

## THE CLIMATE WITNESS PROJECT IN CANADA

As we look at the harm caused by changing climate conditions, two matters of faith drive us: caring for creation and caring about the poor. Genesis 2:15 reminds us that we are to care for creation. Elsewhere the Bible says we are to be stewards of all that God has given us. We don't own the earth; we are called to take care of it for the Lord (Matt. 25:14-30).

Because of the strong biblical mandate and the recommendations of Synod 2012, the CRCNA planned a vigorous witness in preparation for and during the Paris Climate Change Talks. This included sending a delegation of four people to Paris for two purposes: to be able to report to the CRCNA on the results of the meeting and to witness to others at the event that climate change, though it is also a scientific and policy issue, is fundamentally a religious and moral issue. Michelle Nieviadomy, a First Nations woman from Edmonton, was a member of the delegation.

As a member of the aboriginal peoples in Canada, Michelle and others are well aware that the people who are first and most harmed by climate change are the poor – both in Canada and around the world. Consequently, the CRCNA advocates for a vigorous response because we know that if we do not respond, the poor will continue to suffer the consequences.

To enable the CRCNA to do this, the Office of Social Justice of the CRCNA created the Climate Witness Project (CWP) in four regions of the denomination in Canada as well as six regions in the U.S. The regions in Canada were: Hamilton, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. Regional organizers in those regions accomplished the following, completing Phase One of the project:

- Recruited more than 90 Climate Witness Partners, who gave leadership to the CWP in 20 congregations.
- Showed the video [\*Climate Conversations: Kenya\*](#) to the 20 congregations.
- Arranged for the Climate Witness Partners to receive daily newsletters and to participate in a teleconference from the CRCNA delegation in Paris.
- Recruited 4 CRCNA members to [write op-eds](#) for the *Hamilton Spectator* and for CRCNA blogs about the importance of the Paris Agreement.
- Arranged for 5 visits with Members of Parliament.
- Prepared their congregations for the second phase of the Climate Witness Project.

The 196 nations present at the Paris Talks signed the Paris Agreement, a powerful statement that commits them to several key steps to work together to address the challenges of climate change. This is the first time that all the nations of the world have agreed to common strategies to reduce the harm caused by climate change.

### **How is the CRCNA following up on the Paris Agreement?**

Phase Two of the Climate Witness Project started on March 1, 2016, and will be completed by June 30, 2017. Many of the regional organizers from Phase One are continuing, and we may expand into new regions. The CWP will work with at least 28 churches in Canada in order to continue educating congregations about climate change, will ask several Climate Witness Partners to write op-eds, and will arrange for visits with Members of Parliament and Congress.

In addition, congregations will be enabled to take steps to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions by making their buildings more energy efficient and reducing their use of energy produced by the burning of fossil fuels. Some congregations are beginning their work in energy stewardship by replacing incandescent light bulbs and CFL bulbs with LEDs, installing light sensors in bathrooms, and installing programmable thermostats.