





This ethic taught that the alien, the outcast, the widow, the poor, orphans, children, prostitutes, tax collectors – the disenfranchised, those left out, those who wouldn't make it ... the ones that “natural selection” would have left behind ... all of these, Jesus believed, are our human responsibility. “As often as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)

Compassion exists as **a call** to the responsible action of healing, of justice and peace-making on the part of the human. Perhaps the cutting edge of human evolutionary development lies at this

moment in time. The human species **MUST** undertake the responsibility to be healers, reconcilers, vehicles of peace and justice on the planet. It is our duty to let our hearts be broken open – for this we were created. And this responsibility extends beyond the tribe. It may well be that our present planetary crisis is not just inviting, but **requiring** that we open our hearts in compassion for all living creatures. The stakes are high: the choice between pyre and pyre.

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Currently, technology – satellites, television, the Internet, Twitter, and the like – has given birth to a “global brain.” We cannot be unaware of climate change, of water shortage, escalating violence and social breakdown, gross economic disparity. But we know also that there is an emerging voice of non-violence, the “green” movement, a worldwide press for democratic reform. We have to internalize how deeply we depend upon each other, and develop a sense of *common good*.

We are only beginning to live into this worldview; it lies before us as our only hope of a possible future. Technology has drawn collective humanity together in networks that span the globe.

While technology can connect us, it cannot unite us. Only love can do this. At this moment, we desperately need a **global heart** to match the global brain spawned by technology.

We face an entirely new context, a *kairos* critical for the human species and planet Earth. No one has been here before. We are charting new territory. As the species that embodies the capacity for compassionate concern for the whole planet, we can act or not act; we *decide* when we will act on compassionate cues and when we will choose to selfishly serve our own egos. We choose between fire and fire.



## The Earth Charter

### PREAMBLE

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise.

To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

### Earth, Our Home

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. The resilience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air. The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

### The Global Situation

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably, and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous—but not inevitable.

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## The Challenges Ahead

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

## Universal Responsibility

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is

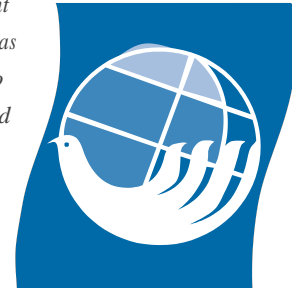
strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature. We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community.

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\* Complete text of the Earth Charter can be found at <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html>

*The Earth Charter was created by the independent Earth Charter Commission, which was convened as a follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in order to produce a global consensus statement of values and principles for a sustainable future. The document was developed over nearly a decade through an extensive process of international consultation, to which over five thousand people contributed.*

*The Charter has been formally endorsed by thousands of organizations, including UNESCO and the IUCN (World Conservation Union). For more information, please visit [www.EarthCharter.org](http://www.EarthCharter.org).*



## World Scientists' Warning to Humanity

Some 1,700 of the world's leading scientists, including the majority of Nobel laureates in the sciences, issued this appeal in November 1992. The Warning was written and spearheaded by the Union of Concerned Scientists' Chair, Henry Kendall.

