

Green Faith Circle Initiative Statement Adopted at Retreat 2018

Multi-Faith Initiative on Sustainable Living

In Paris in 2015, world leaders agreed to keep global warming to “well below 2°C”, and “pursue efforts” for a 1.5°C limit. However, on current trends the world is heading for at least 3°C of warming. To meet the 1.5°C limit we would need a massive reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, reaching zero by 2050.

There is one reliable way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions: deep cuts in energy consumption so that we can stop using fossil fuels. However, scientists and policymakers find it hard to imagine that people will be prepared to make the changes implied in our ways of living.

At the Climate Conference in Bonn on 6-17 November 2017, 80 leaders from a wide range of faith communities world-wide gathered in a joyous and moving event to launch a new initiative for sustainable living. The following text is an extract from the statement of commitment from the faith leaders, delivered to negotiators at COP23 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

“As religious and spiritual leaders, we are committing to make changes in our own lives, and to support the members of our communities in doing the same. Together, we come to you with an invitation to embark on a journey towards compassionate simplicity for the sake of the climate, the human family, and the community of life. For many of us, changes in three areas make the greatest impact:

- *dramatically reducing emissions from our home energy use,*
- *adopting a plant-based diet and reducing food waste, and*
- *minimizing automobile and air travel.*

Because of the gravity of our situation, substantial and long-term changes in these areas are indispensable if we are to reach a 1.5°C future, particularly for those of us in communities whose carbon footprints exceed sustainable levels. We pledge our commitment to such change.

“We wish to be clear that we understand that systemic change is required to solve this crisis. We will continue to advocate for the policies that are so urgently needed. However, we also believe that individual commitments and behaviors are as important in addressing climate change as they are in addressing poverty, racism, and other grave social ills. And we know that our spiritualities and traditions offer wisdom about finding happiness in a purposeful life, family and friendships, not in an overabundance of things. The world needs such wisdom; it is our privilege both to share and to seek to embody it.”

The full text is available at <http://www.interfaithclimatestatement.org/>, as well as the video recording of the faith leaders event which was held on 9th November 2017.

The initiative is in early stages of implementation. The initiative is being managed by GreenFaith, and an international, interfaith steering group is in place.

Current ideas and aspirations are:

- for an ongoing process to secure pledges from leaders at all levels in an extensive range of faith communities,
- to provide training, mostly online, for sustainable living facilitators/leaders within the communities
- to hold a period of celebration, probably a weekend in September 2018, involving events in local and national congregations, potentially including collaborations among faith groups and with secular groups
- to deliver a further statement of record, celebration and commitment to COP24, to be held in Katowice in December 2018
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To learn more and become involved, contact Fletcher Harper at fletcher@greenfaith.org.

Current partners for this initiative include the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, The Bhumi Project, CIDSE, Franciscan Action Network, the Global Catholic Climate Movement, the Global Muslim Climate Network, GreenFaith, Hazon, Islamic Society of North America, One Earth Sangha, Parliament of the World's Religions, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the World Council of Churches.

COP 23 Interfaith Climate Statement

9 Nov 2017, Bonn, Germany

“Walk on Earth Gently”

A Multi-Faith invitation to Sustainable Lifestyles

To all members of the human family and to leaders gathered at COP23:

We extend our warm greetings. We represent the world's family of spiritualities, faiths and religions who share a profound gratitude for our precious planet.

Earth is a blessing. She supports life and is the basis of all our economies. She conveys beauty and evokes our recognition of something greater than ourselves. She is our temple, our mosque, our sanctuary, our cathedral. Our home.

Our actions now threaten the delicate balance of life on Earth, with climate change posing a most grave danger. Record numbers of severe storms, droughts, fires, and related catastrophes leave trauma and grief in their wake. Recent months have witnessed the tragedy of such occurrences in the Caribbean, the US, and India. We shudder over the enormity of this suffering and over what more lies ahead.

For thousands of years, our traditions have taught us to care for Earth. This responsibility has become urgent in recent decades. Our misuse of Earth's generosity, while improving conditions for many, is not improving them for all and is fraying the web of life. The most vulnerable among us, those least responsible for this global threat, suffer the impacts of a warming climate unfairly and unjustly.

We have begun to respond, raising consciousness and starting to consume more sustainably. We have implored leaders to act. We have studied, prayed and petitioned, advocated, marched and mobilized. We have awakened to the urgent challenge and begun to change our ways.

However, we are at a crossroads. The Paris Agreement affirmed limiting temperature rise to well below 2°C, while pursuing efforts to a far safer 1.5°C limit. Our friends from Fiji and small island states, understanding the stakes and underscoring the science, have told us “1.5 to stay alive.” Yet we are currently headed for warming of 3°C or more, perilously beyond this limit

This challenge is both dire and urgent. It calls for us to act.

As religious and spiritual leaders, we are committing to make changes in our own lives, and to support the members of our communities in doing the same. Together, we come to you with an invitation to embark on a journey towards compassionate simplicity for the sake of the climate,

the human family, and the community of life. For many of us, changes in three areas make the greatest impact: dramatically reducing emissions from our home energy use, adopting a plant-based diet and reducing food waste, and minimizing automobile and air travel. Because of the gravity of our situation, substantial and long-term changes in these areas are indispensable if we are to reach a 1.5°C future, particularly for those of us in communities whose carbon footprints exceed sustainable levels. We pledge our commitment to such change.

Through this collective effort, we look forward to creating a global community of conscience and practice in which we learn to put belief into action in relation to our own lifestyles. Our spiritual and faith communities will give us hope and companions for this journey. We will share ideas, materials, and stories of struggle and success. Our practices of mindfulness, spiritual discipline and prayer will enable us to grow. These ancient teachings and practices, and our renewed commitments and willingness to strive, will help us build pathways towards a sustainable future.

We wish to be clear that we understand that systemic change is required to solve this crisis. We will continue to advocate for the policies that are so urgently needed. However, we also believe that individual commitments and behaviors are as important in addressing climate change as they are in addressing poverty, racism, and other grave social ills. And we know that our spiritualities and traditions offer wisdom about finding happiness in a purposeful life, family and friendships, not in an overabundance of things. The world needs such wisdom; it is our privilege both to share and to seek to embody it.

We invite you to join the many others willing to walk this path by adding your name to this document, and by preparing to make commitments in the three areas named above. The diverse groups coming together in this moment will reach out to invite you to become involved in a programme of support and action which will take shape over the coming year.

Let us pray and hope we can come together in love for each other, those who suffer from climate change, future generations, and planet Earth.

Let us commit to walk gently on Earth.

Note: Interfaith groups can obtain additional information about the COP interfaith coalition which met in Bonn, Germany, about future plans, and groups can sign on to the above statement on line at the following link:

Web Link: http://www.interfaithclimatestatement.org/the_statement