

Congregational Consent Form

“The extension of Christian congregational practices to meet the Anthropocene”

Your congregation (or church, parish, place of worship, etc.) has been selected to participate in a research study of how Christian congregations are responding at the grassroots to the challenges of climate change and ecological despair. This project is interested not only in cataloging creative responses to these challenges, but also documenting some of the struggles that come with local Christian congregations seeking to claim a sense of agency (that is, the ability to “do something”) in the midst of a perceived planetary crisis.

At the end of this study, three deliverables will be produced:

1. A practical resource, made freely available, for pastors and church leaders seeking project ideas that help them to sustain faithful ministry in an increasingly warming world. This will most likely take the form of a 16-page PDF guidebook and/or PowerPoint presentation.
2. A philosophical and/or narrative non-fiction resource on what it looks like when a congregation moves past despair or complacency on climate change and instead adopts an orientation of hope (e.g., a publicly available 10,000 word longform essay).
3. An anonymized database that will aid future researchers and creatives who are seeking to better understand and respond to the dynamics of congregations responding faithfully to climate change and ecological despair.

Congregations will be identifiable by name and location in each of these resources. As a leader of the congregation authorized to grant permission for a research investigator to join as a temporary participant-observer in the life of your congregation, you are encouraged to read carefully through this form (and the corresponding Individual Consent Form) before volunteering your congregation to be part of this study.

Who is the research investigator, and who is supporting this research?

The research investigator of this project is Kaleb Nyquist, a recent divinity school graduate with an additional masters degree in public policy (the University of Chicago). Kaleb has previously worked as a youth ministry director (Ravenwood Evangelical Covenant Church) and as a faith-based activist for responsible climate change policy (Young Evangelicals for Climate Action). You may contact Kaleb at kaleb@ravenscov.org or (971) 237-0531.

This project is financially supported by the Pastoral Study Project program of the Louisville Institute. The institutional sponsor of this project is Ravenwood Evangelical Covenant Church, a long-standing neighborhood congregation on Chicago's north side. Any premises or conclusions related to this research are the Investigator's own and do not represent an official public stance of the funder or sponsor. The project website is churches.eco.

How long will the researcher investigator do research with us, and what will the research investigator do as a participant-observer?

The research investigator will be a participant in the congregation for a period approximately of 1-3 weeks (final number to be determined with the congregational lead contact), not including preparatory and follow-up e-mails, phone calls and video chats.

Activities the research investigator may engage in during the visit include:

- Forming a “Focus Presentation” discussion group that will be recorded and transcribed. This can include a documentary screening, a thematic Bible Study, or leading a workshop.
- Formal one-on-one interviews with congregants (recorded and transcribed)

- Informal conversations with congregants (no live recording, although anonymous paraphrasing and field observations may be used later in the deliverables)
- Visit worship services and other specified gatherings of congregational life, taking field notes and photography as appropriate
- Visit the settings of initiatives to address climate change and ecological anxiety, taking field notes and photography as appropriate
- Distributing a survey among congregants (results can be made available to church leadership in a manner that protects congregant confidentiality)

Specific boundaries related to confidentiality and privacy can be negotiated with the research investigator. Note that individual participants will be provided with their own consent form.

What are the risks and benefits of participation?

The goal of the Investigator is that participation in this research study is a fruitful and beneficial experience for each participant. That said, on the Individual Consent Form (available upon request) the most obvious risks and benefits for individual participants are detailed. This is so that each potential participant can make an informed decision about participation, documented below are what are believed to be the most obvious risks and most obvious benefits.

Congregations who opt to participate in this project are generally assumed to be taking initiative on climate change or ecological anxiety and thus will naturally be portrayed in a positive light. Note that while a crucial element of this project is to document some of the struggles that come trying to implement this work, the only struggles that will be published in the deliverables will be those that are in some way shared by two or more participating congregations. The goal of this research is to identify common and relatable themes that others can learn from, not idiosyncrasies peculiar to each congregation that are best left private and confidential.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I permit the research investigator to proceed as a participant-observer according to the terms outlined in this document.

By signing, I am declaring that I am authorized to permit the research investigator to join as a temporary participant-observer. I will have communicated this arrangement appropriately to key stakeholders and the congregation-at-large by the time the research investigator arrives.

I also understand that if I wish to participate in this study as an individual, I must separately fill out the Individual Consent Form associated with this project.

Name of Congregation: _____

Begin and End Dates of Investigator Participation: _____

Church Staff Name: _____

Church Staff Signature: _____ **Date** _____

Elder/Chair Name: _____

Elder/Chair Signature: _____ **Date** _____

Primary Contact Name: _____ *(may be same staff or elder/chair)*

Primary Contact Signature: _____ **Date** _____

Investigator Signature: _____ **Date** _____