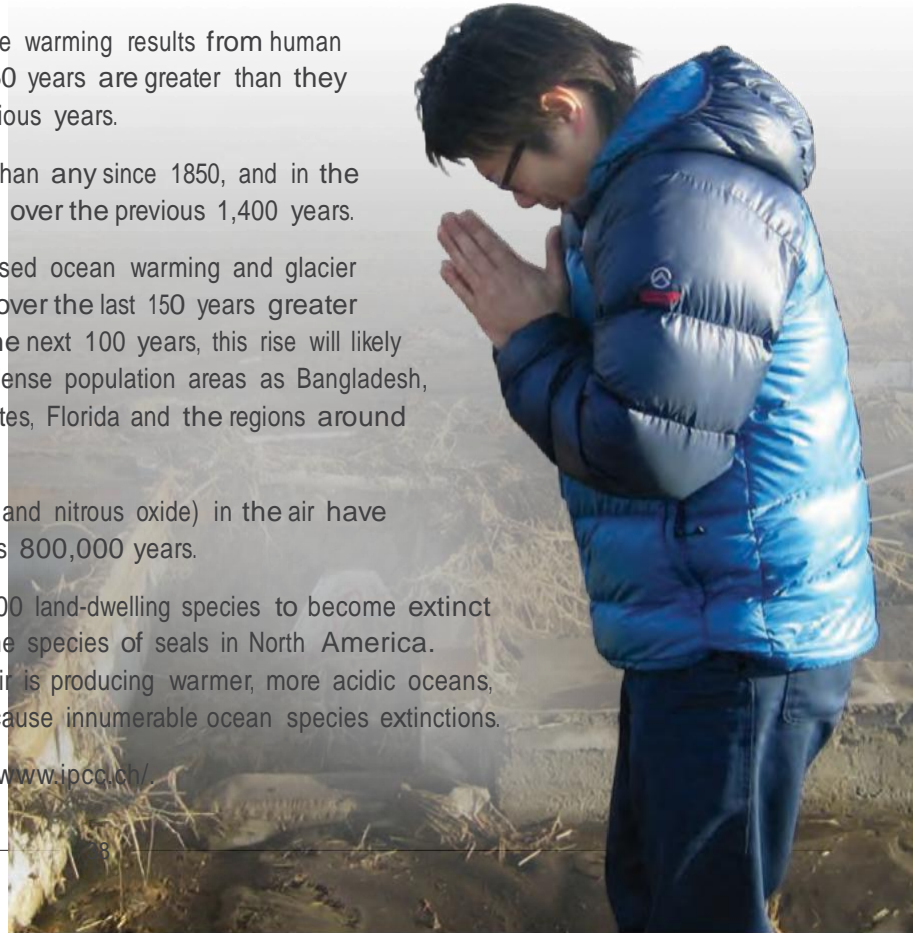
Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about.

November 18, 1992

## Some Findings from the 2013 Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

- 1 It can be said unequivocally that global climate warming results from human behavior and that heating levels in the past 50 years are greater than they have been for hundreds to thousands of previous years.
- 2 The last three 10-year periods were warmer than any since 1850, and in the northern hemisphere, warmer than any period over the previous 1,400 years.
- 3 Human-created atmospheric warming has caused ocean warming and glacier melting, which has produced a sea level rise over the last 150 years greater than any over the last 2,000 years. Over the next 100 years, this rise will likely submerge many south sea islands and such dense population areas as Bangladesh, Egypt, and Southeast Asia. In the United States, Florida and the regions around New Orleans are at high risk.
- 4 Greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) in the air have reached levels not experienced in the previous 800,000 years.
- 5 Global warming will likely cause over 1,000,000 land-dwelling species to become extinct by 2050. These include polar bears and some species of seals in North America. Also, increased carbon dioxide and warmer air is producing warmer, more acidic oceans, which will drastically destroy coral reefs and cause innumerable ocean species extinctions.

The full IPCC report can be accessed at <http://www.ipcc.ch/>.



## Some Findings from the University of Hawaii at Manoa Study of Climate Change

By Camilo Mora and Colleagues Published in *Nature*, 10 October 2013

Sounding perhaps the most urgent warnings about climate change to date, Camilo Mora and colleagues at the University of Hawaii at Manoa report in a study published in *Nature* (10/10/13) that climate is changing so rapidly that within a generation, “whatever climate we were used to will be a thing of the past.” Within 35 years, even the lowest monthly dips in temperatures will be hotter than those experienced in the past 150 years. Radical differences in temperature could take place worldwide by 2047 if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at the current rate; such change could be deferred to 2069 if greenhouse gas emissions are stabilized.

Of particular concern is climate change in the tropics, an area that normally experiences little temperature variation and is therefore intolerant of even slight modifications. The tropics could experience threatening temperature change within seven years, as much as 40 years earlier than some northern cities, such as Moscow or Anchorage, Alaska. Nonetheless, destructive change in the tropics will have global implications in as much as this area has the world’s greatest diversity of marine and terrestrial species,

