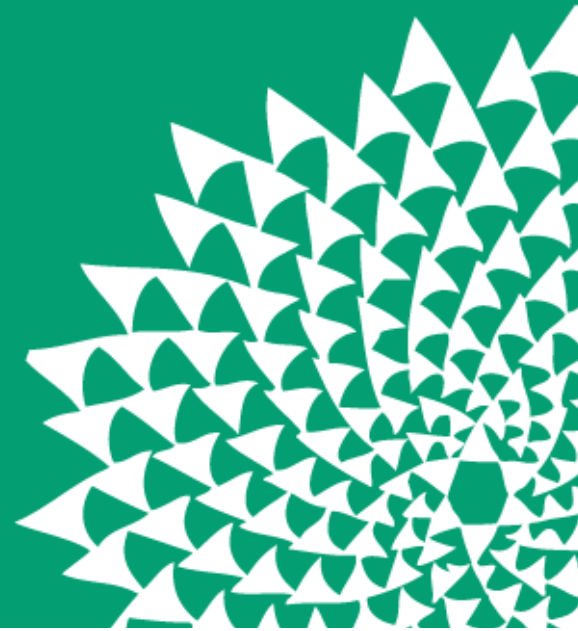




CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2024



Proud member of the



**Jewish Climate
Leadership Coalition**
POWERED BY ADAMAH



CALL TO ACTION

The global climate crisis is an historic inflection point for our planet, our communities, and our people.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN body that assesses the science of climate change, estimates that we have fewer than five years to take urgent and meaningful action to avoid locking in the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

Jewish tradition compels us to respond.

JEWISH CLIMATE LEADERSHIP COALITION

In 2022, Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association signed on as founding partners to the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition, along with twenty other national and international umbrella organizations of Jewish life.

Powered by Adamah, the Coalition is a network of Jewish community organizations who recognize the existential threat and moral urgency of climate change and commit to taking action.

Coalition members develop **Climate Action Plans** that outline our strategic priorities of our climate work. Our Climate Action Plan details action taken to date and sets goals for both reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and mobilizing our networks around climate action in the year ahead.

Inspired by Jewish values, we are working to do the Jewish community's part to mitigate the worst effects of climate change and build a livable future together.

We invite Jewish community organizations everywhere to join us.

For more information about the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition, watch the [Coalition launch video](#) or visit Adamah's [website](#).





CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

Reconstructing Judaism and the RRA together represent a North American Jewish movement that is already engaged in advocacy on a range of important justice-related issues, including climate change. As a Jewish movement centered physically on one campus, our greatest impact is through the administrative decisions we make for the campus, governance decisions for our networks, the reach of our rabbis and congregations, and thought leadership in the public square. This Climate Action Plan outlines the plans of Reconstructing Judaism, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA), and contains a third section comprising the areas of collaboration between Reconstructing Judaism and the RRA for congregational support and thought leadership.

Reconstructing Judaism and the RRA work closely together but are independent 501c3 organizations with distinct boards and staff. This Climate Action Plan builds on long standing commitments to social justice, including climate justice, in both organizations.

Reconstructing Judaism is the central organization of the Reconstructionist movement. We train the next generation of rabbis, support and uplift congregations and *havurot*, foster emerging expressions of Jewish life, and encourage people to be their best selves — always helping to shape what it means to be Jewish today and to imagine the Jewish future. Reconstructing Judaism owns and manages a small campus in Wyncote, PA, and donates in-kind office space to the RRA as well as to Havaya Summer Programs. Decisions and actions related to the building are strictly the purview of Reconstructing Judaism.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) serves the professional development needs of over 380 Reconstructionist rabbis who serve in a variety of capacities throughout North America and the globe. The RRA raises up the voices of rabbis within the Reconstructionist movement and contributes to reconstructionist thought in the public square.

Over the past year, green advocacy and activities have abounded in individual Reconstructionist congregations and communities, and in the movement's Philadelphia-area hub; many of its people play key leadership roles in Jewish and multi-faith environmental efforts. Reconstructing Judaism builds up communities and runs a seminary, while the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association supports rabbis in the field.

For 2024, we are reaffirming our commitment to the climate priorities identified in last year's Climate Action Plan (see below). Given the divergent foci of our two organizations, we anticipate that future green steps will be coordinated though not combined -- even as our two small but mighty institutions continue to implement, and expand upon, the ambitious commitments made in our joint 2023 Climate Action Plan.

2023 CLIMATE ACTION GOALS

Part 1: Building Infrastructure, Finance and Governance - Reconstructing Judaism

Direct or Primary Energy Use

The most direct way to reduce our carbon footprint is in reducing or eliminating the fossil fuels burned in our physical location. While the reach and impact of our movement is far beyond the walls of this one building, it is important to vigorously explore the burning of fossil fuels at our home base, to model and encourage our constituencies to do the same.

