



QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a network of North American Friends (Quakers) and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies.

By Lena Parker, Jess Hobbs Pifer,
Ross Brubeck, and Nathan Shroyer

Walking with a River's Spirit: Finding Earthcare on the Path to Justice

Last May, Friends walked 276 miles and canoed five from Flushing, Queens, to Washington, D.C., inspired by the Flushing Remonstrance, a 1657 document written not by Quakers, but for Quakers, during a time when Quakerism and other forms of religious expression were illegal in what is now New York. Today, we are witnessing grave violations of the rights of immigrants in America. This walk was to respond “to those who say undocumented immigrants are destructive to our nation and its values; they themselves misunderstand our nation and its values. American nationhood is not an ethnicity nor a mundane coincidence of culture. It is a set of sacred principles.”

The walk was not just about reaching a destination. For that, we would have hopped in our cars. Instead, it was about the spiritual and communal experience of the path itself.

On the 13th day, the walkers became rowers as we crossed the Susquehanna River in canoes belonging to the Baltimore Yearly Meeting's camp program. The river, a potent symbol of interdependence and the promise of a connected Creation, turned into a moment of miraculous synchronicity and faith.



BEFRIENDING CREATION

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Image Above: Max Goodman and Stuart Sydenstricker cross the Susquehanna River

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Broadening Our Branches: Welcoming Two New Friends to QEW

Quaker Earthcare Witness is in a season of exciting growth. We have recently been joined by a new staff member in July, and we are welcoming a Quaker Voluntary Service Fellow in September.

Sofia Di Pietro (they/she) is our new Operations & Administrative Assistant. They bring a passion for environmental conservation and a gift for connecting people. Sofia is already creating new pathways for our work to flourish.

Jonny Costello (he/him) will be our QuakerEarth Organizing Fellow. He recently graduated from Earlham College in May with a major in Environmental Sustainability on the Culture and Justice track, and a minor in Economics. Jonny will be expanding our QuakerEarth campaign through his experience with ArcGIS (Geographical Information Systems) and passion for community engagement.



We are overjoyed to welcome them into the fold of our work and witness. Sofia's presence in Santa Cruz and Jonny's in the Twin Cities extends the geographic reach of our staff, rooting us more deeply in communities across the country. We are a network of Friends, and our strength has always been in our connections to one another.

This is what Spirit-led growth looks like: a deepening of our capacity to meet the urgent needs of our time.

Their work is our work, and it is made possible by your faithful support. We invite you

to join us in warmly welcoming them to the QEW community and to hold them, and all of us, in the Light as we deepen our Earthcare work.

With Abundant Hope,
Sweet Miche

Sweet Miche

Communications and Outreach Coordinator,
Quaker Earthcare Witness

Our Vision & Witness

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God.

WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity.

WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

BeFriending Creation

We publish *BeFriending Creation* to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, news of our actions, and encourage a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation.

Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends. The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Please share our work widely and broadly, always attributing it to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

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Nathan Shoyer shared a spiritual connection to the river, retelling the story of Ezekiel.

"In Ezekiel 47, Ezekiel is brought to the temple that was promised to the Jewish people to replace the temple that had been destroyed. Under the temple, there is a trickle of water flowing out of it. With the angel, Ezekiel walks into the shallow river, which continues to become deeper until it can't be crossed, it's gotten so deep and so strong. The passage says that this river will feed the oceans and the fishes will come to it, that the river is lined on both sides with fruit trees in abundance. The river says you are going to get the promise of creation, you can be on your side of the river and the other side, our beings, our trees, our plantations of fruit and abundance, that is also part of creation. This is the interdependence, the basis of empathy, understanding that there is enough."

Lena Parker shared a story about the comical metaphor of the crossing.

"Crossing the Susquehanna was a comically apt metaphor because it was so foggy we couldn't see the other side. We couldn't see more than 10 feet ahead of us and had to stick with each other to not lose each other, but we knew we would get there together."

Jess Hobbs Piffer shared this quote with Luis Andres Henao of the Associated Press.

"It feels really daunting to be up against such critical and large and in some ways existential threats, I just have to put one foot in front of the other to move towards something better, something more true to what Quakers before us saw for this country and what people saw for the American experiment, the American dream."

Ross Brubeck shared a perspective on the river crossing, seeing it as a religious experience.

"I'm gonna say that the river crossing it was one of two spiritual centers for me in the whole walk, and I didn't expect it to be. I've never had an experience like that with so many people. The slate, the visual slate, was utterly clean. There was nothing in the foreground or background. It was just us on a river."

I've thought about the idea of a religious experience as being a shared totality of perception. I can't say how many miracles like that happened on this walk, but the thing that stands out for me as evidence of these miracles was the river, and that we were all seeing the same thing, which was nothing.

We could not discern what was in front of us, which is the entire idea of the walk in the first place was to walk into something that we couldn't understand or recognize, and to move through it with faith."

The walk serves as a potent reminder that our most meaningful work is often found in the humble, collective steps we take together. We embraced an anti-efficient action and an approach rooted in mutual aid, offering a living testament to the power of human connection and a willingness to be vulnerable in the face of the unknown.

This journey of faith, and this willingness to step into the fog with trust, embodies a core truth of Quaker Earthcare Witness: that a right relationship with all of Creation is built not on easy answers, but on our shared commitment to one another and to Earth. The walk, like the river, reminds us that while we may not see the other side, there is enough for everyone on both banks, and that by putting one foot in front of the other, we can continue to move toward a world more aligned with peace.

