

Talk on Climate Change and Global Warming
Sun Mar 7, 2010; UUCMC / Jan W. Dash, PhD

We have a moral and ethical imperative to learn about climate change / global warming and to act appropriately and decisively. This imperative derives from all people living today on the planet and those who will follow us. We cannot have succeeding generations say, of us: *"They refused to learn"* or *"they knew but did not act."*

Global warming (GW) is the climate change (CC) upward trend in globally averaged temperatures. GW has been observed since 1975. The last decade was the hottest on record. There is little doubt among climatologists that GW is caused by greenhouse gas emissions, due to humans. The amount of GW in the future will depend on what humanity does. A typical estimate is 5 degrees F warmer by 2100. The last time our planet saw this average global temperature was 3 million years ago in the Pliocene era.

The impacts of CC/GW are seen now. Impacts are mostly negative and will get far worse if Business As Usual (BAU) continues, without substantial mitigation. Human history is thousands of years old, but grave CC/GW consequences under BAU are expected in less than 100 years, with large increases over natural effects in: water shortages, crop failures, fires, droughts, disease, flooding, species extermination, extreme weather, sea level rise, heat waves, acidified oceans, mass migrations, conflicts over resources and the breakdown of peace, and worldwide economic disruption. Developing countries and the poor will be hit hardest - a social justice issue. The US will also be hit, very hard. There is no safe haven. The US Defense Department regards CC/GW as a national security risk.

We are currently witnessing an organized attack on climate science and scientists by pseudo-scientific contrarian right-wing media, supported by fossil fuel. None of this, including the emails, negates either the science or the huge potential impacts of CC/GW.

What can we do? **It IS still possible to stop the worst impacts of GW.** The right framework is risk management and moral/ethical suasion including social and climate justice, and equity. Leverage from faith groups is critical. UUs have a positive role to play. Our seven principles attest to our commitment. UUs already act on climate: the UUA Statement of Conscience, and initiatives by UU organizations, including the UUCMC, e.g. Green Sanctuary. Future action can include: (1) Personal actions of conservation and efficiency; (2) Collective actions of advocacy: for US climate legislation; supporting the Environmental Protection Agency; and obtaining a fair, ambitious, binding climate treaty. This year, 2010, is critical for these efforts; (3) Education and pushback against specious contrarian claims; (4) Green energy; (5) Green Teams support; (6) Helping UU organizations, e.g. the UU-UN Office, with climate. A UUCMC climate action team will be formed for more specific suggestions.

What is the bottom line? Here is a picture of my grandson. We all have pictures of children. We want to be able to look them in the eye and say: "We did our best on climate". What we do now will affect the quality of life of all future children: worldwide, including the United States. The UUCMC can help make a real difference in this effort.