A Statement by Religious Leaders in Iowa on Global Climate Change
April 2014

As religious leaders representing diverse faith traditions and congregations in Iowa, we believe that global climate change is a moral issue. We feel a particular responsibility to speak on behalf of those whose voices are not heard – the most vulnerable in our society and in our world, including children and future generations.

Carbon pollution is a major driver of global climate change which threatens the health of our families, the well-being of our communities, and ultimately the earth. Current impacts of climate-disrupting carbon dioxide emissions include severe storms, deadly heat waves, drought, flooding, and wildfires. Given that power plants account for 40% of U.S. carbon emissions, we support the efforts of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to finalize the carbon pollution rule for new power plants and to issue a strong draft rule for reducing carbon pollution from existing power plants and finalize it by June 2015.

Carbon pollution is an environmental justice issue. Historically many power plants have been located near low-income neighborhoods, near communities of color, and in Midwest farm communities. These areas contribute much less to the problem yet are being hit the hardest in terms of health and climate impacts. Many of these citizens have preexisting health conditions that make them more vulnerable to heat waves, reduced air quality, and other consequences of burning fossil fuels. These communities also have fewer resources to adapt to climate change and therefore mitigation – reducing the causes of climate change – is critical.

In addition, we must understand the moral responsibility that we have in light of the global disparity between the amount of carbon pollution released by the United States and other developed nations in comparison to developing nations around the world. Developing nations have far less capacity for adapting to climate change, and will bear much more of the impacts. We support efforts to use these carbon pollution standards as leverage to encourage carbon pollution reductions by other developed and growing economies worldwide.

As people of faith, we look for signs of hope in moving toward the future. The Midwest's manufacturing base gives us the opportunity – and responsibility – to take the lead in developing clean energy technologies that can meet our energy needs and protect the earth for future generations. In Iowa, over 4,000 people work in the wind industry, and job growth in the solar industry is on the rise as well. Additional clean energy jobs in energy efficiency, transmission, and research and development means that we do not have to sacrifice employment opportunities for controlling carbon pollution.

Climate change significantly exacerbates issues on which our congregations and faith communities are already working: issues like hunger, clean water, disaster relief, refugee services, and conflict resolution. It is the role of faith leaders to help others connect the dots between climate change and its impacts, and to advocate for meaningful solutions. We believe that limiting carbon pollution from power plants is a key part of that solution. We call upon people of faith to provide leadership on this issue and act in the interest of the common good.

Signed,

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Bishop of Davenport
Roman Catholic Diocese of Davenport

Rev. Phil Barrett
General Presbyter
Presbytery of Des Moines

Rev. Michael Burk, Ph.D.
Bishop, Southeastern Iowa Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Tim Button-Harrison
North Plains District
Church of the Brethren

Bishop Richard Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Roman Catholic Diocese of Des Moines

Rev. Dr. Rich Pleva
Iowa Conference Minister
United Church of Christ

Bishop Alan Scarfe
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa

Rev. William Spangler-Dunning
Regional Minister and President for the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper
Midwest

Bishop Julius C. Trimble
Resident Bishop
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St. Timothy's United Methodist Church
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Lisa Bean
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Earthkeepers
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Rev. W. Michael Biklen
United Methodist Church, Retired
Muscatine

Rev. Mike Blair
Campus Pastor
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Decorah

Rev. Linda Butler
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Dysart

Rev. John M. Caldwell
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Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin
Mary
Dubuque

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Advocacy Team Leader of the Iowa
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Walnut Hills United Methodist Church
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Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin
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Rabbi Steven Edelman-Blank
Tifereth Israel Synagogue
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Rev. David Endriss
Trinity United Presbyterian Church
Indianola

Dr. Janet Everhart
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Pat Farrell, OSF
Sisters of St. Francis Leadership Team
Dubuque

Rev. Jeffrey Filkins
Trinity United Church of Christ
Hartley

Rev. Joan Wooters Fumetti
Foods Resource Bank
Windsor Heights

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Gaddis
Collegiate Presbyterian Church
Ames

Rev. Stacey Gerhart
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Des Moines

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Executive Director
Iowa Interfaith Power & Light

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Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul
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Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
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Sister Catherine Hendel
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Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
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St. Mary Roman Catholic Church
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Susan Janzen
Cedar Falls Mennonite Church
Cedar Falls

Susan Jungman
Parish Nurse
Broadway United Methodist Church
Council Bluffs

Pastor Randy Kasch
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
Cedar Rapids

Pastor Dave Kebschull
St. John Lutheran Church
Cedar Falls

Rev. Barbara Koenig
United Church of Christ
Bettendorf

Kevin Kummer
First Mennonite Church
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Pastor Gary Lee
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Pella

Rev. Stephen Mathonnet-VanderWell
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St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Cedar Falls

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*The listing of faith community names is for identification purposes only.

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