



OUR TIME TO RISE

Religious Resources for Sun Day - Faiths 4 Climate Justice



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Raising a Moral Cry for Climate Justice

Religious leaders are the soul's first responders.

In a time of ecological collapse and democratic decline, the world is not only in crisis—it is waiting for moral clarity and hope. **That hope can come from us.**

When religious leaders speak, conscience is stirred.

When congregations move, communities heal.

When faiths unite, change becomes possible.

We are not powerless. We are not alone. This is our time to rise.

We are called to proclaim that caring for the Earth is a sacred duty. That justice for the vulnerable is the heart of all true religion. That faith can no longer be used to divide or dominate—but to heal, to unite, and to protect life.

On the weekend of September 19-21, religious communities across the US will be speaking out for clean energy and climate justice. We invite you to join them for the Sun Day - Faiths for Climate Justice Mobilization.

Some will hold climate-themed worship services and rituals. Others will march to statehouses and city halls, lead climate pilgrimages, learn more about solar power and electric vehicles. The type of actions is as long as the list of participants. But the intent is the same: to show that religious communities are profoundly and joyfully committed to climate action.

Together, let us commit to making a difference.

May the rivers of justice roll.

May our voices, prayers and actions rise like incense.

May our faiths burn with the fire of compassion and truth.

[Click here for resources and information about Sun Day - Faiths 4 Climate Justice](#)

Overview

The United States is at a crossroads.

The Earth is crying out from fire and flood. Our democracy is under siege by forces of greed, violence and fear. Millions are suffering - in this country and around the world. Billions more will suffer if we do not act.

This is not a time for silence. It is a time for our faiths to rise.

Throughout history, when humanity has stumbled toward injustice and destruction, religious voices have sparked renewal. Prophets have stood before rulers. Monastics have shielded the vulnerable. Communities of faith have raised songs of freedom, delivered powerful messages, and marched with immeasurable courage, breaking the chains of injustice.

Today, the climate crisis, inextricably linked to the struggle to protect democracy, demands nothing less.

Our traditions teach us to love the Earth fiercely, to defend the poor, to speak out boldly against evil and authoritarianism. They teach that for faith communities, speaking truth to power is a privilege and responsibility we pass from generation to generation.

And now, with the power of renewable energy rising like never before, with the dreams of a just and sustainable world still alive, our voices—faithful, courageous, united—can shift the moral landscape again.

The Goal of This Resource

When we began to plan this resource, we asked ourselves, “What would be most useful to religious and spiritual leaders in this challenging moment? What do we want to share in the lead-up to the [September 19-21 Sun Day mobilization](#), a major part of which involves asking religious leaders to speak out for climate action?”

These questions led us to develop a resource that is different from ones we've produced in the past..

This report, and resources that will follow it, is designed to equip religious leaders to preach, teach or speak publicly about the current state of the climate crisis, the US response, and the role of faith leaders and communities in several ways:

- It's important to continue to educate our communities about the impacts of climate change. So, at first, in bullet-pointed form with links to further details, we share facts and statistics about the increase in climate change impacts and the massive health impacts of fossil fuel-generated air pollution.
- It's also important to educate our communities about the devastating and immoral actions the new administration has taken over the past six months. In the following pages we summarize the ways the administration has undermined climate progress and the increased support for the fossil fuel industry through various executive actions and the recent Big Beautiful Bill.
- Despite these real dangers and backward steps, renewable energy continues to grow faster than even the most optimistic projections. We share some data about the rise of renewables - a genuine sign of hope.
- In these challenging times, it is easy for people to feel discouraged and to doubt their own efficacy. We want to remind religious leaders and congregations that their voices matter. In the third section, we summarize research that documents the vitally important and influential roles that religious communities and their leaders play at times of social crisis and when democracy is threatened.

- Finally, we all need inspiration. In the report's final sections, we provide clean energy success stories, examples of transformative religious leadership, and sacred texts that provide assurance and remind us that it's our duty to speak out for what is right, especially in challenging times.

In this difficult time, let's never forget:

We are called to proclaim that protecting the Earth is a sacred duty.

