

Written Testimony of The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church Before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee June 7, 2007

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but power, and of love, and of a sound mind. – 2 Timothy 1:7

Good Morning. Madam Chair, Senator Inhofe, my fellow panelists, it is my great honor and privilege to join you here this morning. I appreciate your kind introduction. I am the Most Reverend Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, elected last summer to be Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Thank you for inviting me to participate in this very important hearing on global warming—which I believe to be one of the great human and spiritual challenges of our time. Before my ordination to the priesthood, I was an oceanographer and I learned that no life form can be studied in isolation from its surroundings or from other organisms. All living things are deeply interconnected, and all life depends on the life of others. Study of the Bible, and of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, made me equally aware that this interconnectedness is one of the central narratives of Scripture. God creates all people and all things to live in relationship with one another and the world around them. At the end of the biblical creation account, the writer of Genesis tells us that “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” I believe that each of us must recall ourselves to the vision that God has for us to realize in our own day. It is a vision in which all human beings live together as siblings, at peace with one another and with God, and in right relationship with all of the rest of creation. While many of the faith communities represented here today may disagree on a variety of issues, in the area of global warming we are increasingly of one mind. The crisis of climate change presents an unprecedented challenge to the goodness, interconnectedness, and sanctity of the world God created and loves. This challenge is what has called our faith communities to come here today and stand on the side of scientific truth. As a priest, trained as a scientist, I take as a sacred obligation the faith community’s responsibility to stand on the side of truth, the truth of science as well as the truth of God’s unquenchable love for the world and all its inhabitants.

The Church's history, of course, gives us examples of moments when Christians saw threat, rather than revelation and truth, in science. The trial and imprisonment of Galileo Galilei for challenging the theory of a geocentric universe is a famous example of the Church's moral failure. For his advocacy of this unfolding revelation through science, Galileo spent the remainder of his life under house arrest. The God whose revelation to us is continual and ongoing also entrusts us with continual and ongoing discovery of the universe he has made. As one who has been formed both through a deep faith and as a scientist I believe science has revealed to us without equivocation that climate change and global warming are real, and caused in significant part by human activities. They are a threat not only to God’s good creation but to all of humanity. This acknowledgment of global warming, and the Church’s commitment to ameliorating it, is a part of the ongoing discovery of God’s revelation to humanity and a call to a fuller understanding of the

scriptural imperative of loving our neighbor. Each one of us is also connected with our neighbor in many unexpected ways. The connectedness of creation is part of what Paul meant when he spoke of Christians being a part of the One Body of Christ. Indeed a later theologian, Sallie McFague, speaks of creation as the Body of God, out of the very same understanding that we are intimately and inevitably connected. Each one of us is connected to those who are just now beginning to suffer from the consequences of climate change and to those living generations from now who will either benefit from our efforts to curb carbon emissions or suffer from our failure to address the challenge which climate change presents.

The scientific community has made clear that we must reduce carbon emissions globally by 15 to 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050 in order to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. On behalf of the Episcopal Church, as a Christian leader representing today not only the concerns of Episcopalians, but the concerns of the many denominations that are part of the National Council of Churches, I implore you to make these goals a national priority. To my colleagues in the faith community who doubt the urgency of addressing global warming, I urge you to re-consider for the sake of God's good earth. I join many of my colleagues and many of you on this committee in sharing a profound concern that climate change will most severely affect those living in poverty and the most vulnerable in our communities here in the United States and around the world. I want to be absolutely clear; inaction on our part is the most costly of all courses of action for those living in poverty. The General Convention, (the governing body of the Episcopal Church), the National Council of Churches, and many Christian denominations have called on Congress to address both climate change and the needs of those living in poverty in adapting to curbs in fossil fuel use. On their behalf, I would like to offer into the record their own statements.

Over the past five years, Americans have become increasingly aware of the phenomenon of global poverty – poverty that kills 30,000 people around the world each day – and have supported Congress and the President in making historic commitments to eradicating it. We cannot triumph over global poverty, however, unless we also address climate change, as the two phenomena are intimately related. Climate change exacerbates global poverty, and global poverty propels climate change.

