

UU's Take on Global Warming

*Statement of Conscience
on Global Warming and Climate
Change*

Adopted June, 2006



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS



Representing over 1,000 liberal congregations in North America

General Assembly

St. Louis, Missouri 2006

Delegates to the 2006 UU General Assembly in St. Louis, Missouri, June 20-25, arrived passionate about passing a strong Statement of Conscience on global warming.

General Assembly

- *Global Warming* was adopted as a Study/Action Issue in 2004, initiating a 2 year study process.
- UUA Commission on Social Witness drafted a statement for consideration at this GA.
- Some felt the draft Statement of Conscience was too bland:
 - “The draft is like tapioca; we need language as hot as chili peppers!”

General Assembly

- In Plenary Session, over 50 amendments were proposed to strengthen the Statement.
- Gini Courter, the UUA moderator, moved the delegates into a Committee of the Whole and added an additional Plenary session to the GA schedule to provide for more time for the amendment process to unfold.
- During the process, there was resounding consensus among delegates for a strong, action-oriented statement.

General Assembly

- Many of the 38 amendments ultimately incorporated were those supported by a collaborative comprised of
 - UU Ministry for Earth,
 - UU Service Committee,
 - UUA Commission on Socially Responsible Investing, and
 - Members of interested UU congregations.
- The amendments sought to strengthen the connections between global warming, our religious values and principles, human rights, and justice.

General Assembly

- The Statement finally adopted included:
 - a call for a strong denominational response,
 - a call to UUs to reduce our personal energy consumption and carbon emissions by at least 20% by 2010 or sooner, and
 - provided clear guidelines for other congregational and individual action.

Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change Statement of Conscience

- “Life on this planet will be greatly affected unless we embrace new practices, ethics, and values to guide our lives on a warming planet.”
- “We as Unitarian Universalists are called to join with others to halt practices that fuel global warming/climate change, to instigate sustainable alternatives, and to mitigate the effects of global warming/climate change with just and ethical responses.”

Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change Statement of Conscience

“As a people of faith, we commit to a renewed reverence for life and respect for the interdependent web of all existence.”

