HOPE AND ACTION IN THE MIDST OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Presented by Pam McVety

November 1, 2026

First Presbyterian Church Tallahassee, Fl



Our Goals

1. To understand the current reality of the climate crisis, PCUSA's latest response and

2. To determine what we as a faith community can do next to help move the needle forward on addressing the climate crisis and implementation of renewable energy.

Our Speakers

- **Today** – Climate Science Update, and General Assembly's Latest Climate Response – Pam McVety
- **November 8** – The Future of Energy with an in depth look at the transition to renewable energy. Dr. Patrick Love



November 15 – Discussion of How We Can Make a Difference in the Transition – Dr. Dan Terpstra



First Presbyterian Church's Creation Care/Energy Transition is Stellar

- Committed in 1998 to be an Environmental Justice Covenant Congregation
- Made environmental education a priority
- Bonus- Our kids pursued careers in environmental justice occupations
- Made energy retrofits with our windows, lighting, and heating and cooling systems
- Installed solar on our education building
- Went carbon neutral
- Developed the Community Carbon Fund
- Divested from fossil fuels



WHY DO MORE ?

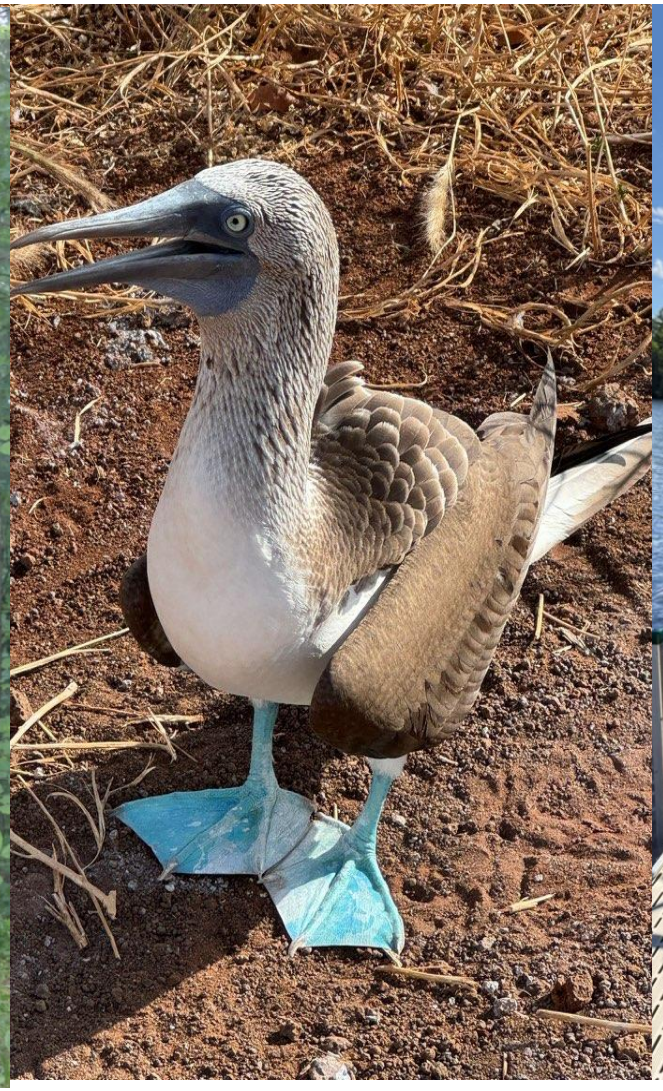
1. WE HAVE A BIBLICAL MANDATE TO CARE FOR CREATION

- **The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"** (Psalm 24). Theologically speaking we human beings don't own anything. We're merely stewards, caretakers of a creation that belongs to the Creator.
- **As wonderful as the creation is, it has its limits.** We cannot exploit the earth's resources with abandon. When we do, we disrupt the balance God built into creation from the beginning. That, more or less, is the lesson Adam and Eve learned when they ate the forbidden fruit. Without limits, the whole system goes haywire.

