanctuary for us to meet with God and unburden ourselves from our daily troubles. Around the world when tragedies strike — in times of war, political conflict, and natural disaster — they serve as places of refuge. This section will help your congregation continue to be a refuge by helping to plan for the impacts of climate change.

No matter your risks, having insurance and keeping it current will form a part of your preparation. Find additional planning tools at [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov)

Climate change is not just a slow-moving shift in temperature. Its effects are unevenly spread across the Earth, and it can manifest in surprising ways, including increased heat waves, hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires. To serve as a place of refuge, local congregations should prepare for gradual changes and more frequent and severe disasters, which will impact our livelihoods and communities.

To understand how to plan for climate change, it is helpful to think about the relationship between creation stewardship, adapting to possible changes, and disaster response.

Many of the steps you take to be a good steward of God’s creation, as outlined in the previous section, will also help you adapt to the changing climate and make your congregation more resilient when disaster strikes. But there is more you can do to serve as a faithful refuge in the changing world. Follow these steps to discern your congregation’s path.



Step 1: Assemble a team to assess risks and develop and implement plans. This could be your creation care team or another new or existing group. Include a member of your congregational leadership, as well as members who understand climate change, finances, and facilities.

Step 2: Set goals to guide you in your adaptation to climate change, and in your preparation for and response to extreme weather. Determine both longer-term goals for slower changes, like increased temperatures or more frequent flooding, and short-term goals to assist your congregants and the community in response to natural disasters in their immediate aftermath. If your risks are relatively low, double-down on support for disaster agencies and relief programs.

Step 3: Assess risk. You already know the kinds of weather events that occur in your area. Find information on how they might shift on page 16 of this guide. Based on this information, think about how your facilities and congregants may be affected. For more information, check out ready.gov.

Step 4: Develop a plan by exploring your options and prioritizing. Focus planning on impacts that are likely and severe. What can you do to mitigate the negative effects of these climate impacts in your congregation? Prioritize your actions by considering cost, ease of implementation, effectiveness, and how they help you to meet your broader goals. Build from and cross-reference your creation stewardship plan from the previous section.

Step 5: Connect with congregants, local government, relief agencies, and/or FEMA office. A part of your plan will be making sure you have a contact plan including information written down in a clear and accessible manner. This will include details for your congregants, your denomination's relief agency, your state and local government's disaster relief office, and other local relief agencies, like the Red Cross, and your local or regional FEMA office.

Step 6: Communicate your plan and update annually. Share your plan with your congregation, your denomination, relief agencies, FEMA, and your local government. They might have ideas for how to cooperate for the good of your congregation and community.

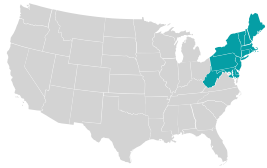
Step 7: Implement your plan. Pick the highest priority action and get started!



Trinity United Church of Christ is serving as a sustainable community “green haven”. They raised money to install a green roof and green flooring and installed a community organic garden to provide fresh produce and environmental education opportunities. They also founded Imani Village, which will be the first holistic, sustainable community sponsored by a faith-based entity in Chicago.

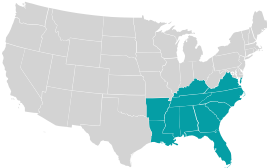
Photo Courtesy: Faith in Place

REGIONAL CLIMATE IMPACTS



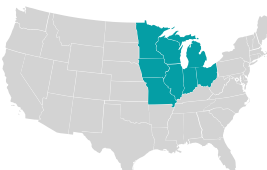
Northeast

Extreme weather, warmer temperatures, lower air and water quality, and sea level rise will impact tourism, farming, forestry, rural industry, and coasts. Major impacts on urban infrastructure and economies.



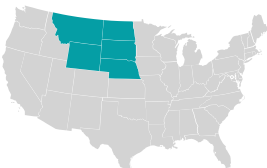
Southeast

Heat, flooding, and diseases increase risks to infrastructure and health in urban areas. Heavy rains and sea level rise endanger coastal tourism and industry. Extreme heat impacts agriculture, hurting rural communities.



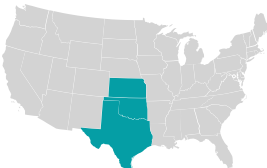
Midwest

Increases in summer humidity and precipitation impact agriculture. Poor air quality days, extreme temperature events, heavy rainfalls, flooding, longer pollen seasons, and pests affect human health and critical infrastructure.



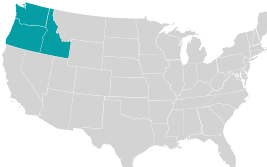
Northern Great Plains

Rainfall changes impact the region. Rising temperatures and extreme weather events risk fossil fuel and renewable energy infrastructure, and likely have negative impacts on agriculture. Indigenous peoples at high risk.



