

Approved August 13, 2009

**ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 2009
REDUCE OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT**

RESOLUTION:

Faithful to our calling to foster the interconnectedness of all creation and building on the strength of past resolutions and actions, we, the members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, resolve to take measurable steps to reduce our congregational/community carbon footprint.

RATIONALE:

Last year the Joint CMSM-LCWR Resolution on Climate Change urged us to address many facets of climate change.¹ Across the world, people living in poverty who have fewer resources and emit less carbon dioxide will suffer the most dire consequences of a changing climate. Even within the United States, this is the case: poorer communities will bear an unequal burden of the impacts of climate change. The evidence is strong that by reducing one's carbon footprint, (the measure of the amount of carbon dioxide generated by a particular lifestyle) will have a positive effect on Earth in all its dimensions. Almost all of our activities increase our footprint...turning on the washing machine, driving a car, buying groceries, or flying in an airplane. Reducing our carbon footprint will demonstrate both our respect for creation and our concern for those most impacted by climate change.

BACKGROUND:

- The United States Catholic Bishops remind us that “Created things belong not to the few, but to the entire human family” (*Renewing the Earth*, 1991). They state that “...we bishops believe that the atmosphere that supports life on earth is a God-given gift, one we must respect and protect (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, 2001). They have urged Congress to place “a priority for the poor” of the world and to work using the framework of the common good (Feb.7, 2007 www.usccb.org) as Congress addresses the multifaceted issues of global warming.
- Pope Benedict XVI, during his Angelus address on August 27, 2006, said that creation is “...exposed to serious dangers and life-styles that can degrade it ... environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world” (quoted on the web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.usccb.org).
- There is a consensus among national and international groups (e.g. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, Just Faith, and Oxfam America) that global warming disproportionately affects those who are poor who have done the least to create it.
- In their report *Poverty and Climate Change, Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaptation* (2003) ten international groups documented the effect of climate change on

¹ LCWR has a history of Assembly Resolutions leading up to this resolution: Promotion of Ecological Sustainability (2004), Preserve and Renew United States Wetlands and Coastlands (2007), Climate Change (2008).

people who are poor. This report is available at the United Nations Development Program website: www.undp.org/energy/docs/poverty-and-climate-change

- Those who are poor are particularly vulnerable to these changes. Women become at-risk because they provide many needs. With drought they spend more time in getting water and are no longer able to raise family crops near their house. Hunger is inevitable (Oxfam America www.oxfamamerica.org).
- The United States is addressing issues of climate change on the national front. President Obama has finalized standards to boost fuel efficiency for automobiles and has begun to reverse climate policies of the United States. It is Obama's desire for the United States to be a world leader in reducing global warming. (As reported on www.news.yahoo.com, January 26, 2009)

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

1. Measure individual and community current carbon footprints.
 - a. To make a measurable reduction in one's carbon footprint an initial calculation of one's current carbon footprint must be obtained. There are many websites that allow you to calculate both your individual and community carbon footprints. They include:

www.carbonfootprint.com	www.timeforchange.org
www.nature.org	www.green.yahoo.com
 - b. Set a measurable goal for yourself and for your community to reduce carbon footprints.
 - c. Initiate creative practices (i.e.: decrease flights by finding alternative ways to meet; plant trees to offset carbon emissions, etc.).
 - d. Measure self and community carbon footprints at defined intervals to track your progress.
2. Monitor national policy development on global warming and influence legislation.
3. Choose simple, consistent practices:
 - Reuse cloth, paper or string bags in place of grocery store plastic bags
 - Register to be removed from catalog and direct mail lists
 - Conserve treated water usage; capture rain water for irrigation needs
 - Reduce the use of disposables: bottled water, dinnerware, prepackaged foods
 - Install long-life, energy-saving CFL bulbs (compact fluorescent light)
 - Purchase energy-saving appliances; conduct energy audits
 - Adjust thermostats and water heater temperatures
 - Drive hybrid cars; practice carpooling; combine errands
 - Research the use of wind generators and solar panels to produce electricity; purchase green energy
 - Invite elected officials to develop strategic plans to reduce the carbon footprint in government buildings, public spaces, environmental policies
 - Employ LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System in new and renovated buildings

ORIGIN OF PROPOSAL: LCWR Global Concerns Committee
RESOURCES

- **Care For All Of Creation:** Six Session Process for Faith Communities, Seattle based Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center (2008) (www.ipjc.org/)
- **Integrity of Creation among Religious:** JPIC Commission, USG/UISG (November 2008) www.lasalle.org/English/Mission/Justice/ICSurveyNov08)
- **Poverty and Climate Change: Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaptation,** www.undp.org/energy/docs/poverty-and-climate-change
- **Business and Environmental Leaders Release Landmark Blueprint for Climate Protection Legislation:** United States Climate Action Partnership (Jan. 15, 2009) www.US-cap.org/
- **Indigenous Groups Criticize Climate Talks :** World Watch Institute: Vision for a Sustainable World (September 22, 2008) www.worldwatch.org
- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, studies and documents:** www.usccb.org
 - *Climate Change Justice and Health Initiative: Why does the Church Care About Global Climate Change?*
 - *Background on Global Climate Change:* Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace
 - *US Bishops Call for Moral Focus on Global Climate Change; New Report Demands Urgent Attention:* Office of Media Relations (Feb. 7, 2007)
 - *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good* (2001)
- Julie Trocchio: **Catholic Groups Convene To Consider Impact Of Climate Change** *Catholic Health World*, February 1, 2008 Vol. 24, Number 2 Catholic Health Association www.chausa.org
- **Websites:**
 - **World Wildlife Fund:** Living Planet Report October 29, 2008 www.wwf.org
 - **Stop Global Warming** (www.stopglobalwarming.org),
 - **Nature Conservancy** (www.nature.org)
 - **National Council of Churches of Christ**, “Carbon Reduction Campaign” . (www.nccecojustice.org/crc.php).
 - **The Inter Press Service Journalism and Communication for Global Change** www.ipsnews.net
 - **The Rockefeller Foundation:** www.rockfound.org
 - **The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change:** www.catholicsandclimatechange.org
 - **Oxfam America:** www.oxfamamerica.org
 - **Just Faith:** www.justfaith.org
 - **Yale Global Online:** www.yaleglobal.yale.edu