

Faith Leaders Show Solidarity with Pope on Climate Change

Written by Care of Creation, Kermit Hovey

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Local Madison Events will “Light the Way,” Appeal for Moral Awakening to Climate Justice.

MADISON - As Pope Francis makes historic speeches to Congress and the United Nations on September 24 and 25, Madison-area faith leaders and concerned community members will gather to amplify the Pope’s call to reverse course on climate change. The first “Light the Way: Faiths for Climate Justice,” event begins at 6:00 p.m. in James Madison Park on Thursday, September 24. The second event convenes at 6:30 am Friday, September 25 at Monona Terrace Convention Center and is followed at 8 am with a gathering at First United Methodist Church downtown to view the Pope’s United Nations address.

The interfaith gathering Thursday evening will include music and statements by leaders representing various faith traditions. The faith leaders will describe how the Pope’s message in his recent encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, resonates with their traditions and has universal meaning for all those concerned about the future of the planet. Following the statements, the faith leaders and attendees will walk by candlelight to the State Capitol for a closing prayer and call to action.

The morning events will start with a silent gathering for contemplation during sunrise, starting at 6:30 a.m. at the entrance to Monona Terrace at Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Next people will convene at 8:00 a.m. at First United Methodist Church, 203 Wisconsin Ave., for a video presentation, followed by a livestreaming of the Pope’s address to the U.N. at 9:00 a.m.

“The excitement surrounding Pope Francis’s visit to the U.S. is not just about his presence in our country. People everywhere truly feel that Francis has taken concern for the future of our common home, Earth, from a political issue to a moral imperative,” said Trudi Jenny, a local Catholic and one of the event organizers. “Local faith leaders here want to echo that protecting creation is linked to care for the poor and that climate justice is the moral issue of our time.”

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Pope Francis released the encyclical *Laudato Si'* in June. Typically, encyclicals are letters on Roman Catholic doctrine sent by the Pope to other bishops.

Laudato Si'

is part of Catholic social teaching; however, it is unique because the Pope's letter is addressed to all of humanity. In the encyclical, Pope Francis calls on the "whole human family" to seek a future that is sustainable and just for all.