



The Climate Crisis Is a Human Crisis

By Alicia Cannon



At no time since we first celebrated Earth Day 50 years ago have we experienced such an environmental crisis as today. Climate change and the depletion of the Earth's ecosystems are having a devastating impact on us all. Last year, we ended the hottest decade and second hottest year in modern history.

We will need to drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in order to keep global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050.

FCNL is dedicated to convincing congress that it is important to develop solutions to the climate crisis.

Scientists in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that such a warming would result in extreme temperatures; increases in frequency, intensity and amount of heavy precipitation; and increase in intensity or frequency of droughts.

As people of faith, we understand—as many indigenous peoples have long understood—that we are an integral part of nature. We need not look far to see how climate change is harming people and ravaging vulnerable communities.

An hour from Washington, D.C., in Maryland is historic Ellicott City, a town that sits at the bottom of a steep valley where four rivers flow into the larger Patapsco River. In 2016, a powerful thunderstorm pummeled it, causing a deadly flash flood that resulted in more than \$24 million in damages.

It was the storm of the century. Some categorized it as a 1,000-year flood. The resilient residents rebuilt the city, reconstructing the quaint town it had been.

Less than two years later, another 1,000-year flood hit the city. A powerful current of water rushed down Main Street, taking cars, debris, and one person with it. After 15 inches of rain, the water slowly receded, leaving gaping holes in shops and collapsed buildings. The resiliency once felt in 2016 was replaced with a feeling of dread. This kind of flood was not supposed to happen again that soon.

Along the U.S. coasts, rising seas are eroding cities and towns. According to a study by Florida State University, 13 million Americans will need to move to escape rising sea levels by the end of this century.

Off the coast of Louisiana in the Gulf of Mexico, the Isle de Jean Charles is sinking. Since 1955, the island has lost 98 percent of its 22,000-acres due to coastal erosion, rising seas, and hurricanes worsened by climate change. The federal government allocated \$48 million to relocate the residents by 2024 to higher ground 40 miles northwest.

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Homes fighting water on the Isle de Jean Charles. Photo by Karen Gadbois shared under a Creative Commons (BY-SA) license.

Resolving Climate Change for Future Generations

VIEWPOINT » By Emily Wirzba



When I first walked through FCNL's doors, a 2013 college graduate filled with zeal to change the world, I knew a few things. First, I was passionate about climate change and environmental issues. Second,

I wanted to enact structural change to address the problem and was eager to see how lobbying and advocacy could make a difference.

What I didn't know was how huge a task this would be. There were no Republicans in Congress publicly talking about climate change. Yet I firmly believed that FCNL's assessment of the problem was accurate: without bipartisan congressional action on climate change, the U.S. could not fully address the problem.

The United States has to be an active participant in international efforts in order to reduce greenhouse gases. It was clear that FCNL needed to cultivate the space for bipartisan dialogue on climate change in Congress, if we wanted even a chance at passing legislation.

Since then, I can't overstate how much the political landscape has shifted. We've helped members of Congress take meaningful action on climate change. This took years of persistent work by FCNL's network, building relationships and seeking that of God in each legislator. We still have a long way to go but a few moments were key to this political shift.

**As people of faith, we understand—
as many indigenous peoples
have long understood—that we
are an integral part of nature.**

In 2019, we saw a surge of youth activism worldwide, demanding a response from our leaders to match the scale of the crisis. Greta Thunberg's weekly school strike activated millions. Inspired by the Sunrise Movement, legislators drafted the ambitious Green New Deal.

It is also getting harder to ignore the effects of climate change as it wreaks havoc in the United States and worldwide. Elected officials from both parties are witnessing the people they represent experience harm—from the torrential flooding in Nebraska to the wildfires in California.

Members of Congress are responding. There is now a bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus in both the House and Senate that are building trust across the aisle. There are seven carbon pricing bills in Congress, four of which have bipartisan support.



Tandem Friends School (Charlottesville, VA) students gather to lobby Rep. Denver Riggleman (VA-5) on climate change.

These bills seek to shift our economy towards cleaner energy sources. To varying degrees, they seek to ensure that low-income families and other vulnerable communities are not harmed by the policy.

