

# Climate Summit Statement

As communities of faith representing the concerns of congregants across the country, we offer prayers and our hopes for moral leadership during the Climate Summit. Across the religious spectrum, as we work to provide relief and elevate the voices of those impacted by the climate crisis in the U.S. and globally, we urge the government to respond with urgency, fairness and equity.

We know firsthand that communities that are already overburdened from racism and pollution, particularly Black, Indigenous and communities of color, are often the first and worst harmed by climate change. The most vulnerable members of those communities—the very old, very young, those with disabilities, and women and girls—are disproportionately affected, but also have the capacity to be powerful agents for transformative change in their communities when given targeted support. They are members of our faith communities; our partners; and in many cases ourselves.

We must follow the science and reduce our emissions to avoid further exacerbation of climate disruption. The U.S. must take rapid, bold and ambitious action to move towards clean energy sources that are not harmful to creation or people who are already overburdened by pollution. The communities that are most harmed by the extraction of fossil fuels and the subsequent impact of climate change must be supported so that they can adapt and flourish. Addressing the scale of this problem in all its dimensions requires us, and indeed all stakeholders, to embrace a **whole community** approach, with government taking on a significant role.

Because we are part of a global community and the main contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, the United States must commit its fair share of international finance, mobilize responsible private investment, ensure financial transparency and disclosure, while protecting human rights. Financing should be directed to mitigation, adaptation, *and* loss and damage, prioritize grants over loans and be in addition to, rather than instead of, existing foreign assistance. This includes support for the Green Climate Fund and other multilateral and bilateral funds. Used appropriately, climate finance is a powerful and effective tool that can help the U.S. to correct past and present harms, and rectify our relationship with the rest of the world.

We must also look more broadly at debt relief and seek out innovative and forward looking financing mechanisms and modalities that do not further burden low- and middle-income countries in their response. In addition to climate finance, we must stop financing fossil fuel projects and accompanying infrastructure abroad. The projects financed by the United States must center the voices and full participation of local and most affected groups, across all stages of the project management cycle. This includes people who typically are underrepresented—Indigenous groups, women and girls, and other communities marginalized or discriminated against by race, ethnicity, class, caste and ability.

As we move to a clean energy economy we need to prioritize local needs based on decision-making and leadership from frontline communities. The transition away from fossil fuels must ensure racial and gender equity and focus on ensuring that the livelihoods and wellbeing of

workers are not sacrificed in the process of reaching greenhouse gas emission targets. Empowered frontline communities can lead our transformation to a clean energy economy, demonstrating a powerful example to the rest of the world. Job creation and job training are therefore top priorities, with a focus on clean jobs. This should be done centered on racial and gender equity so that all communities can thrive during the energy transition. Creating resilient communities demands that we own our responsibility to address systemic racism and social, economic and political structures that exploit and discriminate. Our religious traditions proclaim the need to ensure that none are left behind.

We must invest in Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities so they can lead the decision-making in their communities and increase their ability to overcome climate-induced natural disasters. Even highly ambitious emissions reductions will not prevent decades of climate-induced natural disasters, so U.S. policy also must include resources and tools that empower communities to adapt to and recover from climate-induced disasters. Our climate response must prioritize equity in disaster response; address resource scarcity in the context of community-based resiliency; and center frontline communities who have been impacted longest and who are impacted first. Our response also must account for climate-driven human migration. Our faith communities already offer sanctuary, welcome, and safety to millions fleeing unlivable conditions. This work and the need to partner with governments in this ministry will become ever more important as levels of climate-related migration rise.

We acknowledge that faith communities are already working to reduce our own emissions, educate our congregants and members about climate change, advocate for policy changes, and minister to those experiencing climate impacts. We urge the U.S. to encourage and resource additional faith based climate efforts while facilitating additional avenues for civil society engagement.

As faith groups immersed in communities, we know the importance of listening to people to learn their hopes, their needs and the knowledge and skills they bring. We ask the U.S. government to do the same both at home and abroad, including listening to the fears of workers who have powered our country for decades and to the wisdom of Indigenous peoples like those of the Amazon who have been protecting that precious bioregion for millennia. We need to solicit a robust inclusion of Indigenous communities and Indigenous wisdom in addressing climate change. And, we need to see full inclusion of front-line faith-based communities in all aspects of addressing the climate crisis.

Our collective faiths call on us as individuals and as a nation to act with courage, compassion and commitment as we build a future that is just, sustainable and filled with acts of love for each other and for all of God's creation. We will continue to pray for your leadership and look forward to working with your Administration to address the climate crisis.

Church World Service  
Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy  
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life  
Dayenu: A Jewish Call for Climate Justice  
The Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Hazon  
Interfaith Power & Light  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
People's Justice Council, Alabama Interfaith Power & Light  
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness  
Presbyterians for Earth Care  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team  
United Church of Christ Ministry of Environmental Justice.  
United Methodist Women  
General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church

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