

First Presidency Initial Reflections

What does it mean for Community of Christ to declare a climate emergency?

In response to World Conference Resolution 1325 Climate Emergency adopted 25 April 2023, Community of Christ is adding its voice with many other organizations and leaders around the world who are declaring a climate emergency. Declaring a climate emergency is a significant and conscientious step taken by the Community of Christ to address the urgent issue of climate change. This declaration reflects our deep commitment to the principles of environmental stewardship, justice, and compassion for all of God's creation, as guided by Doctrine and Covenants 163:4b.

Based on initial reflections by the First Presidency, here's what we are beginning to think it means for the church and its members:

1. **Acknowledgment of Urgency:** By declaring a climate emergency, the church acknowledges the urgency and severity of the global climate crisis that is harming everyone, especially the most vulnerable in our world. It aligns us with the growing worldwide movement that recognizes the need for immediate and meaningful action to address climate change.
2. **Spiritual and Temporal Responsibility:** This declaration is rooted in our Enduring Principles as formed from the stories of scripture and our call to be stewards of the earth. It recognizes that the Earth, which was created as a sanctuary for life to flourish, is suffering due to human greed and conflict. We see it as our spiritual duty to respond to this distress.
3. **Commitment to Action:** Community of Christ is committing to concrete actions to address climate change. This includes encouraging all jurisdictions of the church (IHQ, mission centers, congregations) to reduce carbon emissions resulting from church activities, review policies with consideration of climate impact, and support organizations and community groups that raise awareness and take peaceful action to limit global warming.

As an example of our commitment to action, the Presidency has reduced the number of in-person meetings for the World Church Leadership Council and Council of Twelve to lessen the carbon emissions created from travel. Other steps taken can be found online at:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/account-media/26072/uploaded/c/0e16133685_1689176503_climate-emergency-statement-12-07-2023.pdf

4. Resources and Support: Members and friends of the church with expertise are encouraged to develop and identify resources to assist our leaders, members, and friends find practical ways to reduce carbon emissions. The Earth Stewardship Team, with support from the Communication Team and Herald House, can collect and make resources available that are created around the church.

5. Empowerment of Individuals: The challenge is for each individual within our faith community to use their personal power to make positive changes that reduce the impact on the earth. Some of these changes could include: consumption habits, lifestyle choices, and increased recycling, to name a few. This also includes advocating for sustainability in their communities, workplaces, and through political representation.

6. Unity with Global Efforts: By joining over 2,000 other organizations in 40 countries that have declared climate emergencies, Community of Christ is demonstrating our collective commitment to be part of a global effort to combat climate change. We are embracing our shared responsibility to protect the planet and its future for generations to come.

In summary, declaring a climate emergency is a significant spiritual and practical first step for Community of Christ. The World Conference passing WCR 1325 is a declaration of our Enduring Principle of the Sacredness of Creation. It signifies the church's dedication to addressing climate change, aligning with the teachings of our faith, and actively working towards a more sustainable and just world for all.

We see the declaration as only the first step. While declarations are important expressions of intent, it's crucial that we complement them with tangible actions to give them substance and impact. Declarations, without meaningful follow-through, can risk being perceived as symbolic gestures rather than concrete commitments that effect positive change.