


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio
Anticipating December 23, 2018

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Editorial

After the Calendar, the Second and Third Reading sections are inspired by the readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Tom Keene's poem is *Cold Beds*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem, the introductory section of *Triennial Update to The National Global Change Research Plan 2012–2021: A Strategic Plan for the U.S. Global Change Research Program* reports what a joint committee of thirteen federal departments has been doing to gather and report information on climate change. Only the first paragraph gives an executive summary of findings; the remainder recounts the processes involved in compiling the report. Some politicians have tried to dismiss the whole report as a product of a "political agenda." This part of the report gives the lie to that. For the more striking information that fills out the executive summary paragraph, one can access the government website: <https://downloads.globalchange.gov>.

Next Sunday's e-mail transmission will be a special Christmas issue of *Testimony*. A transmission for December 30 is planned to follow a day or so later.

Calendar

Second Reading (Hebrews 16:5-11)

The second reading, from the *Letter to the Hebrews*, applies an excerpt from Psalm 40 to Jesus, depicting the second Person of the Trinity as reciting it. The *Letter to the Hebrews* is a very early Christian essay that stresses the insufficiency of the old Law, and it is unlikely that its author had a developed Trinitarian theology; rather the theology would develop from it and other early statements. Psalm 40 reads:

You did not desire a sacrifice and offering,
But a body that you furnished for me;
With burnt offerings and offerings for sin
You were not content.

Then I said, "Behold I am here,
In the chapter of the scroll it is written for me,
To do your will, O God." (Ps 40:6-8)

God in the world, not in the sky as an object of rituals, is the will of God.

Third Reading (Luke 1.39-45)

...Elizabeth was filled with the holy spirit, and she cried out loudly and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why does it happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as the sound of your greeting occurred in my ears, the child in my womb leapt with joy."

In the same way that Mary Magdalene and other women were the first to say to the apostles at Easter that Jesus was risen, so Mary and Elizabeth were the first to say that Jesus, still hidden, was coming to life. And filled with the as yet unrecognized Holy Spirit, Elizabeth asks why the mother of the Lord should come to her, the mother of the last prophet of the Old Covenant? Not yet carried to term, that prophet was already rejoicing.

Zechariah, an official priest of the Old Covenant, was not to sire the Lord incarnate nor even be able to speak in testimony at all. But the unofficial Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, could and did speak. And Mary was going to Elizabeth as Jesus would go to John at the Jordan.

The very structure of Luke's Gospel calls into question whether the ways under the law were the ways chosen by God for the future. Few followers of Jesus today maintain that the Hebrew ritual life need be observed, but what about the hereditary priesthood? That too has been dropped, following the theology of the *Letter to the Hebrews*. And what about the male priesthood? Indeed, even the Greek term for *priest* is never used in the New Testament for a Christian minister; some extra-scriptural translator decided to render the term for *elder* or *presbyter* with the word *priest* for everyday discourse. The problem is not a semantic one; we can adjust to that. The problem is the failure to follow Luke in breaking with all the ways of the Old Covenant.

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Poem

Cold Beds

We lie down in cold beds
that yearn for the
warmth our bodies bestow.

We tote sacks of ground grain,
find fire to bake bread
for any who hunger.

We turn pages in search
of the words that fit

the songs our souls would sing.

We crack our cocoons
to stretch our wings.

Tom Keene and Muse
November 10, 2018

Triennial Update to The National Global Change Research Plan 2012–2021: A Strategic Plan for the U.S. Global Change Research Program

Executive Summary

The global environment is changing rapidly as a result of human activities. Over the last half-century, population growth and urbanization, economic growth, energy production, natural resource use, and other trends have accelerated at a rate unprecedented in human history, driving profound changes in ecosystems, oceans, ice, the composition of Earth's atmosphere, and other systems that influence human life.¹ These global changes are causing climate change, ocean acidification, air and water pollution, species loss, and other impacts; and these changes pose both risks and opportunities that present complex challenges for communities, governments, and businesses across the Nation and the world. As the impacts of global change progress, demand for information on response measures is rising. Global-change science is needed to inform adaptation actions to cope with risks created by a changing climate, and to inform mitigation actions (e.g., greenhouse gas reduction measures) to decrease the risks associated with climate change, especially over the long-term. The global-change research enterprise faces the challenge of further advancing fundamental understanding of the causes and effects of change while providing information needed for response measures of many kinds and at different scales.

The U.S. Global Change Research Program at a Glance

To help address the challenge of advancing basic scientific knowledge while informing practical action, President Ronald Reagan created—and Congress codified with the 1990 Global Change Research Act (GCRA)—the United States Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), charged with providing a scientific foundation to support the Nation's response to present and future global change. USGCRP comprises 13 Federal agencies that conduct or use research on global change and its impacts on society...and is overseen by a Principal from each member agency, constituting the Subcommittee on Global Change Research (SGCR). USGCRP's focus spans from basic research that advances understanding of the Earth system to decision support, scientific assessment, and public engagement surrounding global-change science and response measures. USGCRP's mandate under the GCRA encompasses both climate change and other global environmental changes related to, interacting with, or associated with climate—such as ocean acidification, agricultural land–use change,

pollution, and natural climate variability—that have implications for economic and societal well-being. Throughout this document, “climate-related global change” is used to describe the current scope of USGCRP’s mission.

