

THE EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE

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THE EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE: A HISTORY

The Evangelical Climate Initiative is a group of more than 85 evangelical leaders who—as a result of their commitment to Jesus Christ and concern for His creation—have signed the statement entitled *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action*.

The Initiative represents their efforts (signatories sign as individuals, and not as spokespersons for their respective organizations) to encourage action by evangelical Christians and all Americans to make life changes necessary to help solve the global warming crisis, and to advance legislation that will limit emissions, while respecting economic and business concerns.

The release of *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action* is the latest in a series of actions on the issue by evangelicals. These include the following:

Statement by Evangelical Scientists

The first important initiative was the issuing of a statement by evangelical scientists at The Hague during the international climate negotiations in November 2000. It confirmed the problem, described the impacts, especially in relation to the poor, related this to Jesus' teachings about caring for "the least of these," and suggested that a clean, efficient energy future was a major part of the solution.¹

Oxford Conference

Another important initiative related to climate science was a conference at Oxford during the summer of 2002 organized by two evangelical organizations dedicated to the integration of science, Christian faith, and care for creation: The John Ray Initiative of Great Britain headed up by Sir John Houghton (former Chair of the scientific assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or IPCC), and the Au Sable Institute in the U.S. led by Calvin DeWitt. This conference also issued a statement confirming the science, discussing the impacts and the solutions, and relating it all to Christian faith.²

¹ The statement by evangelical scientists was also published in the Winter 2002 issue of *Creation Care* magazine on pages 10-11.

² Information about the Oxford conference, including the statement, can be found at: <http://www.climateforum2002.org/>.

The *What Would Jesus Drive* educational campaign

The campaign began in November 2002 and its message was that our transportation choices are moral choices for three basic reasons: impacts of transportation pollution on human health, particularly that of children; the problem of global warming and its impacts on the poor, and the consequences of our oil dependence on national and economic security.³

Sandy Cove Covenant

The growing acceptance of creation-care more broadly within the evangelical community helped lead to the Sandy Cove Conference in June 2004 for a select group of evangelical leaders focused on environmental issues and co-sponsored by *Christianity Today* magazine, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and the Evangelical Environmental Network. Sir John Houghton, himself an evangelical Christian, was a keynote speaker, with climate change and Christian faith one of his main topics. The resulting Sandy Cove Covenant committed the attendees to dialoguing with their colleagues about climate change with the goal of producing an evangelical leaders' statement on the subject.⁴

NAE Statement and Creation-care

In the fall of 2004, the NAE adopted a statement intended to guide evangelical engagement in the public arena entitled *For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility*.⁵ Endorsed by over 100 evangelical leaders, the statement's seventh principle was devoted to creation-care. This affirmation by evangelical leaders of creation-care as one of the top seven public priorities has helped to pave the way for acceptance of climate change as a legitimate issue that should be given serious consideration by leaders of organizations affiliated with the NAE.

³ For additional information, see www.whatwouldjesusdrive.org.

⁴ To view the Sandy Cove Covenant, go to: <http://www.creationcare.org/conference/>.

⁵ To view *For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility*, go to: http://www.nae.net/images/civic_responsibility2.pdf.