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### **BOB DOPPELT: Religious groups call for action on climate change**

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**BY BOB DOPPELT**

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It's Earth Day, a time when we should be celebrating our commitment to caring for the health of our planet.

Yet, it is difficult to celebrate the Earth when we grasp the warning issued last month by the Organization for Economic and Community Development: If current emission trends continue, the world's average temperatures will be at least 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit higher by mid-century, compared to pre-industrial times.

In plain English, if human-generated emissions are not slashed rapidly, within the lifespan of many alive today the Earth will experience irreversible damage, leading to falling standards of living.

Even more disturbing, according to the organization, is that if we start now, keeping temperatures at safer levels would cost only about 0.2 percentage points of economic growth a year. That pales in comparison to the cost of inaction, which could be 14 percentage points or more annually.

Despite this and many similar admonitions, President Obama and Congress have failed to address the climate emergency meaningfully. This dereliction of duty has inspired a large group of religious and spiritual organizations to organize five days of faith-based activities in Washington, D.C., during the week of Earth Day calling for action on the climate emergency.

Interfaith Moral Action on Climate ([rgne.ws/HUBHNb](http://rgne.ws/HUBHNb)) is playing a key role in organizing and linking these activities. Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i, Hindu, Buddhist and Native American organizations are raising their voices in unison and demanding that our elected officials rapidly address the climate crisis. I will be with them in Washington.

The breadth and diversity of the collaborative shows that most faith and spiritual organizations see no contradiction between their religious beliefs and the need to reduce emissions. Acknowledging climate science does not make you a secularist.

The coalition's "Call to Action" offers clear guiding principles for addressing the climate emergency. It begins, "As people of faith and spirituality, we are deeply concerned about the effects of climate change ravaging our planet, and we are compelled by our traditions and collective conscience to take action together on this deeply moral challenge."

It continues, “As a first step, we call on our leaders to enact policies that dramatically reduce wasted energy and significantly shift our power supplies from oil, coal and natural gas to wind, solar, geothermal and other renewable energy sources. We must equitably phase out all fossil fuel subsidies.

“We also call on our leaders to enact policies to help people here and abroad prepare for and withstand the terrible impacts of climate change that are already occurring and that will grow much worse in the years ahead.

“Our call is: To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). We must hold forth a brighter vision for our human future within the community of creation as we seek commitment to a set of clear, widely held moral principles.

“First, it is morally wrong to unjustifiably cause human suffering and death. Human--induced climate change is correlated with storms, floods, droughts, crop failures, diseases, and water and food shortages, as well as associated breakdowns in political, economic, social and ecological systems. These breakdowns compromise human security and already are harming and killing people here and abroad. The greatest impacts are falling on low-income people, communities of color, indigenous peoples, and others who have contributed little to climate change. We have a moral obligation to rapidly reduce our carbon pollution to minimize these disproportionate impacts.

“The second principle is to honor our moral obligation for equity and justice. The shift to a sustainable, energy efficient and renewable energy economy can create millions of good jobs and support healthy families and communities. We must ensure that this shift is a ‘just transition’ that protects the most vulnerable among us.

“The third guiding moral principle is to protect the Earth, which is the source of all life. Virtually all the world’s religious and spiritual traditions proclaim that we have a moral obligation to be good stewards of the Earth and all of its creatures and processes.

“To disrupt the climate that is the cornerstone of all life and to squander the extraordinary abundance of life, diversity, and beauty of the planet is a moral failure of the first order.”

The coalition statement closes with, “May we rely on the guidance of our faith traditions and spiritual teachings to find the power to act with courage and conviction to create a brighter, more secure and sustainable future for all of us, our children and all future generations.”

These compelling words offer guidance for elected officials and everyone else on the need, urgency and means for addressing the climate emergency so that eventually we can all truly celebrate on Earth Day.

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CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.”  
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