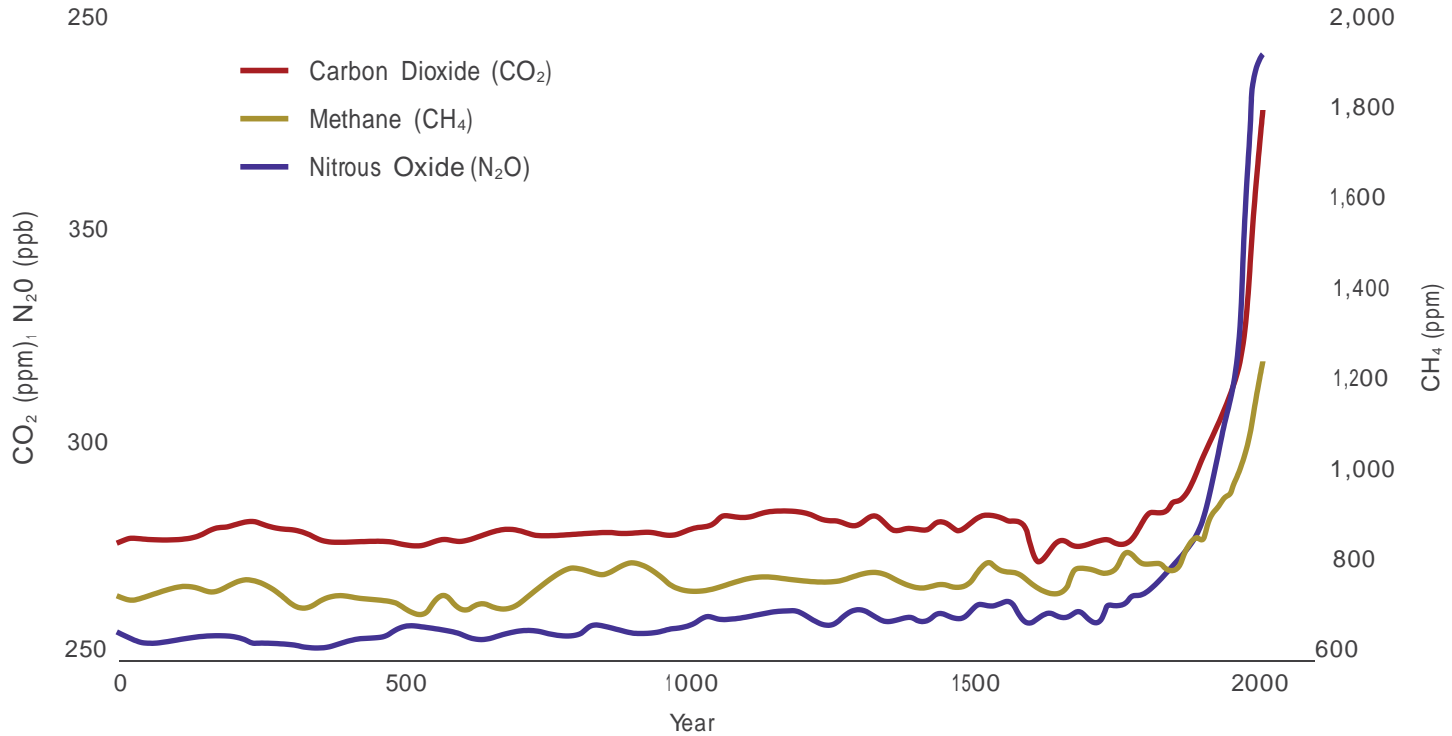
as well as most of the world’s human population. Ironically, one of the researchers reports that the countries first impacted by unprecedented climates are the ones with the least capacity to respond. Furthermore, these are countries that are least responsible for causing climate change.

Worldwide, climate change could affect “human welfare, through changes in the supply of food and water; human health, through wider spread of infectious diseases, through heat stress and through mental illness; the economy, through changes in goods and services; and national security as a result of population shifts, heightened competition for natural resources, violent conflict and geopolitical instability.”

Lastly, climate change should not be perceived solely as a prediction for the future; it is taking place now. The rate at which it continues depends upon how effectively the people of the developed nations curtail the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. If emissions are reduced, the pace of climate change will be slowed. This can, according to Mora, “buy time for species, ecosystems, and ourselves to adapt to the coming changes.”



## Concentrations of Greenhouse Gases from 0 to 2005



SOURCE: IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Chap 2

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## The Center for Interfaith Relations

The Center for Interfaith Relations (CIR) is a nonsectarian organization dedicated to promoting through interfaith activity greater understanding and cooperation among the culturally and religiously diverse neighbors residing in Louisville, Kentucky, and, indeed, in the world. Although it did not adopt its current name until 2006, CIR traces its origin to 1985 when the Cathedral Heritage Foundation (CHF) was founded to restore, revitalize, and sustain Louisville's Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Assumption. This project was initiated under the late Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, O.P., and was conceived of as interfaith in intention. He therefore convened a religiously diverse board to carry out the project.

