Interfaith Power & Light
Mobilizing Bold and Just Action on Climate Change

2019 ANNUAL REPORT
This year marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of Interfaith Power & Light! As you can see from the stories included in this annual report, our work has continued to grow and evolve over time. The challenge for any organization is to have a clear vision and mission, while remaining nimble and responsive to the challenges that remain before us.

As the only national interfaith organization in the U.S. responding directly to the climate crisis, your support means that you are prioritizing a faith-based response to global warming. In this report, you’ll see the fruits of that effort — whether from IPL’s national fly-in to Washington, D.C., for meetings with members of Congress and their staff to discuss climate solutions, to work happening on the ground with our state affiliates in support of clean cars and methane standards, or through the continued greening of congregational facilities with our Cool Congregations program. IPL supporters are serving as role models for personal action and advocacy.

We know, too, that how we work is as important as what we work on. That’s why in 2019 we created a new Strategic Framework for IPL, clarifying our vision, mission, values, and guiding principles. We are pleased to share this with you in this annual report.

We want to make it clear that centering justice is at the heart of our calling as a faith-based organization. Climate change impacts those who are most vulnerable first, worst, and longest — this includes children, those with underlying health conditions, black and brown communities, low-income communities, and future generations. We share a moral imperative to work with and on behalf of those who are suffering.

Rev. Susan Hendershot
President

Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley
Board Chair

MISSION
Interfaith Power & Light inspires and mobilizes people of faith and conscience to take bold and just action on climate change.

VISION
IPL envisions a stable climate where humans live in right and just relationship, interconnected with a healthy, thriving, natural world.

VALUES
Because we embrace faith and spirituality, we are grounded in the inter-connectedness of the sacred, the natural world, and one another.

Because we embrace justice, we act with inclusion and respect, working in solidarity with vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Because we embrace hope, we are empowered to live into our vision for the world for present and future generations.

Because we embrace courage, we speak with a prophetic voice to create equity and restore wholeness to all.

Because love is central to who we are, we are committed to ending the suffering caused by climate change.
Atmospheric scientist Kait Parker, IPL President Rev. Susan Hendershot, IPL Board Chair Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley, and UCS President Ken Kimmell at the Forum on Faith, Science, & Climate Solutions in Atlanta, GA.
Interfaith Power & Light

inspires and mobilizes people of faith and conscience to take bold and just action on climate change. Interfaith Power & Light envisions a stable climate where humans live in right and just relationship, interconnected with a healthy, thriving, natural world.

Since the year 2000, IPL has built a powerful grassroots network of people of faith to drive smarter energy policy-making and has helped thousands of congregations address global warming by modeling energy stewardship in their own facilities. We have a track record of tangible results in shrinking carbon footprints and educating millions of people of faith about the important role they play in this challenging issue.

Today, IPL has a national network of 40 IPL-branded state affiliates and supporters in all 50 states reaching 22,000 faith communities. United in our mission to build a religious response to global warming, we have a diverse array of issues and programs, from fighting to retire dirty coal power plants to passing precedent-setting clean energy targets in states and cities across the country. This model forms the basis of . . .

IPL’s Guiding Principles:

- Inspiring and engaging individuals, families, and faith and local communities to embody spiritual and societal transformation by reducing their greenhouse gas emissions while building a new relationship with Earth.
- Mobilizing people of faith and conscience to advocate for just and equitable climate solutions at the local, state, and national levels.
- Working collaboratively with the IPL national network, diverse partner organizations, and marginalized communities.
- Modeling shared leadership and decision-making within our organization and our partnerships.
- Focusing on our common values, broadly communicating the moral obligation to address the urgency of global warming.
"Today our faiths stand united in their call to care for the Earth, and to protect the poor and the suffering. Strong action on climate change is imperative by the principles and traditions of our faiths and the collective compassion, wisdom and leadership of humanity."

From the Interfaith Declaration on Climate Change
In 2019, Interfaith Power & Light mobilized tens of thousands of people of faith across the country to sign petitions, send emails and postcards to elected officials, meet with their Senators and Congresspeople in-person in Washington, D.C., and to speak out at public hearings. We did this to seek support for policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions such as the Clean Car Standards, Methane Pollution Standards, Clean Power Plan, and the 100% Clean Economy Act to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the middle of the century.

