

# Presbyterian Church in San Diego hosts *Climate Crisis Conference*

By Marina Stant  
10/20/2016

On the Saturday morning of October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016, over 100 people came out to Solana Beach Presbyterian Church for the *Climate Crisis Conference*, hosted by the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii.

The conference unified voices of science, religion, activism, and the military to discuss climate change with an emphasized call to action on the part of the American people to transition towards a sustainable world.

“Climate change is the biggest long-term security threat in the Pacific region,” said keynote speaker Rear Admiral Len Hering (ret) who served over 32 years in the US Navy progressing the movement of sustainable energy usage in the military and is now the Executive Director of the Center for Sustainable Energy.

Admiral Hering defended his statement by addressing the population rise from 1.5 billion in 1850 to 7.4 billion today, water and food shortages, as well as agricultural disasters from flood and drought.

“In order to feed the population of 2050, we need to produce as much food in 40 years as was produced in the last 10,000 years,” he articulated.



Further, the impacts of climate change are happening close to home.

“California is in it’s 12<sup>th</sup> year of drought from a meteorological perspective...and there is no forecast for it’s relief,” admonished Admiral Hering.

Dr. Lynne Talley , a distinguished Oceanographer at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in Monterey, California, also spoke about the changing weather conditions.

“We importantly change our rain strength and that changes our agriculture and floods and droughts. That may be our bigger immediate impact [from climate change],” she warned.

Dr. Talley explained that we can expect to see an increase of rain in flood prone areas and an increase of drought in dry areas.

Fr. Emmett Farrell, a retired priest of the Roman Catholic Docese of San Diego spoke on behalf of the catholic church and Pope Francis’s Encyclical, “Laudato si”.

“This lifestyle is unsustainable” he emphasized, pressing that every person must be a part of the solution through education, and taking steps towards

change.

Churches are a “voice at the table”, he added, and have an important part to play in the changing of our world.



Marshall Saunders, the president and founder of the Citizens' Climate Lobby, called for political action.

“What we need is ordinary people...we've got to organize and make demands,” he voiced.

Citizens'Climate Lobby, a grassroots nonprofit advocacy organization with over 350 chapters around the world has been fighting for the implementation of a carbon tax in the US which is believed to significantly diminish the use of fossil fuels and strengthen an economy that supports sustainable energy. This idea was expanded upon by the presentation of *Facing the Surge*, a film by Adaptation Now which reveals flood damage within coastal communities from sea level rise and explores the potential outcomes of a carbon tax.

Erin Morrin attended the conference because she is encountering climate change first hand. Her family has been in the farming business for over 40 years in San Diego County.

“Over the years we've noticed drought and pests, and have had to use more city resource water. City water has a lot of salt and that causes problems in the roots of the crops. Our food security is under threat” she explained.

Farther North, snow pack is diminishing in the Sierra Nevada which creates concern for Californians' water supply.

“The whole state relies on the snow[pack] in the summer. Historically we have relied upon snow from the sierras that is around all summer long. The snow pack is going to dramatically change over the next hundred years,” stated Dr. Jeff Severinghaus, a professor at Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

The snow pack is projected to drop dramatically this century due to warming temperatures.

“That's a huge issue for farmers in California,” Dr. Severinghaus warned.

Despite the alarming threats that the speakers lectured on, they also offered insights into solutions, concurring that all people must make changes in their lives to solve the problems in the environment.

“The solution isn't black and white. Reducing the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the environment will take thousands of years.” Dr. Talley said, urging that people reduce, reuse, recycle and make the switch to sustainable energy.

Workshop sessions took place in between the main speakers' talks with an array of topics from Climate Justice led by Rev. Beth Johnson from Palomar Universalist Unitarian Fellowship to Community Choice Energy by the San

Diego Energy District.

The event was considered a success by Dr. Tom English, president of the T. English Endangered Species Studies Institute (TESSI) who was largely responsible for organizing the event.