

THE GREAT WARMING

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH **REV. RICHARD CIZIK**



Excerpts from Rev. Cizik's Interview

(The full interview can be found at <http://www.thegreatwarming.com/revrichardcizik.html>)

I would say that this newfound passion, this concern for Creation Care as we call it, comes straight from God and the Holy Spirit who is regenerating people's hearts to realize the imperative of the scriptures to care for God's world in new ways. It comes from God Himself. He has changed my heart too. I have had a conversion to this cause.

The climate change crisis that we believe is occurring is not something we can wait ten years, five years, even a year, to address. Climate change is real and human induced. It calls for action soon. And we are saying **action based upon a biblical view of the world as God's world**. And to deplete our resources, to harm our world by environmental degradation, is an offense against God. That's what the Scriptures say. Therefore, if we are to be obedient to the Scriptures, there is no time to wait, no time to stall, no time to deliberate.

I think what's occurring is that people in the pews have not been getting cues from their pastors and denominational leaders - the people they esteem most. But we know that once they hear this word from their spiritual heads, from their churches, denominations and religious organizations, they will respond. And they've told us they will respond. Not just by changing their lifestyle, but by changing their politicians. Now that's where the rubber meets the road.

Evangelicals comprise between 40-50% per cent of the Republican base, and it has been the leadership of the Republican party, sad to say, that has not shown the leadership it should on environmental issues... in fact, have stymied action on climate change. So if the largest single population group in the Republican coalition were to say *"This is important, we want you, as our leaders in the Republican party, to take leadership on climate change, on clean air, on pure water, on the stewardship of our natural resources"*, if evangelical Christians were to say that, I daresay Republicans will listen. The Republicans running for the White House in 2008 will have to listen.

Look, evangelical Christians have learned that we have to do politics differently than we used to. In the 1980's for example, with all the ideological fervor that existed, many an evangelical thought "*well we'll simply convert the opposition to our side*". Well, we've learned that we can't simply convert all those in public life to our side, especially on religion. But we do know that we can convert people to a common good that everyone can agree upon. For example, evangelical Christians have collaborated with Tibetan Buddhists to pass international religious freedom bills. They've collaborated with gay rights activists to pass the president's Global Aids Initiative. They've worked with the ACLU to pass a Prison Rape Elimination Act. So, can we not collaborate with environmentalists? Of course we can! But do we need to develop our own voice first? Sure, I think we need to. Evangelicals need to have a sense that they are speaking out of their own tradition, their own religious and Biblical tradition – that they are not simply "me too" environmentalists. So, once evangelical Christians have developed their own voice, once they are comfortable with the fact that there needs to be government action, and that voluntary action won't suffice for climate change, and they put it all together, they will conclude that yes, environmentalism is not a bad word.

I think pastors should begin by teaching the word of God. This is God's world. When we destroy or deplete it, we violate his will. I think that is the very beginning. But there are also concrete actions which our believers in churches can take, from recycling to looking at the energy that our churches use, to looking for energy-efficient ways of operating our congregations. There are lots of other actions we can take. Transportation, for example. Some churches have huge bus fleets, and the question is what kind of energy are we consuming? So there are lots of actions that churches can take.

Because God doesn't intend to ask me "*Rich, how did I create the Earth?*" He won't ask me that. He'll say "*Rich, what did you do to protect that which I created?*" And that is an awesome question that deserves a good answer.