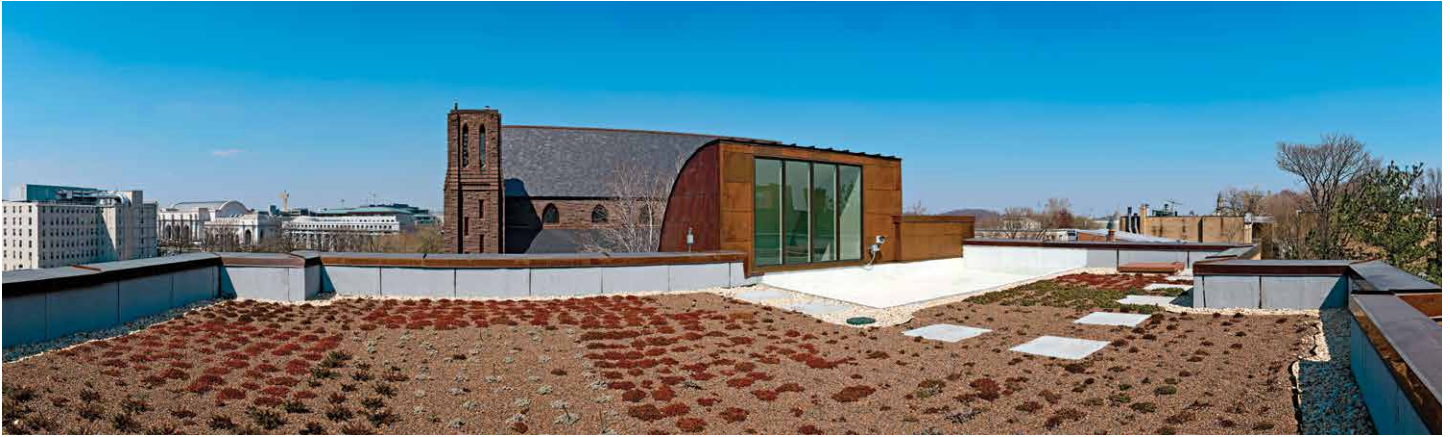
As new bills are drafted, we analyze them using our interfaith carbon pricing principles, centered on justice, human dignity, and dialogue. "The principles are rooted in the practice of emphasizing our common values in order to advance cooperation and overcome partisanship at both the national and international levels."

Democrats are drafting ambitious legislation that will provide a roadmap for how to address the problem, through frameworks established by the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis and other congressional committees.

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FCNL Gets a Platinum Rating for Being Green

By Alex Frandsen



Covered in drought-tolerant plants, FCNL's roof is easily spotted from the Hart Senate Office Building. Photo by Jim Morris.



When FCNL finished renovations in 2007, it earned a notable honor: 245 2nd Street became the first green building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Now, more than a decade later, FCNL's drive to minimize its environmental footprint has earned it a platinum rating, the highest level for a green building.

For over a decade, FCNL held a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certification, signifying that it meets crucial benchmarks in maintaining an environmentally responsible building.

LEED is a program of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). It measures and defines what makes a green building. There are four levels: certified, silver, gold, and platinum. From silver, FCNL has vaulted to platinum.

The push to meet this mark has been led by FCNL's facilities team, led by Ato Stephens. The team has been working hard to ensure that FCNL excels in the main categories analyzed by USGBC: energy usage, water usage, waste, transportation, and human experience.

The building's original green features from the renovation remain impactful. The geothermal heating and cooling system, which uses ten 350-foot wells to take advantage of the Earth's natural temperature, is 45 percent more energy efficient than a standard HVAC system. Energy-efficient windows and the rooftop

"light scoop" allow plenty of natural light without sacrificing insulation.

Much of the building's interior is made from renewable and sustainable materials—the bamboo flooring, carpeting, and ceiling tile. Low-flow toilets help minimize water use, too.

In 2007, FCNL's headquarters became the first green building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

But the crowning feature may be the green roof, which insulates the building and lowers the urban "heat island" effect. Covered in attractive drought-tolerant plants, the roof is easily spotted from the Hart Senate Office Building and has frequently attracted visitors from Capitol Hill curious to learn more.

However, as former FCNL executive secretary Joe Volk notes in a 2007 *Roll Call* article, "Green buildings aren't just the physical place, they are also how people live and work."

To encourage more eco-friendly modes of transportation, FCNL provides employees with bike parking, a shower, and a stipend for Metro use. The result, says facilities coordinator Ato Stephens, is that most people at FCNL don't rely on a car to get to work.

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The Climate Crisis Is a Human Crisis *(from p. 1)*

But the residents, mostly members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, are reluctant to leave. Their ancestors settled Isle de Jean Charles to escape the Trail of Tears and the Indian Removal Act.

