



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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Climate Change: No Denying It

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EXPERIENCE

Central Illinois, along with a big swath of the country, has been moving toward drought for several years. Each year at Jubilee Farm (jubileefarm.info) we talk about it. We watch it encroach on our growing season as it alters planting and germinating times. We watch some of our crops shrivel up after a valiant effort to grow and note that others never even break through the soil. I am not sure why we were so stunned a few summers back when for the first time the well we use to water the garden went dry in midsummer.

In 2012, early in the growing season, long before we even needed to rely on it for irrigation, the well was again dry. January's temperatures bounced around and played havoc with the expected winter precipitation that never arrived. In March we broke heat records. The dry spell and the heat, occasionally broken with short periods of unusual cooling, continued through the growing season. Another first, in mid-July we canceled two weeks' worth of pick-up for the subscribers of our community supported garden

(CSG). Little of what we had planted was growing. What did grow were tomatoes and peppers, and that was about all we were able to offer for the rest of the growing season. Not even our zucchini made it! Our county was declared the second worst hit in Illinois, gaining the distinction of being in "extreme drought" condition.

We started 2013 fully expecting drought again and were surprised with an over-

we closed the CSG season three weeks early. We will not offer the CSG next year.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

A new study looking at 11,000 years of climate temperatures shows the world is in the middle of a dramatic U-turn, lurching from near record cooling to an unprecedented heat spike in the 20th century. (Union of Concerned Scientists, www.ucsusa.org)

Every one of the past 35 years has been warmer than the 20th century average. The 12 warmest years on record have all occurred since 1998. 2012 was the hottest

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abundance of precipitation that kept us from getting into the garden until late June, three-and-a-half months past normal planting time. We started our CSG season two weeks late and with little produce to share. Then, no rain in August, and the well was dry again. Late-planted tomatoes finally began to ripen in September. After a hard frost in October,

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year ever recorded for the contiguous United States.

The principal driver of long-term warming is the total emissions of CO₂. At current rates, CO₂ emissions will hurtle us past a planetary climate rise of 2 degrees Celsius in less than 50 years, conservatively assuming that emissions rates do not continue on their current upward trajectory of approximately 3% per year.

Climate change is not a new reality. The long-predicted dramatic effects we are experiencing have been building for years and are now literally in our faces as we, even in our country, endure floods, fires, dust storms, droughts, E-5 tornadoes, massive blizzards, melting glaciers, ocean level rise, the expansion of disease vectors, and off-the-scale pollen counts. In the words of Martin Luther King, "We are living in the fierce urgency of now."

REFLECTION

There is no point in railing against all the lost opportunity to take what would have been reasonable steps to mitigate the effects of climate change. There is not much point, either, in fussing at the recalcitrance of Congress to accept climate reality and take the appropriate actions long outlined by reputable scientists. Frustration and finger-pointing are getting us nowhere, except in deeper and hotter water, literally.

Instead, it is time for grassroots action. In fact, such action is well underway. It is no longer possible to count the host of local, national, and international groups working in creative and varied ways to address climate change. And faith communities are well represented.

As people of faith, as Catholics who come from a long tradition of understanding creation as revelatory of God, as vowed religious women, we have a particular grassroots role to play. We are recognized as educators and respected as women who live what we preach. Others look to us to model, cajole, challenge, and inspire them to make pro-life choices that allow the whole of life on this planet to flourish.

That means we need to know the facts about climate change. For those of us in the United States it means we need to hold our elected officials account-

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able for their inaction. It means that we need to make lifestyle changes in what we eat and drink and wear, what we purchase and how we dispose of it after our use, what and how we drive, how we warm and cool our motherhouses and convents, and what decisions we make regarding the lands we hold in trust.

It means that those we serve and those with whom we serve, see us work, pray, yearn, even ache for justice, for making right the planetary relationships that have been compromised or broken by our anthropocentric short-sightedness.

It means that we come to the realization that this issue of climate change is not

just one more on a list of justice actions we need to take. It is, rather, the overarching justice issue. The consequences of climate change are at this moment exacerbating access to fresh water and food supplies, migration, trafficking, armed conflict, the health and welfare of women and children, and the integrity and viability of the whole of creation.

We are indeed living in "the fierce urgency of now." At no other time in our species' history have we been given a mandate of such planetary proportions. It compels us to know ourselves, our greater planetary self, and in that knowing take up the work, in whatever fashion we are most impassioned, that will bring healing and protect life. That is no little task. But it is the one task ul-

ACTION

Demand action from elected state and federal leaders, i.e., an effective climate change plan, funding for alternative energy, less reliance on fossil and nuclear fuels, and cooperation with world leaders on climate initiatives.

Take simple practical steps to reduce your personal carbon emissions: eat less meat, eat locally raised foods, use less hot water, drive efficiently, and raise/lower thermostats.

Support or get involved in any grassroots efforts designed to mitigate the effects of climate change: Transition USA, 350.org, Just Label It, and any local food efforts