

Christian Reformed Church Celebrates Pope's Call to Climate Action

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The Christian Reformed Church welcomes Pope's Francis' encyclical on environmental stewardship, integral ecology, and climate change released today. Since its inception, the Christian Reformed Church has boldly affirmed the inherent goodness of the created world and our responsibility, as caretakers and divine image-bearers, to be good stewards of the myriad gifts of creation. We confess that for far too long we have shirked our divinely-ordained vocation of earth care, and we lament the ways in which our abuse and neglect of the created world has led to poverty, hunger, and a dangerously changing climate.

The Christian Reformed Church affirms that the gospel must always be both proclaimed in word and demonstrated in deed, and that a central component of this task includes taking seriously God's command in Genesis 2:15 to serve and to protect the rest of the created order and to exercise responsible stewardship. Along with the original goodness of creation, we affirm the integrity of creation as an evangelical witness to the power and glory of God and the cosmic scope of God's redemptive work in Jesus as encompassing all of creation. These theological and evangelistic convictions, then, compel us toward faithful participation in the urgent global discussions around creation and climate care. We add our voice to the gathering cry of the global church out of gratitude for the saving work of God in Christ and out of concern for the integrity of God's good creation.

We are doing more than raising our voice, however. The Christian Reformed Church is engaged in a number of concrete actions that seek to live out our conviction that we are called to serve and protect the creation. Due to a massive structural overhaul at our Grand Rapids headquarters, our denominational building was recently awarded ENERGY STAR certification, scoring in the 97th percentile of all US office buildings and becoming only the second denominational headquarters in the country to receive such a designation (the first being the PCUSA). A pilot project with seven congregations is hoped to yield four additional ENERGY STAR certifications for CRC church buildings in both the US and Canada. Our denominational offices have also developed educational materials for church and small group study on the topics of creation and climate care.

In 2012, the Christian Reformed Church became one of the first evangelical denominations in the US to affirm that human-induced climate change is a moral, social justice and religious issue and to call on its institutions, churches, and individual members to take steps to address it. As such, we affirm Pope Francis' conviction that climate change is fundamentally a moral issue.

We have too many brothers and sisters around the world living on the edge of poverty whose livelihoods are threatened to believe otherwise. Brothers and sisters in Kenya, who are facing the impossible task of deciphering when the once-predictable rains will actually arrive to water their crops. Brothers and sisters in Bangladesh, whose lands are disappearing beneath the relentlessly lapping waves of ever-rising tides. Even brothers and sisters in Miami and southern California, whose lands are simultaneously choked for water and drowned by the sea.

We also have too many little ones in our congregations set to inherit a dangerously broken world to believe otherwise. Our children and grandchildren, by no fault of their own, are threatened by an unpredictable future because of our inaction. Covenant children, to whom we have made baptismal promises of love and support, are set to inherit the consequences of our greed and neglect. If climate change is not a moral issue, I cannot imagine what is.

We can no longer stand idly by as local fisheries collapse, soils fail, sea levels rise, and more and more people are driven from their homes. We refuse to stay silent as the inheritance of our children and grandchildren is selfishly and wantonly squandered. For too long the church has been silent about the moral travesty of climate change. Today, the Pope has said, "Enough is enough," and the Christian Reformed Church welcomes his voice.