We are called to declare that justice for the vulnerable is the heart of true religion and the moral core of democracy.

We are called to reclaim the public square from those who would use faith to divide and destroy.

This is our moment. This is our time to rise.

May our voices be loud, our spirits bold, and our love for the Earth and all people unstoppable.

[Click here for resources and information about Sun Day - Faiths 4 Climate Justice](#)

Climate Dangers, Clean Energy Opportunities

The Climate Emergency is Here.

The impacts of climate change are accelerating across the US and around the world.

- 2023 was the hottest year ever recorded globally ([NOAA](#)), until 2024 - and that was in turn the hottest year ever recorded. ([NOAA](#))
- In the U.S., 28 separate climate disasters cost over \$92 billion and took more than 500 lives in 2023 ([NOAA Billion-Dollar Disasters](#)). That is \$10.5 million in damages just in the US every hour of every day.
- Poor and working-class communities suffer most: they live in flood-prone areas, wildfire zones, and neighborhoods without green cover or clean air ([EPA Climate and Social Vulnerability Report](#)).
- Climate-related migration is rising—11 million Americans were displaced by weather disasters in 2024 ([Internal Displacement Monitoring Center](#)). This was a record.

Burning Fossil Fuels Kills Millions.

- Air pollution, largely from burning fossil fuels, is responsible for at least 100,000 premature deaths in the US annually ([US News and World Report](#)).
- In 2023, fossil fuel-generated air pollution killed over 5 million people around the globe. ([The Guardian](#))
- Renewable energy leads to cleaner air, which prevents asthma and improves cardiovascular health.

The US Government is Dismantling Climate Protections and Clean Energy.

Over the past six months, the federal government has taken numerous steps to cancel, de-fund and undermine the US response to climate change.

- The US has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement ([US State Department](#)).

- The government has sought to halt offshore wind development ([Reuters](#)), attacked EV subsidies and defunded much of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) ([Politico](#)).
- By early 2025, the IRA had already created over 400,000 jobs. ([Climate Power](#)) Projections were that this legislation would have created nearly 1 million jobs annually for ten years. ([Blue Green Alliance](#)) The Big Beautiful Bill will eliminate many of these.

Fossil Fuel Industry Subsidies: Profiting from Destruction

The recent Big Beautiful Bill extended and increased fossil fuel industry subsidies which accelerate climate change.

- Fossil fuel companies receive \$20 billion per year in direct U.S. subsidies ([EIA](#)). That's more than \$2 million in direct subsidies every single hour of every day.
- Globally, fossil fuel subsidies totaled \$7 trillion in 2022 ([IMF](#)). That's more than \$800 million in subsidies every single hour of every day.

Hope Still Rises: Renewable Energy and Green Jobs

In the face of these challenges, renewable energy has grown faster than even the most optimistic forecasts. Now is not the time to slow down!

- In 2024, thanks to consistent state policies and a commitment to climate leadership, over 55% of California's electricity came from renewable sources ([US Energy Information Administration](#)). For 132 days, 100% of the state's electricity was generated by renewables. ([CA ISO](#))
- In 2024, more than 500,000 Californians were employed in clean energy jobs ([E2 Clean Jobs Report](#)).
- Nationally, renewable sources provided 24% of all US electricity in 2024 and continue to grow ([EIA](#)).

Stories to Inspire Preaching

The following five stories can serve as an inspiration for congregations learning more about climate change and how we can respond. They also remind us about the suffering that climate change causes - and why our actions matter.

Pakistan: When the Waters Rose, the People Rose Too

In the last decade, Pakistan has experienced two of the most catastrophic climate-induced floods in its history – in 2010 and again in 2022. Together, they displaced tens of millions, killed thousands, and left vast areas of farmland and homes underwater for months. In 2022 alone, one-third of the country was submerged.

The government's power grid, already fragile, could not meet the needs of a flooded, recovering population.

But in the midst of loss, everyday people took matters into their own hands.

Across rural and urban communities, Pakistanis began purchasing solar panels, often with pooled community funds, small loans, or personal savings. In many cases, they installed the panels themselves, creating local microgrids to power lights, water pumps, and cell towers. Even mosques began using solar to remain open and serve as safe spaces.

