



A Statement from Theologians, Ethicists and Religious Leaders in support of fossil fuel divestment and clean energy reinvestment by faith communities

The Earth is a stunning gift.

It supports life. It is the basis of all our economies. It conveys beauty. It evokes our recognition of something greater than ourselves. It is our temple, our mosque, our sanctuary, our cathedral. It is our home.

Today, the balance of life on Earth is threatened by climate change.

This is not news. For decades, scientists have warned that our greenhouse gas emissions are heating the atmosphere and oceans. They have been joined by environmentalists, educators, religious leaders, and many from politics and business, who have warned that unchecked climate change will create devastation. Rising temperatures and sea levels, punishing storms, droughts and floods will displace and endanger billions of people. Many will lose their lives. Many others, particularly the poorest, will lose their livelihoods and homes. Human society and the Earth's ecosystems will be left to future generations in tragically diminished condition, with only costly prospects for partial repair.

Evidence of this new reality arrives daily, in record numbers of severe storms, droughts and other catastrophes that leave trauma and grief in their wake.

In 2013, scientists calculated that humanity could afford to emit approximately 500 more gigatons of CO₂ emissions before forcing the climate past the gravely dangerous threshold of a two degree temperature rise.¹ All countries in the civilized world, ranging from Saudi Arabia to China, the United States, Australia, and all of Europe, agree that to go beyond the two degree guardrail would endanger civilization.

Burning the proven reserves of the fossil fuel industry will create 3,000 gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions, six times this threshold level.²

For more than two decades, talented leaders – including legislative and shareholder advocates - have implored political and industry leaders to act. Their sound reasoning and humanity's best interests have been subverted by the vast influence of the fossil fuel industry, a massively profitable and influential collection of firms and states.

¹ <http://www.takepart.com/article/2013/09/27/ipcc-report-climate-change-bill-mckibben-new-math>

² <http://www.takepart.com/article/2013/09/27/ipcc-report-climate-change-bill-mckibben-new-math>

This industry has used its financial power to prevent legislation and binding agreements to reduce carbon emissions, spending over \$400,000 per day to lobby the US government alone.³ It secures unthinkable large government subsidies - \$1.5 billion globally per day, according to the International Energy Agency. In 2013, the industry spent over \$600 billion exploring for new fossil fuel reserves, far beyond the \$244 billion invested globally in renewable energy.⁴⁵ This level of spending dwarfs the resources that can be mobilized by advocates for a sustainable future.

Energy represents a foundation for civilization; there is no arguing this. But fossil fuels and the fossil fuel industry's obstruction of a response to the climate crisis represent a grave danger to life.

What must faith communities do?

They must divest and reinvest now.

Our religious traditions share values regarding the ethical use of financial resources. In the past, our communities have decided that profiting from certain economic activities is incompatible with our faiths. When an industry continually, over years, causes massive harm while intractably resisting calls for change, faith communities have moved beyond education, engagement and advocacy to divestment. In recent decades, faith groups have taken this approach in response to the tobacco industry and to apartheid South Africa. These efforts made a meaningful difference. They helped, rightly, to delegitimize corporate and governmental regimes whose actions were profoundly destructive.

Because of the grave threat of climate change and the fossil fuel sector's unyielding refusal to change, it is no longer right for religious groups to profit from companies that, with certainty, are creating ecological destruction and human suffering on such a titanic scale.

Faith communities must continue to press for legislation. They must continue to conserve energy and reduce their carbon footprints. These actions remain important. But they are not enough.

As a matter of life, and because we believe in a just and loving Creator, we urge the faith communities of the world to divest from their holdings of fossil fuels.

In addition, we implore faith communities to reinvest in a clean energy future, to make their facilities more energy efficient. But they must not stop there. They must identify creative ways to support a clean energy future, recognizing that the world's poor need new sources of safe, clean power.

We have been given a gift, the Earth, and entrusted with its care. We are responsible for its future, and for the future of life. Climate change threatens that future.

We must act decisively, now, to choose life.

Divestment and reinvestment embody that choice.

³ <http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?Ind=E01>

⁴ <http://www.fastcoexist.com/3020656/are-oil-companies-wasting-billions-on-energy-theyll-never-use>

⁵ <http://fs-unep-centre.org/publications/global-trends-renewable-energy-investment-2013>