

Summary and Report on the Cool Planet Adult Study: “Creation Care: Responding to Climate Change”

These study sessions were held on Sunday mornings, 9:20-10:15am, April 18 - May 23, 2010, at the First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, 1140 Cowper Street (at Lincoln Ave.), www.fprespa.org.

The Cool Planet Working Group (CPWG) of the First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, California planned this Adult Study Series to cover six general areas related to understanding and acting on greenhouse gas emission and climate change. The study sessions spanning these six areas also provided an opportunity to hear and share some questions, ideas and knowledge among ourselves, as members of the CPWG and as members of our church community. This summary gives the descriptions used to announce each of the six sessions followed by a summary of that session.

1. April 18: Overview and “Biological Science that Shows the Urgency of Action”

After a brief introduction to the series, special guest Ellie Cohen, CEO and Director of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (<http://www.prbo.org>) will discuss findings from the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. What do the birds tell us about climate change, and what might that mean for us?! Dr. Cohen will focus on the science and the public concerns that motivate her passion for turning back climate change.

Summary: Dr. Cohen told how her increasing concern about species extinction and other effects of global warming had led her to enroll in Al Gore’s program to train speakers to present the problem and to urge actions to correct human-caused global warming. The Point Reyes Bird Observatory is also a Conservation Center, and is an information source on much past and ongoing research by scientists whose work documents the accelerating changes, especially warming and changes caused by warming, changes that emerge from biological research data on birds and other animals and plants in California. . . .

2. April 25: Panel on Climate Economics and Stewardship: Our actions as consumers and investors

Michael Closson of Acterra on our choices as consumers; Jeff Chow on environmentally-conscious investing and donating; our third speaker will be Yvonne Charles of California Interfaith Power & Light (CIPL). This session gives practical advice on how we can show our faith by our works effectively (James 2:18).

Summary: All three panelists told us of things they do and actions that they recommend for action as consumers, investors and donors, actions that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stimulate businesses that build or use renewable energy sources or cut energy demand. Actions that we may want to consider include increasing our capacity to donate via some suggestions Jeff Chow made regarding insurance and other ways to conserve and protect personal assets that we need for retirement and heirs, install solar or energy conserving equipment in our church per guidance available through Yvonne Charles’s presentation and discussion of what CIPL provides as an information and networking service, and act as consumers and as educators along the lines suggested by Michael Closson of Acterra. On this last one, we have details from our Cool Campaign reports of Oct. 2008 through April 2009, in which we were a participant in the general campaign led by Acterra.

3. May 2: Faith Traditions: Words that Teach and Inspire Creation Care

Evan Hughes and others share ideas on stewardship of creation from the Judeo-Christian tradition and other faith traditions, from biblical times through the present.

Summary: A 12-page set of texts selected by our group over the past two years, plus some selected by Evan Hughes for our Adult Study is available from Evan (evanhughesphd@aol.com) and from Susan Chamberlain (suschamberlain@gmail.com).

4. May 9: Actions as Citizens: Showing “Faith” Through “Works”

Peter Drekmeier tells of his experiences and lessons learned to advise us on (1) priorities, (2) messages to convey, and (3) methods of citizen action. What actions can make our role as citizens most effective?

Summary: Peter Drekmeier presented in PowerPoint and then took questions. His slides covered the problems that global warming presents to California and the local area, the emission sources including statewide and Palo Alto itself, and then emphasized the changes, such as sea level rise and the changes in the Bay and in the Palo Alto bay front that are expected to result even if future emissions are reduced. On citizen action, Peter presented a timeline of local events and organizations.

5. May 16: Technology: Creation Care and Human Creativity

Don Hildenbrand, Evan Hughes and Leo Lotter discuss technology and lifestyle topics: conservation, energy efficiency, electric vehicles, solar cells, algae, biomass and geothermal energy, renewable fuels and renewable power generation sources and technologies.

Summary: Don Hildenbrand discussed electric vehicles, batteries and hydrogen as a fuel, and the potential of energy conservation and efficiency to do much of the needed emission reduction at lower cost than many new, renewable sources of electric power generation. Leo Lotter showed a 10-minute video from public television’s Nova Science Now on the subject of automobile and truck fuel from algae. He then made some comments and took questions. Evan Hughes gave a list of renewable and zero-emission (no carbon dioxide from fossil fuel sources of carbon) technologies and commented on most of them. Evan introduced an attendee, Alex Canarra, who had two slides to present: (1) one on “white roofs” as cost effective energy conservation and a way to lessen global warming by reflecting a small amount of solar heat radiation back into space; and (2) the other on thorium molten salt nuclear reactor technology as a much safer way to generate zero-carbon electricity.

6. May 23: Science: From “having dominion” over the Earth to “managing” the Earth’s atmosphere to care for the Creation and Humanity

Stephen Schneider, world-renowned Stanford climate scientist (<http://stephenschneider.stanford.edu>), will speak on the science of climate change, the human role in causing and solving the problem, and what we should know about the science, the scientists, the “debate,” and how to be effective.

Summary: Edie Eddy introduced Dr. Stephen Schneider and he made a presentation on many aspects of the problems, the urgency of action and some of the issues and media battles over action on global warming. His book *Science as a Contact Sport* tells of the science and the battles 1970-2009, based on his own active role over these 40 years.