In just two years, these grassroots solar efforts contributed to a 25% increase in the country's electricity supply from renewables, even as national infrastructure lags behind.

This is a story of human dignity, resilience, and hope. In the face of devastation, people together with solar panels created light, and hope.

Faith is not only found in sacred texts. It is found in the determined hands of people who refuse to give up. In Pakistan, when the world failed them, they turned their faces to the sun—and shared its power with each other. (See [Reuters](#))

Texas: From Eviction to Opportunity - Rebuilding Life One Solar Panel at a Time

Frederick Mims was working construction in Houston and doing okay - until the pandemic hit in early 2020. He lost his job. Then, without warning, his apartment lease ended and he was evicted, forced to bounce between shelters and sporadic day labor.

Refusing to give up, Frederick enrolled in a clean-energy workforce program called MC3 (Multi-Craft Core Curriculum), powered by the Texas Climate Jobs Project. Over several weeks, he earned certifications in health and safety, electric work, core construction skills—and even received transportation stipends and completion support.

 Pakistan's solar surge lifts it into rarefied 25% club



After graduation, Frederick joined the Laborers' International Union of North America Local 350 and started work on a solar farm near Livingston, Texas. Today, he has a stable, unionized job in the clean energy sector. He's rebuilt his confidence and housing stability. He earns a living wage—no longer living paycheck to paycheck.

Frederick's story shows how green jobs training can lift working-class individuals out of poverty, giving them dignity, security, and purpose.

In the face of rising energy insecurity and climate threats, we need stories like Frederick's—real proof that faith-rooted training and clean energy can empower resilient communities.

But now there's a new threat. Will Frederick's job—and the many like it—survive political attacks on the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and federal climate programs? If those programs are defunded or rolled back, will the door close on this path of liberation? Or will we rise together to protect it? (See [Houston Chronicle](#))

California: When the Land Could No Longer Feed Them, the Sun Did

In California's San Joaquin Valley, once one of the most productive farming regions in the world, farmers are facing a future they never imagined.

Climate change, which has resulted in groundwater restrictions, years of intense drought, and rising temperatures, have made it impossible for many small farmers to keep planting. For generations, their families worked the land. But now, some of that land can't grow crops anymore.

And so, they're growing a new cash crop: clean power.

California farmers are leasing portions of their parched, fallowed land to solar developers. These new "fields" don't grow almonds or cotton or tomatoes—they harvest sunlight. Some farmers are now making more money from solar than they ever did from crops. "We just couldn't keep irrigating," one farmer said. "But this? This brings in revenue. And it doesn't deplete the land."

The state estimates that more than a million acres of farmland may need to be retired due to water scarcity. But thousands of those acres are already being reborn as clean energy centers, helping power the grid and provide income to struggling families.

It's not just a new way to farm. It's a new way to live faithfully on the land. (See [Beaumont Enterprise](#))

Climate Jobs National Resource Center's post

Climate Jobs National Resource Center
January 27 · 📍

The [Houston Chronicle](#) recently featured stories of graduates from the [Texas Climate Jobs Project's](#) re-apprenticeship program, which trains Texans for good union careers building clean energy infrastructure.

Recent graduate Frederick Mims first lost his construction job at the beginning of the pandemic and in 2023 was facing eviction. Today, Mims is a member of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Local 350 and is working on a solar project in Livingston, Texas.



HOUSTONCHRONICLE.COM
A new Houston program aims to build a pipeline of unionized clean energy jobs



Farmers are making bank harvesting a new crop: Solar energy

In California's water-stressed Central Valley, farmers are fallowing land and installing solar, providing financial stability and saving water.

North Carolina: Sacred Roofs, Sacred Power

In North Carolina, the power bills at many small congregations used to eat up funds that could have gone to feeding the hungry, running youth programs, or helping elders pay for medicine.

And for Black churches and under-resourced congregations, the energy burden was especially heavy.

But instead of giving up, they turned their roofs into prophets.

