

## **CLIMATE CHANGE: THE EVIDENCE AND CONSEQUENCE FOR THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

*“The era of procrastination, of half measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays is coming to its close.”* Winston Churchill, 1936

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (IPCC), projects a possible global temperature rise of up to six degrees by 2100, with its best estimate, a 4.5 degree Celsius during this century. Long-term changes in climate change have been observed at global, continental, and regional levels; including Arctic temperatures and ice, ocean salinity and wind patterns, resulting in extreme weather to include droughts, heavy precipitation, and heat waves. Scientist predict that heat waves in North America will become more intense, more frequent and longer lasting in the second half of the century. Heat waves have stronger effects on urban populations especially the urban poor. One major reason for urban areas being more prone to heat-related deaths, the “heat island” effect, is due to its surface-covering is typically asphalt and concrete, which retains heat. As a result, temperatures in these areas are higher, especially during heat waves. African Americans are more than twice likely as Whites to live in the inner city. African Americans, particularly, should be concerned about the issue of climate change.

Climate change is expected to increase the range of many diseases, as warmer conditions will allow disease-spreading insects such as ticks and mosquitoes to live in places they previously could not live. Scientist estimate that the potential for a malaria epidemic could increase by up to 27 percent due to climate change. Warmer and wetter conditions in the United States are likely to increase malaria rates in this country. African Americans are one and a half times less likely than White Americans to have medical insurance and are less likely to have regular access to medical care. As a result, increases in diseases put African Americans more at risk than other communities. Higher temperatures of global warming are expected to degrade air

quality through increased ozone formation. In every major city in the United States, African Americans are more likely than Whites to be exposed to higher air toxics concentrations. Over 70 percent of African Americans live in counties in violation of federal air pollution standards. Due to violation of these standards, there is an expected increase in the incidence of asthmas in the general population. African Americans are nearly three times as likely to be hospitalized or killed by asthmas as Whites.

Climate change has a direct impact on ministry in our churches. Unemployment and economic hardship associated with climate change will fall most heavily on the African American community. Gasoline prices are affected by climate change. There is a direct correlation between social justice, economic justice and climate justice. Although African Americans are disproportionately affected by climate change, they also have more to gain from policies to slow global warming. According to one study, reducing emissions of greenhouse gases to 15 percent below 1990 levels would save an estimated 10,000 African Americans lives per year by 2020.

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