Legislative Bulletin

NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Faith and Climate Justice in North Carolina

THE COUNCIL'S FAITH PERSPECITVE

Faith and the Environment

As people of faith, we proclaim our belief that our world is God's creation, that God sees it as good, and that it is ours to protect and maintain. We also recognize that the quality of life for all of us depends upon the earth's health and well-being. We are charged by our Creator with caring for creation (Genesis 1:28, 2:15), and are called to be faithful stewards of that which is entrusted to us (Luke 16:1-13).

What scripture says:

- The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15
- The Bible tells us "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1), and that God's wisdom and glory is seen in the teeming of life in the seas (Psalm 104:25).

"Climate change is a global problem with grave implications. . . It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. . . A great cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal."

— Pope Francis, encyclical on ecology, June 2015, Laudato Si'

The Council's View on Climate Change

We urge people of faith everywhere to practice responsible stewardship of the environment and to work with government, industry, and others to cease the ravaging of the earth. We encourage persons, communities, industries, and governments to work together to protect what God loves and to safeguard the lives, livelihoods, health, and well-being of our neighbors.

In a 2007 issue statement, the Council said: "We recognize that global warming is the all-encompassing problem that exacerbates each of the other environmental concerns, because life as we know it developed in stable climatic conditions that have existed on Earth for thousands of years. Changes averaging only one degree worldwide have already produced melting ice, rising seas and water deprivation, setting off mass evacuations, loss of livelihood and water wars for our brothers and sisters in other parts of the globe....We believe that by numbers, geographic representation and social influence, the faith communities of North Carolina have the potential to shift the state's priorities toward a more just and sustainable future."

We are called to love and steward Creation, and to care for the most vulnerable among us, who are most at risk. We have a moral responsibility to leave a safe climate and sustainable environment for our children and future generations.

Climate Change Impacts

The world must phase-out use of fossil fuels and shift to clean energy investments. While global emissions are still growing, some modern and innovative economies have already beaten the trend - moving from destructive fossil fuels to renewable energies, proving it can be done.

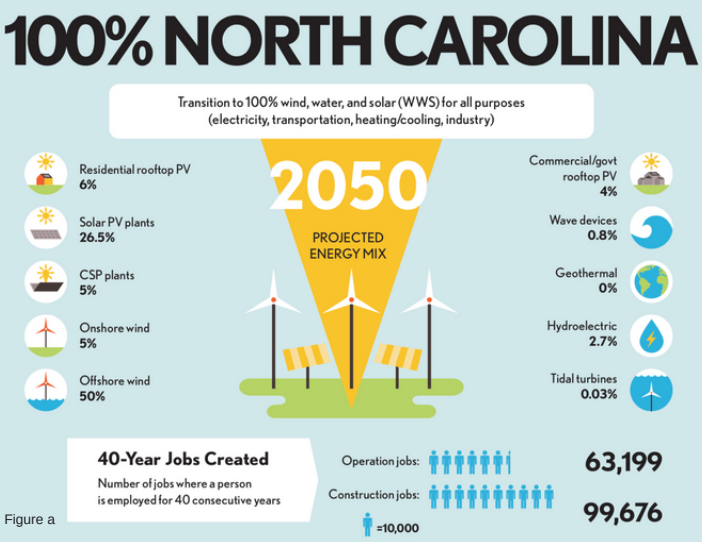
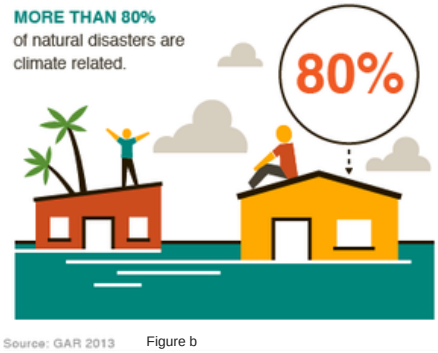


Figure a



Source: GAR 2013 Figure b

Widespread climate-related weather extremes are occurring now and will get worse. A 1.5°F increase is already causing extreme weather events in the U.S. and globally, such as longer heat waves, wildfires, more heavy downpours, and more severe droughts. In addition warmer oceans will lead to stronger weather systems such as Hurricanes Maria, Matthew, and Florence.[1]

Crop and livestock production will be increasingly challenged. Increased heat, pests, water stress, diseases, and weather extremes will pose adaptation challenges for crop and livestock production. Yields of major U.S. crops are expected to decline, threatening both U.S. and international food security. Extreme impacts on those who work in food production will result in less productivity and more hazardous conditions. Additionally, food prices will dramatically increase.

Figure c

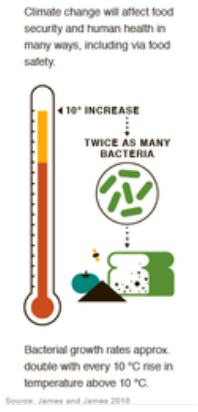


Figure d

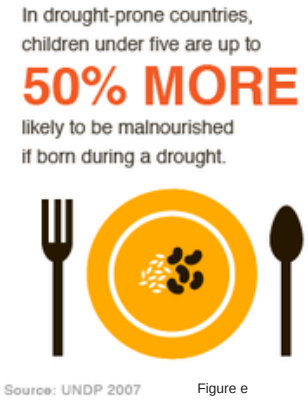


Figure e

Reliability of water supplies is being reduced by climate change. Surface and groundwater supplies in many regions are already stressed by increasing demand for water as well as declining runoff and groundwater recharge.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS EVERYONE

The Council's Eco-Justice Connection Initiative

"I used to think that if we threw enough good science at the environmental problems, we could solve them. I was wrong. The main threats to the environment are not biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change, as I once thought. They are selfishness and greed and pride. And for that we need a spiritual and cultural transformation, something we scientists don't know much about."

— James "Gus" Speth, Former Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and U.S. Presidential Climate Advisor

Eco-Justice Connection (EJC) works with faith communities to identify and implement positive, hope-filled responses to climate change as a moral imperative. The work of EJC is to empower and support a critical mass of people of faith who, with courage and informed open hearts and minds, will exercise the prophetic voice and create meaningful change toward a low-carbon sustainable future for all.

EJC is a North Carolina Council of Churches initiative comprised of 27 distinct judicatories from 18 denominations.

EJC has organized/participated in thousands of statewide, regional, and national events, including workshops, presentations, film screenings, media campaigns, and religious events. We emphasize the interfaith nature of our work, the theological call to care for creation, and the importance of sharing success stories that can lead the way for others.

EJC is the only NC-based statewide organization that works on addressing the ecological and justice issues of climate change as a faith-based initiative.

EJC Director
susannah@ncchurches.org

EJC Program Coordinator
ren@ncchurches.org

ECO-JUSTICE *Connection*
AN INITIATIVE OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Eco-Justice Connetion
27 Horne Street
Raleigh, NC
27607

info@ncchurches.org

(919) 828-6501

www.ncchurches.org

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Figure a. The Solutions Project
Figure b,c,d,e. CGIAR Centers and Research Programs - Research program on Climate change, agriculture, and food security