

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON GLOBAL WARMING**

THE PROBLEM

The report from the Second World Climate Conference, held in Geneva from October 29 until November 8, 1990, stated: "If the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations is not limited, then predicted climate change would place stresses on the natural and social systems unprecedented in the past 10,000 years." It is believed that increased levels of gases are gradually causing the earth's atmosphere and surface to become warmer. The effect is similar to that of the glass panels in a greenhouse that let some heat in but prevent much of it from leaving. Much of the increase in levels of gases is directly attributable to human industrial activity.

The first part of the Second World Climate Conference included over 700 scientists in different fields. A Ministerial Session followed in which 137 governments (82% of the United Nations) participated. The scientists reached substantial agreement on a wide range of issues. The conference declared: "Emissions resulting from human activities are substantially increasing atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gases. These increases will enhance the natural greenhouse effect, resulting on average in an additional warming of the earth's surface."

In December of 1999 the heads of the National Office of Atmospheric Administration/British Meteorological Office warned "Ignoring climate change will surely be the most costly of all possible choices... The evidence global warming "is almost controvertible...we need to act accordingly."¹ The major greenhouse gases and their sources are:²

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂) generated as a by-product of everyday energy consumption, accounts for 83.4% of all greenhouse gases,
- Methane (CH₄) emitted from animal waste, rice and other types of cultivation, and leaked or flared during the extraction of oil, gas and coal, amounts to 8.6% of greenhouse gases,
- nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions account for 6.0% of greenhouse gas emissions which originate from from nitrogen fertilization, nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and tropospheric ozone from automobile exhaust, coal combustion and other sources
- Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) found in solvents, air conditioning fluids, Refrigerants, perfluorocarbons (PFC's) and SF₄, constitute another 2% of greenhouse gas emissions

The particularly dangerous role of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) deserves special mention. These gases are the primary cause of the depletion of the ozone layer in the stratosphere and simultaneously contribute to warming. The ozone layer filters ultraviolet radiation. Its destruction leads to increased exposure and significantly increased levels of skin cancer.

¹ 1 The Churches Role in Protecting the Earth's Atmosphere: Report of an Ecumenical Consultation of Churches in Northern Industrialized Countries held at Gwatt, Switzerland, from January 13-18, 1991, page 5.

² Ozone Action, WWW.ozone.org, "Scientific Consensus on Global Warming."

Consequences of global warming include the melting of polar ice caps and the subsequent rise in sea levels. Such rises could inundate land that is densely populated and totally submerge island nations in the South Pacific and elsewhere. Approximately 50% of the world's population lives in coastal areas. Other impacts include increased storm intensity and frequency, changes in water condition and availability, stresses on health conditions, and variations in agriculture and food production. While these impacts will be felt most severely in developing countries, the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina indicates that all nations are at risk. Although the initial impact of these global warming trends will be felt by less industrialized nations, 75% of all carbon dioxide emissions come from more industrialized nations.

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As American Baptist Christians we have been growing in our awareness of the implications of our faith related to ecological concerns. Our earlier Policy Statement on Ecology reminded us of our responsibility to God for the care of creation (Genesis 1:1, 11-12) and of God's displeasure with humanity's misuse of creation. Further reflection calls us to consider more seriously the implications of God's call to "love your neighbor as yourself."

There is but one Creator. As travelers on this globe together, we are commonly dependent upon Earth for sustenance. We are interdependent with all creation. We must learn to understand what it means to respect all that God has created and to be our neighbor's keepers. We need to expand our hearing of Jesus' "new commandment" to "Love one another." We must see the whole creation as our neighbor. Certainly the implications of this command exceed one culture, race, ethnic group, or species just as it exceeds one denomination.

Further, as human beings we are surrounded by and live in an environment we call air. It is in us as well as around us. When it is poisoned and polluted (Isaiah 24:5-6), all creation is harmed. The Old Testament word for air is the same as "wind" and "Spirit." When we limit our understanding of God's Spirit, we limit our understanding and care for God's creatures and creation.

Global warming affects hunger, access to clean water, environmental stewardship, health and peace. Addressing global warming will make it more possible for all to live the life of possibility that God intends. Therefore, based on our faith in the Creator God who makes us a part of a unified creation, the General Board of the American Baptist Churches USA, calls on national boards, regions, American Baptist institutions, congregations and individuals to:

- A. Join in ways to build a culture that can live in harmony with God's creation by:
 1. Deepening our biblical understanding of creation and our role in preserving the gifts God has given through such activities as use and production of educational materials, courses, special programs, and personal study.
 2. Developing a spirituality that embraces the dignity of the character of creation, connecting our understanding of personal salvation with stewardship of God's creation.
 3. Acting with others to build a world community of cooperation to share justly the life-giving resources of the earth.

4. Participating in multicultural bridge-building experiences.
 5. Learning about the causes of global warming through self-education and inclusion of materials in church school and learning institutions at all levels, from nurseries to universities.
- B. Join in global, local and personal efforts to safeguard the world's atmospheric integrity and quality by:
1. Building and renovating our homes and church facilities to be energy efficient and beginning programs of energy conservation and awareness.
 2. Striving to eliminate the use of products that contain CFC's.
 3. Using public transportation, car pooling, and telephone conferencing.
 4. Becoming ecologically aware consumers by using products, including food, that consume less energy in production, transportation, packaging, and use.
 5. Turning to renewable energy sources and using energy sources that are not fossil fuels.
 6. Preparing to aid and enable those in all communities who are and will be impacted by the effects of global climate change.
- C. Address the causes and reverse the consequences of global warming by:
1. Advocating the passage of legislation at all appropriate levels to reduce carbon dioxide output and to set reduction targets for other greenhouse gases.
 2. Supporting the passage of mandatory higher fuel efficiency for new vehicles and phasing out of older, less efficient vehicles.
 3. Supporting rail and other means of increased transportation efficiency including subsidies for public transportation.
 4. Combating deforestation domestically and internationally through programs of preservation and reforestation and through responsible consumption.
 5. Sponsoring and supporting shareholder resolutions to corporations on issues like reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, phasing out of CFC's, increased energy efficiency and fuel conservation, environmental cost accounting and other issues affecting global warming.
 6. Calling for an international treaty such as the Kyoto Protocols on global warming with specific targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases.
 7. Working to implement just intra- and inter-national trade and economic relationships (based on principles like the transfer of technical and economic resources, self-reliance, sustainable agriculture, and forms of development that do not exacerbate global warming).
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3 According to the "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation" document, Seoul, Korea 1991, suggests a 3% annual reduction.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - November 1991
161 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstention

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - March 2001

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2007
(General Board Reference # - 8189:6/91)

Policy Base

American Baptist Churches Policy Statement on Ecology - June 1989

American Baptist Churches Policy Statement on Energy - June 1977

American Baptist Churches Policy Statement on Human Rights - December 1976

4. The right to secure and healthy environment, clean air, pure water, and an earth that can nurture and support present and future generations.

American Baptist Churches Resolution on Environmental Concerns - March 1983

American Baptist Churches Resolution on Nuclear Power: Seeking Rational Solutions - December 1982