With the help of faith-based nonprofits and community solar programs, dozens of congregations in North Carolina have installed rooftop solar panels—producing clean energy, lowering their bills, and proclaiming their moral commitment to creation care. “We preach stewardship,” said one pastor. “It’s not just about money. It’s about how we treat the Earth.”

Despite outdated laws that made it hard for nonprofits to own solar panels directly, these congregations worked around the system, using power purchase agreements and third-party ownership to make solar affordable. Some churches now save thousands of dollars each year, money that goes right back into their ministries.

Their rooftops are now sermons. Their panels are prayers made visible. Their electricity is clean, and their moral challenge is clear: “What if every steeple became a statement? What if our sanctuaries not only preached light—but produced it?” (See [Religion News Service](#))

Hurricane Ian: When the Storm Passed, the Flood of Injustice Remained

In 2022, Hurricane Ian slammed into Florida and parts of Texas with devastating force. Entire neighborhoods were submerged. Homes were torn from their foundations. Power was lost for days.

But the real storm came after the wind died down.

Tens of thousands of people, especially in working-class and Black and Latino communities, lost everything. Not just their homes. Their footing in life.

They had no flood insurance. Many were renters. Some were already living paycheck to paycheck. FEMA aid didn’t reach everyone. Rebuilding was a luxury they couldn’t afford.

In Texas, a single mother of two watched her apartment flood, and then faced eviction—with nowhere to go. In Florida, elderly residents without cars couldn’t evacuate, and lost everything. Some families ended up homeless. Others went deep into debt just to survive.

Meanwhile, wealthier residents with flood insurance and higher-ground homes rebuilt quickly. The storm became just an interruption.

How smaller congregations are challenging the system to 'go solar'

GREENSBORO, N.C. (RNS) — Smaller, African-American churches are convinced of the moral obligations of switching to renewable energy sources, but the speed with which they take on solar panels has much to do with economics and state regulations.



By —
Aria
Rhodes, The
Conversation

By —
Mick
DeSivik, The
Conversation

Analysis: How disasters like Hurricane Ian can make inequality worse

For others, it was a permanent setback—another widening of the chasm between rich and poor.

And climate change is making these storms more frequent, more intense, more cruel. As one researcher put it: “Disasters don’t create inequality—but they shine a spotlight on it—and deepen it.”

Floodwaters don’t discriminate, but disaster recovery does. If we claim to love our neighbor, we must confront a system that abandons them in their hour of need. (See [PBS](#))

In threatening times, religious voices matter.

Religious Leadership Helps Stop Authoritarianism's Spread

The research is clear. When trusted leaders and clergy speak out boldly, visibly, morally: movements for justice grow, and authoritarianism retreats. Public moral leadership by clergy and spiritual figures has been a cornerstone of democratic resistance throughout history. Faith leadership in the US Civil Rights Movement and Poland's Solidarity Movement are recent examples. ([Protect Democracy](#))

Following are several examples of leadership from different faiths. Some of these examples will be familiar while others may not be. In times of crisis, these stories can remind us of the importance of faithful leadership and renew our own commitment to action to protect the climate. These stories are listed in historical order.

1. Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth was a formerly enslaved African American woman who, in the 19th century, became a powerful preacher, abolitionist, and women's rights activist.

- Guided by Christian faith, she believed God had called her to travel and speak out against slavery and injustice.
- Her stirring speeches—including the famous "Ain't I a Woman?" address—challenged the moral failures of a society that oppressed both Black people and women.
- She combined spiritual authority with fearless public witness, confronting racism and sexism with uncompromising clarity.
- "Truth is powerful and it prevails." Her life embodied prophetic faith in action for liberation and equality.

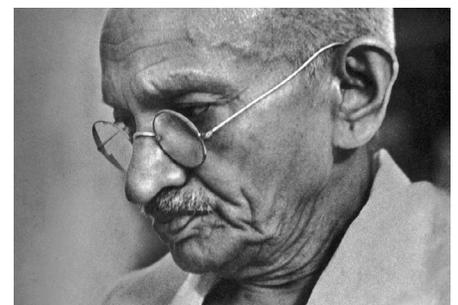


Credit: Picryl

2. Mahatma Gandhi and the Struggle for Indian Independence

Mahatma Gandhi, a devout Hindu, led a decades-long nonviolent resistance against British colonial rule in India. Rooted in Hindu dharma, teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, and the Jain principle of ahimsa (non-harm), Gandhi's spiritual conviction generated mass political action.

