

Dominion. Stewardship. Conservation.



**An Open Letter to the Signers of
“Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action”
and Others Concerned About Global Warming**

*“They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I was eager to do.”
—The Apostle Paul, Galatians 2:10*

Widespread media reports tell of a scientific consensus that:

- the world is presently experiencing unprecedented global warming;
- the main cause of it is rising atmospheric carbon dioxide because of human use of fossil fuels for energy; and
- the consequences of continuing this pattern will include (1) rising sea levels that could inundate highly populated and often poor low-lying lands, (2) more frequent deadly heat waves, droughts, and other extreme weather events, (3) increased tropical diseases in warming temperate regions, and (4) more frequent and intense hurricanes.

Recently eighty-six evangelical pastors, college presidents, mission heads, and other leaders signed “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” under the auspices of the Evangelical Climate Initiative. The document calls on the federal government to pass national legislation requiring sufficient reductions in carbon dioxide emissions to fight global warming and argues that these are necessary to protect the poor from its harmful effects.

In light of all this, many people are puzzled by the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance’s opposition to such calls. Do we not *care* about the prospect of catastrophic global warming? Do we not *care* that with rising temperatures the polar ice caps will melt, and the sea will inundate low island countries and coastal regions? Do we not *care* that the world’s poor might be most hurt by these things?

Yes, we care. But we also believe, with economist Walter Williams, that “truly compassionate policy requires dispassionate analysis.” That is the very motive for our opposing drastic steps to prevent global warming. In short, we have the same motive proclaimed by the Evangelical Climate Initiative in its “Call to Action.”

But motive and reason are not the same thing. It matters little how well we mean, if what we do actually harms those we intend to help.

That is why we take the positions we do. In the accompanying document, “**A Call to Truth, Prudence,**

and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming,” we present extensive evidence and argument against the extent, the significance, and perhaps the existence of the much-touted scientific consensus on catastrophic human-induced global warming. Further, good science—like truth—is not about counting votes but about empirical evidence and valid arguments. Therefore we also present data, arguments, and sources favoring a different perspective:

- Foreseeable global warming will have moderate and mixed (not only harmful but also helpful), not catastrophic, consequences for humanity—including the poor—and the rest of the world’s inhabitants.
- Natural causes may account for a large part, perhaps the majority, of the global warming in both the last thirty and the last one hundred fifty years, which together constitute an episode in the natural rising and falling cycles of global average temperature. Human emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are probably a minor and possibly an insignificant contributor to its causes.
- Reducing carbon dioxide emissions would have at most an insignificant impact on the quantity and duration of global warming and would not significantly reduce alleged harmful effects.
- Government-mandated carbon dioxide emissions reductions not only would not significantly curtail global warming or reduce its harmful effects but also would cause greater harm than good to humanity—especially the poor—while offering virtually no benefit to the rest of the world’s inhabitants.
- In light of all the above, the most prudent response is not to try (almost certainly unsuccessfully and at enormous cost) to prevent or reduce whatever slight warming might really occur. It is instead to prepare to adapt by fostering means that will effectively protect humanity—especially the poor—not only from whatever harms might be anticipated from global warming but also from harms that might be fostered by other types of catastrophes, natural or manmade.

We believe the harm caused by mandated reductions in energy consumption in the quixotic quest to reduce global warming will far exceed its benefits. Reducing energy consumption will require significantly increasing the costs of energy—whether through taxation or by restricting supplies. Because energy is a vital component in producing all goods and services people need, raising its costs means raising other prices, too. For wealthy people, this might require some adjustments in consumption patterns—inconvenient and disappointing, perhaps, but not devastating. But for the world’s two billion or more poor people, who can barely afford sufficient food, clothing, and shelter to sustain life, and who are without electricity and the refrigeration, cooking, light, heat, and air conditioning it can provide, it can mean the difference between life and death.