Let me give you a few examples. As temperature changes increase the frequency and intensity of severe weather events around the world, poor countries -- which often lack infrastructure such as storm walls and water-storage facilities -- will divert resources away from fighting poverty in order to respond to disaster. A warmer climate will also increase the spread of diseases like malaria and tax the ability of poor countries to respond adequately. Perhaps most severely, changed rain patterns will increase the prevalence of drought in places like Africa, where only four percent of cropped land is irrigated, leaving populations without food and hamstrung in their ability to trade internationally to generate income. By 2020, between 75 and 250 million Africans are

projected to be exposed to an increase of water stress due to climate change. Conversely, just as climate change will exacerbate poverty, poverty also is hastening climate change. Most people living in poverty around the world lack access to a reliable energy source, an imbalance that must be addressed in any attempt to lift a community out of poverty. Unfortunately, financial necessity forces many to choose energy sources such as oil, coal or wood, which threaten to expand significantly the world's greenhouse emissions and thus accelerate the effects of climate change. This cycle—poverty that begets climate change, and vice versa—threatens the future of all people, rich and poor alike. This relationship between deadly poverty and the health of creation was not lost on the world's leaders when, at the turn of the 21st century, they committed to cut global poverty in half by 2015. Their plan, which established the eight Millennium Development Goals, included a specific pledge of environmental sustainability. This year marks the halfway point in the world's effort to achieve these goals, and while progress has been impressive in some places, we are nowhere close to halfway there. Addressing climate change is a critical step toward putting the world back on track. Climate change and poverty are linked at home as well. We know that those living in poverty, particularly minorities, in the United States will suffer a disproportionate share of the effects of climate change. In July of 2004, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation released a report entitled *African Americans and Climate Change: An Unequal Burden* that concluded “there is a stark disparity in the United States between those who benefit from the causes of climate change and those who bear the costs of climate change.” The report finds that African Americans are disproportionately burdened by the health effects of climate change, including increased deaths from heat waves and extreme weather, as well as air pollution and the spread of infectious diseases. African American households spend more money on direct energy purchases as a percentage of their income than non African Americans across every income bracket and are more likely to be impacted by the economic instability caused by climate change, than other groups. That report makes a strong case for our congressional leaders to propose legislation to reduce carbon emissions that does not put a greater share of the cost on those living in poverty.

Climate change is also disproportionately affecting indigenous cultures. Nowhere is this more evident than in our Lutheran brothers' and sisters' northernmost congregation, Shishmaref Lutheran Church, located 20 miles south of the Arctic Circle on the Chukchi Sea, Alaska. The forces unleashed by global climate change are literally washing away the earth on which these 600 Inupiat Eskimos live. Due to increased storms, melting sea ice, thawing permafrost, and rising sea levels, their island home will soon be under water. They must uproot themselves and their 4000 year-old culture and find a new place to live. In other parts of the Arctic, the exploitation of fossil fuels that contribute to global warming threaten both the subsistence rights of the Gwich'in people—more than 90 percent of whom are Episcopalian—and their culture as well. The calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou in Alaska's North Slope are sacred to the Gwich'in people and the Episcopal Church supports the Gwich'in in calling for full protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Science, regardless of the field, is the pursuit of answers to

questions that scientists raise in observing creation. While there may be great debate about how to deal with climate change, in fact the answer is known and the solution is clear. We must reduce carbon dioxide emissions. I find hope in this because it means the solution is simply good leadership and vision. And I am reminded by the Book of Proverbs that where there is no vision, the people perish. In addressing climate change, Congress already has many of the necessary tools -- through existing programs and resources that could aggressively help those with limited means to adapt to climate change. Tax policy can be adjusted and targeted to encourage middle and low income taxpayers to take advantage of new technologies or to adjust to potentially higher energy costs. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program could be fully funded and expanded where necessary to protect the neediest among us. Other policy options include a cap and trade system with a directed revenue stream that could be used to help vulnerable communities to access new technologies, equipment, or appliances. In the spirit of our nation's historic entrepreneurial and innovative prowess, we can also find opportunity to lead the world with new technologies, renewable sources of energy and innovations not yet dreamed of, that will allow for new markets, new jobs, new industries and the ability to provide job training and transition for American workers as we move away from the use of fossil fuels. Those innovations can benefit all of humanity. As the National Academies report "Understanding and Responding to Climate Change" concluded: "Nations with wealth have a better chance of using science and technology to anticipate, mitigate, and adapt to sea-level rise, threats to agriculture, and other climate impacts. . . The developed world will need to assist the developing nations to build their capacity to meet the challenges of adapting to climate change." Madam chair, I will close where I began, by recalling the Scriptural account of creation and God's proclamation that each piece of it was good, and that the whole of it -- when viewed together and in relationship -- was **very** good. Ultimately, scripture is an account of relationships: the bond of love between God and the world, and the interconnectivity of all people and all things in that world. It is only when we take seriously those relationships--when we realize that all people have a stake in the health and well-being of all others and of the Earth itself--that creation can truly begin to realize the abundant life that God intends for every one of us.

As I conclude I offer you this prayer from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer: "O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature; Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen"--BCP page 239.

I will pray for each of you and for this Congress that you will be graced with vision and truth. May the Peace of God be upon this Senate and this Committee. Thank you.