In May, Interfaith Power & Light convened forty-seven faith leaders from thirty states to fan out across Washington, D.C., for our annual advocacy day. Faith leaders met with more than 100 Senate and Congressional offices to advocate for the Green New Deal and insist that the U.S. remain in the Paris Climate Accord. The day after IPL’s 2019 advocacy day the House passed H.R. 9, known as the Climate Action Now Act, re-affirming our country’s commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement. With the lack of climate leadership at the federal level, we changed our advocacy strategy to identify other ways to push for policies that address climate change.
OPPOSING EPA METHANE ROLLBACKS

In October, Interfaith Power & Light had a powerful faith presence at the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) one and only hearing on the proposed elimination of regulations on methane emissions. The hearings were held in Dallas, Texas in the heart of oil and gas country. Methane pollution causes deep and irreparable harm to Earth’s climate and environment and inflicts suffering upon communities. As people of faith, we are called to care for those who suffer and to protect our planet against the devastating effects of climate change. Testifying on behalf of Interfaith Power & Light was United Methodist EarthKeeper Rev. Mel Caraway. He is with Texas Impact and is a Texas IPL Board Member. Caraway led a press conference during the hearings that highlighted scientific studies on the health impacts of methane leaks and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from fracking oil and natural gas. Caraway, together with other faith leaders, testified before the EPA panel. The other speakers included Texas IPL’s Rev. Melissa Ashmore, New Mexico IPL’s Penny Aucoin, faith leaders from communities suffering from the direct impacts of methane pollution, and members of several Native American tribal groups.

Together, their testimonies made a strong pro-climate case against the weak methane regulations proposed by the Trump Administration. Their impassioned speeches called out the proposed removal of restrictions on harmful and deadly methane emissions as irresponsible and dangerous, adding fuel to the fire of global warming. Testimony pointed out that any proposed “savings” to the oil and gas industry would cost the environment greatly by increasing methane emissions by more than 30% over six years. Immediately on the heels of the EPA’s methane hearing, IPL initiated a flash email advocacy campaign and gathered signatures from more than 2,000 people of faith. These signatures were sent to the EPA and the Trump Administration making it clear that people of faith and conscience all over the country support strong and effective methane pollution safeguards.

"Preventing pollution and protecting God’s Creation are shared concerns of all the world’s faith traditions. These concerns have particular resonance because what we do to God’s Creation has a direct effect on the health and well-being of all of God’s children."

From the testimony of Rev. Mel Caraway, Texas Impact/ Texas IPL Board Member EPA Testimony, Methane Hearings in Dallas, Texas in October 2019

FAITH CLIMATE VOTER PLEDGE

IPL launched a Faith Climate Voter Pledge to ask people of faith and conscience to vote with climate and Creation in mind. Thousands of pledge-takers vowed to put love into action for every living creature and for every vulnerable community suffering the impacts of our changing climate, from sea rise, to extreme heat, to devastating droughts, to supercharged storms. The 2020 elections will set the nation’s course on climate for years to come.
PARIS to PITTSBURGH SCREENINGS

In 2019, Interfaith Power & Light congregations organized 700 screenings of the film Paris to Pittsburgh in all 50 states plus Newfoundland, Fiji, and Macau Sur. Set against the national debate over the U.S. energy future — and the Trump administration’s explosive decision to exit the Paris Climate Agreement — the film captures what’s at stake for communities around the country and the inspiring ways Americans are responding. Interfaith Power & Light used the film to re-invigorate congregations that signed the Paris Pledge (pledging to reduce their carbon emissions 50% by 2030 and to be carbon neutral by 2050) and to develop relationships with new congregations. Faith communities reported that turnout far exceeded expectations. We engaged 40 plus new congregations and 750 individuals in IPL and reconnected with those already in our network.

ON TOUR with the UNION of CONCERNED SCIENTISTS

Interfaith Power & Light partnered with the Union of Concerned Scientists on a speaking tour throughout the Southeast to share how the U.S. faith community and science community are united in addressing climate change. IPL President Rev. Susan Hendershot and Union of Concerned Scientist President, Ken Kimmell supported the work of IPL affiliates in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee to bring this message to more than 500 people of faith through five events. They demonstrated that faith and science are aligned on the causes, impacts, and solutions to climate change and helped participants get connected to the IPL Network.

SOLAR SURVEY of CONGREGATIONS

Interfaith Power & Light released its second survey and report of congregations in the United States with solar Photovoltaic (PV) systems. The number of congregations reporting has more than doubled since the last survey to 770 in 47 states plus the District of Columbia! The total PV capacity of these systems is 45 megawatts (MW), comparable to the on-site solar capacity of large multi-location commercial entities such as Costco and Kohls. California is by far the state with the greatest number of congregations (of all major faith traditions) to implement solar PV systems; the PV systems installed by 190 Congregations provide 13.5 MW of capacity. This is sufficient energy to power 2500 homes or the carbon reduction equivalent of planting 235,000 trees. Other regions with large numbers of congregations that have converted to solar energy include: Massachusetts (64 congregations), Washington, D.C. (55), Indiana (48), Maryland (27), and Minnesota (27).
COOL CONGREGATIONS CHALLENGE WINNERS!