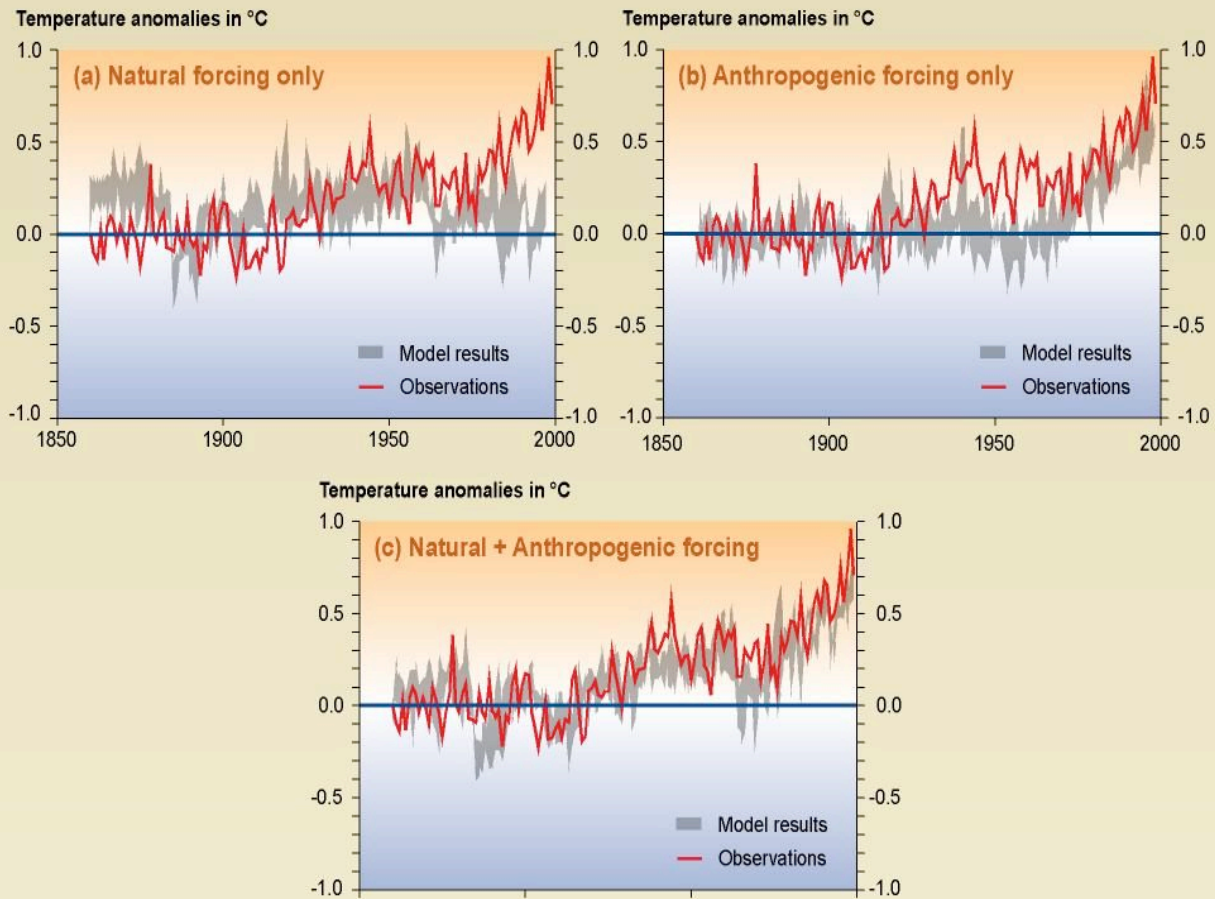
A Matter of Science

- There is scientific consensus that Earth's climate is changing caused primarily by human use of oil, coal, and natural gas.
- Melting of polar ice and mountain glaciers may cause sea levels to rise by at least 3 feet, probably more - by 80 feet in coming centuries if the average temperature rises five degrees.
- Half the world's plant and animal species at risk of extinction by 2100.
- Siberian permafrost peat bogs melting - releasing methane and accelerating global climate change.
- Melting ice upsets delicate salt balance in North Atlantic Ocean, threatening a local ice age in northern Europe and parts of North America.

A Matter of Science

- Warmer climates extending toward the poles dramatically alter ecosystems.
- Recent increases in sea surface temperatures are linked with more intense hurricanes.
- Global warming can cause both increases and decreases in local temperatures and precipitation.
- Human-generated greenhouse gases are at a level not seen for at least 600,000 years.
- While climate is always changing, studies show that natural causes do not account for the recent rapid temperature increase but human activity does.

Comparison between modeled and observations of temperature rise since the year 1860



SYR - FIGURE 2-4

A Matter of Faith and Justice

- “As Unitarian Universalists, we are called by our Seventh Principle to affirm and promote “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”
- “We envision a world in which all people are assured a secure and meaningful life that is ecologically responsible and sustainable, in which every form of life has intrinsic value.”
- “To sustain the interdependent web, we must burden it less while maintaining the essentials of our lives.”

A Matter of Faith and Justice

“Our world is calling us to gather in community and respond from our moral and spiritual wealth, together we can transform our individual and congregational lives into acts of moral witness, discarding our harmful habits for new behaviors and practices that will sustain life on Earth, ever vigilant against injustice.”

A Matter of Policy

“It is a bitter irony and a grave injustice that economically developed countries that are most responsible for global warming/climate change possess the wealth, technology, and infrastructure to cope with its negative effects, while those who have the least will have the largest burdens to bear.”

A Matter of Policy

- U.S.A. ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992.
- U.S.A. has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol to the convention, which sets milestones for reducing greenhouse gas emission rates.
- International cooperation is critical for addressing this global dilemma.

A Call to Action

“Affirming that we are part of this earth and that humankind has brought about global warming/climate change, **we, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association**, pledge to ground our missions and ministries in **reverence for this earth** and **responsibility** to it as we undertake these **personal practices, congregational actions, and advocacy goals.**”

Personal Practices

- Reduce our use of energy and our consumption of manufactured goods that become waste.
- Use alternative sources of energy to reduce global warming/climate change and to encourage the development of such sources.

