

Faith Communities Across Waterloo Region Call for Urgent Climate Justice on Earth Day 2021

April 21, 2021

On the eve of this Earth Day like no other, faith communities across Waterloo Region are calling for urgent action to protect Earth - our shared home - in this crucial decade. As people of faith, we join our voices in solidarity with the global scientific community's clear warning that humanity must cut global greenhouse gas emissions drastically by 2030 or risk facing extreme climate change impacts across the globe. It is our responsibility to preserve a stable climate: for all life already suffering from the climate crisis today, and for generations still to come who deserve to inherit a safe climate future.

Ten local places of worship from a diversity of spiritual traditions have installed or requested a banner and added their voices to this release, including: Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Shri Ram Dham Mandir, First Mennonite Church, Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Trillium Lutheran Church, Temple Shalom Synagogue, Westminster United Church, Rockway Mennonite Church, Emmanuel United Church and St Jacobs Mennonite Church. Several other faith communities are at various stages of discernment.

Today we are hanging banners on our places of worship to amplify the call for climate justice and we call on all faith communities in Waterloo Region to join us. These banners are a statement of solidarity and commitment to strive together for climate justice, grounded in our diverse faith traditions, toward a safe climate future for all.

The beautiful banner was designed by local graphic artists in a campaign led by grassroots group Faith Climate Justice Waterloo Region (FCJ). FCJ formed in 2019 to bring people of all faiths together to call attention to the urgency of the climate crisis and engage in local, faith-based action, and to call on elected leaders at all levels to make commitments to bold climate action centering social justice.

"Our congregation is proud to be among the first in the region to hang these banners as a visible public show of support for the urgently needed bold climate action in this decade," emphasizes Swami Haripriyaji of the Shri Ram Dham Hindu Temple of Kitchener Waterloo Region of the Brahmrishti Mission of Canada. "We invite other faith communities to do the same. Jointly the aim is to have at least 50 of these banners hanging on places of worship across the region before the end of 2021."

"Addressing climate change will take many types of action," said Katie Goerzen Sheard, a young adult at Waterloo North Mennonite Church. "Our church has done energy-efficiency retrofits, added solar panels and held an education series on climate change. Putting this banner on our church also sends a clear message to our elected leaders - people in our community want systems change, not climate change."

"Faith communities must be vocal and active in the local and global climate justice movement," said Henriette Thompson of Faith Climate Justice. "Waterloo Region's efforts to 'build back better' in the wake of the pandemic must be centred around climate justice, including by providing energy-efficient housing and renewable energy that is affordable to everyone in our community, among many other solutions. Before the pandemic hit, all local governments in Waterloo Region committed to reducing local greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. This commitment must begin with action today, and pursuing it presents unique opportunities to tackle the climate crisis *and* build a just and prosperous community for all."

Our faith communities urge you to get involved, join this movement and consider hanging a banner on your place of worship in solidarity today. To order a banner or get more information, please visit: www.faithclimatejustice.ca

Photos of banners installed on local places of worship are on the website as well.

In faith and commitment to a safe climate future,

Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church
Brahmarishi Mission of Canada, Shri Ram Dham Mandir
Temple Shalom Reform Jewish Congregation
Westminster United Church
Rockway Mennonite Church
First Mennonite Church
Waterloo North Mennonite Church
Trillium Lutheran Church
Emmanuel United Church
St Jacobs Mennonite Church

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