2. CREATION CARE IS A MISSION OF OUR DENOMINATION

AND MORE
We All Love and Need a Healthy Environment









FINAL WHY: The Earth is Heating Up Way too Fast

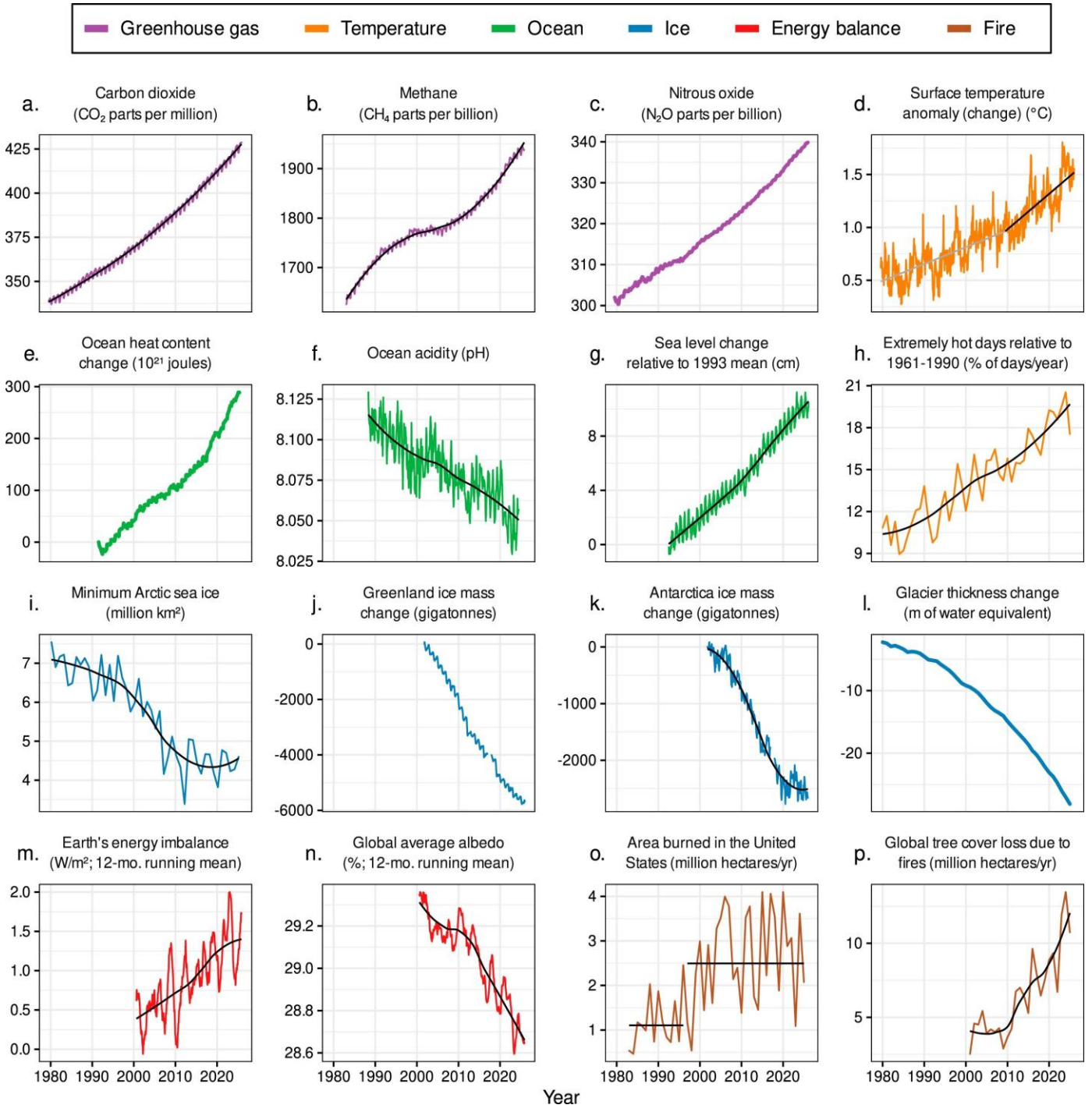
- September 2, 2026, UN issued a report, "Limiting Overshoot".
- UN acknowledges that the Earth has **lost its chance to prevent some of the worst of global warming's harms.** The world will cross the 1.5 degree threshold in the next few years.
- Still possible to bring temperatures down.
- Requires immediate and sustained cuts to carbon emissions with a carbon dioxide removal process.
- In plain English: We must do a lot more, a lot faster to cut emissions and remove CO_2 from the atmosphere..

The United States has made the climate crisis worse

- The UN report cites the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and a rise in U.S. emissions have made the climate crisis worse.
- America accounted for **70% of emissions growth** among countries that increased pollution in 2025.
- **All the other top 20 major economies** reduced their carbon pollution or at least slowed the carbon dioxide growth.