The island holds special cultural ties to their tribal traditions, language, and family. Moving would mean leaving their homes and their culture behind.

It is simply against our faith for Native American tribes and other vulnerable communities to suffer from the consequences of a climate crisis for which they did little to contribute. Throughout the world, millions of refugees have been forced to leave their homes and face uncertain lives elsewhere because of drastic changes to their environment. The IPCC, citing various studies, says that there could be 200 million climate refugees by 2050.

Such is the case of Ioane Teitiota, a citizen of the low-lying island nation of Kiribati in the South Pacific. He left his home in South Tarawa to start a new life in New Zealand, saying his reason for migrating is “the same as people who are fleeing war. Those who are afraid of dying, it’s the same as me.”

His home island had become uninhabitable due to overcrowding, agricultural failures, sea level rise, and unsafe drinking water. Yet New Zealand deported him for overstaying his visa. This case was brought

before the UN Human Rights Committee, which ruled that climate refugees cannot be forced home. However, the governing body decided that Kiribati’s uninhabitability due to climate change was not imminent enough to categorize Teitiota a climate refugee.

At FCNL, we recognize that climate impacts are not experienced equally. Frontline communities and communities of color disproportionately experience the brunt of climate impacts. That is why our work seeking an earth restored is grounded in the belief that vulnerable communities should be helped, not harmed, by climate policy.

It is critical that we work to pass policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Economists have concluded that most cost-effective and fastest way is to put a price on carbon emissions. Together with our partners, we believe that polluters must bear the burden and not those populations who feel the worst impact of climate change and are least able to respond.

As we work to address the climate crisis, we carry the stories of Ioane Teitiota, the natives of the Isle De Jean Charles, and residents of Ellicott City, in order to prevent others from experiencing the same.

Alicia Cannon is FCNL’s program assistant for sustainable energy and environment. 



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Young Adults Virtually Lobby for Climate Solutions

More than 450 young adults from 40 states have registered to virtually attend Spring Lobby Weekend (SLW), March 28-31. They will attend from meetings, churches, colleges, and universities.

Spring Lobby Weekend was originally planned as an in-person event. However, it was converted into a virtual one to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The participants will virtually lobby Congress to address climate change by putting a price on carbon with the Climate Rebate Act as the legislative vehicle.



FCNL's Young Fellows have been the major recruiters for SLW as they travel to colleges, meetings, and churches around the U.S.

During the weekend, members of congress will address the participants. Young adult leaders and climate change scientists will also share their expertise during the workshops. Participants will be trained in effective Quaker lobbying.

“For most participants, attending this event is the first step to what we hope will be a lifetime of advocating for peace, justice, and environmental sustainability,” said Jim Cason, FCNL associate general secretary for strategic advocacy.

Many alumni have become leaders in other nonprofit organizations and even staff members in Congress.

“Spring Lobby Weekend is an incredible way to get the skills and the tools to make sure that when you're out of college you're ready to lift up those around you, be it through advocacy or be it through being a leader in the community in other ways,” said Wilmington College student Emma Marks at the end of last year's SLW.

Spring Lobby Weekend was started by FCNL in 2006. More than 3,000 young adults have participated in the training. They have lobbied on such issues as ending war, immigration, and climate change. [f](#)

FCNL Wins Five Awards

The Religion Communicators Council recently granted FCNL five DeRose-Hinkhouse Awards in recognition of the excellence of its communications work in 2019. RCC is the oldest group of its kind and the DeRose-Hinkhouse is most prestigious in the field of religious communications.

“The DeRose-Hinkhouse Awards are external validations of the quality of FCNL's work and its growing success in reaching new audiences,” said Diane Randall, FCNL general secretary. “The organization's Forward Plan calls for expanding its media, marketing, and communications work.”

The awards were given for an op-ed, “Diplomacy is the Best Way to Achieve Peace with Iran,” published in Real Clear Religion. The Washington Newsletter and an online media kit on the poorest and hungriest U.S. states also bagged awards.

Awards were also given to two radio public service announcements (PSAs)—one on immigration and another on ending gun violence. Together, these two PSAs were aired by 3,237 stations reaching just over 24 million people. In advertising terms, the publicity generated by these PSAs was valued at \$175,000.

“I am grateful to the communications team and our FCNL colleagues for helping us to always reach for the highest possible standards in religious communications,” said Adlai Amor, FCNL's associate general secretary for communications. “This year's awards are particularly significant since the competition was opened to more religion publishers and broadcasting networks.”