As understanding of global change advances, and climate-change impacts deepen, USGCRP is increasingly in a position to support decision making in a number of affected sectors by providing information on likely impacts of change, as well as societal and ecological characteristics that influence resilience under changing conditions. Within this framework, USGCRP sees its role as freely providing scientific information that can be used by others for both research and operational purposes and that builds awareness of the information provided by the Program and its potential uses. USGCRP’s core scientific capabilities in Earth observations, modeling, and understanding of Earth-system processes provide the knowledge base for decision support, scientific assessment, and communication, education, and engagement goals under the 2012–2021 Strategic Plan. In carrying out its mandate, the Program engages with a range of stakeholders and global-change information producers and users, primarily through a sustained-assessment process that includes the quadrennial National Climate Assessment (NCA), and through regional science organizations of its member agencies.

Advancing Strategic Goals

As required by the GCRA, the Strategic Plan is updated triennially, reporting on progress and refining Program priorities in response to advances and new challenges.... This update retains the goals of the 2012–2021 Strategic Plan and builds upon significant accomplishments in basic research, scientific assessment and the production of actionable science, information management and sharing, and engagement, discussed in detail in Chapter III. The Program’s priorities, grounded in USGCRP’s core scientific capabilities, are revisited annually, and adjusted as appropriate, in response to progress made and emerging challenges. Chapter II discusses progress in recent Program priority areas in Arctic Research and Resilience, Water-Cycle Extremes, and Methane Cycling within the Context of the Carbon Cycle.

Since the release of the 2012–2021 Strategic Plan, new capabilities for observing key elements of the water cycle and the response of Arctic systems to rapid warming, among other advances, are driving new understanding, extending and challenging model capabilities, and providing records of change that can be used to develop decision-support tools (Chapter III, Objective 1.3). Building on the long-term development of multi-model ensembles for North America and the data that support them, USGCRP is advancing its ability to perform and analyze seasonal climate predictions used in agriculture and water-resources management, among other sectors (Chapter III, Objective 1.4). In addition, a new national information system on extreme heat and human health led by several USGCRP member agencies uses observations, predictive capabilities, and decision tools to support preparedness in the face of temperature and watercycle extremes (Chapter II).

The Third National Climate Assessment (NCA3), released in 2014, synthesized an extensive scientific literature for decision makers, focused on climate change and its impacts on people and places across the United States. NCA3 is supported by a searchable and shareable website, which has had more than one million visits to report

chapters and highlights as of July 2016. NCAnet, a network of more than 180 organizations and networks from both the private and public sectors, aims to understand user interests and needs while also sharing USGCRP information widely. As part of developing a sustained-assessment process that extends beyond the quadrennial report, USGCRP develops special assessments including *The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment* (2016), which broke new ground in quantifying the increased risks that climate changes poses to the health of all Americans, and highlighted factors that make some individuals and communities particularly vulnerable. Assessments on climate change and food security (2015) and the impacts of drought on forests and rangelands (2016) have also been released, and assessments of carbon-cycle science and climate science are underway, all of which will contribute to NCA4, planned for release in 2018. In support of the NCA3, USGCRP built the Global Change Information System (GCIS) to provide transparent and traceable linkages to the science that supports the NCA3's major findings, intended for use by both policy makers and the scientific community. This system is used with other special reports and is being further developed to support the Program more widely. Findings from the NCA and other research also provide the underlying science called for in the President's Climate Action Plan.

Addressing Challenges

USGCRP continues to confront a number of challenges in achieving the mandate of the GCRA and the goals of the 2012–2021 Strategic Plan, addressed in detail in Chapter III. While the Program has made significant progress in developing science that can inform adaptation planning and action, the development of a unified framework for incorporating social-science methodologies and expertise into both fundamental science and decision-relevant components is among the ongoing challenges for the Program. USGCRP is also using its long-running programs, aimed at understanding the natural processes governing the behavior of greenhouse gases and other atmospheric constituents, to provide further scientific foundations for understanding mitigation options and impacts; in this effort, the Program faces many of the same challenges noted for building capacity to inform adaptation decisions.

Informing adaptation actions calls for USGCRP to translate expertise, data, tools, and model outputs into products for societal benefit as determined by end-user needs, and to work with end users to develop the capacity to use decision tools. Building the kind of governmental, non-governmental, and academic partnerships and private sector collaborations needed to fully address these challenges, and to enable the collaborators to fulfill roles that are outside of the scope of USGCRP as a knowledge provider and translator, is an ongoing effort.

On the technical side, advancements in climate model resolution and integration with societal impacts models create the need for USGCRP to ensure consistency and robustness in downscaling approaches and to provide guidance in helping decision makers access relevant, standardized information and understand uncertainties. Maintaining the long-term observations that allow scientists to monitor, understand, and model change, while also developing and deploying new observing approaches, is also an ongoing challenge.

Road Ahead

Given the relatively short time since the release of the 2012–2021 Strategic Plan, this update refreshes it and discusses how USGCRP will build on recent progress and navigate new and ongoing challenges. The next update, to be developed for release in 2019, will initiate an extensive review of Program directions, in preparation for a new decadal Strategic Plan due in 2022. The Program expects to consult with Program participants and stakeholders in developing special activities (e.g., community workshops, commissioned studies) needed to inform the 2022–2031 Strategic Plan.

Acknowledgments

This update was greatly improved by revisions made in response to public comments, and those made by the Committee to Advise USGCRP at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, as well as extensive review from within the U.S. Government.

Links

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Pax Christi San Antonio
<http://www.paxchristisa.org>

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
www.msjc.net

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee
<http://saccvi.blogspot.com/>

San Antonio Peace Center
<http://www.sanantoniopeace.center>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty
www.txccedp.org

Dialogue Institute of San Antonio
www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/

Climate Change
www.creation-care.com

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www.nowcastsa.com/