



THE INSTITUTE ON RELIGION IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE

FOUNDED IN 1954

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IRAS cultivates a community of informed and respectful inquiry and dialogue at the intersections of science with religion, spirituality and philosophy in service of global, societal and personal well-being.



Star Island

An environment that frees all who come to renew spiritually, explore matters of consequence, and gain knowledge about the world as it might ideally be.

THE “WICKED PROBLEM” OF CLIMATE CHANGE: WHAT IS IT DOING TO US AND FOR US?

63rd Summer Conference of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science
In Partnership with the Parliament of the World’s Religions
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Climate change is a “wicked problem” with overlapping causes and consequences in economic, ecological, ethical, and technological realms. As climate change continues to alter our planet, how can we use this monumental change as an opportunity for societal and spiritual transformation?

“Uncertainty and ambiguity emerge here as resources, because they force us to confront those things we really want—not safety in some distant and contested future, but justice and self-understanding now.” - Sheila Jananoff

What is the way forward? We must confront climate change as a planetary community. It affects every institution, society, public policy, culture and ecosystem into the foreseeable future. Every possible course of action intertwines with issues of international and intra-societal economic and social justice. Climate change is a multigenerational, transnational “wicked problem” with no single, simple solution.

Tasks to be addressed:

1. Better understand the current scientific expectations for the future of the climate and its impact on our children and on all life.
2. Take stock of what we can or can't control in terms of the consequences of human action.
3. Deal with our grief, hope and desires in the midst of great losses and shifts that will occur.
4. Recognize the limits and capacities of our evolutionary heritage. Think beyond our current economic and political identities into new ways of imagining and living into the future.
5. Move away from anthropocentric thinking and learn to realize our human purposes as part of a finite, planetary community.
6. Use the resources of guiding wisdom from the world's religious and philosophical traditions.
7. Formulate compelling narratives of creation care to enable us as persons, groups and cultures to see what needs to be done and have the courage to do it.
8. Use new understandings of how we should live to bring about social and economic justice for all in a sustainable earth community.

Coming to terms with what the “wicked problem” of rapid climate change might do for us will take creativity, imagination, and complex interdisciplinary thinking of organizations like IRAS.

Conference Committee: Emily Austin austin.emily@gmail.com and Karl Peters kpeters396@cox.net, (Co-chairs), Paul Carr (Conference Champion), Tanya Avakian, Jane Bengtson, Marj Davis, Larry Greenfield Sol Katz, Ted Laurenson, Ruben Nelson, Spencer Stober, Emily Troxel, Jennifer Whitten, James van Pelt, and Barbara Whittaker-Johns.

