Good afternoon. I am the Rev. Steve Halsted, pastor at Community United Church of Christ in Raleigh, NC. I am here today to provide testimony as a faith leader, and as clergy representative of NC Interfaith Power and Light, a statewide organization addressing the ecological and justice issues of climate change as a faith-based initiative.

NC Interfaith Power & Light is a program of the North Carolina Council of Churches. This role provides access to the Council’s membership of over 6,200 congregations. The North Carolina Council of Churches is comprised of 25 distinct judicatories from 17 denominations with 1.5 million congregants across the state of North Carolina. In 2005, NCIPL became the 16th state affiliate of the national Interfaith Power & Light Campaign. There are now Interfaith Power & Light affiliates in 40 states in over 15,000 congregations.

NCIPL has active programs preparing for the consequences of climate change from sea-level rise to human health impacts. Experts advise us to “avoid the unmanageable and manage the unavoidable;” change is here and it is frightening. NCIPL offers hope with programs that congregations can use to build local resilience and reduce the magnitude of future change.

As people of faith called to care for God’s people and Creation, especially the most vulnerable, we have a moral obligation to address the profound impacts of the way we produce and use energy. In addition to protecting our climate, curbing pollution from power plants offers many important benefits, including saving lives and reducing health risks to those suffering from heart disease and respiratory ailments such as asthma.

As a United Church of Christ pastor and clergy representative to NC Interfaith Power & Light, I am very proud that UCC’s executive minister for Justice and Witness Ministries, the Rev. Linda Jaramillo publically proclaimed “The United Church of Christ applauds the Obama Administration’s efforts to take real action on climate change. A proposal like the one introduced by the EPA has been a long time coming and is just the first of many steps that need to be taken by the U.S. government and big business to begin to curtail the damage that has already been done to our precious Earth.”
President Obama and the EPA are acting on our moral obligation to address unlimited carbon pollution coming from the nation’s power plants, the single largest source of global warming pollution in the country. The new standards will help usher in clean energy solutions like improved efficiency and solar power: things that North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light congregations have been using in their facilities for years to reduce emissions and save money. Emerging wind and solar companies have been in a David and Goliath struggle against the well-funded coal and gas industries. The new standards will create a dynamic move toward cleaner energy.

“These days faith and science are close allies. The science is clear and peer proven that global warming and climate change in our time is human induced by our tremendous emissions of carbon in the air – causing carbon pollution and the “green house” effect. Science tells us this reality. The role of religious faith is to give us the moral imperative to change our lifestyle and safeguard our environment for future generations and welfare of human life and the integrity of God’s creation. The EPA’s carbon safeguards are one important element in changing our lifestyle to meet this threat.

Communities of faith are identifying and implementing hope-filled responses to climate change as a moral imperative. We want to influence people to be good caretakers or stewards of God’s good gifts in creation. We seek energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sources in order to safeguard our environment now and for future generations as is guided by the wisdom of our faith traditions.

Climate change is a moral issue. The impacts can already be felt through heat waves, droughts and wildfires, but the impacts will get far worse if we continue to do nothing. The EPA is looking to take one critical step by reducing pollution from power plants.

On behalf of NC Interfaith Power & Light I have contacted North Carolina’s Senators, Kay Hagan and Richard Burr, to let them know that we support this positive action to reduce industrial carbon pollution.

I am hopeful that the EPA’s new carbon emission safeguards will be embraced by business and industry as the right course of action for the people, both rich and poor and all in between, of our nation.

Rev. Steve Halsted
Pastor of United Church of Christ
Clergy Representative to NCIPL’s Executive Committee