Last year, FCNL won three DeRose-Hinkhouse awards for its annual report, a book on FCNL's history, and the Washington Newsletter. [f](#)

Viewpoint (from p. 2)

House Republican leaders now acknowledge the need to address climate change and have proposed their own solutions, including planting one trillion trees. While their solutions don't go far enough, it's important that they are now officially engaging as a party.

Members of Congress are finally realizing their obligation to future generations. When Chris Coons (DE) asked Mike Braun (IN) to establish the bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus with him, Sen. Braun's answer left a lasting impression. "His answer was rooted in his kids and grandkids and the passion they have for being engaged in trying to tackle this multigenerational issue," said Sen. Coons.

May our concern for our children and grandchildren motivate us to keep advancing climate solutions.

Emily Wirzba is FCNL's legislative manager for sustainable energy and environment. 

LEED Platinum Rating (from p. 3)

But the drive to be green is about more than awards. FCNL seeks an earth restored, and making the home base for Quaker advocacy as eco-friendly possible is a way of putting our values to practice.

According to the Alliance to Save Energy, buildings account for 40 percent of U.S. energy consumption and 70 percent of electricity consumption. They emit over one-third of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, more than any other sector of the economy.

With FCNL's location on the doorstep of Congress, 245 2nd Street is an example of what's possible. Although the adjacent Quaker Welcome Center at 205 C Street is not LEED-certified, it was renovated following LEED guidelines.

The center has a solar roof, which generated 581 kWh in January. This is equivalent to 1,648 lbs. of carbon emissions saved, or 41 trees planted. Since more power

is generated than is needed by the center, the excess is sold to the power company.

"We believe that Congress should address climate change and shift towards a clean energy economy," said Thomas Swindell, FCNL associate general secretary for administration and finance. "But we don't only believe it—we practice it. Our LEED certification, green roof, and solar panels, to name a few, manifest the fact that with every opportunity presented, FCNL takes advantage of using energy efficient tools."

Alex Frandsen is a communications assistant at FCNL. 

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The Washington Newsletter is a publication of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is a national nonpartisan Quaker organization that lobbies Congress for peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.

Clerk: Ron Ferguson
Assistant Clerk: Bridget Moix
General Secretary: Diane Randall

Editor: Adlai Amor
Writers: FCNL Staff
Photos: FCNL Staff
Design/Layout: Wesley Wolfbear Pinkham

Reprinting: Encouraged with credit
Cost: Free upon request
Frequency: Published 6 times a year

245 2nd Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-547-6000 | fctlinfo@fctl.org | fctl.org
facebook.com/quakerlobby | @fctl



Printed with vegetable ink on FSC-certified paper in a facility that uses renewable energy.

The Power of Faith in Bridging Divides

FCNL policy committee member Michael Snarr recently co-authored a book that profiles seven individuals living out their faith through service to others. Emily Wirzba, FCNL's lead environmental lobbyist, was one of them.

The book, titled "Faithful Witness in a Fractured World," lays out models for an "authentic Christian life." The motivation for writing it, according to Snarr, was to show the profound power faith has in bridging political and social divides.

"Too many conservative Christians think you get saved and your Christian walk is over," he said. "And for too many liberals, we feel that they write off Christianity entirely. We wanted to counter that; here are Christians really living in authentic faith. For anyone might reject Christianity, you're missing a lot of people who are doing real things."

Snarr, a professor at Wilmington College in Ohio, has been bringing students to Spring Lobby Weekend for 14 years, so he was intimately familiar with FCNL's work. He and co-author, Nicole L. Johnson, settled on Wirzba as one of the subjects due to her tireless advocacy for bipartisan climate solutions.

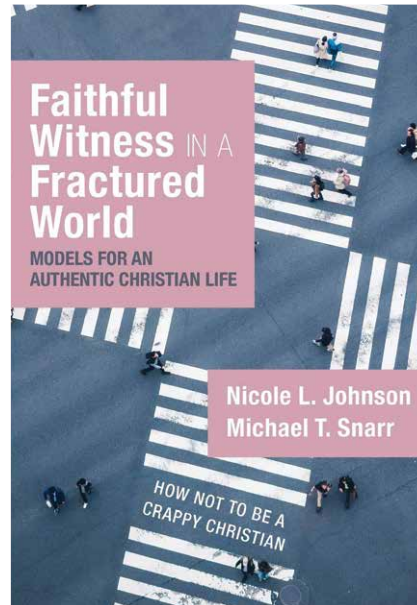
"We worked really hard not to stoke any partisan flames here. [Emily] is bringing people together, and that's what this book is all about," he said.