Along with all the benefits we derive from economic use of energy, another consideration—a Biblical/theological one—points in the same direction. The stewardship God gave to human beings over the earth—to cultivate and guard the garden (Genesis 2:15) and to fill, subdue, and rule the whole earth (Genesis 1:28)—strongly suggests that caring for human needs is compatible with caring for the earth. As theologian Wayne Grudem put it, “It does not seem likely to me that God would set up the world to work in such a way that human beings would eventually destroy the earth by doing such ordinary and morally good and necessary things as breathing, building a fire to cook or keep warm, burning fuel to travel, or using energy for a refrigerator to preserve food.”

Whether or not global warming is largely natural, (1) human efforts to stop it are largely futile; (2) whatever efforts we undertake to stem our small contributions to it would needlessly divert resources from much more beneficial uses; and (3) adaptation strategies for whatever slight warming does occur are much more sensible than costly but futile prevention strategies. Therefore, we believe it is far wiser to promote economic growth, partly through keeping energy inexpensive, than to fight against potential global warming and thus slow economic growth. And there is a side benefit, too: wealthier societies are better able and more willing to spend to protect and improve the natural environment than poorer societies. Our policy, therefore, is better not only for humanity but also for the rest of the planet.

We recognize that reasonable people can disagree with our understanding of the science and economics. But this is indeed our understanding.

Please join us in endorsing **“A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming.”** To do so, send an e-mail with your name, degree(s) (with subject, level, and granting institution), professional title, professional affiliation (for identification purposes only), mailing address, e-mail address, and (for verification) phone number to isa@interfaithstewardship.org. If you have questions, please e-mail the same address.

**Endorsers of
“A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor:
An Evangelical Response to Global Warming”**

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(Organizational affiliations are for identification purposes only and do not imply organizational endorsement.)

Adel Abadeer, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI

Randy Alcorn, D.D., Director, Eternal Perspective Ministries

Gregg R. Allison, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Paul N. Anderson, Ph.D., Professor of Biblical and Quaker Studies, Director of the George Fox University Congregational Discernment Project, George Fox University, Newberg, OR

William L. Anderson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Economics, Frostburg State University, Frostburg, MD

Rev. Bruce R. Backensto, Ph.D. (Cand.), Co-Pastor, Geneva Reformed Presbyterian Church, Beaver Falls, PA

Ted Baehr, President, Christian Film and Television Commission, Camarillo, CA

Howard A. Ball, Director of ChurchLIFE, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, Orlando, FL

Doug Bandow, Vice President of Policy, Citizen Outreach, Springfield, VA

Michael Bauman, Professor of Theology and Culture, Director of Christian Studies, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, MI

E. Calvin Beisner, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Historical Theology and Social Ethics, Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Peggy S. Birchfield, Executive Director, Religious Freedom Action Coalition, Washington, D.C.

Paul C. Boling, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy and Christian Thought, Chairman of Christian Studies Division, Bryan College, Dayton, TN

* Bishop Wellington Boone, Founder and Chief Overseer, Fellowship of International Churches, Atlanta, Georgia

Rev. James A. Borland, Ph.D., Professor of New Testament and Theology, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

Mark Brandly, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI

D. A. Carson, Ph.D., Research Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL

Gary Cass, D.Min., Executive Director, Center for Reclaiming America for Christ, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Kent A. Chambers Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Environmental Science, Hardin Simmons University, Abilene, TX

Richard C. Chewning, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Christian Ethics, Baylor University, Waco, TX, and Distinguished Scholar in Residence, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR

Kenneth W. Chilton, Ph.D., Director, Institute for the Study of Economics and the Environment, Lindenwood University, St. Charles, MO

Michael Cromartie, Vice President, Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C.

L. Anthony Curto, D.Min., Associate Professor of Practical Theology, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Taylors, SC

Dr. Robert A. Demick, Deacon, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Coral Springs/Margate, Coral Springs, FL

Charles A. Donovan, Executive Vice President, Family Research Council, Washington, D.C.

