

Climate Change Phyllis Kravitz

We are living in extraordinary times. Almost every day we're bombarded with yet another crisis in the world. Our conversations consist of exclaiming and commiserating about the latest event and it's impossible to watch the news impassively.

Whether it's worries about North Korea, stories about international migration, terrible floods & forest fires, it becomes difficult to pass an ordinary day without thinking about one of these important issues.

Climate change. Global warming. These phrases have become much more prevalent in our lexicon. My purpose today is to link many of these worldwide crises to the effects from climate change. Here at JRC we have already taken a huge step in proclaiming our commitment by building a platinum level LEEDS building. That was an important experience of which we can be proud. But we're not done! It's not sufficient to renew, reuse and recycle. World events are being affected.

Here are just a few examples. Rising sea levels have impacted mass migration, contributing to political instability. I am not a scientist, but it's not hard to put 2 and 2 together to understand that the forest fires are caused by drought and high temperatures. And in addition to the terrible cost to people's homes and the effect on outdoor recreation, the smoke will cause respiratory problems, and future weather patterns will change. And 90 degree weather in September? The Dept. of Agriculture indicates hardiness has changed, so formerly cool temperatures for growing vegetables in the Midwest have inched up 10 degrees.

I have two ideas to suggest. One is an organization I've become involved with called Citizen Climate Lobby. It specifically focuses on carbon emissions, the single most contributor to global warming. It's a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of volunteers from around the country who meet with members of Congress to advocate a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It puts a price on carbon but is revenue neutral, strong enough to stabilize the climate while boosting the economy, and benefitting all income families. I have some brochures that will further explain this concept.

Secondarily, we know that our Jewish tradition emphasizes that human dominion over nature does not provide a license to abuse the environment; rather we are reminded that if we fail to do our part, there will be nobody after us to repair our damage.

As a synagogue, we could pass a resolution, not unlike that done by Chicago Sinai Congregation, advocating Congress to pass carbon pricing legislation. Actions by the faith based community, municipalities and business leaders will be a strong influence in convincing Congress to act. Given JRC's history of social justice commitment, this should not be difficult. The Green Team welcomes your ideas and support toward this effort.