

CLIMATE CHANGE



GUIDE:

- Find out when and where political candidates are going to speak. Specifically, look for “town hall” style meetings where audience members can interact with candidates and/or policymakers.
- Research the stance that the candidate/policymaker takes on environmental issues and plan your questions accordingly. Be mindful that terms like “climate or “climate change” can be viewed as polarizing and shut down an opportunity for meaningful discussion.
- Ask your questions in a polite but firm manner. Avoid yes/no questions and instead ask more open-ended questions.
- If allowed, speak with a candidate before or after an event for a more in-depth conversation.

Menno Simons called on government authorities to uphold just policies: “you must see to it that justice is done between two parties in dispute and to free the oppressed out of the hand of the oppressor” (“Foundation of Christian Doctrine,” 1539). For U.S. citizens, we have a duty to ourselves and our communities to participate in our elections. If you have not registered to vote yet, visit:

washingtonmemo.org/register-to-vote

Many who reside in the United States still struggle for the right to vote. Even those who are not registered voters can still find opportunities to engage candidates at public events or through other means of communication such as letters and social media.

Introduction

Climate change is an issue that affects our communities at local, national, and international levels, with the most vulnerable populations being the least responsible and the least able to cope when we fall short in our stewardship. It is vital that we take steps to achieve individual sustainability, in order to embrace our role as stewards of God’s creation. With campaigns in full swing as we approach November elections, it is also vital to engage in active discussions with candidates and to elect officials who support positive action.

The prophet Ezekiel admonishes the overuse of the resources that God has given us: “Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet?” (Ezekiel 34:18) As Christians, it is our duty to care for our planet and to ensure that we protect both our environment and our fellow human beings.

The Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions (CSCS) is a collaborative initiative of Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College and Mennonite Central Committee to lead Anabaptist efforts to respond to the challenges of climate change.

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CLIMATE CHANGE IS A COMPLEX ISSUE THAT ENCOMPASSES MANY DIFFERENT AREAS OF PUBLIC POLICY. SEE THE LIST OF SUGGESTED TOPICS AND QUESTIONS BELOW OR CREATE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS.

Sustainable development

In order to ensure that future generations can live in a clean and healthy environment, promoting sustainability initiatives in our communities is a crucial first step. This can be achieved through multiple avenues, but as Christians, we should strive to ensure that this development benefits everyone, particularly the most vulnerable members of society.

- What steps would you take to move us in a more sustainable direction?
- How would you ensure that such development is enjoyed equally among all of your constituents, including low-income and other marginalized communities?

Climate refugees

Ecological disasters such as storms, floods, and drought can often be an underlying cause of mass migration, food insecurity, political unrest, and violent uprising. Many argue that these types of disasters will cause one of the largest migrations in modern history, primarily in the global South, with upper estimates of 140 million global “climate refugees” by 2050.

- What steps would you take to mitigate the risk of ecological disasters leading to mass migration in other nations?
- How are we preparing for potential displacement due to ecological disasters in the United States?

Disaster preparedness

Over the last several years, we have seen an increase in both the occurrence and severity of extreme weather events. Often, the least privileged members of society are the last to receive help both during and after a crisis. Disasters such as hurricanes, droughts, and floods have cost thousands of lives and billions of dollars in property damage.

- On a local and national level, how are we preparing for a potential increase in both the frequency and severity of natural disasters?
- In recent years, we have seen examples of marginalized groups facing discrimination during and after natural disasters. What steps would you take to ensure that everyone has adequate access to resources to help them rebuild after such a crisis?

Renewable energy

When it comes to caring for God’s creation, moving away from non-renewable energy sources to “green” renewable sources is key. While many economists agree that switching to alternative fuels would benefit the U.S. economy in the long run, there are still concerns over potential job losses in the short term.

- What policies would you support to invest in more renewable energy sources?
- What steps would you take to assist workers in fossil fuel industries during this transition period?

Climate and health

Extreme heat, increased periods of heavy rainfall and drought, and air pollution can affect human health in negative ways. The World Health Organization estimates that this will increase health care spending in the United States by \$2 billion to \$4 billion per year by 2030. Along with causing an increase in health issues among vulnerable populations, warming temperatures will also increase the spread of diseases, especially in the global South.

- What policy changes do you support to protect our communities from the negative impacts to human health caused by air pollution, extreme heat, and increased periods of heavy rainfall and drought?

Sources: World Bank, World Health Organization

For more in-depth information on these topics and others, visit sustainableclimatesolutions.org.