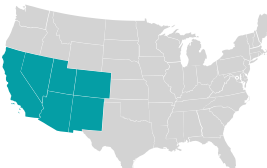
Southern Great Plains

Climate change affects food, energy, and water. Sea level rise, increasing temperature, and extreme precipitation put built environment, coasts, and health at risk. Increased likelihood of population displacement.



Northwest

Wildlife, fish, and plants tied to tribal culture and popular recreation at risk. Flooding, landslides, drought, wildfire, and heat waves risk water supplies, power, and transportation. Hazards to healthcare and social systems.



Southwest

Drought, wildfire, rising temperatures, heat waves, poor air quality, disease affect energy, agriculture, water, food security, health, indigenous peoples. Sea level and temperature rise and ocean acidification affect coasts.



Alaska

Less Arctic summer sea ice, increasing temperatures, ocean acidification, permafrost thaw, erosion, wildfire, and glacier melt affect Alaskans and their infrastructure. Greatest threats are to rural areas and indigenous peoples.



Hawaii & U.S. Islands

Temperature and sea level rise, changing rainfall, risk of extreme drought and flooding all threaten water and food security, culture, jobs, housing, infrastructure, tourism, and raise risk of human conflict and migration.

MOVING FORWARD EXAMPLE



Creating Climate Refuge with Atlanta's St. Usquam's Church

Our fictional friends at St. Usquam's in Atlanta prayed about how to prioritize creation care after experiencing more severe hurricanes due to a changing climate. They decided to **form a team** and **get a baseline for their energy use**, and began with **low-cost efforts** like switching to LED lighting to reduce their carbon footprint. After a few years, they saved enough money to **invest in a more efficient HVAC system**. With these successes, the church decided to launch a **campaign to help congregants** implement creation-friendly, money-saving measures in their own homes.

Now, St. Usquam's wants to do more to prepare for the impacts of climate change. **They want to continue to offer religious services**, or resume them as quickly as possible, after extreme events and **to be a refuge for the community** as the climate changes.

After **checking projected climate risks** in the region, they plan for two:

- 1. Urban heat events**, which are harmful to the community and happening more often. The church prioritizes weatherization and energy efficiency to keep cooling costs down in summer. They agree to **serve as a designated 'cooling center'** during heatwaves.
- 2. Flooding**, which is more likely during extreme weather events like hurricanes, will become more frequent and severe. The team **updates existing hurricane plans** and **inspects their foundation for any vulnerability to** increased flooding. They also **check that insurance is up to date** and covers hurricane and flood damage.

The team **updates the congregation contact list** and adds local government and relief agencies. They also **share their plans with relief agencies and local government** and ask how Atlanta plans to adapt to climate change.

The congregation feels called to **share their concerns about climate change with local policymakers**. The Creation Care team asks the mayor and city council to **develop programs that help others care for creation** and shares ecoAmerica's *Path to Positive Communities Moving Forward Guide*. They **join with members of a nearby synagogue to attend a town hall meeting on clean energy**, and together they **share their experiences and hopes** for Atlanta's clean energy future.

CREATING REFUGE

For more detail on regional impacts of climate change see [Fourth National Climate Assessment Volume II: Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States](#).

For more in depth resources on congregational response to disaster events, see the Refuge section on [BlessedTomorrow.org](https://www.blessedtomorrow.org).

For more information on developing resiliency go to [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).

BEARING WITNESS: ADVOCACY

Faith leaders have the power to engage congregations, communities, and policymakers to advance just climate solutions within houses of worship and in local, state, and national arenas. By bearing witness to the effects of climate change and the need for just solutions, you encourage action and help prepare communities for climate impacts.

Faith leaders are consistently identified as some of the most trusted climate change messengers in the United States, according to ecoAmerica's research. Your moral leadership transcends partisan politics. Faith leaders can be authentic champions for the critical solutions we need to care properly for our families, the most vulnerable among us, and to leave a better future for our children.

Know how your faith tradition supports you. Most faith groups have national or state advocacy programs with dedicated staff who provide programmatic support to congregations on many issues like hunger, homelessness, health, and climate change. Visit their websites to learn more. Subscribe to newsletters and social media to get involved.

Make an Advocacy Plan. Ask yourself the following key questions. Use your answers to identify strategies, tactics, timing, and resource allocation.

- Why do we believe what we believe about climate action as people of faith?
- What goal(s) are we trying to achieve?
- Who is our audience?
- Who are our allies in this effort, and how could we collaborate?
- What strategies and messages work best to reach our goals?
- What timing opportunities exist, such as religious holidays and seasons, or special celebrations?
- Who will be responsible for executing each activity, and what resources do they have?
- What is our timeline?

