



## The things that make for peace U.S. CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Rarely is climate change discussed in the context of violence. But people are indeed suffering and dying due to human actions.

Climate change has led to more frequent and extreme weather events that take lives directly. It also contributes to slower-developing humanitarian crises as a driver of food shortages, conflict and migration. The most vulnerable often suffer the most harm.

In Luke 19:41–42, Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem and wept over it, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!” Although Anabaptists have a long history of nonviolence, many are coming to the difficult realization that we are part of the violence being done to God’s creation. We have, once again, failed to recognize “the things that make for peace.”

What does it mean to live in peace with the Earth? Living a simple, sustainable lifestyle is a good start. But we must also urge our government officials to enact policies that both care for the Earth and assist those who have been harmed by the violence of climate change. \*

*Read more about the slow violence of climate change at [mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing](http://mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing).*

*Moringa, shown in this 2015 photo, is a highly nutritious drought-tolerant leafy plant grown by farmers in Burkina Faso who participate in an MCC-supported program. The program helps farmers adapt to climate change through conservation agriculture practices.*

MCC photo/James Souder

# An urgency and a responsibility

by Tammy Alexander

**M**ennonite Central Committee (MCC) partners around the world detail in no uncertain terms how climate change is impacting their communities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, unpredictable seasonal rainfall and recurring drought are causing food shortages and contributing to increased migration. In sub-Saharan Africa, reduced rainfall and higher temperatures are key concerns for farmers and ranchers. In south Asia, melting glaciers are causing both flooding and water shortages.

A cruel irony about climate change is that the communities most harmed by its effects are the least responsible for its origin—and the least able to respond and adapt. The United States, as the largest historical emitter of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change, bears a great responsibility not only for reducing our own emissions but also for helping those affected.

While a clear moral responsibility should drive action, so should a recognition that climate change aggravates and intensifies humanitarian crises around the world, including food shortages, forced migration, conflict and the spread of disease. The implications for U.S. domestic and foreign policy are significant.

News reports about the unfolding crisis in Venezuela seldom mention climate change, though it has contributed to the situation in substan-

tial ways. The country has been in a decade-long drought and has lost four of its five glaciers, leading to the rationing of water and electricity. (Hydropower is a key source of electricity in Venezuela.) This has, in turn, led to low crop yields and other economic losses, worsening the economic and political crisis.

In Central America, a terrible combination of drought and flooding has battered farmers, contributing to malnutrition, loss of income and out-migration. Annual droughts that used to last weeks are lasting months. Half the workforce in Guatemala is in agriculture and an increasing number of farmers find they are no longer able to feed their own families or make a profit from their crops. As a result, many are migrating to cities or to the U.S. to find work. Some U.S. foreign assistance programs to help indigenous and other rural farmers adapt to extreme weather patterns have been cut. Such cuts only increase the likelihood such families will migrate to the U.S.

Climate change can also be a stress factor in areas of conflict, such as in the Lake Chad Basin in north Africa. The lake is a crucial source of food, water and employment for millions in the region but a combination of drought and inefficient use has reduced the lake to just 10% the size it was 50 years ago. Such scarcity can lead to conflict, sometimes violent, over dwindling resources.

## Key issues in current U.S. policy

So far, the Trump administration's approach to climate change has been to deny it is important or that any response is necessary. In 2017, the administration began the multi-year



## to address climate change

### Climate change and food security in Latin America and the Caribbean

MCC partners and their communities in Latin America and the Caribbean increasingly feel the effects of climate change on food security due to droughts, unpredictable seasonal patterns and new insect infestations affecting agricultural production. Increasing numbers of people, especially youth, are migrating to cities or other countries because they no longer experience rural livelihoods as viable options.

Already-vulnerable regions expect to see continued changes in water availability due to decreased rainfall. In addition, unusual extreme weather events like flash floods and hurricanes have severely affected Latin America, increasing the vulnerability of communities to disaster.

process to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate accord, halted federal efforts to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and ended U.S. funding for the Green Climate Fund, an international program to help vulnerable communities around the world respond to climate change.

While the administration is rightly concerned about the loss of jobs in fossil fuel industries, many of these jobs were lost before 2017. A more effective solution would be to invest in the burgeoning renewable energy

## Advocacy resources

- An introduction to carbon pricing
- Election resource: Climate change

Available at [washingtonmemo.org/environment](http://washingtonmemo.org/environment).





MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht

*Tree distributions, like this one at an MCC-supported tree nursery in the community of Leje, have been a central part of MCC's work in Haiti's Artibonite department since 1982. An independent organization, Konbit Peyizan, is now continuing the work.*

MCC partners seek increased training on crop diversification and improved agricultural techniques, the use of drought-resistant crops or seed varieties and strategies for water and soil conservation. The long-term reforestation work MCC has supported over the last 30 years in Haiti likely mitigated impacts of Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

While climate change and its impact on food security present a myriad of challenges for partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, their daily efforts in climate-affected communities encourage and challenge MCC to support partners as they carry out this work.

*Read more at [mcclaca.org/climate-change](http://mcclaca.org/climate-change).*

*Darrin Yoder was MCC regional disaster coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean.*

industry and in communities, such as those in Appalachia, who have lost coal mining jobs. Doubling down on the use of fossil fuels ignores the havoc climate change is wreaking on lives and livelihoods in the U.S. and globally.

Several House committees have held hearings on climate change this year. In May, the House passed H.R. 9 to keep the U.S. in the Paris Agreement and cut U.S. emissions. A resolution calling for a "Green New Deal" has more than 90 cospon-

sors. Neither proposal is likely to be approved by the Senate without significant grassroots pressure.

However, just as rising temperatures due to climate change have an inertia that is difficult to reverse, so do efforts to address climate change. Actions by U.S. states and corporations to transition away from fossil fuels and to more renewable sources of energy have their own inertia and have kept moving forward in recent years. International efforts to curb emissions continue as well, with a number of countries exceeding their Paris Agreement goals.

### Looking ahead

Though there is some activity in Congress around carbon tax proposals to reduce U.S. emissions, advocates should study these proposals carefully. Some would roll back environmental regulations, give tax cuts to wealthy households or act as a regressive tax on vulnerable populations such as rural communities, recent immigrants and very low-income households.

As climate change looks to be a key issue in upcoming national elections, voters should continue to press political leaders to craft effective and thoughtful solutions that recognize both the urgency of the problem and the responsibility of the U.S. to begin to repair the harm it has caused. ✨

## Speakers explain impact of climate change on their home countries

Zacharías Martínez, Sibonokuhle Ncube and Durga Sunchiuri are from three different continents, but they share a common grief: Their nations are experiencing the effects of climate change.

Last year, the three spoke to groups in the U.S. (including policymakers) at the invitation of the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, a partnership between Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College and MCC. A common thread running through their experiences was water: too little water to grow crops, too much water at the wrong times.

Nepal has experienced both extremes, enduring severe flooding and yet having a decreasing supply of water for farming and household uses. "Eight hundred million South Asian people depend on water from the Himalayas," explained Sunchiuri, an MCC staff member in Nepal.

Ncube, from Zimbabwe, cited climate change as one of the factors that created a cholera epidemic in the capital city, Harare. Migration to the city from the parched countryside weakened the already-strained septic infrastructure.

Martínez, quoting his friend and mentor, Oscar Romero, who was canonized as a saint last year, said, "To align ourselves with God is not to become the lord of nature or to become an exploiter of our natural surroundings."

*Read more at [mcc.org/stories/speakers-explain-impact-climate-change-their-home-countries](http://mcc.org/stories/speakers-explain-impact-climate-change-their-home-countries).*

*Jennifer Schrock is leader of Mennonite Creation Care Network and wrote this on behalf of the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions.*

*Zacharías Martínez, Durga Sunchiuri and Sibonokuhle Ncube.*



MCC photo/Tammy Alexander

# Worship resources

## Prayer for our Earth from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

—*Interfaith Power and Light: "Faith Climate Action Week" resources*. More at [faithclimateactionweek.org/prayers-and-climate-blessings](http://faithclimateactionweek.org/prayers-and-climate-blessings).

## Prayer of confession

Gracious and merciful God, in your presence we confess our sins. We have neglected the poor and the

hungry and ignored the cries of the oppressed. We pursue profits and pleasures that harm the land and pollute the waters, leaving this world depleted and damaged for future generations. Have mercy on us, O Lord. Help us to trust your power to change our lives and make us new, that we and all your creatures may know the joy of life abundant, given through Christ Jesus, the risen Lord. Amen.

—*Creation Justice Ministries*. More at [creationjustice.org/earth-day-sunday.html](http://creationjustice.org/earth-day-sunday.html).

## Scripture readings

Job 28:20–27

God speaks of wisdom being imbedded in nature, even in the elements of the weather.

Psalms 24:1, Psalm 148

The Earth is God's wondrous creation; it brings glory to God.

