

Ethical Energy

The Wisconsin Interfaith
Climate Change Campaign

Spring 2002

Volume 1, Issue 1

52 Wisconsin leaders join national counterparts to support a much cleaner federal energy policy

On Feb 26, 52 religious leaders in Wisconsin--joined by over 1000 other national faith leaders--called upon the U.S. Senate "at a moment of great moral urgency for our nation and the planet" to oppose President Bush's energy plan.

The signatories felt that the President's plan--despite his assertion October 11 that "the less dependent we are on foreign sources of crude oil, the more secure we are at home"--fell woefully short of any realistic answers to our current pressing problems of reliance upon foreign oil and the lack of renewable energy sources. The top request asked the senators to support increased vehicle fuel efficiency and encourage alternative fuel-source vehicles.

The presenters of the letter--and members of the Wisconsin Interfaith Climate Change Campaign--include representatives of most major faith groups, such as: the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal church, the Roman

Church, the Orthodox Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Korean Presbyterian Church in America, the Religious Society of Friends, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations and the Alliance of Baptists.

One paragraph of the letter underscored the link between the principles of faith and the calling for tougher environmental standards: "Recent events remind us of the intimate link between the safety of the people and the reliability of our energy system. Efforts to preserve the environment are ever more clearly necessary in order to protect human life. Security and



A Wind Sweeping Through Wisconsin's Churches

Wind power is a viable option for Wisconsin homes and businesses that wish to use "green energy" and support renewable energy sources rather than relying upon the traditional, fossil fuel energy sources. Wind power has already been tested by a handful of farmers in northeast and southwest Wisconsin who have been

harvesting wind and generating both income and energy from the venture. To our west, Minnesota's wind industry can generate 300 megawatts of power. A megawatt is 1 million watts: enough electricity to light 1,000 homes.

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Special points of interest:

- The Wisconsin Interfaith Climate Change Campaign has a brand new website! Look for it at www.webofcreation.org
- Plans are underway for conferences in Eau Claire and Stevens Point or Wausau, both to be held in September. Call Rev. Dave Steffenson at 920-623-4360 for more information.

Wisconsin needs more Energy Star Congregations!

About two dozen religious facilities in Wisconsin are listed as taking part in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star Congregation Program, which is sometimes also known as the Energy Stewardship Congregation Program.

Participating in this program means that a congregation has made a commitment to having an energy audit performed and, if necessary, implementing such measures as performing replacing conventional incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents, adding insulation, and installing programmable thermostats and motion sensors.

Making these kinds of changes benefits the environment by reducing emissions from power plants, but they also save a congregation a considerable amount of money in the long run. Many energy efficiency improvements pay for themselves within a few years.

It's easy for a congregation to begin the process of becoming an Energy Star Congregation. For information on those first steps, call Rev. Dave Steffenson at 920-623-4360.



Current list of Wisconsin's Energy Star Congregations

First American Lutheran Church, Oconto
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Racine
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Green Bay
Grace Lutheran Church, Germantown
Grace Lutheran Church, Green Bay
Lutherdale Bible Camp, Elkhorn
Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa
St Andrew Lutheran Church, Wausau
St. Paul's Lutheran Church & School, Stevens Point
Trinity Lutheran Church, Sheboygan
Zion Lutheran Church, Marinette

Corpus Christi Parish, Sturgeon Bay
Dominican Sisters, Sinsinawa
St. Joseph Convent Retirement Home for Sisters, Camp-

bellspport
St. Louis Parish, Caledonia
St. Mary's Parish, Rhinelander
St. Peter & Paul Parish, Green Bay
St. Sebastian Parish, Milwaukee

First Presbyterian Church, Wausaukee
North Shore Presbyterian Church, Shorewood
West Granville Presbyterian Church, Milwaukee

First Congregational Church of Rochester
Pilgrim Congregational Church, Green Bay
Pilgrim UCC, Fond du Lac
United Methodist Church, Clintonville

Wisconsin's Energy Star Congregations are concentrated in the state's eastern-most counties.

52 Wisconsin Leaders

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sustainability are inextricably linked.”

In April the Senate concluded its lengthy debate on the nation's energy policy. In contrast to action by the House of Representatives last year, Senators voted to...

[Insert some details, especially on CAFE, renewables, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and mandatory reporting of greenhouse gas emissions.]

Help us spread the word

Feel free to make multiple photocopies of this newsletter and distribute it to anyone you see fit.

In future issues we would like to highlight some significant efforts in the private sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We may also profile individuals who have taken a number of steps, many quite simple, to reduce their energy use dramatically.

However, in order to print and send out at least as many copies of forthcoming issues as this debut issue, we could use some financial assistance.

Any amount would be greatly appreciated. Donations can be sent to this newsletter's return address.

About this publication—and this statewide interfaith environmental campaign

The Wisconsin Interfaith Climate Change Campaign is one of 21 such state-based initiatives spearheaded in recent years by the National Council of Churches, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. The campaign here is a program of Wisconsin Interfaith IMPACT, a longstanding social action coalition.

