

God So Loved the World: A Christian Call for Climate Action (New England)

“God So Loved The World: A Christian Call to Climate Action (New England)” is a 25-minute slideshow intended to inspire Christians to connect their faith with the urgent need to tackle global warming. It is available free of charge.

“God So Loved the World” was co-produced by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Dr. Robert A. Jonas, and The Canary Project, an organization that produces art and media to deepen public understanding of human-induced climate change and to energize commitment to solutions. The slideshow is particularly directed to the Episcopal Church in Massachusetts and the New England region, but its message may speak to Christians of other denominations and in other places.

The script below may be read aloud to the audience as the images are shown. Some images have no script and should be presented in silence.

Note: In Power Point, the script is printed beneath each image. To hide the script when projecting the image, click on the three dots below the image and pull the bar down to conceal the script. Lift the bar to reveal the script.

IMAGE

#1

#2

#3

We live on a beautiful planet. John’s Gospel tells us, “God so loved the world.” In Greek, the word for ‘world’ is *kosmos*. “God so loved the *kosmos*...” – the universe, everything that God created.

#4

Since the end of the last Ice Age, the Earth has enjoyed thousands of years in which the climate has been quite stable. The atmosphere that surrounds and protects the Earth has been just the right thickness to make the planet not too cold and not too hot – a just-right home for human beings and for all kinds of other creatures.

5

About 150 years ago the internal combustion engine was invented, and we started burning fossil fuels such as coal, gas, and oil.

#6

Burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere – a *lot* of gases. For example, burning one gallon of gas sends about 5½ pounds of carbon dioxide out the exhaust pipe.

#7

Releasing carbon dioxide (CO₂) is an inevitable byproduct of burning fossil fuels. One of the best ways to reduce the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is to reduce our use of coal, gas, and oil.

#8

This graph shows the atmospheric concentration of CO₂. The horizontal axis shows the years 1750-2000, and the vertical axis shows the parts per million of carbon dioxide. You can see that it's going in one direction – up.

#9

This graph shows one effect of rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere: global temperatures go up. Notice that the horizontal axis shows the year 2000, and then looks ahead 100 years. The vertical line shows the temperature. You can see that temperatures worldwide may rise significantly -- the different estimates depend on what human beings decide to do, such as whether or not we rein in the release of CO₂ and other heat-trapping gases.

Climate science shows that human activity, not just natural variability in the climate, is responsible for the sudden, sharp rise in temperatures worldwide. Already, the average worldwide temperature has increased more than 1 degree Fahrenheit.

This may not sound like much, but it is enough to generate a host of severe consequences.

#10

With a rise of just a single degree – and with higher temperatures on the way – some areas of the world are already experiencing more frequent and more severe droughts. Droughts and heat waves from Kenya to Australia and southern Europe have been linked to global warming.

#11

Other areas of the world are experiencing floods and rising seas.

#12

This is Hurricane Katrina approaching the Gulf Coast in 2005, fueled by warming seas. Although no single storm can be directly attributed to global warming, the enormity of Hurricane Katrina *is* consistent with climate change, because hurricanes draw strength from the heat in ocean surface waters. On average, warming water generates more powerful hurricanes.

#13

This photo was taken in Louisiana three months after Hurricane Katrina, and suggests the challenges we are likely to face in the years ahead. Warmer temperatures make extreme weather more extreme.

#14

Warmer winters and springs, and changes in patterns of rainfall, increase the likelihood of wildfires. This picture was taken in Washington State, where hundreds of thousands of acres burned in 2006. Of course, we've always had wildfires, hurricanes, and so on, but what's new is the frequency and severity of these extreme weather events.

#15

Global warming disrupts entire ecosystems. One example is coral reefs, which are dying around the world because of rising ocean temperatures and other stressors.

#16

Everything frozen is melting. Permafrost is thawing, and glaciers around the world are receding.

#17

You can see how dramatically this glacier in Argentina has receded since 1896. The alpine glaciers in Europe have lost half their volume since 1850, and by the end of this century, half of what is left will be gone. Most glaciers in the Northern Rocky Mountains will be gone by 2050.

#18

The worldwide melt is going on even more quickly than climate models predicted. In September 2007 the Northwest Passage was free of ice for the first time since humans started keeping track.

#19

Polar bears depend on ice for their survival and are at high risk of extinction. Two-thirds of their population may be gone by 2050.

#20

Rising seas will cause flooding.

