

## Connecting faith and climate change

### Jurovics' book makes faith-based case to fight environmental problems

Stephen Jurovics believes that the future habitability of the planet may be in the hands of the faith community. In his book, "Hospitable Planet: Faith, Action and Climate Change," Jurovics turns to leaders and laity of the Christian and Jewish faith communities, making a religious case for why humans should take action to mitigate climate change.

Jurovics will speak about his book, including the arguments he lays out and the strategies he suggests for fighting climate change, at an upcoming visit to [location] on [date] at [time].

Faith-based teachings for climate change mitigation, in tandem with science-based ones, create a case for action that Jurovics believes is uncontestable.

"An energy company is unlikely to debate a teaching of Jesus or a verse in Deuteronomy," he said.

Jurovics believes that in our intensely capitalist society, arguments for rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions face continual challenges from powerful sectors of our society that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The actions of the faith community, though, could bring society to the tipping point for collectively fighting to maintain the habitability of Earth.

"For people for whom Bible teachings matter, it's not difficult to demonstrate that climate change is a religious as well as an environmental problem," Jurovics said.

Jurovics, who holds a doctorate in engineering, worked many years in aerospace engineering before shifting into environmental work, which included helping architects and engineers design and operate energy efficient buildings. He was also an EPA contractor for about 15 years. His daily work kept thoughts of environmental problems in the forefront of his mind, and he contemplated how environmental issues might connect to his faith.

"I was working for a number of years on environmental issues and various aspects of climate change, and began wondering whether teachings in the Bible relate to these contemporary problems," Jurovics said.

He did research for more than two years on biblical teachings about the natural world and found that some effects of climate change are contrary to biblical teachings.

"Since humans bear responsibility for carbon emissions, we bear responsibility for their effects. That's how climate change becomes a religious issue as well as an environmental one," Jurovics said. He began writing "Hospitable Planet" to document this line of inquiry.

In the episode of Noah and the ark, for example, Jurovics points out that God tells Noah several times to save all the species, not to lose any type; in modern terms, to preserve biological diversity.

Jurovics points out that one effect of climate change is that we are losing species at a pace far above the natural rate, perhaps 100 times faster. This result is contrary to biblical teachings, Jurovics believes, and, in addition, may have devastating consequences for all life on earth.

There are also lessons about gas emissions, which Jurovics points out are, in essence, air pollution. In the time of the Old Testament's writing, air pollution came in the form of foul air from tanneries, decaying animal carcasses, or from threshing as farmers separated the wheat from the chaff in the wind. Those issues came up before the legal authorities so that even hundreds of years before Jesus, rulings were issued on the matter. When he reviewed the collection of those rulings, Jurovics found that a principle emerged: the individual is not to engage in an activity that injures the community. This, he believes, comes from the familiar biblical teaching to "love your neighbor as yourself."

"If we're releasing greenhouse gasses into the community, we're injuring the entire world," Jurovics said.

Though the lessons stem from an ancient time, Jurovics argues that they are still very much relevant.

"We are always challenged to pull these core teachings forward in time and apply them to contemporary issues," Jurovics said.

While the first part of "Hospitable Planet" focuses on the religious argument for working to slow climate change, the second and third parts focus on what we can do about the problem. He lists 10 actions to take on the national level to have a positive impact on slowing climate change.

Jurovics also advocates taking to the streets as an essential part of a movement for climate change mitigation. He urges that the strategy for an "environmental rights movement" be similar to the strategy for the civil rights movement.

Like most Americans, Jurovics sees examples of the effects of climate change all around him.

"At some point we ask, how is the next generation going to live? What's it going to be like, thirty years from now, 50 years from now? ... I'm looking at future generations, and I think this is what I'm supposed to do now," Jurovics said.

In addition to publishing "Hospitable Planet," Jurovics has spoken at dozens of churches, where he's presented the religious case for fighting climate change, along with the scientific one. He hopes to encourage the huge faith community to take on this issue visibly and forcefully.

“What I want people to understand is that we still have time to react, but it’s a pretty narrow window of time- probably less than a generation.”

To learn more about “Hospitable Planet,” purchase the book or connect with Jurovics, visit [hospitableplanet.com](http://hospitableplanet.com). “Hospitable Planet” is available on Amazon or through your local bookstore.