Reconstructing Judaism will begin a conversation in the current year to consider a climate drawdown plan for the campus. The campus is currently upgrading the heat from oil to natural gas, which will not foreclose the conversation about moving to renewables.

Future considerations include: an audit of our primary energy use for our campus. We will consider a long term goal of becoming a zero-emissions building by 2035. If and as electric vehicles become more affordable and ubiquitous, we will monitor the need to install EV charging stations.

Note: Coalition members will have access to a growing number of financing options through Adamah and others to support efforts to get to zero GHG emissions.

Renewables

The second level of direct drawdown is taking steps to go carbon neutral on all electricity use that comes out of our building.

We will opportunistically explore powering our campus through renewable energy. This could take one of three forms:

- We will explore if our utility provider offers renewable energy options to opt into.
- We will explore the possibility of installing solar on the campus of 1299 Church Road, which could include the possibility of selling energy back to the grid.
- We will explore purchasing solar power through an off-site solar array. This could be through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), a kind of financing that requires no upfront cost from the organization, and/or through participation in a community solar initiative.

Transportation

Reconstructing Judaism board meetings, committee meetings, and many of our educational offerings are now conducted remotely. Some work-related travel remains essential for the relational aspects of our mission. For work-related travel and conventions, we will commit to conversations about offsetting the climate impact of that travel, through our values-based decision making process. One option could be offering conference participants the opportunity to purchase vetted climate offsets.

Food and Food Waste

Reconstructing Judaism has been a leader in humane and climate-conscious food decisions for more than a decade. Our conventions serve predominantly plant-based and vegetarian offerings.

In the Wyncote building, dishware is washable and not disposable. Recycling is in place. We will advocate for local composting, which is not yet available.

Finance

The Reconstructing Judaism board has adopted an investment policy that includes ESG criteria. We will ask the Investment Committee to review the place of fossil fuels in our current ESG screen and to bring their evaluation (and any recommendations) to the board of governors.

Part 2: Mobilizing Reconstructionist Rabbis - the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

The RRA passed **climate resolutions** in [2008](#) and in [2021](#). Both resolutions recognized the need for ongoing and increasing Jewish environmental education, both to expand our consciousness and to drive our sustainable and just actions. Specifically, both resolutions invoked the serious and urgent need to radically reduce carbon emissions, based on Jewish values including *redifat tzedek* (pursuing justice), *l'dor vador* (solidarity with future

generations), and *shmirat ha'adamah* (guarding Creation). The 2021 resolution called for all Jewish communities to do their part both to reduce individual and institutional carbon footprints, through a set of increasingly ambitious changes, and to join collective efforts to shift our society away from fossil fuels.

What follows includes efforts to-date as well as commitments for the future to establish action steps in alignment with the 2021 resolution. Please note the overlap of some of these initiatives with those in Part 3 of this document.

Reducing Climate Impact

As an organization that rents space, these are the ways we have already committed to reducing our impact.

The RRA already conducts 50% of its board meetings remotely, creates educational opportunities that are primarily remote, and is committed to making remote options available for all programs. We have cut back to bi-annual conventions which, among other advantages, reduced travel and transportation by half.

RRA conventions and gatherings follow a commitment to vegetarian and sustainably sourced foods. We will turn to Adamah and other sources for suggestions on meaningful carbon offsets for future conventions, and on creative ways to deepen interpersonal connections with less travel.

Membership renewals and primary communications from the RRA toward its membership along with most other correspondence from the building has already been moved online, vastly reducing paper usage and transportation of mailed materials.

Finance

The RRA Board is in the process of developing its first-ever investment policy that includes climate justice and ESG criteria. The RRA has also worked to ensure that rabbis have access to socially responsible investment opportunities through our retirement plan.

Internal

In keeping with the [mission of the RRA](#), the next two sections outline ways that the RRA will support rabbis and communities within the scope of a Climate Action Plan.

Supporting Rabbis

An ad-hoc group of RRA members planned and implemented a plenary for the March 2022 RRA Convention. The program included (1) honoring our pain for the world through Jewish contextualization and [the work of Joanna Macy](#); (2) hearing from colleagues whose work addresses climate change in a sampling of ways including political activism, congregational engagement, and pastoral care; and (3) connecting informally in groups around types of activism including the above as well as outdoor experiences and greening buildings.