Brian Douglas, M.Div., Deacon, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Wilton Manors, FL

Rev. Charles H. Dunahoo, D.Min., Coordinator, Christian Education and Publications Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America, Lawrenceville, GA

Art Eberle, President, Compliance Assurance Associates, Inc. (industrial pollution control consulting engineer), Bartlett, TN

Reginald E. Ecarma, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Mass Communication and Political Science, North Greenville University, Greenville, SC

John Eidsmoe, Lt. Colonel, USAFR (Ret.), Professor of Law Emeritus, Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, Montgomery, AL; Senior Staff Attorney, Alabama Supreme Court

William B. Evans, Ph.D., Younts Professor of Bible and Religion, Erskine College, Due West, SC

Neil L. Frank, Ph.D. (Meteorology), former Director, National Hurricane Center; chief meteorologist, KHOU-TV, Houston, TX (CBS affiliate)

Rev. Warren A. Gage, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Old Testament, Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Victor Goldschmidt, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Purdue, University, West Lafayette, IN

Rev. Alan Gomes, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Theology, Talbot School of Theology (Biola University), La Mirada, CA

Guillermo Gonzalez, Ph.D., Department of Physics and Astronomy, Iowa State University, Ames, IA

Rev. George Grant, Ph.D., Pastor, Christ Community Church; Founder, King's Meadow Study Center; President, Franklin Classical School, Nashville, TN

*Former signer of the Evangelical Climate Initiative.

Gary O. Gray, Ph.D., Professor of Chemistry, Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics, Director of the Darrell R. Strait Center for the Integration of Science and Christian Faith, Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, MO

Rev. Wayne Grudem, Ph.D., Research Professor of Bible and Theology, Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, AZ

Rev. David Hall, Ph.D., Senior Pastor, Midway Presbyterian Church, Powder Springs, GA

Rev. Steve Hartland, Pastor, Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, Joppa, MD

Rev. Stephen Henderson, Th.M., Pastor, Munich International Community Church, Munich, Germany

The Honorable Donald Paul Hodel, J. D., currently member of the Board of Trustees of the North American Electric Reliability Council; formerly: U. S. Secretary of Energy, U. S. Secretary of the Interior, Under Secretary of the Interior, Administrator and Deputy Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration, member of the Board of Directors of the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), member of the Advisory Board of EPRI, President of Christian Coalition, President of Focus on the Family

Rev. H. Wayne House, Ph.D., Distinguished Research Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, Faith Evangelical Seminary, Tacoma, WA and Salem, OR, and Adjunct Professor of Law, Trinity Law School, Trinity International University, Santa Ana, CA

Rev. Irfon Hughes, Pastor, Hillcrest Presbyterian Church, Volant, PA

Charles W. Jarvis, President and CEO, USA Next, United Seniors Association, Purcellville, VA; former Deputy Undersecretary (No. 3) at Department of the Interior, former Executive Vice President, Focus on the Family

Rev. Gary Johnson, Ph.D., Senior Pastor, Church of the Redeemer, Mesa, AZ

Jerry Johnson, M.Div., Director, The Apologetics Group, Draper, VA

Rev. Peter Jones, Ph.D., Director, Christian Witness to a Pagan Planet, Adjunct Professor and Scholar in Residence, Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, CA

J. C. Keister, Ph.D., Research Specialist, 3M Corporation, Lakeville, MN

Rev. Lane Keister, Pastor (PCA), serving congregations of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of America, Hull, ND

Kelvin Kemm, Ph.D. (Nuclear Physics), CEO, Stratek Business Strategy Consultants, Pretoria, South Africa

Rev. D. James Kennedy, Ph.D., Senior Minister, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church; host, Truths That Transform; founder, Evangelism Explosion, Coral Ridge Ministries, Coral Ridge Media, D. James Kennedy Center for Christian Statesmanship, and Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Scott Klusendorf, President, Life Training Institute, Colorado Springs, CO

Henry Krabbendam, Th.D., Professor of Biblical Studies, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, GA, and Chairman, Africa Christian Training Institute, Uganda

Rev. Sam Lamerson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of New Testament, Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

David R. Legates, Ph.D. (Climatology), Associate Professor and Director, Center for Climatic Research, University of Delaware, Newark, DE

Kevin Lewis, J.D., Assistant Professor of Theology and Law, Biola University, La Mirada, CA

Patrick J. Marx, Director, Compass Advisory Partners, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA

Raymond K. Mason, Forest Land Manager (Ret'd.), U.S. Forest Service and Florida Division of Forestry; Fellow and Fifty-year Member, Society of American Foresters, Havana, FL

Rev. Donald G. Matzat, Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church (LCMS), Bridgeville, PA; former host of radio show *Issues, Etc.*, St. Louis, MO

Rev. J. Paul McCracken, retired pastor, Reformed Presbyterian Church, North America

Dr. Ross McKittrick, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in Economics, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada; expert reviewer, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group 1

Rev. LeRoy E. Miller, Pastor, Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Lincoln, NE

Tracy C. Miller, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Grove City College, Grove City, PA

C. Ben Mitchell, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Bioethics & Contemporary Culture, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois; Director, M.A. Program in Communication and Culture; Editor, *Ethics & Medicine: An International Journal of Bioethics*

Garry J. Moes, Director, Murphys Christian Camp, Former Writer/Editor, The Associated Press, Murphys, CA

William J. Murray, Chairman, Religious Freedom Coalition, Washington, D.C.

Jeffrey L. Myers, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Communications, Bryan College, Dayton, TN

Dean Nelson, Executive Director, Network of Politically Active Christians (a division of Wellington Boone Ministries), 801 G Street NW, Washington, D.C.

Jerry Newcombe, Senior Producer, Coral Ridge Ministries TV, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Michael J. Nichols, CEP, President, M.J. Nichols and Associates, LLC (Environmental Consulting), West Palm Beach, FL

David Noebel, Ph.D. (cand.), President, Summit Ministries, Manitou Springs, CO

Rev. Jerry O'Neill, D.D., President, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA

Douglas B. Ostien, M.S. (Mathematics), St. Charles, MO

Gretchen Passantino, M.Div., Director, Answers in Action, Costa Mesa, CA, and Adjunct Professor, Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Tacoma, WA

Franklin E. (Ed) Payne, M.D., (Ret.), Associate Professor, Medical College of Georgia, Founder and Editor, *Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*; Augusta, GA

Eric Pement, Vice President, Evangelical Ministries to New Religions, Chicago, IL 60625

Tony Perkins, President, Family Research Council, 801 G. St. NW, Washington, D.C., 202-393-2100

Rev. Richard D. Phillips, Senior Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Coral Springs/Margate, FL; Director, Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology; board member, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals

Rev. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., Ph.D., President and Professor of Systematic Theology, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Greenville, SC

Rev. W. Duncan Rankin, Ph.D., Minister, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Oak Ridge, TN, and Adjunct Professor of Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS

Rev. Robert L. Reymond, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology, Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Jay W. Richards, Ph.D., Research Fellow, Acton Institute, Grand Rapids, MI

David Ridenour, Vice President, National Center for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C.

Gregory J. Rummo, M.S., M.B.A., CEO, New Chemic, Butler, NJ

Michael R. Salazar, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Chemistry, Union University, Jackson, TN

Daryl Sas, Ph.D., Professor of Biology, Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA

William L. Saunders, Esq., Senior Fellow and Human Rights Counsel, Family Research Council, Washington, D.C.

Herbert Schlossberg, Ph.D., Author, Dumfries, VA

Rev. Abdul Karim Sesay, Senior Pastor, Kings & Priests Court International Ministries, Silver Springs, MD

Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, Chairman, Traditional Values Coalition

Rev. Ron Siegenthaler, D.Min., Executive Minister, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Randy T. Simmons, Ph.D., Professor and Department Head, Political Science, Utah State University, Logan, UT

Rev. Cecil Siriwardene, Pastor, Evangelical Free Church, Redondo Beach, CA

Rev. Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., Pastor, Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (CRPC), Sheboygan, WI, Editor, Presbyterian International News Service and *Presbyterian Heritage*

Rev. John B. Sorensen, Executive Vice President, Evangelism Explosion International, Fort Lauderdale, FL

John A. Sparks, J.D., Dean of Arts & Letters, Grove City College, Grove City, PA

Dr. Roy W. Spencer, Ph.D. (Climatology), principal research scientist, University of Alabama, Huntsville, former senior scientist for climate studies, Marshall Space Flight Center, NASA