Since mid-2000, the Wisconsin campaign has communicated with its several hundred supporters and participants primarily via e-mail and at five conferences across the

state. This new publication is intended to keep in touch with supporters who don't use e-mail and to reach out to other interested parties, such as government officials. If your congregation has recently had an educational session or took some action with an eye toward energy conservation and global warming, please let us know. Our frequency of publication will depend to some extent on reader input.



Campaign issued initial leaders' statement in 2000

Two years ago the Wisconsin Interfaith Climate Change Campaign issued its initial statement, which was signed by many of the denominations listed on page 1 of this newsletter. Here is the text of that statement, minus a list of various effects of climate change and several pledges.

To our brothers and sisters, the people of Wisconsin:

We as members and leaders of Wisconsin faith communities believe that God calls us to the responsible use of resources and technology for the sake of the human family and all life on earth.

It is with great awe and humility that we accept our stewardship responsibility for the natural world. God created and sustains the whole world, together with ourselves and all creatures. Humans have been gifted with great intelligence and creativity. We often misuse these gifts, abusing one another and the earth, but we also have the gift to faithfully respond to our

God's justice calls us to consider who bears the most responsibility for global climate change, and who will bear its heaviest burdens. Our nation, with some 4% of the world's population, produces almost 25% of the "greenhouse gases" accelerating climate change. Those who will suffer most are the poor, sick, elderly, future generations, and those living in countries with large populations and fragile, poor economies.

Yet, alongside these dangers, there is also hope. The required changes in our way of life are opportunities to bring our lives into line with our deepest values. Facing up to the threat of accelerated climate change can help us to renew our gratitude for the gifts of creation, and to recover deep religious values of humility, restraint, stewardship, compassion, justice, and community. Accepting our responsibility, we can learn to better care for our neighbors, future generations, and God's earth.

Reduction in fossil fuel consumption can bring many environmental, health, economic, and political benefits. At the same time, we must ensure that policies to reduce climate change take into account the needs of the poor and those whose livelihoods will be most affected by the necessary changes.

Scientific consensus on the evidence for accelerated climate change imposes on us the moral responsibility to join with all persons of good will to act to reduce greenhouse emissions well below their 1990 levels. We invite all persons to faithfully and prayerfully consider the opportunities open to them and their communities. Action can and must be taken at all levels: from individual choices to businesses and congregations to national policy to international. Each of us will have different ways to act on our resolve.

The statement quoted Psalms 24:1 and 28:1, Hosea 4:3, Micah 6:8, Isaiah 65:17-18a, Luke 10:27 and Deuteronomy 30:19.

human calling to preserve and cherish God's creation.

Earth has been blessed with a relatively stable climate. Now, leading scientists warn that our continued and increasing use of fossil fuels, deforestation, and pollution are contributing to a change in the global climate that could dramatically and negatively alter the conditions of life on earth. Our faith communities cannot ignore these ominous warnings. Too much is at stake, and the evidence is too compelling. We cannot risk disaster by failing to act.



The Wisconsin Interfaith
Climate Change Campaign

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We're on the Web!
www.webofcreation.org

● We are people of many faiths gathered around a common commitment to protect and sustain Creation. We seek to move the care of Creation to the forefront of Wisconsin faith communities.

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A Wind Sweeping Through Wisconsin Churches

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These "energy windmills" can be 200 feet tall high technology generators. (The higher the better in order to avoid the turbulence created by buildings and trees.) In southwest Minnesota, their 150 foot blades--the size of a Boeing 747--turn breezes into clean and renewable energy that can provide electricity for homes and businesses all the way to Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Wisconsinites interested in availing themselves of wind power--but who feel they aren't ready to install a wind generator on their property--can purchase green power from utilities in most parts of the state. Madison Gas & Electric is an example of a company that has been doing this for some time successfully in Wisconsin.

This is what Advent Lutheran Church in Madison will likely be doing come this April. The church investigated installing a windmill on the church property but when assessor Bob Owen looked over the site he found that the wind speed through the property was marginal, a common result for city sites where buildings and full-grown trees halt and slow the wind. (Rural churches sitting on Wisconsin hilltops possess the ideal sites for installing windmills. Lutheran churches in De Forest and Columbus are continuing to explore this option.)

Advent Lutheran decided that its top priority was to undertake energy conservation measures regarding the use of their building and reducing their use of energy. It made sense financially to subscribe to green power rather than erecting a wind system on their own site.

"We invite our members to examine their lifestyles and make a commitment as to how they will grow as stewards of the environment," Rev. Jeff Wild, pastor of Advent Lutheran, Madison Christian Community, said.

He recommends that individual congregations ask the power companies that provide their service what kind of renewable sources of energy are available to them.

"Energy companies need a bigger push from government and citizens to do more than the minimal required by law in providing renewable sources of energy," he says, adding: "Incidentally, with the state budget cuts, in the next budget there is no money allocated for renewable sources of energy development in the state."

To this end, they found that green energy was the ethical choice--as well as the practical and environmental one.