Transportation

- Choose the most energy-efficient transportation methods that meet our needs and abilities (e.g., walk, bike, carpool, use mass transit and communication technologies, and limit travel).



Personal Practices

- Determine our personal energy consumption and pledge to reduce our use of energy and carbon emissions by at least 20 percent by 2010 or sooner and into the future.
- Energy Efficiency Tips:
www.uuvisalia.org/justice/energy.html

Personal Practices

- Reuse, recycle, and reduce waste.
- Plant and preserve trees and native plants and choose sustainably harvested wood and wood products.
- Eat and serve energy-efficient food that is locally produced and low on the food chain.
- Use financial resources to encourage corporate social responsibility with reference to global warming/climate change.

Personal Practices

- Model these practices by committing to a life of simplicity and Earth stewardship.
- Consume less, choose appliances that are rated energy-efficient (e.g., by the EPA Energy Star Program), and choose products and materials that are made from renewable resources and can be recycled at the end of their usefulness.

Personal Practices

Commit to continue to learn about the science, impact, and mitigation of global warming/climate change and communicate this knowledge by teaching about and discussing the problems and dangers of, and actions to address, climate change.

www.uuvisalia.org/justice/personal_practices.html

Congregational Actions

- Celebrate reverence for the *interdependent web of existence* in all aspects of congregational life.
- Treat environmentally responsible practices as a *spiritual discipline*.
- Seek certification through the *Green Sanctuary* Program of the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth.

Congregational Actions

- Educate ourselves, our children, and future generations on sustainable ways to live interdependently.
- UU Visalia Action:
 - Northwest Earth Institute Study Course on “Sustainable Living” - January, 2007

Congregational Actions

- Whenever possible, plan congregational facilities around proximity to public transportation and encourage congregants, as they are able, to travel by public transportation, walking, biking, and carpooling.
- Seek U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for all new congregational building projects and use LEED guidelines for renovation projects.
- Enroll in the EPA's Energy Star for Congregations Program.

Congregational Actions

- Use congregational financial resources to positively address the global warming/ climate change crisis.
- Practice environmentally responsible consumption and encourage voluntary simplicity among members.
- Build a broader base for environmentally mindful policies and practices through congregational *alliances* within Unitarian Universalism, through interfaith channels, and with secular entities.

Denominational Affairs

- Call upon all political parties to address the issue.
- Provide resources for congregational and personal responses.
- Seek opportunities for public witness on environmental justice.
- Perform environmental audits of UUA properties and model environmentally sustainable practices.
- Find hope for the future.

Advocacy Goals

- USA to ratify Kyoto Protocol.
- Shift federal subsidies from fossil fuel industries to renewable energy technologies and improved energy efficiency.
- Fund programs to mitigate adverse effects.
- Safe and responsible development of power sources with low greenhouse gas emissions.
- Increase forestation and other forms of CO₂ sequestration.

Advocacy Goals

- Fund energy efficient mass transit.
- Encourage global warming/climate change impact studies by local and regional governments.
- Urban and regional planning designed to reduce energy consumption.
- Access to family planning services around the world.
- Strengthen CAFE Standards for autos and light trucks.

Advocacy Goals

- National greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets of:
 - 10% below current levels by 2015
 - 20% by 2020
 - 60% by 2030
- US policy taking a leadership role in global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate the negative impacts of global warming/climate change.
- Support legislation at local and state level to reduce emissions.

Conclusion of Statement

“Given our human capacity to reflect and act upon our own lives as well as the condition of the world, we accept with *humility and determination* our responsibility to remedy and mitigate global warming/climate change through innovation, cooperation, and self-discipline. We undertake this work for the preservation of *life on Earth*.”

How does UU Visalia Fit In?

- Support our Green Sanctuary Committee - help us achieve our 12 projects!
- Join the UU Ministry for Earth.
- Participate in Interfaith Power and Light.
- Study Group on “Sustainable Living” from Northwest Earth Institute.
- Become carbon neutral: conserve energy and buy carbon offsets - CarbonFund.org
- Celebrate the interconnected Web!

We are all called to
Earth Ministry



Unitarian Universalism

Our 7 Principles

The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Justice, equality and compassion in human relations

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large

The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

www.uuvisalia.org

www.uua.org