- He mobilized millions through peaceful marches, boycotts, and fasting — always grounded in prayer and truth-seeking (satyagraha). His moral clarity inspired global movements for civil rights and liberation.
- Gandhi demonstrated how religious discipline, public courage, and spiritual nonviolence could defeat an empire and inspire a global ethic of justice.
- "You may never know what results come from your actions. But if you do nothing, there will be no result."

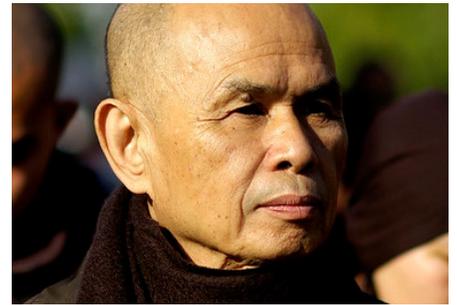


Credit: Wikimedia Commons

3. Thich Nhat Hanh: Buddhist Nonviolence and the Vietnam War

During the Vietnam War, Thich Nhat Hanh – a young Vietnamese Zen monk – spoke out globally against the war. He called for peace, reconciliation, and compassion rooted in mindfulness.

- He coined the term “engaged Buddhism,” insisting that spiritual life must respond to the suffering of the world. “When bombs begin to fall on people, you cannot stay in the meditation hall all of the time.”
- His 1967 meeting with Martin Luther King Jr. helped persuade King to denounce the Vietnam War, a turning point in US public opinion.
- In exile for nearly 40 years, Nhat Hanh continued to teach that peace, justice, and environmental protection are spiritual imperatives.
- He showed that contemplative religions can offer powerful resistance to injustice and that moral clarity expressed with compassion can shift global conscience.



Credit: Duc

4. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement

In the face of vicious segregation, police brutality, and white supremacist terrorism, Dr. King, a Baptist minister, mobilized the moral power of Black churches to awaken a nation’s conscience.

- His leadership catalyzed landmark changes including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, he reminded fellow clergy: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Credit: Unpacked for Educators

5. Rabbis Abraham Joshua Heschel and Joachim Prinz - Interfaith Solidarity

Both men fled Nazi persecution and became leading voices in the US Civil Rights Movement. Heschel, a Polish-born theologian, marched with Dr. King at Selma and describing it as “praying with my feet.” Prinz rallied the Jewish community across the US to join the Civil Rights Movement, speaking at the March on Washington, and gave the speech just before Dr. King: “America must not become a nation of onlookers...It must not remain silent. It must speak up and act.”

- They framed racism and war as religious crises, not just political ones.
- They pointed to the harm done when nations turned a blind eye to injustice.
- Their prophetic voices helped bring interfaith credibility and urgency to the movement.
- They showed how spiritual leaders, especially from historically



Rabbi Joachim Prinz speaking at the 1963 March on Washington

Credit: NJ Jewish News

persecuted communities, can transform interfaith moral action into real world impact.

6. Swami Agnivesh: Fighting India's Caste System

A Hindu monk, Swami Agnivesh led campaigns against bonded labor and caste-based discrimination. Bonded labour is a form of modern slavery in which a person is forced to work to repay a debt with little or no pay, and without freedom to leave, with the debt manipulated to keep the worker trapped indefinitely, passed down through generations.

- Rooted in Vedic teachings of equality and through interfaith collaboration, Swami Agnivesh helped secure the 1976 Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act in India and worked across religious lines for justice and peace.
- "Spirituality divorced from social justice is not true spirituality. Religion must be a force for liberation, not oppression."



7. Malala Yousafzai and the Fight for Girls' Education and Peace

Raised in Pakistan under Taliban occupation, Malala Yousafzai – a devout Muslim – began speaking out publicly at age 11 against the Taliban's ban on girls' education. Grounded in her Islamic faith, she risked her life to defend the rights of girls and women to learn and lead.