Jeremiah 9:10

A lamentation for nature.

Matthew 25:31–46

Caring for the vulnerable includes being aware of how climate change makes more people sick, hungry and vulnerable.

## Songs

HWB 89 For the beauty of the earth

HWB 156 All things bright and beautiful

HWB 414 God, who stretched

STS 115 Beauty for brokenness

## Additional resources

Mennonite Creation Care Network: [mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing/](http://mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing/)

GreenFaith: [greenfaith.org/christian\\_ecospirituality](http://greenfaith.org/christian_ecospirituality)

## IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3121  
[senate.gov](http://senate.gov)

Representative \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121  
[house.gov](http://house.gov)

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500  
(202) 456-1111  
[whitehouse.gov/contact](http://whitehouse.gov/contact)

## GET INVOLVED!

- Check out our website at [washington.mcc.org](http://washington.mcc.org).
- Read our blog at [washingtonmemo.org](http://washingtonmemo.org).
- Sign up to receive **action alerts** and the monthly **E-Memo**.
- Follow us on **Twitter** at [twitter.com/mccwashington](https://twitter.com/mccwashington). Like us on **Facebook** at [facebook.com/MCCWashingtonOffice](https://facebook.com/MCCWashingtonOffice).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**January 24, 2020**

**High school essay and video contest deadline**  
[washington.mcc.org](http://washington.mcc.org)

**April 24–27, 2020**

**Ecumenical Advocacy Days**  
"Imagine! God's Earth and People Restored"  
Washington, D.C.  
[advocacydays.org](http://advocacydays.org)

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All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.



# Facts about climate change



**26 million**  
(2008–15)  
**143 million**  
(by 2050)

People per year internally displaced  
by climate change

**2016, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2014**  
Five warmest years on record, globally

MCC photo/James Souder

## Per capita emissions

**16.2**

Metric tons of CO2 emitted per capita  
per year (2017) in the U.S.

**4.8**

Global average

**3.1**

Goal for a sustainable world\*

\*Calculated using IPCC goal of 24 billion metric tons  
per year and a global population of 7.7 billion



MCC photo/Silas Crews

## U.S. as highest historical global emitter



Chart shows cumulative CO2 emissions by nation in billions of tons, as of 2017

MCC photo/James Souder

Sources: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Our World in Data, World Bank

## 1 Lower U.S. emissions.

The U.S. is currently the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases and the highest historical emitter; without urgent action, the effects of climate change will continue to harm communities and become even more difficult to reverse. **The U.S. should recommit to the Paris Agreement, set realistic but ambitious emissions reduction goals and implement a clear strategy to meet those goals.** Mitigation strategies should safeguard vulnerable groups such as communities of color, indigenous communities, rural households, low-income households and recent immigrants.

## 2 Assist communities in the U.S.

Recognizing the increasing incidence of severe weather, droughts, flooding and forest fires leading to internal displacement, economic losses and the loss of lives, policies should assist communities in the U.S. who are harmed by the effects of climate change. **Particular attention should be given to already vulnerable and marginalized communities,** including those harmed by fossil fuel extraction. Transition assistance should be provided to individuals and communities dependent upon fossil fuel jobs.

## 3 Assist communities outside the U.S.

As a key contributor to climate change, the U.S. has a clear moral responsibility to help communities harmed by its effects. **U.S. foreign assistance funds should contribute to international adaptation and mitigation efforts** such as the Green Climate Fund. U.S. participation in these programs should push for transparency and ensure that the voices of affected communities are driving decisions.

## 4 Recognize how climate change drives humanitarian crises.

**U.S. policy must consider how climate change contributes to food shortages, migration, conflict and the increased spread of disease.** Complex crises require a comprehensive response. Failure to recognize and address climate change as a factor leaves policies that do not fully address the root causes of humanitarian crises.



MCC photo/Anna Vogt

### Learn more

**MCC U.S. Washington Office**  
[washingtonmemo.org/environment](http://washingtonmemo.org/environment)

**MCC Latin America and the Caribbean blog: Climate change**  
[mccclaca.org/category/advocacy/climate-change](http://mccclaca.org/category/advocacy/climate-change)

**Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions**  
[sustainableclimatesolutions.org](http://sustainableclimatesolutions.org)

**Mennonite Creation Care Network**  
[mennocreationcare.org](http://mennocreationcare.org)

**NASA: Global climate change**  
[climate.nasa.gov](http://climate.nasa.gov)