Wirzba also challenged the stereotype of the self-interested D.C. lobbyist.

Barbara Monahan Retires

Barbara Monahan, FCNL's associate general secretary for development, retired from the organization at the end of 2019. Under her leadership, FCNL successfully completed a capital campaign, "The World We Seek: Now is the Time."


The campaign provided the core support to grow FCNL's Young Adult Program, renovate the building next to FCNL's office for the Quaker Welcome Center, and help grow FCNL's endowment.




Professor Michael Snarr's new book "Faithful Witness in a Fractured World" was co-written with Nicole L. Johnson at University of Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio. Michael and his father, Neil Snarr, are members of FCNL's general committee. Each year, they lead a large delegation to FCNL's Spring Lobby Weekend.

"To me, she's a living example of someone with good intentions in the 'swamp.' It's inspiring," said Snarr.

After interviewing Wirzba and the rest of the book's subjects, a few core themes emerged. Snarr ticked them off: "Love is at the center of their work. [They're] part of a redeeming and restoring society. They embody their faith. And they have a right ordering of allegiances."

He explained what he means by the last theme: "We find too many Christians put country before faith. All the people in the book had a healthy skepticism of nationalism. We can't draw the line around the U.S.—there's no 'us' and 'them' with humanity." 

"We will miss Barbara's wisdom and her Quaker presence. She established the foundation for a strong development program with a dedicated and dynamic team," said Diane Randall, FCNL general secretary.

"I am very pleased that Stephen Donahoe, who has worked at FCNL for over 11 years, most recently as director of major gifts will now serve as director of development," she added. 

Seeking to Relieve the Impacts of Climate Change

QUESTION & ANSWER » With Dr. Barbara Ward

What motivates you in your climate work?

The urgency and need to halt and, if possible, reverse the impacts of climate degradation. I approach climate work from a holistic, systemic perspective where consideration is given to the historic factors that have created the current conditions and planning is undertaken from a long-term, permaculture (writ large) perspective.

I am continually motivated and grateful to the people I meet in this work. There are so many local solutions, collaborations, and partnerships that are happening and energizing!

What impact does climate change have on coastal communities in Florida?

Florida is experiencing several water issues, not just coastal. The peninsula is sinking. The coastal areas flood during sunny days when high tide occurs; saltwater from sewer lines floods streets.

Other areas also are experiencing saltwater intrusion in the aquifer. Runoff from agriculture, impermeable surfaces (e.g. roads), contribute to algae blooms that harm the ocean and life. And, then there are the bigger, more intense storms!

Scientists have been warning about the negative impacts of climate change. Is it too late to do anything now?

I hope that it is not too late. John Heimburg and I will co-facilitate a workshop to introduce Project Drawdown (drawdown.org) during Southeastern Yearly Meeting's 2020 Annual Gathering. Some of the solutions offered by Project Drawdown show that the negative impacts of climate change can be reversed.

If we are not able to reverse the impacts, we can attempt to mitigate or minimize the severity of the impact. If we can't mitigate or minimize the impacts, we can plan for recovery and transition.

Young people have taken the leadership on climate issues in the international stage. Is this leadership change also happening in local communities?

I always share the story that the position for SEYM's field secretary for Earthcare began with the youth in the Yearly Meeting. I think that Quakers have a process that creates a safe, loving environment for young people to be heard and supported.

Older Quakers can show up by sharing our process. We have a Quaker axiom, written by Molly Gloss in *The Dazzle of Day*: "Be quick to hear and slow to speak, and let grace season the words."

How could federal climate policy help the challenges your community is currently facing?

Prioritize the reversal, mitigation, or minimizing climate degradation over all other policies and legislative considerations. This includes not rolling back environmental laws and policies; shifting fossil fuel subsidies to alternative fuel subsidies; increasing funds for public mass transit; increasing funds for agricultural practices that do not rely on fossil fuel fertilizers; using permaculture cultivation techniques; promoting local farming; and relieving the impacts of climate change on low-income and minority communities as a start.

What is most exciting about your climate work right now? What gives you hope?

The people I meet, what they are doing—and the opportunities to share what I learn is both exciting and gives me great hope.



Dr. Beverly Ward is former clerk of Tampa Monthly meeting and is the field secretary for Earthcare at the Southeast Yearly Meeting.

She holds a doctorate in applied anthropology from the University of South Florida. 