



UCC Conference Minister Part of National Interfaith Coalition to Address Climate Change

New coalition of religious activists to seek solutions regarding climate change

CLEVELAND, OH (May 9, 2014) – On the heels of the National Climate Assessment, a grim report on global warming released by the White House on May 6, a group of faith-based environmental leaders kicked-off a new initiative to address climate change in congregations, communities and beyond. Blessed Tomorrow, a national interfaith coalition of religious activists, launched Wednesday, May 7, to inspire and engage people of faith to lead the charge on climate change solutions and work with other groups to create real, necessary change.

"I think of this as a movement really," said the Rev. Jim Antal, conference minister of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and one of Blessed Tomorrow's founding faith leaders. "People of faith are the sleeping giant in relation to the social change that needs to happen. I can now see the beginning of a path through which that sleeping giant will arise and pastors, rabbis and other faith leaders across the country will be able to engage and face the biggest challenge we've ever faced."

Blessed Tomorrow is an interfaith initiative of ecoAmerica, an organization that aims to mobilize people to understand and address America's core concerns and how they relate to climate and sustainability. EcoAmerica consists of leaders in seven sectors – faith, business, health, communities, new constituencies, higher education, and stewardship – all working to address climate change in their particular areas. Antal is one of Blessed Tomorrow's 21 founding faith leaders, with the Rev. Canon Sally Bingham, president and founder of Interfaith Power and Light; the Rev. Fletcher Harper, executive director of GreenFaith; and the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), among others.

The goal of Blessed Tomorrow is to encourage faith leaders to take steps together on a path to a positive future while maintaining the distinct voice of their tradition through simple, proven resources they can use to empower their members and communities. Its "Path to Positive" initiative provides tools for faith leaders, so each can create their own set of strategies and solutions to engage their churches, communities, and municipalities with creation care.

In late May, leaders from all seven sectors of ecoAmerica will gather in Chicago for a day-and-a-half event. There, activists from each sector will provide mutual encouragement and cross fertilization for one another relative to the environmental work each group will be undertaking, in some ways, all together. Antal said this event will provide an opportunity for all leaders in the environmental movement to come together and share ways to deal with the global crisis of climate change.

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About the United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a mainline Protestant denomination with nearly 1 million members and more than 5,100 congregations nationwide, including more than 150 UCC congregations throughout North Carolina.

Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American. The UCC's motto ("That they may all be one," John 17:21) and tagline (God is still speaking,) supports the Church's long-standing commitment to social justice issues and its extravagant welcome to all, no matter who they are, or where they are on life's journey.

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