- After surviving a gunshot wound to the head at age 15, Malala continued her advocacy on the world stage, always framing education as a religious and moral imperative. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize at the age of 17.
- In her acceptance speech, she quoted the Quran: "Read! In the name of your Lord who created." (Surah Al-'Alaq 96:1) and emphasized that Islam teaches equality, knowledge, and peace, not violence or repression.
- "The extremists are afraid of books and pens. The power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women."



Credit: White House

The collective message of these stories: Silence emboldens injustice. Proclamation and religiously rooted action change history. Sacred teachings across traditions remind us of this simple truth. The following is a short list of sacred texts which give voice to this reality.

	Religion	Text	Message
	Christianity	Amos 5:24 – “Let justice roll down like waters.”	Faith is active. Justice must be visible.
	Judaism	Isaiah 58:1 – “Shout aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet.”	Silence is betrayal. Prophets speak.
	Islam	Qur’an 3:104 – “Let there arise among you a group calling to good...”	Moral witness is a sacred obligation.
	Hinduism	Bhagavad Gita 2:47 – “You have a right to your duty, not its fruits.”	Do what is right—regardless of outcome.
	Buddhism	Lotus Sutra – “We must spread the message for the benefit of all beings.”	Truth must be shared, not hidden.
	Unitarian Universalism	2nd Principle – “Justice, equity, and compassion...”	Speak for love, justice, and the common good.

Preaching Tip:

When religious leaders fall silent, injustice gains ground. When we speak and act, hope rises. Tell your own story. Why do you care? How did your tradition teach you to stand for justice?

Sample Sermon Opener:

“We are not the first to face trials. We walk in the footsteps of prophets and peacemakers who refused to be silent.”

B. For Faith Leaders, Communities: Speaking Out is a Religious Responsibility

Our sacred texts do not call us to private comfort. They call us to public courage, to lift our voices on behalf of those who are suffering, and to demand justice. This is as true now in relation to climate change as it has been on any issue of social concern across history.

A recent study reminds us of the power of religious voices by showing that when religious leaders break silence on climate change, their congregants change. Out of 1,600 US religious leaders surveyed in 2023-24, 90% believed that climate change is real, but only 50% had ever mentioned this in a sermon and 25% have only mentioned climate change once or twice.

The same study found that when congregants hear their clergy speak out consistently about climate change, they become more likely to become active on the issue themselves and to support candidates calling for climate action.

[\(Boston College\)](#)

The following passages highlight the shared moral duty across religions to raise one's voice publicly in defense of justice and righteousness.



Ed Hayward | University Communications | April 2024

Religion	Text	Message
 Christianity	Ephesians 5:11 – “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”	Followers of Christ are called not just to avoid wrongdoing, but to name and confront it publicly.
 Judaism	Proverbs 31:8–9 – “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.”	Moral responsibility includes advocacy for the voiceless and vulnerable.
 Islam	Qur’an 4:135 – “O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even against yourselves...”	Justice is a sacred duty, even when it is personally costly.
 Hinduism	Bhagavad Gita 3.19 – “One should engage in work without attachment for the sake of the welfare of society.”	Spiritual maturity involves acting for the common good, not personal gain.
 Buddhism	The Mahāyāna Sūtra of Golden Light – “The voice of truth shall be like thunder in the sky, awakening those in slumber.”	Speaking the truth with compassion is a form of awakening others and oneself.
 Unitarian Universalism	Principle 5: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process	Our core values call on us to speak out publicly.

Preaching Tips:

**Encourage action: suggest one public way the congregation can respond this week
(write a letter, attend a rally, support a green policy).**

Challenge your congregation to see themselves as part of a rising, moral movement of faith.

Sample Openers for Spoken Teachings:

“The prophets were not polite. The saints were not silent.

The world is waiting for the faithful to find their voice again.”

“We are not powerless. We are prophets. We are not waiting. We are proclaiming.”

“In this moment of planetary pain, the world needs a sacred uprising.

Not one of violence, but of love. Not one of fear, but of faith.”

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