The tradition of the medieval cathedrals, which served their communities as cultural and humane centers as well as places of worship, guided the plans for the restoration of the Cathedral of the Assumption. Completed in

1852, the early Cathedral had continued this tradition, offering a range of services that included economic relief for the poor, educational programs, a library, public lectures, and concerts.

The goal of CHF was to make the Cathedral once again a place that nurtured a more fully human life for all, but especially for persons in need, regardless of faith tradition.

As CHF attended to the many details of restoring the Cathedral building as a place of worship, in a gesture of broad social and interfaith outreach, it embarked upon initiatives to bring art and music to the people of Louisville. Over 600 programs, attended by some 33,000 persons were made available, and the George Garvin Brown Garden was created as an

inviting place of repose in the heart of downtown Louisville. These and other initiatives led up to the founding by Christy Brown in 1996 of the Festival of Faiths, the first event of its kind in the United States.



## The Festival of Faiths

The Festival of Faiths is a five-consecutive-day event that celebrates religious diversity, expresses gratitude for the unity composed of this diversity, and engages people of faith in common action for the good of the community. From the outset, the Festival of Faiths has been unique in its celebration of diversity, focusing upon the distinctive rituals, customs, and practices of the faith traditions represented in the local community and beyond. This respect for and fascination with diversity is an outgrowth of CIR's foundational belief that the Spirit is alive in all religious traditions. Within the Festival of Faiths, there is no religious mainstream, nor is any faith tradition relegated to minority status. To the contrary, the Festival upholds the belief that every act of worship by every single person is a blessing to one and all alike.

The Festival of Faiths recognizes religious diversity as a community asset, as it embodies an endless supply of admirable and enriching resources. The celebration of religious pluralism is more relevant today than it was in the early days of the Festival, when religious diversity in the United States referred, by and large, to Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Now, most American cities have become far more religiously diversified

through immigration patterns of the last century, making the United States the most religiously diverse nation on the planet. In bringing Hindus, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Baha'is, and others together, the Festival draws upon an array of resources and interests that cannot be exploited in a single lifetime. In this richly diverse setting, the Festival of Faiths convenes multiple programs including keynote speakers, panel discussions, interfaith services, art exhibits, films, youth programs, and other events. Each program is related to a Festival theme and is targeted to a specific audience and age group so that some aspect of the Festival of Faiths can appeal in a special way to the entire community.

The community benefits in many ways from the Festival of Faiths. The Festival itself is broadly based, reaching out to all under its presumption of unity in diversity. Benefiting from its broad outreach, it is well positioned to address community needs and to foster harmony by creating relationships where differences exist. In our world today, it is doubtful that community building can take place unless strong bonds of interreligious trust are woven, based upon mutual respect and understanding.

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Not only does the community at large benefit from the Festival of Faiths; individuals can grow spiritually within their own faith tradition through interreligious exchange. For example, Thomas Merton, a Catholic monk, reached out beyond Christianity to seek spiritual revitalization in the meditation traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, the search culminating in his meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1968. Each monk remained true to his own tradition, but each acknowledged that he benefited from the interreligious exchange between them.

Convinced of the benefits, communal and individual, of a Festival of Faiths, CIR has just embarked upon an effort to export the Festival, and to that end, is making available a Template for the use of those desiring to present a Festival of Faiths in their respective cities. This Template can be obtained at a modest charge from the CIR office:

415 W. Muhammad Ali Blvd.

Louisville, KY 40202

USA

(502) 583-3100

[festivaloffaiths@interfaithrelations.org](mailto:festivaloffaiths@interfaithrelations.org)

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This tool kit acknowledges first of all the efforts of all who give vitality and substance to the Sustainability Revolution through their reverence for sacred air, water, and soil and all the life, human and earth, which they support. Their inspiration has enlightened every aspect of this booklet, and it is gratefully noted.

