

COP 23 Interfaith Climate Statement



At COP23 in Bonn, Germany in November 2017, a coalition of diverse faith and spiritual groups share a declaration and their initial commitments to lifestyles of compassionate simplicity for the sake of the climate. We invite you to sign the statement and become involved.

“Walk on Earth Gently” A Multi-Faith invitation to Sustainable Lifestyles

To all members of the human family and to leaders gathered at COP23:

We extend our warm greetings. We represent the world’s family of spiritualities, faiths and religions who share a profound gratitude for our precious planet.

Earth is a blessing. She supports life and is the basis of all our economies. She conveys beauty and evokes our recognition of something greater than ourselves. She is our temple, our mosque, our sanctuary, our cathedral. Our home.

Our actions now threaten the delicate balance of life on Earth, with climate change posing a most grave danger. Record numbers of severe storms, droughts, fires, and related catastrophes leave trauma and grief in their wake. Recent months have witnessed the tragedy of such occurrences in the Caribbean, the US, and India. We shudder over the enormity of this suffering and over what more lies ahead.

For thousands of years, our traditions have taught us to care for Earth. This responsibility has become urgent in recent decades. Our misuse of Earth’s generosity, while improving conditions for many, is not improving them for all and is fraying the web of life. The most vulnerable among us, those least responsible for this global threat, suffer the impacts of a warming climate unfairly and unjustly.

We have begun to respond, raising consciousness and starting to consume more sustainably. We have implored leaders to act. We have studied, prayed and petitioned, advocated, marched and mobilized. We have awakened to the urgent challenge and begun to change our ways.

However, we are at a crossroads. The Paris Agreement affirmed limiting temperature rise to well below 2⁰C, while pursuing efforts to a far safer 1.5⁰C limit. Our friends from Fiji and small island states, understanding the stakes and underscoring the science, have told us “1.5 to stay alive.” Yet we are currently headed for warming of 3⁰C or more, perilously beyond this limit

This challenge is both dire and urgent. It calls for us to act.

As religious and spiritual leaders, we are committing to make changes in our own lives, and to support the members of our communities in doing the same. Together, we come to you with an invitation to embark on a journey towards compassionate simplicity for the sake of the climate, the human family, and the community of life. For many of us, changes in three areas make the greatest impact: dramatically reducing emissions from our home energy use, adopting a plant-based diet and reducing food waste, and minimizing automobile and air travel. Because of the gravity of our situation, substantial and long-term changes in these areas are indispensable if we are to reach a 1.5⁰C future, particularly for those of us in communities whose carbon footprints exceed sustainable levels. We pledge our commitment to such change.

Through this collective effort, we look forward to creating a global community of conscience and practice in which we learn to put belief into action in relation to our own lifestyles. Our spiritual and faith communities will give us hope and companions for this journey. We will share ideas, materials, and stories of struggle and success. Our practices of mindfulness, spiritual discipline and prayer will enable us to grow. These ancient teachings and practices, and our renewed commitments and willingness to strive, will help us build pathways towards a sustainable future.

We wish to be clear that we understand that systemic change is required to solve this crisis. We will continue to advocate for the policies that are so urgently needed. However, we also believe that individual commitments and behaviors are as important in addressing climate change as they are in addressing poverty, racism, and other grave social ills. And we know that our spiritualities and traditions offer wisdom about finding happiness in a purposeful life, family and friendships, not in an overabundance of things. The world needs such wisdom; it is our privilege both to share and to seek to embody it.

We invite you to join the many others willing to walk this path by adding your name to this document, and by preparing to make commitments in the three areas named above. The diverse groups coming together in this moment will reach out to invite you to become involved in a programme of support and action which will take shape over the coming year.

Let us pray and hope we can come together in love for each other, those who suffer from climate change, future generations, and planet Earth.

Let us commit to walk gently on Earth.