



## Introduction

“Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.”

– Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Ground of all being, Mother of life, Father of the universe.  
May we know your presence here, seeking your will upon earth.  
Grant all your creatures food for today and strength for our families.  
Pardon our falseness as we forgive those who are untrue to us.  
Do not forsake us in our need but lead us to new birth.  
For the glory of life and the light of life, are yours forever. Amen.

– Celtic Lord’s Prayer

After more than thirty years of globally coordinated research by the best of our scientists, there is no doubt that this climate crisis is caused by us, can be remedied

only by us, and now, due to our failure to act, is a serious threat to all of us and most particularly to the least of us. Those who've done the least to create climate change are the ones most harmed by it. Climate change is as unjust as it is horrific.

How bad is it? In November of 2021, UN Secretary General António Guterres summed up the first IPCC 6 report with four words: “**Code Red for Humanity.**” In 2022, Secretary General Guterres summed up the second IPCC 6 report with just three words: “**Delay is death.**” If we all rapidly and substantially cut our carbon expression, we can preserve a *difficult* future for our children. If we fail, they face a *dreadful* future.

We are called to face a two-sided truth. The scientific side is largely proven and accepted: Scientifically, we know what to do and economically we can afford to do it. The political truth is altogether different. Ten of our eleven past presidents have openly supported facing climate change and other systemic harms to our environment yet none have found the political support to pass comprehensive climate change legislation. Pledges for change were then and are now defeated, diverted, or delayed by well-funded opposition forces, not unlike those used by the tobacco lobby to delay cigarette warning labels for forty years.

Internationally, the United States, Canada, and many other nations are stuck with pledges long on promise and short on substance. Secretary General António Guterres says that we are now “cataloging the empty pledges that put us firmly on track toward an unlivable world.” The Episcopal Church is now an official observer at the annual Congress of the Parties. Our delegates have worked very hard, but without the support of Congress no significant pledge can be made. No developed country has recognized that it has harmed other countries. Global fossil fuel corporations are using the entire process to broker an agreement to exempt them from liability.

As noted in our section on "The Science," we are quickly running out of time. We have fewer than eight years to hit our 2030 carbon reduction goal, and the United States is going backward, not forward. If we do not hit our 2030 goals, then the 2050 goals will be

irrelevant. Our "Titanic" plows toward the icebergs at an ever-increasing speed. As of early 2022, we were projected to reach a temperature increase of 1.5°C in 15 to 20 years. As of May 2022, the World Meteorological Organization projects we have a 50 percent chance of reaching 1.5°C by 2026.

In light of this situation, there's little wonder that many feel that nothing meaningful can be done to make our Congress act and that nothing that we do here can make a significant difference to the world.

We respectfully disagree. The unprecedented peril of climate change is also an unprecedented opportunity for faith communities to get the job done. Our political system has not failed; it simply cannot create the fundamental change needed without the engine of transformation that faith provides.

Without transformative political action by faith communities, the Underground Railroad and Abolition movement would not have succeeded. Without transformative faith communities, Civil Rights, desegregation, and voting rights would not have become, at least for now, the law of the land.

The singular power that communities of faith have that Congress lacks is *love*. We are not talking about sentimental love but instead the love that stands up to power: the love that stood up to Bull Connor, police dogs, fire hoses, and beatings and kept on singing, "We shall overcome." With such love, a few thousand can change the course of Congress but only if we are as devoted as we are united.

This transformation is something all of us can afford to do. We must transform ourselves and our profoundly tattered relation with Creation. We must let go of what no longer works to embrace what we truly need. This change begins not with the politics of party but with the politics of loving transformation, and it is accomplished by facing difficult truths.

The first difficult truth is that our culture, faith, and society are founded on a series of fictions that we've accepted as fact. Since the writings of Aristotle, for example, we've accepted the fiction of hierarchy in which humans are superior to all other beings and some humans are superior to other humans due to their gender, culture, skin color, or sexual orientation. God didn't pick favorites. Such false hierarchies of status have cultivated new forms of intolerance that label difference as deviance. Hierarchy has flowered into other fictions like anthropomorphism, which places humans above all others while objectifying the rest of creation into "things" and "resources" from which to profit.

Next is the fiction that humans are the only "people." Nothing God created is inanimate. Everything God created has personhood. Our indigenous ancestors likely believed as Chief Seattle did:

"The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

Denying the reality of our indigeneity and its fundamental relation to all of Creation is what paved the way for the climate change crisis. It caused us to worship a caricature of Jesus, not the real person Jesus was, like Chief Seattle, a "First Nations" person whose homeland was colonized. He was a subject, not a citizen, of the Roman Empire. He, like St. Francis, felt that all of Creation was sacred and that hierarchic views of creation were erroneous.

Another fiction central to our lives is that we humans can "weave the web of life"; in other words, that we can use technology and the market to invent our way out of any problem.

And finally, at the root of climate change is the fiction that Christianity was a religion of empire destined to rule over Creation instead of being a humble and grateful strand of it.

In time, this view led to a church that proclaimed that slavery and genocide were lawful and that the land and all creatures that lived upon it were no longer sacred and were simply resources to be bought and sold.

Taken together, these fictions have reduced human understanding of Creation from a sacred commonality to mere commodities in an economy in which growth is valued more than health and in which the Market has more wisdom than the Maker.

Chief Seattle knew the true law of the land:

"All things share the same breath—the beast, the tree, the man. . . .  
[T]he air shares its spirit with all the life it supports."

Although some can feel the truth of his words, we are far from living it. Living it demands we abandon the fictions in our lives, admit their harms, and repair their breaches. Each harm is an injustice upon Creation; each reparation is justice to Creation.

This transformation will take immense courage and commitment, but we have both. As Karle Wilson Baker said, "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." The world looks to our nation, the most powerful democracy and the greatest historical contributor to climate change, to set the example for what should be done. Congress was unable for more than ninety years to pass voting rights legislation until people of faith organized and acted politically. Since the current global impasse is propped up by *empty* pledges, we must set the moral example by making *full* pledges. We can individually and congregationally pledge as if we were nations to admit our responsibility, to commit to reduce our carbon emissions, and to assist a congregation harmed by climate change.

If just half of us manage to pledge and calculate our carbon footprints and take responsibility, that will be news the world wants to hear. We will join with other faiths because every faith is based in love, and together, in our devotion to repair our harm to Creation, we will be stronger together than we could ever be apart.

We must also reach in as we reach out. We cannot address climate change without seeking Climate Justice. We must courageously challenge the fiction of whiteness many mistake for identity. Only we can decolonize our histories and understandings from fake news, unjust privilege, Manifest Destiny, and systemic discriminations against those whose, land, labor, and dignity colonizers took without just compensation. We cannot repair our Creation without a profound understanding of how we have injured her.

This report next addresses first the "why" of this work and then the science behind this work. Thereafter we will share our recommendations for actions to be taken, faith formation and creation justice mindsets to be developed, and resources needed to support this most important work.

If we unite in love, there is little we cannot do. But we must act now.