#21

Here in New England, before the century is over we may lose our maple, birch, and beech trees – and with them our spectacular fall colors and our region's maple sugar industry.

#22

Global warming is not just a (quote-unquote) “environmental” issue – it is also a very human issue, an issue of social justice. Both in this country and around the world, the poor and the least powerful of our human neighbors will suffer most from the illness, pollution and infectious diseases that are spread by the degradation of the natural environment. This Norman Rockwell painting hangs in the New York City headquarters of the United Nations. It reads, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

#23

It is the poor who are most vulnerable to the flooding, food shortages, and loss of clean water that are caused by global warming. Climate change is closely related to economic justice and to public health.

#24

In 2007 Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori testified before the U.S. Senate on the challenge of global warming. She emphasized that tackling global warming goes hand in hand with ending extreme poverty.

#25

Climate change stresses every country, but it places an especially heavy burden on the poor. In Bangladesh, for instance, more than 17 million people live within 3 feet of sea level. We could witness scenes like this one in many places around the world, including our own country. The United Nations estimates that by the middle of this century, hundreds of millions of people around the world may be forced from their homes because of rising sea levels, heavier floods, and more intense droughts. Where will all these people go?

#26

Stopping climate change is an issue of national and global security. Crop failures, famines, and forced migrations can lead to wars between countries and within countries, as people fight over access to food and fresh water, and as dwindling resources spark competition between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots.’

#27

Global warming is the moral crisis of our time. God gave us the Earth to cherish and protect, not to destroy. Global warming is not just a scientific, political, and economic issue. It is a moral and spiritual issue, as well.

#28

On what spiritual wisdom do Christians draw as we face the tragic and terrifying reality of global warming? What insights from Scripture and tradition help us to move beyond inaction and despair?

First and foremost, we believe in a God who is experienced in our relationships with ourselves, each other, and all Creation.

#29

Christians trust that God is with us.

#30

We are grateful for God's Creation. Scripture and tradition remind us that the whole earth is filled with the glory of God.

#31

Here in our beloved New England we see God's glory in rivers, forests, and fields, in mountains, lakes, seashores, and rolling hills.

#32

With our great Protestant forebear, Martin Luther, we know that "God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and the flowers and the clouds and stars."

#33

With our great Roman Catholic forebear, Thomas Aquinas, we know that "Revelation comes in two volumes – the Bible and nature."

#34

"All living things are deeply interconnected, and all life depends on the life of others...." That is what the Presiding Bishop said in her testimony to the Senate. She also said that interconnectedness is one of the basic themes of the Bible. God has a vision for us to make real, a vision in which all human beings live together as brothers and sisters, at peace with each other, with God, and with the rest of creation.

#35

The world belongs to God. It is God's creation, and God delights in it.

#36

"I want creation to penetrate you with so much admiration that wherever you go, the least plant may bring you a clear remembrance of the Creator.... One blade of grass or one speck of dust is enough to occupy your entire mind in beholding the art with which it has been made."

Imagine that – every blade of grass is an invitation to praise God!

#37

When we go back to our creation story, we remember that God made us in God's image and likeness, and gave us dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth [Gen 1:26, 28]. What does it mean to have dominion?

#38

"Dominion does not mean abusive use, it means Earth keeping, it means creature keeping. We, as good stewards of the Creation, are obligated not to destroy that over which we have been given dominion."

Our first vocation as human beings is to tend and protect the Earth.

#39

#40

When we destroy the Creation, we dishonor the Creator. We sin against God.

#41

#42

As people of faith, we cannot remain silent.

#43

Sometimes we may feel hopeless and full of despair as we say to ourselves: "It's too late. We can't turn this around." That is why we must put our trust in a God who loves every inch of creation and whose covenant with Creation will never be broken.

#44

Christianity offers an imperiled world the conviction that God's creation is good, and that in Christ, God has redeemed not just human beings, not just the individual human soul, but the whole of Creation, every leaf and twig, every living creature. That is what the early Church understood about the cross: that Jesus died not just for human beings, but for the whole Creation.

#45

When we come to the cross where Jesus died, we let ourselves feel our grief about the wounds of Creation. We let ourselves weep for what has been lost. At the foot of the cross, we also admit our past complacency, ignorance and neglect. We confess our own part in gobbling up the resources of the world. We repent, and we return to the Lord.