More particularly, we acknowledge the following for their significant contributions to this publication:

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Speech Delivered at the 9th World Assembly  
of Religions for Peace  
November 20th – 22nd • Vienna, Austria

*My Dear Religions for Peace Family,*

*It is an exceptional honor to be here at your truly remarkable Religions for Peace 9th World Assembly. I am humbled to be before you because I sincerely believe that you represent the very best of the best of our world.*

*Each one of you, in carrying out your vitally important vocations, is a true beacon and model of peace and of hospitality because you daily lead by love, inspiring Faith, Hope, and Charity around our entire suffering world.*

*I accepted your invitation out of my gratitude to you and to Religions for Peace, which I have been privileged to serve many years as an International Trustee. This has allowed me to witness firsthand your loving and powerful work of developing an ever expanding “Religions for Peace global movement.”*

*Finally, I accepted because of my extremely deep concern for the health of all of life, and my alarm at the terrifying rate at which we are currently destroying our world's environment.*

*The breadth of your developing Religions for Peace family is truly exceptional, showing me and all of our globe's faith-filled individuals the endless potential power of All **FAITHS WORKING TOGETHER** to effect serious, positive global change.*

*My Louisville colleague, Dr. Kathleen Lyons, and I have brought you two gifts from our **Kentucky** home:*

*The first is a global tool kit, which is your invitation to please become recognized as the world's voice for the preservation of our sacred air, water, and soil so as to create healthy communities that are essential for the survival of all of life – human and natural.*

*Our other gift is your personal **KEY** and bookmark, which is a symbol of our prayer that you will continuously unlock your minds and hearts in new kinds of ways to discover that you are the true spiritual and inter-religious guardians of health and the loving protectors of all of life.*

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*HRH Prince Charles laments that we have for years been encouraged to think of ourselves as disconnected from nature, perhaps even the “masters of nature.” As a result, we have lost touch with the holiness of nature, which has been left in our care in a very, very sacred trust.*

*He believes, as many of us do, that to be restored to wholeness we must be reinstated consciously, spiritually, and emotionally with the vast, larger life of which we are a part. This larger life is sustained by the sacred air, water, and soil all of which are the gifts of life from the great author of life.*

*There is widespread evidence that we are scarcely conscious of our unity with all of life. The UN’s Millennium Ecosystem Assessment warns that “nearly two-thirds of the natural machinery that supports life on Earth is being degraded by human pressure;” yet, the reality is that this alarming news has scarcely drawn a response.*

*Gandhi has told us that “the Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not every man’s greed.” Again, no response.*

*My fellow Kentuckian and dear friend Wendell Berry has said, “...Industrial humanity has brought about phase two of original sin making us all now absolutely complicit in the murder of creation.” But I ask you, our religious leaders – who is listening?*

*Thich Nhat Hanh, a brilliant thinker in his own right and a friend to one of my personal heroes and fellow Kentuckians, Thomas Merton, has been telling us, “The bells of mindfulness are sounding. All over the Earth, we are experiencing floods, draughts, and massive wildfires. Sea ice is melting in the Arctic, hurricanes and heat waves are killing thousands. Mother Earth is being destroyed and Mother Earth is angry ... and yet we continue to consume, ignoring the ringing bells.” So I ask you again – who is listening?*

*We hear comments equally startling on a daily basis from those who love the Earth, like His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew who tells us that “the way we respond to the natural environment directly reflects the way we treat human beings and that the survival of the natural environment is also the survival of ourselves and that a crime against nature is a crime against ourselves and sin against God.”*

*Pope Francis is asking us “to protect with love all that God has given us.” So with our hearts full of love, let’s begin now by heeding the voices that speak on behalf of Nature and encouraging our followers to do the same.*

*The challenge before us is twofold: We face an ecological crisis as well as an unheeding populace. While I do not underestimate the magnitude of this challenge, I believe that our faiths give each of us hope that an improved understanding of the urgency of climate change can and*

*will take place through you, our world's religious leaders. We will see positive change when you begin to teach daily from your Mosques, your Cathedrals, your Temples, and your Synagogues that all of human life is precious. Health, Harmony, and Peace can only be achieved when we practice justice towards the world's sacred elements, the source of all life and our connection with the divine.*

*I am confident that our connection to this one planet is one of our greatest commonalities. You, the religious*

*leaders of our globe, who have "the allegiance of billions of believers," hold the world's keys and are the prophetic voices that our suffering earth has been waiting for. You are the voices of faith, of hope, and of charity which can create that one unified interreligious voice that will empower all religious leaders to find the much needed new ways to apply our universally shared moral principles to all life, natural and human, such as ...*