Rev. Kenneth Gary Talbot, Ph.D., President and Professor of Theology and Apologetics, Whitefield Theological Seminary, Lakeland, FL

Hilton P. Terrell, M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, McLeod Regional Medical Center, Florence, SC; faculty, Medical University of South Carolina

Timothy Terrell, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Wofford College, Spartanburg, SC

Gregory Alan Thornbury, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Christian Studies, Union University, Jackson, TN

Don Thorsen, Ph.D., Professor of Theology, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA

Rev. Dr. James Tonkovich, President, Institute of Religion and Democracy, Washington, DC

G. Cornelis van Kooten, Ph.D., Professor of Economics, and Canada Research Chair in Environmental Studies & Climate, University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C., Canada

Arlene Sanchez Walsh, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Hispanic Church Studies and Ministry, Haggard Graduate School of Theology, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA

Rev. Ralph Weitz, Stewardship Pastor, Immanuel Bible Church, Springfield, VA

David Wells, Ph.D., Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA

R. Fowler White, Ph.D., Professor of New Testament and Biblical Languages, Dean of Faculty, and Administrator, Knox Theological Seminary

David W. Whitlock, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Business and Computer Science, Associate Provost (beginning Fall 2006), Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, MO

Harry V. Wiant, Jr., Ph.D., Joseph E. Ibberson Chair, School of Forest Resources, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Jay L. Wile, Ph.D., President, Apologia Educational Ministries, Anderson, IN

David Williams, President, L.D. Advantage, Fort Worth, TX, former Denominational Representative, Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals (1983-2003)

Non-evangelicals with special expertise in climatology or related sciences, economics, environmental studies, theology, or ethics:

Dennis Avery, Ph.D., Director, Center for Global Food Issues, Hudson Institute, Churchville, VA

Father J. Michael Beers, Ph.D., Dean of the Pre-Theologate, Ave Maria University, Naples, FL

Sonja A. Boehmer-Christiansen, Ph.D., Reader, Department of Geography, Hull University, Hull, UK; Editor, *Energy & Environment*

R. M. Carter, Ph.D., paleontologist, stratigrapher, marine geologist, and environmental scientist, Professor, Marine Geophysical Laboratory, James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland, Australia

Paul K. Driessen, Esq., environmental ethicist, Senior Policy Advisor (energy and environment), Congress of Racial Equality

Robert Essenhigh, Ph.D., E. G. Bailey Professor of Energy Conversion, Ohio State University

Vincent Gray, Ph.D. (Chemistry, Cambridge University), Wellington, NZ, climate consultant, expert reviewer of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change from its inception

Kenneth Green, D.Env. (Environmental Science & Engineering), Visiting Fellow, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C.

Steven F. Hayward, Ph.D., F. K. Weyerhauser Fellow, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., author, *Index of Leading Environmental Indicators* (annual)

Craig D. Idso, Ph.D., Chairman, Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change, Tempe, AZ

Sherwood B. Idso, Ph.D., President, Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change, Tempe, AZ

Zbigniew Jaworowski, M.D., Ph.D., D.Sc., Professor and Chairman of the scientific council of the Central Laboratory for Radiological Protection, Warsaw, Poland

Madhav L. Khandekar, Ph.D. (Meteorology), Retired Research Scientist, Environment Canada, ~49 years in the science of weather & climate, IPCC Expert Reviewer, Fourth Cycle, 2007

Rabbi Daniel Lapin, President, Toward Tradition, Mercer Island, WA

Richard S. Lindzen, Ph.D. (Climatology), Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Meteorology, Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's *Third Assessment Report*

Anthony R. Lupo, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Atmospheric Science, University of Missouri, Columbia

Thomas P. Sheahan, Ph.D. Senior Analyst, National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Washington, D.C.

S. Fred Singer, Ph.D., President, Science & Environmental Policy Project, Arlington, VA; Professor Emeritus of Environmental Sciences, University of Virginia; former director of the U.S. Weather Satellite Service

Fred L. Smith, Jr., President, Competitive Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C.