The State of the Climate Report October 14, 2026

The Earth's life-support systems are being pushed beyond stable limits, with changes unfolding faster than our ability to respond.



Source: The 2026 State of the Climate Report: Challenges And Opportunities. BioScience October 14, 2026,

Seven Climate Indicators are at Record Extremes

- Of 16 climate-related indicators, seven are currently at record extremes.

1. Carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide increase
2. Temperatures
3. Energy balance
4. Ocean acidity
5. Glacier thickness decrease
6. Greenland ice mass loss
7. Wildfires

- Several indicators also show evidence of **accelerating trends or abrupt shifts,** raising concerns about the growing risk of crossing critical tipping points.
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Tipping Points

Nothing is more important or Urgent to Avoid

Tipping Points are Irreversible

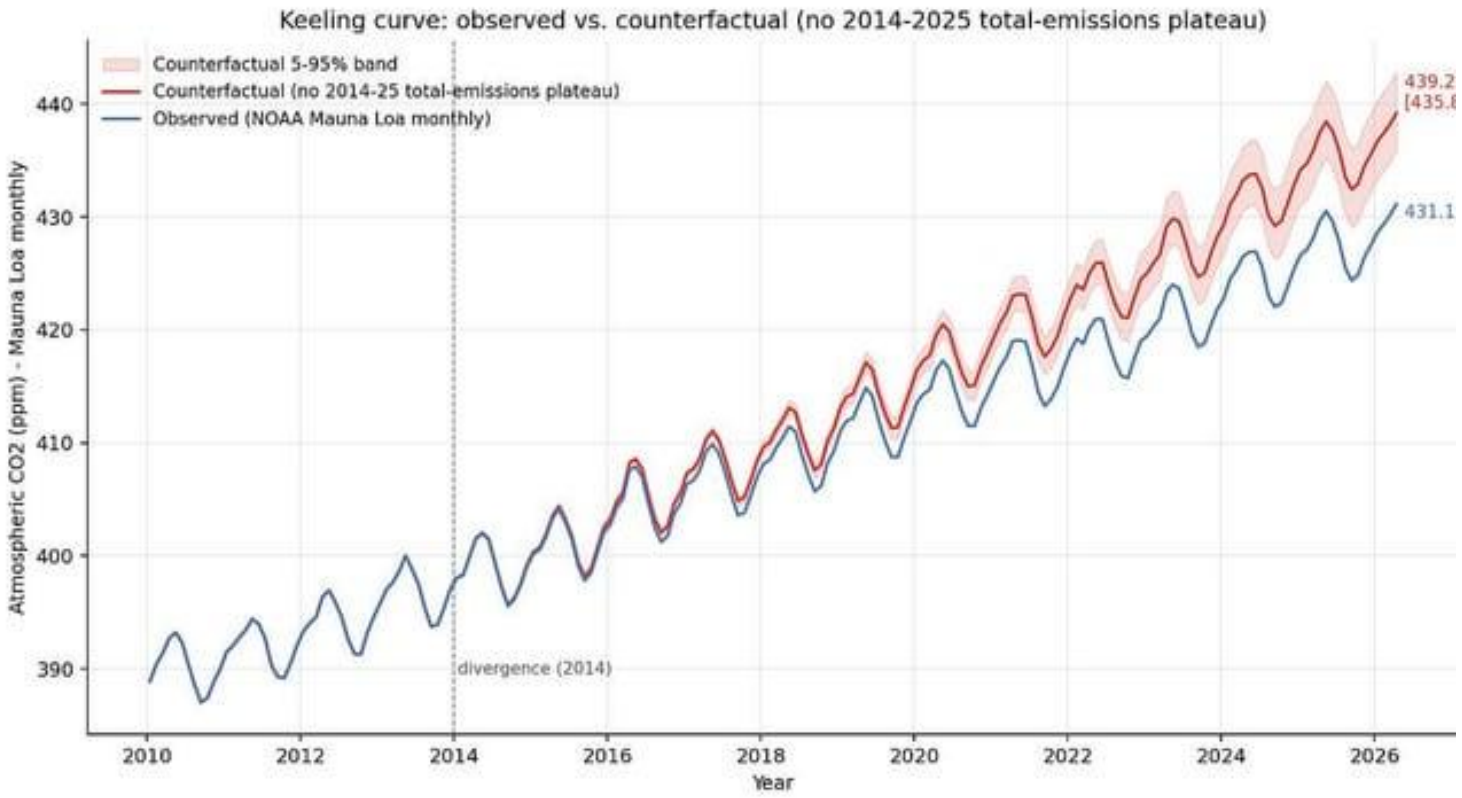
Impacts on natural systems are cumulative and small additional changes can trigger major and irreversible shifts that continue on their own. **Not stoppable on human time scale**.

