

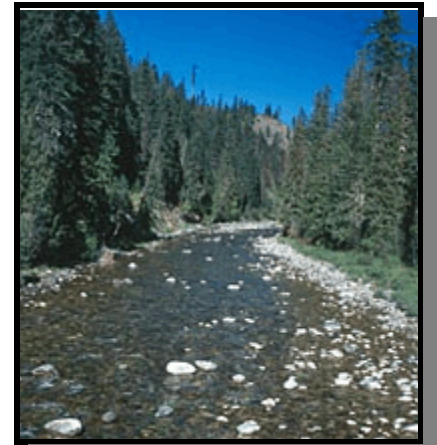
Energy & The Environment

*Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office
A Ministry of the Church of the Brethren General Board*

April 2005

A CALL TO CARE

We gaze in delight at the swelling rivers and streams as they run cool and clear. We look up in awe at the majestic mountains, their lofty summits piercing the endless sky. How lucky we are to share these gifts, and yet too often we fail to recognize that their very existence is at risk. Human consumption of natural resources – in the continuing effort to produce and provide energy – has had a devastating effect. We may be able to enjoy these wonders now, but the continued use of fossil fuels has endangered the environment for future generations. Do we really want to pass on a world where polluted rivers, crumbling mountains, and barren forests scar the landscape? Do we want our children and our grandchildren to breathe air polluted with toxic chemicals? As people of faith and as stewards of the earth, it is our responsibility to protect this world. Please heed the call to care for God's Creation.



Clear streams...but for how long?

FOSSIL FUELS – A THREAT TO OUR FUTURE

Simply put, our reliance on fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gases is destroying the environment. These materials account for approximately 85% of all fuels used in the United States. One problem with using such resources is the destructive nature of their extraction. Our landscape is torn asunder as we search for coal and natural gases. Forests and oceans – as well as the creatures that inhabit them – are cleared away in the effort to drill for oil. The mere process of finding and procuring these resources is devastating to the natural world.

Actually using them poses another problem altogether! By burning fossil fuels, harmful greenhouse gases are continuously released into the atmosphere. It has become the dominant belief that these gases destabilize current atmospheric conditions and in turn adversely effect climate and weather patterns across the globe. The result is the devastating condition of climate change called *global warming*. An increase in droughts, floods, and mean global sea level are the likely result. Moreover, such weather anomalies will no doubt affect the human population, as millions (particularly those in developing nations) will be forced to deal with an increasingly harsh environment.

We use these fuels every day! Consider your car again. Burning one gallon of gasoline releases 28 pounds of CO₂ into the air. In addition, fossil fuel power plants release *hundreds of millions of tons of pollution* into the air. This pollution contributes to acid rain and smog as well as to global warming. Clearly, our reliance on fossil fuels has become a threat to the environment and to ourselves. The 2005-2006 budget proposals show that 90% of energy spending is going towards non-renewable resources. One major complaint about changing our policy is that it would be too harmful to our economy. Apollo Alliance, a non profit environmental organization, reports that “renewable power production is labor intensive- wind power creates 2.77 jobs for every MW produced, Solar PV creates 7.24 jobs per MW, and geothermal creates 5.67 jobs per MW.” Furthermore, “every \$1 billion invested into public transportation supports 47,500 jobs. The Department of Energy estimates that standards on washing machines, water heaters, and fluorescent lamp ballasts will create 120,000 jobs through 2020” (www.apolloalliance.org; keyword: energy independence: the facts). We have actually tried one major alternative – nuclear power – but the inherent dangers (e.g. accidental nuclear meltdowns, difficulty disposing of toxic nuclear waste, etc.) must be addressed prior to any further expansion.

TAKE ACTION

There are a number of steps you can take to help promote clean, renewable energy. One way is to contact your representatives in Washington, DC. Encourage them to introduce and support provisions that would encourage energy efficiency. Ask your Senators and Representative to support legislation that:

- Addresses the dangers of global warming and sets limits on the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere, specifically CO₂. Sen. McCain (R-AZ), Sen. Lieberman (D-CT), Sen. Jeffords (I-VT), and Sen. Hagel (R-NE) will have energy proposals that include curbing greenhouse gases.
- Initiates an energy policy that relies less on fossil fuels and more on renewable power sources, such as geothermal, wind, water, and solar energy, as well as ethanol, fuel cell, and bio-diesel technologies.
- Officially protects areas of wilderness against development and fossil fuel extraction, particularly the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- Initiates regulations that would make automobiles more fuel-efficient. The Sierra Club reports that raising the miles per gallon standard to 45 mpg would “cut CO₂ pollution by 600 million tons and save consumers at least \$45 billion each year at the pump.”



Harmful pollutants being pumped into the air.

But don't stop there! As an individual you can take steps to help the environment and be more fuel-efficient. Consider these changes in your daily routine:

- Use compact fluorescent bulbs. They use about a third as much energy as regular incandescent bulbs.
- Use low-flow showerheads. They reduce the amount of water as well as the energy needed to heat it.
- Replace older appliances with more energy-efficient devices. Look for refrigerators, washers, or furnaces with the “Energy-Star” label. If you're looking for a new car why not consider buying a hybrid or fuel efficient vehicle.
- Don't drive – WALK! Every mile you don't drive prevents one pound of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere. Plus, you're not using (or providing the need for) oil/gas. Have further to go? Try riding a bike, public transportation, or car pooling with friends or coworkers.

CHURCH POLICY

In “**Creation: Called to Care**,” the Church of the Brethren supports the effort to protect the environment by emphasizing our relationship with the Earth as a component of God's covenant with humankind (**Annual Conference, 1991**). “People of faith are responsible for their part in renewing and sustaining creation.” As stated in “**Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation**,” the Church encourages “research and development of energy alternatives to fossil fuels” in an effort to “address the causes and reverse the consequences of global warming” (**General Board, 1991**).

For more information on this and other issues, contact the Brethren Witness/Washington Office at:

Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office
337 North Carolina Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20003
Phone: (202) 546-3202, 800-785-3246
Fax: (202) 544-5852
E-Mail: washington_office_gb@brethren.org

Visit our website at:
www.brethren.org
Keyword: Witness/Washington Office