Connect on climate with successful messages. Whether you're writing an email, a sermon, or sharing your story with an elected official, personal connections and relevance inspire people to act. Craft messages for greater impact using Blessed Tomorrow's [Let's Talk Faith and Climate](#) guide and ecoAmerica's [Talking Points](#).

IN YOUR CONGREGATION

Inspire your congregation regularly. Start within the walls of your own worship community. Talk about climate impacts and ways to be part of the solution in sermons, congregational communications and social media, study groups, Sunday school, and more. Engage your Creation Care team and ask them to share updates on ways they are helping the congregation to conserve energy and walk more gently on the Earth. Add a “Creation Care Corner” to your weekly bulletin or newsletter, sharing tips and updates. Sample messages can be found in [Let’s Talk Faith and Climate](#).

Make a congregational public statement. A congregational public statement is a powerful way to engage your community in your faith-rooted commitment to address climate change. It should include key examples of how you will act and a call for your community to follow you. Consider holding a service of commitment. In some traditions, it may be appropriate to include a confession of complicity in damage to God’s creation prior to making the commitment. Share the public statement on your website, communications, and with both social media and traditional media. Consider using Blessed Tomorrow’s draft statement on moving toward 100% Clean energy by 2030.

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Reach outside your walls through community engagement. Ask your congregation to participate in activities that share information about climate change with the community. This could include holding thoughtful public events to encourage dialogue about how climate change is impacting the community, such as hosting a prayer vigil to amplify voices of impacted people, hosting a speaker series open to the community or, hosting a community Earth Day fair. Individuals may seek opportunities to serve on local committees and councils as a faith representative, or speak at town hall meetings or public hearings about the need for just solutions.



Four Elements of Successful Communication

Salient Climate Impacts:

Share impacts seen with your own eyes. Link to daily/local lives.

Unambiguous Solutions:

Highlight proven solutions that benefit the economy, our health and our security.

Agency, Empowerment:

Give concrete examples that you, your congregation, your community, and nation can act.

Moral Imperative:

Root your message in our responsibility to our children, families, and communities.

Photo Courtesy: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



People of many faiths lift their voices together to call for climate action during the People's Climate March in Washington, D.C. on April 29, 2017.

Photo Courtesy: The United Church of Christ

Partner with other faith leaders. Chances are you are not the only congregation in your community that is concerned about climate change and wants to be part of the solution. Over 80% of people in the United States are concerned about the issue, and many are not aware that their neighbors are too. Reach out to other congregations and organizations to collaborate. You may find increased strength, knowledge, and inspiration from working formally or informally with other faith leaders and congregations, whether on message, ways to walk more gently together, or engaging the larger community or region on climate solutions. See if there are local environmental advocacy organizations in your area, or see if national grassroots organizations like Interfaith Power and Light or GreenFaith have support in your area.

Write an opinion editorial or a letter to the editor.

Both letters to the editor and Op-Eds are widely read, particularly by decision makers. Find out your publication's requirements for submission, and follow the same general approach to crafting a message as recommended in [*Let's Talk Faith and Climate*](#). Connect personally, be brief and compassionate, stick to your talking points, share personal stories and examples, and end with a strong call to action.

WITH POLICYMAKERS

Elevate your voice with policymakers through advocacy.

Policymakers want and need to hear from constituents to inform their work on our behalf. Here are several easy ways to share God's call to care for creation.

Write to, email, or call your policymakers. Host letter-writing opportunities for your fellow congregants. Encourage decision makers to support climate-friendly policies and programs. Recommend policymakers use ecoAmerica's guide for civic leaders, [*Path To Positive Communities Moving Forward Guide*](#).

Use social media to communicate directly with policymakers, while also bearing witness with others who follow you. Politicians use platforms like Facebook and Twitter to gauge public opinion and to communicate with us. Social media is also a great way to celebrate successes and promote upcoming events. Find social media tips and examples on [BlessedTomorrow.org](#).

Schedule in-person meetings. Building a personal relationship with policymakers can be an effective means of advocacy and will demonstrate that constituents care deeply about God’s creation. Schedule a meeting with your mayor, local councilperson, state legislator, member of Congress, or other elected officials. The [Let’s Talk Faith and Climate](#) guide and these tips can help you prepare for a conversation.

- ✓ Identify yourself as a constituent and person of faith
- ✓ Be brief, polite, and compassionate
- ✓ Draw on your personal and community experience
- ✓ Make a specific ask
- ✓ Request follow-up
- ✓ Say thank you

Support collective action. Your congregation is not alone in this work! As appropriate, collaborate with other advocacy efforts in your community, perhaps from other sectors. For example, many health groups are active in climate change advocacy. Check out which health groups are active on Climate for Health, and see if any healthcare professionals in your congregation or community would be interested in working together. By joining your voice with others, you amplify your advocacy for greater impact.



Clergy and members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America meet with members of Congress.