- Large **polar ice sheets** may have already begun long term melting that could raise sea levels by several meters over centuries. Darker water absorbs more heat, so more melting.
- **Higher temperatures** dry out landscapes and leads to forest fires which release more CO_2.
- Amazon **rainforest is shifting** to savanna like conditions, so absorbing less CO_2.
- **Deep water circulation** my be weakening or collapsing because of warming which would cause a dramatic shift in weather for northern Europe.

- Tipping points would have catastrophic impacts on humans and the planet.

Some **Good** News on Science

CO_2 emissions have stopped growing as rapidly but are still increasing at record levels.



Why Emissions Have Slowed Up?

- Rapid expansion of clean energy globally, with spending on clean energy rising from around $600 billion in 2020 to $2.3 trillion in 2025.
- Notable reductions in land use emissions associated with reduced rates of deforestation in countries like Brazil.

GHG Atmospheric Concentration are Still Increasing

Emissions are still additions. Every year, billions of tons of new carbon dioxide (CO_2) are pumped into the air.

CO_2 accumulates long-term: Roughly half of all emitted CO_2 stays in the atmosphere for over a century, and a portion remains for thousands of years.

Natural sinks can't keep up: Oceans and forests absorb about half of human-emitted carbon, but their capacity is limited and cannot absorb the massive backlog building in the air.



Reminder that Temperatures Follow GHG Emissions

- **The Earth is warming at the fastest rate on record as emissions hit new highs and critical carbon sinks break down.**
- Also there has been a **drop in aerosol** pollution from coal generators and cargo ships which further drives up temperatures. Aerosols reflect sunlight, with a cooling effect. But cleaning up this pollution, further hastens warming.
- The rate of heating increased from 0.2 degrees C per decade to an **unprecedented 0.35 degrees** C, according to a new study published in *Geophysical Research Letters*.

Extreme Heat Kills

- Extreme heat is the leading weather-related killer in the United States and globally, causing more fatalities in a typical year than hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes combined.



The Problem is the Fossil Fuel Industry



People don't seem to understand how precarious our current situation has become.



From our federal government to our state government leadership is not only not addressing the climate crisis but are opposing actions to address it and promoting more fossil fuels.



Our denomination and others have been slow to react in a substantive manner to the the climate crisis.

Even Climate Hushing Amongst Democrats

- **Democratic campaigners are not speaking out.**
- Recent University of California study surveyed voters and found that at worse talking about climate change elicited a neutral response and at best a positive response.
- 65% of Americans say the issue of global warming is "extremely," "very," or "somewhat" important to them personally.



Reality

If 97% of engineers said a bridge would likely collapse no one would cross it. When 97% of climate scientists say we are headed towards catastrophe, people call it a hoax and mindlessly accelerate us closer to irreversible tipping points.

We Know How to Solve This

- We know what to do
  1. Stop supporting the fossil fuel industry and burning fossil fuels.
  2. Restore nature & stop cutting down forests
  3. Rapidly transition to renewable energy and remove carbon from atmosphere

PCUSA Finally Aligns Its Finances with its Climate Policies in 2026

- Our denomination **took 12 years** to agree to stop supporting the fossil fuel industry with its investments.
- One of the main reasons was because our BOP and PF believed that they **had to have investments in the industry to make money.**
- Even at GA this summer, a financial representative said that investments in fossil fuels are part of a **"balanced portfolio".**





Our Resistance to Categorical Divestment of Fossil Fuels was Institutionalized

- 1984 Divestment Strategy: Principles and Criteria approved by the General Assembly identified categorical divestment in two places.
- **MRTI divestment procedures only provide for a company-by-company review:** They said even this summer that theirs is only "one way to divest" and it is their company-by-company selective engagement process.
- In 2019, The Board of Pensions updated their policy on Prohibited Securities to say that they **do not act of categorical divestment recommended by the General Assembly**.

Advisory Committee for Social Witness Policy

ACSWP's Issues Important Policy Report

"Intent, Effect, Haste: Ethical Guidance on Fossil Fuels"

- Key language: The PCUSA should pursue the path that supports the quickest and most efficient transition away from the production, distribution and use of fossil fuels.
- Previously supported divestment in 2020-2022, but BOP and PF convinced commissioners that BAU was enough.

Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy on Haste

- Finally, the overwhelming **effects of the climate crisis** broke through to commissioners, and the **ACSWP's 2026 policy** clearly spoke to the need for haste, and staff agreed to support full divestment.
- However, we are still invested and **won't know until next GA** whether we are removing our investments on a trajectory that reflects the urgency of the climate crisis.

Brief History of Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign in PCUSA

To read more about the 12-year campaign see the Presbyterians for Earth Care, July 21, 2026, article by Fred Milligan

https://presbyearthcare.blogspot.com/2026/07/a-brief-history-of-fossil-fuel.html



2026 Overture Changing Course for a Green Future Overture Passed General Assembly

- Amended to say: Calls for the denomination to align its investments in the exploration, development, extraction, refinement, transportation, and sale of fossil fuels with the ethical guidelines of ACSWP's "Intent, Effect, and Haste".
- Commends the PF and BOP for reducing ff investments and World Council of Churches for divesting.
- Calls for an orderly removal of our investments and to seek investments in renewable energy
- Directs MRTI to expand engagement to banks and insurance companies
- Encourages Interim Unified Agency to advocate for just global transition
- Directs the Stated Clerk to inform all and provide pastoral care to any Presbyterian who this may affect.
- Result: Brings our denomination's finances in alignment with our decades long healing creation policies.

Passed a Second Overture: The Green Future Endowment Fund

- Focus is helping people through the transition to renewable energy.
- Created an endowment fund
- Calls for a design team to develop a proposal for how to capitalize and operate a green endowment fund.
- Report back at next GA.
- GA voted for a similar fund in 2008 but never established
- Helps us help workers and communities on the front line of climate harm, as well as creation.

Presbyterians for Earth Care
AN ECO-JUSTICE NETWORK
25 YEARS

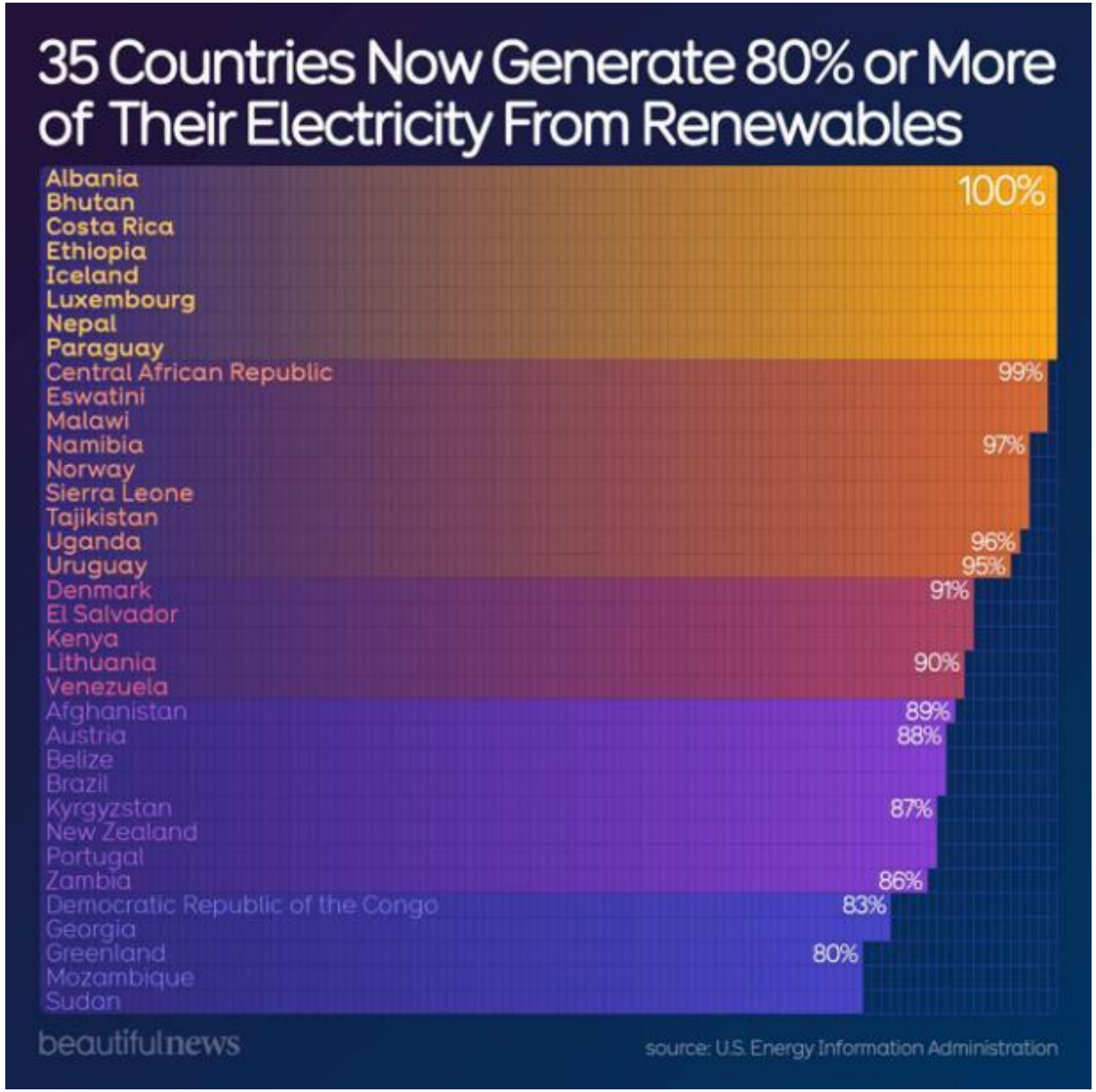
Good News
The Transition to Renewable Energy is Moving Forward

