

## **We must take care of God's creation**

Compass: Points of view from the community

By REV. PAUL KLITZKE

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Over the past few years, Alaskans have witnessed record temperatures, record fire seasons, thawing permafrost and diseases damaging our fish and forests. According to experts, the Arctic is melting and warming faster than any other place on Earth.

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence is the rapid shrinking of the Arctic sea ice. The impacts from retreating sea ice are sweeping, and threaten not only the polar bear but also the people of Alaska.

Caleb Pungowiyi from Nome captured the significance of the sea ice to Alaskans when he said that the "ice is a supporter of life. ... When it starts disintegrating and disappearing faster, it affects our lives dramatically."

With all of these visible changes, it is not surprising that a new study found that 81 percent of Alaskans are convinced that global warming is happening. What's more, more than 70 percent of Alaskans believe that global warming is a serious threat to people, plants and animals in Alaska. It is certainly time for Alaska government officials to heed the concerns of their constituents and take prudent actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As I am a person of faith, my arguments for expressing a call to action transcend facts and figures and summon a moral responsibility to care for God's creation. There is a profound connection between God, the Earth and the atmosphere, revealed in Genesis: "I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

We must care for that which God has created because we know that it is an extension of his divinity. The book of Job proclaims, "... ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. ... In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all humanity."



Human-caused global warming is threatening creation. Earlier this year more than 86 evangelical leaders issued a statement on global warming, saying that "human-induced climate change is real" and "Christian moral convictions demand our response to the climate change problem." In Wasilla, the Alaska chapter of Interfaith Power and Light has developed a campaign mobilizing a religious response to global warming while promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation.

For those of you who may still believe that the current warming cycle is a natural trend, you are in part correct. Natural causes have contributed a small amount to the warming we are experiencing. But all the evidence indicates that the majority of the warming in the last 50 years is due to human actions, and the rate at which melting and warming are occurring is extremely fast and damaging.

In less than 30 years, the Arctic sea ice has lost an area twice the size of Texas. Sen. Ted Stevens, has recognized these impacts and feels that "Alaska is harder hit by global climate change than anyplace in the world."

For all of these reasons, I am requesting a call for action from our newly elected officials to take the following prudent actions:

1. Expand Alaska's use of renewable energy, especially geothermal, wind and biomass, through legislation, regulation and budget allocations;
2. Help Alaskans reduce their energy bills through conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy measures; and
3. Audit the amount of carbon emissions that are produced by our state government and employ cost-effective ways to reduce these emissions.

It is time for the Alaska state government to listen to its people on global warming, because we are talking. It is time to learn from the Great Land of Alaska about stewardship, because it is teaching. And it is my prayer that our newly elected officials will hear the voice of present and future Alaskans and heed our concerns.

The Rev. Paul Klitzke runs Alaska Interfaith Power and Light, a Wasilla-based organization that promotes positive environmental change with respect to energy and global warming.