#46

Through the power of Christ's resurrection, we are forgiven, reconciled, and set free. We bear witness to the Christ who bursts out of the tomb, who proclaims that life, not death, has the last word, and who gives us power to roll away the stone.

#47

Every time we explore the natural world, we meet the crucified and risen One who fills all things, redeems all things, and makes all Creation new [Colossians 1: 17-20; Revelation 21:5].

#48

Whenever we share the Eucharist, Christ gives himself to us in the natural elements of bread and wine, and restores our connections not only with God and one another, but also with the whole web of creation.

#49

We are sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit, who sustains us in our search to be faithful stewards of God's creation.

What we feel called to do can take many forms. Here are 10 ways to make a difference as individuals and as members of a community of faith.

#50

1. Start a Creation care committee in your parish. Call it whatever you like. You can set up a bulletin board, write Eco-Tips for your parish newsletter, or organize an "Eco-justice fair" where you sell compact fluorescent light bulbs, display non-toxic cleaners and recycled paper products, or – as in this picture – sell homemade bird houses.

#51

Interfaith Power & Light is a non-profit group that helps congregations become good stewards of creation through energy conservation and efficiency, and the use of renewable sources of energy.

Joining Interfaith Power & Light can help your parish reduce its energy consumption and lower its operating costs. Be sure to get an energy audit of your buildings and to carry out its recommendations.

#52

Turn down the heat. Get an energy audit of your home and increase your home's energy efficiency. Seal drafts around windows and doors; insulate the attic; wrap your water heater in an insulation jacket. Buy energy-efficient appliances.

#53

Drive as little as possible. Combine several errands into one trip. Carpool, walk, bicycle, or use public transportation.

Buy cars with high fuel efficiency, since using a more efficient car is an important way to prevent global warming.

#54

Replace your old light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. Fluorescent bulbs cost more than incandescent, but they use one quarter of the electricity, last ten times longer, and can save \$40-60 over their lifetimes.

Be sure to turn off lights and computers when not in use.

#55

We need to make a swift transition to clean, safe, renewable energy. Here in Massachusetts, you can support clean energy on your electric bill or support the development of wind turbines by visiting the Website for Mass Energy.

#56

If you can, invest in solar energy by installing photovoltaic panels that turn sunlight into electricity or use it to heat hot water.

#57

In this country the average bite of food travels 1500 miles before it reaches our lips.

When we buy local, organic, in-season foods, we save the fossil fuels that are used to transport foods long distances, and we support local farms.

Some congregations like to host “100-mile meals,” in which as many foods as possible are made with ingredients grown or raised within 100 miles.

#58

Avoid using polystyrene cups and plates, which are made with fossil fuels and take forever to decompose. Instead, provide ceramic mugs for coffee, and use real plates and cutlery at parish events. Encourage parishioners not to accept plastic bags when they shop, but to bring their own reusable bags.

Increase your church’s recycling of paper, newspaper, cans, and glass.

#59

Don’t serve bottled water at parish events. Bottled water is expensive and made of plastic, which is derived from oil. Bottled water also uses energy in the process of being packaged, shipped, and chilled.

#60

In every aspect of your church’s life, develop the themes of interdependence with nature, responsibility for earth stewardship, and thankfulness for God’s Creation.

#61

Only a few years ago, most Americans had never heard of global warming. Today global warming is in the national spotlight, and a wide-ranging network of groups is rising to the challenge of stopping it.

It will take the inspired political involvement of millions of Americans to get our country on track.

Support political candidates who have a strong commitment and an effective plan to fight global warming.

#62

That is the target we must reach – 80% reduction by 2050.

#63

This is an extraordinary moment in human history. We must act quickly.

#64

#65

#66

We are worth saving.

The Earth is worth saving.

Our children and our children's children are worth saving.

#67

Let's become healers of the Earth.

#68

Let's awaken a new reverence for life.

#69

We love our children. As one climate activist [Eban Goodstein] puts it, we want to be able to look at our children and our children's children and say:

I give you... polar bears.

I give you... glaciers.

I give you... coral reefs.

I give you... ice shelves as big as a continent.

I give you... moderate weather.

#70

I give you... a stable climate.

#71

#72

Let's walk together with courage and hope, because the Lord of life is walking with us.

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Spoken text developed by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, with some material drawn from "To Serve Christ in All Creation" (Pastoral Letter from the Episcopal bishops of New England, 2003), The Canary Project, Bill McKibben, and other sources.

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