- **The transition to renewable energy is happening despite:**
- Our state and federal government passing laws that make it difficult even illegal to move away from fossil fuels and defunding renewable energy.
- The ongoing campaign of the fossil fuel industry to keep us dependent on fossil fuels. (Their tools include- misinformation, undermining science, and stigmatizing public discussions and advocacy for addressing the climate crisis.)
- The slowness of moral institutions like churches to get on board with reality.
- The public's failure to accept and respond to the climate crisis.

Global Clean Energy Generation Reaches Historic Milestones

- Global clean energy generation has reached historic milestones.
- **Surpassing Fossil Fuels:** Data from the energy thinktank Ember reveals that clean energy growth met all the increase in global electricity demand in 2026 so far.
- **U.S. Progress:** Nationally, the U.S. generated more electricity from solar and wind than from gas for a full month for the first time, with 93% of new 2026 capacity additions coming from green sources.
- **The Battery Revolution:** Grid-scale and home battery storage costs have dropped sharply, improving efficiency and reliability to support solar and wind integration.
- **Global Leadership:** China continues to lead the surge in solar output, which grew tenfold over the decade leading up to 2025.

Global Progress is Excellent



THE Key Question

- Will we meet the global emissions reduction target required to limit the peak global warming to 1.7 -1.8 degrees C and avoid a disastrous climate overshoot?
  - 18% by 2030
  - 45% by 2035
  - 69% by 2040

Source: September 2, 2026 U.N. Limiting Overshoot report

Deep Dive Next Week into Renewable Energy



Final Thought

"Stopping this trend is in our hands," the UN study concluded. "In the current political climate, however, it is quite possible that warming may continue its fast pace or even accelerate further."

WHAT CAN WE DO NEXT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



Our Reality Explained by a Climate Scientist

"I'm a climate scientist. If you knew what I know, you'd be terrified too. If the fracturing of our once stable climate doesn't terrify you, then **you don't fully understand it.** The reality is that, as far as we know, our world has never, in its entire history, heated up as rapidly as it is doing now. Think about that for a moment. We're experiencing, in our lifetimes, a heating episode that is probably unique in the last 4.6 billion years." -**Bill McGuire, author, Hothouse Earth: An Inhabitant's Guide.**

Reminder of What Happened in Nepal Because of Melting Glaciers

- **1,367 people confirmed dead** following the 26 August floods
- **5,132 people are still missing**, including 587 foreign nationals, as search and rescue missions continue
- 13,646 people have been rescued
- "The devastation Nepal has experienced is an extraordinary, stark **illustration of the losses and damages that climate-vulnerable countries are increasingly facing,**" UN Resident Coordinator for Nepal, Lila Pieters Yahia, told reporters by video link at UN Headquarters.
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We Don't Want to Go Where We are Headed

- On basis of current policies, we are headed to 2.9-degree temperature increase which would be disastrous.
- Remember scientists said we should not exceed a 1.5-degree increase.
- Our warming world is causing more and more destructive impacts from monster hurricanes to forest fires to the devastating glacial flood in Nepal.