

Global warming poses ‘severe’ threat

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By Marv Knox

Editor

SAN ANTONIO—With the planet warming faster than it has in 10,000 years, “global warming is the most severe, important issue facing humankind,” environmentalist Karl Rábago insisted.

Rábago, director of the Houston Advanced Research Center’s clean and renewable energy group, challenged participants in the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission’s annual conference to take steps to alleviate the problem.

Christian Life Commission meeting

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“We have every tool and technology we need to address all these (environmental) problems,” Rábago stressed. “We made this problem in little steps. We can get out with little steps.”

The problem hinges on one factor, he said: “It’s the stuff we burn.” Global consumption of oil, gas and coal is pumping unprecedented amounts of carbon dioxide into the environment. It has the net effect of trapping heat and raising temperatures all over the world.

“The trend is ominous,” Rábago said. He cited the retreat of glaciers, shrinking polar ice caps, farmlands and forests devastated by drought in some locales and ravaging floods in others, deaths due to extreme heat, and unprecedented numbers of Category 4 and Category 5 hurricanes.

Wasteful consumption, combined with the fuel necessary to produce commodities, is a vexing problem, he said, noting, “Of all material mobilized into our economy for our benefit, 94 percent is thrown away within six months. ... The U.S. rate of consumption has doubled in 25 years. We have 7 percent of the world’s (land) mass, but we use 33 percent of the resources.”

The key to the solution is sustainability, he claimed: “It’s living and working as if you really believe in a tomorrow. It’s meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to survive as well.”

From a practical standpoint, that means adopting a systems perspective, recognizing that, in nature, everything is connected to everything else, Rábago said, noting incremental positive steps can achieve incremental improvements.

Among the “small steps” Rábago advocated are:

- Construction of “green buildings” that require less power to heat, cool and light.

- Increased use of renewable fuels, such as wind power and solar power.
- Spread of electrification a-round the globe, so that families in developing na-tions require fewer children to sustain the parents.
- Recycling. Christians must accept their responsibility in preserving the planet, Rábago said. “If you’re given a precious gift, what’s the right thing to do? ... This is our planet; it’s the only one we have.”

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