

Introduce self:

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Enacting the strictest possible limits on carbon emissions is a critical moral issue to me as a person of faith.

The Episcopal Church, and my congregation of St. Paul's, know we must cut climate pollution coming from fossil fuel power plants.

All the way back in 1973, the General Convention of my denomination named this as one of our beliefs in resolution 1973-B106: which I quote: We

- (1) Recognize the relation between Christian stewardship and prudent use of the Earth,
- (2) Encourage responsible and thoughtful use of our natural resources, and direct all Episcopalians to be alert to plans of peoples and governments which threaten, degrade, or waste our natural environment, and take appropriate public steps to oppose them.

This is not merely because of our moral duty to be good stewards of God's created environment. We are morally required by resolution 2000-D005 to oppose government policy that fails to protect people who are poor, or people of color, from polluting industries.

Reducing these emissions is an issue of the highest spiritual and moral urgency because of the threats it poses to human life and dignity. In 2006, resolution 2006-C018 specifically noted that the use of fossil fuels harms air quality and public health and is contributing to changes in the global climate that threaten the lives and livelihoods of our neighbors around the world.

General Convention also called on the US government to cut carbon emissions in resolutions 2009-D031 and 2012-D055.

I'm a priest, I'm not a scientist. But I understand that this earth, our island home, does not have infinite resources. I understand that our climate is already changing. I understand that the people who are suffering the losses of their livelihoods, health, and lives the most from that change often are already the most marginalized. I understand we have already caused harm, and further harm may bring us to tipping points that will cause cascading, exponential disasters. This is so obviously immoral, I don't know if you need a priest to point that out to you!

As a priest, one of the joys of my work is to baptize people, to welcome them into a community. In my tradition, we baptize people of all ages, including infants. When I hold an infant in my arms, and we as a congregation solemnly promise we will do all in our power to support them, how dare we lie to that child, and to God? How dare we hand that child a world we have knowingly polluted and is dangerously warming? How dare we subject them to a future of asthma attacks, missed school and work, cataclysmic storms, droughts, fires, and premature death? It makes me incredibly sad to know that some of the things I love about this world may not be there for them, and for their children, and grandchildren. It frightens me to think that we may be trading their future for our own comfort and convenience.

In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, quoting Deuteronomy 30:19: “The future of our fragile beautiful planet is in our hands ... We can be wantonly irresponsible, or we can be caring and compassionate. God says, ‘I have set before you life and death ... choose life.’”

The EPA must finalize the strongest carbon standards possible by improving on the proposal to require greater reductions from existing gas plants and to secure emission reductions from all fossil power plants on a faster timeline.