Photo Courtesy: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

SELECTED RESOURCES: BEARING WITNESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Blessed Tomorrow: is a coalition of diverse religious partners united as faithful stewards of creation. Together, we inspire our communities to take action today on one of the greatest moral challenges of our era — protecting our shared home.

ecoAmerica: ecoAmerica builds institutional leadership, public support, and political will for climate solutions in the United States.

We help national mainstream organizations elevate their climate leadership, providing them strategy, tools, and resources to demonstrate visible climate leadership, empower climate literacy, engage all residents, and build collective action and advocacy.

Climate for Health: is a national initiative led by a diverse network of health leaders from across the health sector representing key health

care, public health, clinical, and medical institutions and associations.

Path to Positive Communities: empowers local and regional leaders to maximize the opportunities climate solutions bring to the American people and their communities, and inspire their residents and other leaders to support solutions at local, regional, and national levels.



Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, speaking at the National Climate and Faith Leadership Forum in May 2018.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE

Through faithful advocacy, individuals and congregations can promote solutions that better care for God’s creation and advance justice. While there are IRS limitations on the amount of lobbying activities that non-profits like houses of worship may conduct, there are many more ways that congregations can engage in advocacy without crossing any regulatory lines. Generally, communicating to the public and policymakers on broad principles, as opposed to specific legislation, would not constitute lobbying. Blessed Tomorrow encourages you to review the IRS Tax Guide for Churches & Religious Organizations at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov). Many faith traditions also have advocacy staff who can provide guidance, tools and resources as you develop an advocacy plan.

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

	Writing	Calling	Email
White House	The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, DC 20500	Call Comment Line, 202-456-1111	whitehouse.gov/ contact
Congress	Find your US Senator or Representative house.gov senate.gov	Call Capitol Switchboard to be transferred to your US Senator or Representative 202-224-3121	Find your US Senator or Representative house.gov senate.gov
Governor	Look-up contact information at usa.gov/state-governor		
State Legislature	Look-up contact information for your state legislators at congress.gov/state-legislature-websites		
Local Government	Look-up your local government officials at usa.gov/local-governments		

A BOLDER WITNESS

By Rev. Dr. Jim Antal

Author of *Climate Church*, *Climate World*

The climate crisis places an inescapable moral claim on our generation, and therefore on each of us. The recent United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report revealed that we must transform the world economy at a speed and scale that has “no documented historic precedent.” Our challenge may seem insurmountable, but the more we embrace our task as described in this guide, the more clearly we will see that we have the power to succeed.

For thousands of years, the persistent and courageous witness of people of faith has prompted enormous social change by exposing injustice. Humanity has seen the moral arc of the universe bend toward justice. We can inspire the world to see that climate injustice, environmental racism, and the sixth extinction are neither necessary nor inevitable.

Because many of those in power benefit from the status quo, they oppose the changes that science mandates and faithfulness requires. Thus, more and more people of faith are discerning a call to put their bodies on the line. We may be called to join others in protest. We may even be called to the more costly witness of nonviolent civil disobedience.

By witnessing with our bodies, we experience the truth that fifteen-year-old Greta Thunberg declared in a Ted Talk a month before she addressed the UN Climate Change Conference in Poland: *“The one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere. So instead of looking for hope, look for action. Then and only then, hope will come.”*



Rev. Dr. Jim Antal: author, climate activist and public theologian.

Photo Courtesy: The United Church of Christ

THANK YOU FOR CARING

There are many different ways to move forward on creation care. As you begin to define your path, you will find that each action you take will strengthen your efforts in other areas. As you act as a good steward, you will be better prepared for climate change. As you advocate for climate solutions in your community, you will be motivated to be a better steward of God’s resources.

Whatever your path, you will be working for the good of God’s creation and joining in a multi-faith effort to care for the most vulnerable among us and to promote equity and justice in our communities and around the world. Stay connected with Blessed Tomorrow to receive additional tools and resources to help you do this important work, at BlessedTomorrow.org.

ecoAmerica

building climate leadership

202.457.1900

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Find us on social media @BlessedTomorrow



Thank you to our Blessed Tomorrow partners:

African Methodist Episcopal Church

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

American Baptist Churches USA

Auburn Seminary

Blessed Earth

Catholic Climate Covenant

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Convergence

Creation Justice Ministries

The Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church In America

The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale

Franciscan Action Network

GreenFaith

Interfaith Power and Light

Islamic Society of North America

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Metropolitan Community Church

National Latino Evangelical Coalition

National Religious Coalition on Creation Care

Orthodox Fellowship of the Transfiguration

Presbyterian Church USA

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Sojourners

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church General Board of

Church and Society

United Methodist Women

U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

Values Partnerships, Inc.

World Vision, U.S.

Sign up for the monthly newsletter at BlessedTomorrow.org to get fresh ideas and resources regularly, including webinars and more detailed guides.