

Climate Change Unites Science and Religion

Laying down their swords over how we came to exist, leaders from scientific and evangelical communities in the US joined forces today in an unprecedented effort to protect what we have.

Speaking at a press conference in Washington DC, members of the newly formed group expressed concerns about planetary threats caused by humans including climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, and species extinction.

The group issued an “urgent call to action” signed by 28 coalition members including university professors, federal biologists, directors of conservation organisations, seminary officials, evangelical organisation leaders, and "megachurch" pastors.

The statement, sent to President George W Bush and Congressional leaders urges fundamental change in public policies and states that “business as usual cannot continue yet one more day”.
Deep reverence

The group was spearheaded by leaders of Harvard University’s Center for Health and the Global Environment in Boston, Massachusetts, and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), an umbrella group that encompasses 45,000 churches, and represents 40% of the Republican Party’s supporters.

“We share a very deep reverence for life on earth, whether that life was created by God or evolved over billions of years, it exists, is sacred to all of us, and is being endangered by human activity,” said Eric Chivian, Director of Harvard’s Center for Health and the Global Environment.

“It doesn’t matter if we are liberals or conservatives, Darwinists or Creationists, we are all under the same atmosphere and drink the same water and will do everything we can to work together to solve these problems.”

"Creation care agenda"

Reverend Richard Cizik, NAE's vice president for government affairs, says that by working together the two groups can have a larger impact.

“We have formed a partnership which we think has the power to reach far and wide and be very persuasive in promoting a creation care agenda,” Cizik says. “We are driven by an overriding sense that we cannot fail, we must not fail, there is too much at stake.”

Having met for the first time at a retreat in late-November 2006 in Thomasville, Georgia, the group now plans to meet with Congressional leaders from both Republican and Democratic parties on Thursday to encourage action on environmental issues.

Inconvenient truth

Today's statements are not the first time evangelicals have expressed concern over the environment. In February 2006, 86 evangelical leaders signed a statement to fight global warming. The statement declared that human-induced climate change is real, its consequences will hit the poor the hardest, and Christian moral convictions demand urgent response to the problem.

Today's announcement follows the showing of An Inconvenient Truth, former Vice President Al Gore's documentary on global warming, in thousands of churches across the US in recent months.

Scientists signing the letter included Harvard biologist and author of The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth, Edward O. Wilson. It was also signed by leading climate scientist James Hansen, who came under fire from the White House after calling for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to slow global warming in December 2005.

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