Across the country, congregations are taking climate action in their own facilities and becoming excellent role models for their congregants showing concrete ways to reduce one’s carbon footprint. In 2019, 70 congregations entered their projects in the Cool Congregations Challenge. IPL awarded five congregations for their leadership, inspiration, and action to reduce their carbon footprint. This year the congregations who entered the challenge prevented thousands of tons of CO2 from entering the atmosphere. The winners of this year’s challenge are inspirations to their communities and other faith groups across the country. Every year IPL is honored to celebrate these congregations and the amazing work they do.

Sacred Grounds Winner: A Closer Look
Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska won IPL’s Cool Congregations Challenge Sacred Grounds award for transforming a 1.9-acre lawn surrounding the congregation into a neighborhood park and arboretum featuring a landscaping plan that benefits the environment and serves the community by providing habitat for wildlife, immersion in nature, and nature-based play for children. The garden includes a 1,000-foot rain garden, native plantings, and a nature-based playground with an 11-foot, 1.5-ton section of ash trunk climbing structure. The upper deck of the fort reaches into the branches of a nearby ash tree. They hope a large number of families in the neighboring large apartment complexes will use it. They calculate that their plantings now sequester 1.4 tons of carbon on average per year for the first 25 years, and in 50 years when the trees are mature they will sequester eight tons per year.

RENEWABLE ROLE MODEL
Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church
Brevard, NC
Launched 20kW pilot project designed by students at Appalachian State University and successfully cut their dependence on the grid by 35%, saving $3,000, and preventing 28 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

ENERGY SAVER
Urbandale United Church of Christ
Urbandale, IA
Achieved a 40% reduction in electricity use and a 20% reduction in gas use. The first of their denomination in Iowa to sign the Paris Pledge to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030.

SACRED GROUNDS
Aldersgate United Methodist Church
Lincoln, NE
Installed a 2-acre rain garden with native plantings and nature-based playground.

COMMUNITY INSPIRATION
All Saints Church
New Albany, OH
Signed-up families for energy audits offered by their local utility and added a composting station for parishioners.

COOL CONGREGATIONS PLANNER
Congregation Kol Emeth
Palo Alto, CA
A new energy efficient worship facility with net zero heating and cooling systems and waste plans.
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE in VIRGINIA

Virginia Interfaith Power & Light organized an eye-opening bus tour to explore environmental justice in Hampton Roads, Virginia. The tour served to educate and empower people of faith with knowledge about the impact of pollution on their communities.

On the bus tour, leaders visited Lambert’s Point to discuss coal dust, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School to learn about fracked-gas pipelines, and the Paradise Creek Nature Park Center to hear about sustainable community models. The group witnessed how climate disruption and environmental burdens disproportionately affect low-income communities and people of color in Hampton Roads. Along the route, they discussed various health and public safety hazards faced by local residents affected by environmental injustice and what the faith community can do to address its effects. In addition to fostering cooperation and bringing attention to environmental justice, visiting Paradise Creek helped clergy and activists explore ways to mitigate the harmful impacts of climate change.

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE in IOWA

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light Executive Director, Matt Russell, is also a farmer who uses regenerative agriculture to reduce carbon emissions. In the months before the Iowa Caucus, he realized “there was this huge opportunity where we could educate the presidential candidates. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect we would move all of them,” but that’s exactly what happened.

Russell decided to invite all of the presidential hopefuls touring the state to visit his 110-acre sustainable Coyote Run Farm, in Lacona, Iowa. Several of them accepted the invitation, and during their tour of the farm, Russell shared how farmers can be part of the solution to the climate crisis and discussed the urgency of addressing climate change. Many others called to learn more about agriculture and climate change.

Russell’s work elevated the issue of climate change in the 2020 elections and helped the candidates see how sustainable farmers can be part of the climate solution.
COMMENTARY

In 2019, IPL's total income was $1.8 million and total funds available for operations reached $2.3 million. IPL's total operating budget was $1.45 million. Of this, $1.2 million of operating expenses went to support state and national programming, with $247,807 being granted out to state affiliates, partners, and congregations with $246,577 supporting the California Interfaith Power & Light program and $707,995 funding national programs and campaigns. Individual and congregational donations provided 18% of total funds raised. We are grateful to all of our donors for their generosity, which made this work possible.

Rev. Susan Hendershot with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi at COP25.
Ways to Help Interfaith Power & Light

Interfaith Power & Light depends on our members and supporters to achieve our mission. There are many ways to help: volunteering, donating, and leaving a legacy gift. You can support our state affiliates by designating your gift for our re-grant program, and our Carbon Covenant program by designating the project of your choice. Another great way to provide reliable support is by making a monthly donation that is automatic, secure and convenient.

Leave a Legacy for Creation

As people of faith we are called to care for those who come after us. Include Interfaith Power & Light in your estate plans and join our Regeneration Society. Your gift will fund programs that empower people of faith to safeguard Creation for future generations. You could designate a specific fund, dollar amount, or percentage of your estate to help faith communities address climate change. Please contact sarah@interfaithpowerandlight.org to learn more.

- Bequest
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A Religious Response to Global Warming
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