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*THOU SHALT NOT KILL*

*THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF*

*And THOU SHALT DO UNTO OTHERS AS WE  
WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO US*

*Fifty years ago at the young age of 16, I was among the 250,000 participants in the Civil Rights March on the Mall in Washington, DC. It was on that August day in 1963 that I witnessed for the first time in my life what I believe to be the absolutely remarkable power of successful interreligious leadership.*

*It was there that those very diverse religious leaders, speaking from their hearts, insisted that the racial atrocities that our suffering United States of America were tolerating were absolutely immoral and therefore completely unacceptable. Because of their fervor, we, the 250,000 plus people of all ages, creeds, and colors learned that day that, yes, together, "We must overcome," and that, yes, together, "We shall overcome."*

*Two years ago, in September, my extraordinary husband of 43 years, Owsley Brown II, a fellow Religions for Peace International Trustee, died very unexpectedly and tragically from an extremely rare form of MRSA. His shocking and completely surprising death, I will always believe, was absolutely connected to our destruction of life's natural balance.*

*So I stand before you, a widow with a broken heart, asking that you in the name of all of the children and grandchildren of our globe please use this your 9th World Assembly to heed Prince Charles's recommendation to create and lead a global sustainability movement that will restore our world and all of its people to moral and physical wellness.*

*This sustainability movement will allow you, our religious leaders, to become globally recognized as "Mother Earth's Moral Agents of Change" and the Moral Voices for All of Life as you teach each of us to use prayer, song, and love to celebrate the interconnectedness between our natural and human world. Together, we learn that each of us, bound in a single miraculous unity of life, is blessed to hold the whole world in our hands!*

*Most Affectionately,  
Christy Brown*

**Together let's preserve our World's Sacred Air,  
Water, and Soil, so as to create the healthy  
communities that are essential for the survival of all  
of life, human and natural.**

## An Endorsement of the Sustainability Revolution

*Adapted from a statement written by members of three Orders of Roman Catholic religious women in Kentucky, whose lands lie in the path of a proposed pipeline which would carry chemicals and gases that have the potential to threaten entire ecosystems and all the life that they support. You are invited to share this statement with your followers and to sign it to witness your collective endorsement of the Sustainability Revolution.*

**WE BELIEVE**, as supporters of the Sustainability Revolution, that Earth does not belong to us, but that we belong to Earth, our home planet that is alive with the creative energy of God. We believe that the divine intention is that all life be nurtured by creation's abundance, and that human beings have been called to be co-creators by living and working in harmony with all life systems. Today, this requires that we acknowledge the potential catastrophe of global climate change and our role in causing it. We believe that we have a responsibility to change our behavior and our priorities in order to slow the pace of disastrous climate change. Our goal must be to provide within this decade the means of meeting global energy needs through the use of efficient and affordable renewable resources.

**WE REJECT**, as supporters of the Sustainability Revolution, the assumption that access to the resources needed by all Earth's people can be limited to the ownership and profit-taking of a few. We reject all tactics that threaten the health of earth as well as human life, and we reject an economy that promotes wasteful consumption of energy and natural resources. We reject the plundering of Earth through mismanagement or by behaviors motivated by greed, such as extraction, deforestation, and polluting land, air, and water. We further reject the notion that the Sustainability Revolution promises a life of rigorous austerity.

**WE COMMIT**, as supporters of the Sustainability Revolution, to caring for sacred air, soil, and water and to exercising compassion for all of our global neighbors. We commit ourselves to advancing the cause of Peace on Earth by directing our efforts and ingenuity to reversing the course of destruction fueled by climate change, thereby participating in a movement that promises a healthy and productive existence for all life—human and earth.

*Please send an email message, indicating your endorsement of the Sustainability Revolution, to [festivaloffaiths@interfaithrelations.org](mailto:festivaloffaiths@interfaithrelations.org). Please indicate on the Subject Line of your email "Sustainability Revolution." A response no later than January 1, 2014, would be appreciated.*



*Religious communities are, without question, the largest and best organized civil institutions in the world today, claiming the allegiance of billions of believers and bridging the divides of race, class, and nationality. They are uniquely equipped to meet the challenges of our time: resolving conflicts, caring for the earth, the sick and needy, and promoting peaceful co-existence among all people.*

**Religions for Peace**   
*Different Faiths, Common Action.*