The RRA is establishing **Climate Justice Task Force**, to support our movement as a whole to engage in political advocacy and individual and communal action. Part of this process has already been the development of a [Climate Ambitions](#) database to track which rabbis are involved with what climate justice work, in order to facilitate collaborations. Going forward, we hope to develop cohorts and practice groups for rabbis working on specific climate-related projects, beginning with an assessment of who is already doing what.

Supporting Communities

The following commitments can apply equally to **every institution** within which Reconstructionist rabbis, educators, and lay-leaders function.

RRA members will develop a **sustainability brit** (covenant) regarding how we gather. Categories will include travel and climate offsets, food choices, waste, and more. RRA members and their organizations along with Reconstructing Judaism affiliates will be invited to sign-on, recognizing that this is one part of an overall Climate Action Plan.

The [RRA's 2021 resolution](#) on climate change calls for us to work in **partnership** with other faith groups and other organizations focused on climate advocacy and climate justice. The RRA is a founding member of the [Jewish Earth Alliance](#) that promotes grassroots action and advocacy on climate-focused legislation. The RRA participates in both legislative action and direct organizing partnerships with [Greenfaith](#).

- **Mobilize communities regarding the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition.** Our climate change resolution describes a goal of disseminating information to local rabbis and communities. There are numerous organizations within which Reconstructionist rabbis work that may be poised to take significant action to decarbonize their own institutions, but need support to do so. We will recruit and encourage RRA-affiliated institutions to [join the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition](#) and take significant actions to reduce their primary energy use.
- We will encourage congregations to explore **switching power to solar**, and other truly renewable sources. This could include rooftop solar through Solar United Neighbor's "Thirty Million Solar Roofs," which we name in the [RRA's resolution on climate change](#). The financial incentives from the Inflation Reduction Act will help in this effort.
- **Moving investment dollars away from fossil fuels.** We will encourage congregations to consider commitments to fossil-fuel-free endowments, using the resources offered by [Dayenu](#) as well as Adamah in this important work.

Future Potential

Over time, the RRA will seek both external and internal funding for driving this work forward.

The Climate Justice Task Force will review and update our Climate Action Plan regularly.

Part 3: Congregations & Thought Leadership in the Public Square - Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Support Affiliated Congregations, through Thriving Communities and RRA:

Mobilize congregations. There are numerous Reconstructionist synagogues who may be poised to take significant action to decarbonize their own institutions, but need support to do so. We will recruit and encourage Reconstructionist congregations to [join the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition](#) and take significant actions to reduce their primary energy use.

Please see the **Supporting Communities** section in Part 2 above for how RRA-affiliated rabbis will be supporting specific partnership and learning opportunities.

Ongoing Thought Leadership

[Evolve: Groundbreaking Jewish Conversations](#) is the movement's center for thought pieces. The [Climate Justice & Environmentalism](#) section includes articles by thought leaders including numerous RRA members. We will continue to add to this section as well as promote the visibility of the pieces.

[Ritualwell](#) is an initiative of Reconstructing Judaism, and is included here in the joint thought leadership as rabbinical students and rabbis are frequent contributors. Ritualwell is the most extensive online resource that curates original Jewish rituals for Jews and fellow seekers. We publish rituals, ceremonies, prayers and poems to mark sacred moments in Jewish life. Through creating and sharing rituals, hosting [Ritualwell Immersions](#) (online learning experiences), curating an [online Judaica shop](#), Ritualwell fosters a supportive environment for Jewish creativity, spiritual growth and discovery. [Dozens of climate-related rituals](#) and liturgy have already been curated. We will commit to the ongoing development of liturgy and rituals to raise up love of creation and the earth as a central pillar of Jewish practice and concern.

Future Potential. The [Tikkun Olam Commission](#) (TOC) was established in 2018 as a joint commission of Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. An initial process revealed a clear

preference among its members that the TOC concentrate on racial justice, immigration justice and/or climate justice for the immediate future. The commission selected racial justice as its first priority. With the understanding that climate issues fall hardest on racial minorities, the issues are intimately linked.

Communications

The language for these invitations will be generated by members of the RRA in partnership with Adamah, and will also be disseminated by Thriving Communities.

Leadership Brief goes monthly to congregations, featuring up to five topics. Its audience is presidents, rabbis, executive directors and educators of affiliated Reconstructionist communities. Initial invitation in the January 2023 issue.

Websites

In addition to the climate-related resources on Evolve and Ritualwell, the following will be added in early 2023:

- <https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/>, the website for Reconstructing Judaism, will include under “Repairing the World/Tikkun Olam” a blurb linked to an article about the Coalition as well as the environmental initiatives currently underway throughout the movement.
- <https://therra.org/> is the website for the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. Information about the Coalition partnership was posted September 22, 2022, and remains on the home page. Additional resources will continue to be added.