Learn more about the
Quaker Walk to Washington at
QuakerWalk2025.org
or
@WalkToWashington



Richard Grossman

Building Community, Treading Lightly: The Promise of Cohousing

At the Spring Gathering, speaker Daniel Wahl mentioned “cohousing”. That might be a new word for some Friends, so I thought I would write a bit about my wife’s and my experience after living in a cohousing community for a quarter century.

Heartwood Cohousing is near Durango, Colorado, to which we moved in 1976. Our two sons were 2 and 5 years old then, and we chose this little mountain town as the best place to raise them. It has a college and a ski area—and a small Friends Meeting. Heartwood Cohousing was started many years later.

Cohousing is a type of intentional community where people share many things and experiences. Wikipedia defines it thus: “Cohousing is an intentional, self-governing, cooperative community where residents live in private homes often clustered around shared space.”

Although that’s a pretty good definition, I have a different way of explaining cohousing to people who aren’t familiar with the term: “When you move into a new home, you probably will meet your neighbors. Perhaps you’ll interact with them frequently, or perhaps not. We live in a cohousing community because we enjoy interacting with other people on a daily basis.

Maybe you have read about senior cohousing. That’s not for my wife (Gail) and me! We enjoy being surrounded by people of all ages. The youngest in Heartwood was born this February! He and his 5-year-old brother (and their parents) live in the other half of our duplex home. Gail and I are among the oldest, at 81. We love passing by the bevy of young girls playing on the pathway when we walk to the Common House to get the mail.

We do not share our homes, our finances, or most meals. One of the goals of cohousing communities is to improve our interpersonal relationships. However, that was not the principal reason that I joined Heartwood Cohousing.

We do share potluck Mexican food dinners on Tuesdays, a delicious Common Meal cooked by residents on Wednesdays, and a potluck on Fridays. We share things (our workshop is well supplied with tools), the paths on our 350 acres of beautiful land, and many other facilities. Our 24 homes are in a cluster, causing as little disturbance as possible to the surrounding land and animals. We also share the work to maintain all this, and we share our joys and sorrows.



In addition to the covenants that are similar to those of any subdivision, we agree to a bunch of interpersonal agreements and guidelines. These form the basis for our relationships to each other, and to our land and its non-human inhabitants. For instance, in our Vision and Values, the Stewardship Agreement states:

“We live gently on the Earth. We are thankful for Nature’s resources, being conscious to take good care of them and use them efficiently.”

Back when we were considering joining the cohousing community, I was attracted to it for several reasons. In addition to improving my interpersonal relationships, I was intrigued by the possibility of gains in efficiency and thus ways to decrease our impact. It was also time to downsize since both our sons had left home. By living closely with good friends who are also neighbors, we could share tools and other resources. We don’t have to run to the store if the recipe calls for 3 eggs and we only have 2—just knock on a neighbor’s door!

Furthermore, the construction of the homes take advantage of passive solar and they are built to be very energy efficient.

Although we were among the first to put solar on our roof, there are now many more arrays. Several years ago, we used the community’s Renewable Energy Fund to put 10 solar panels on the workshop’s roof. They provided most of the energy for that building and for the large Common House, which is the center of our community. With the advent of electric vehicles, however, we needed more “juice”, and recently added 10 more panels. One current challenge is

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to figure out how to make EV charging available to any member of Heartwood, as we hope EVs will continue to be popular.

Growing up in Philadelphia, my best friend lived in Awbury, before it was open to the public. It was established by Henry Cope in the mid-19th century, and became a Quaker community. Although many people living in cohousing wouldn't realize it, cohousing has some of the same attributes as Quakerism. Decisions are made by consensus, people are treated equally, and integrity is assumed. Furthermore, we strive for peace among ourselves and the world, and, most of all, we value community.

Gail and I are planning on "aging in place". We continue to enjoy living where we are, surrounded by friends, and have help and support when needed. The work that Heartwood expects of every member helps to keep us in shape and fit. However, as we age, we are able to do less work and are delighted with the younger families who have moved in.

With so much beautiful acreage, Heartwood has enough land to grow and not impinge on our nonhuman neighbors. We are looking forward to "Phase 2"—the expansion of 14 new homes. They will all be certified "Zero Energy Ready Homes". They will bring new friends to our community!

To learn more about cohousing, check out cohousing.org. Heartwood's website, including information about Phase 2, is heartwoodcohousing.com.

Richard Grossman recently retired from the practice of obstetrics and gynecology in Durango, CO. He continues to work on several population-centered projects at population-matters.org. He is a member of Durango Monthly Meeting (IMYM).



Upcoming Events

Organizing for Climate Resilience:

An Online Course with Cherice Bock at Ben Lomond Quaker Center

Tuesdays in October @ 6:30-8pm Pacific

As we start feeling the impacts of climate change, it's important to help shape our local communities to be more resilient, with the ability to respond and recover when there are climate emergencies, and the ability to work together to lower our climate impact. Faith communities, including Quaker meetings, could have an important role as hubs for community connection and to use their buildings and grounds in ways that help heal their local ecosystems.

This virtual workshop series will offer suggestions and examples for ways that individuals and faith communities can begin to build climate resilient communities, including information about community organizing, ideas of types of projects, and tools and resources to get you started. Learn more at QuakerCenter.org



EMERGE Values:

A QEW Event with the Climate Action Committee and Friends of Radnor Quaker Meeting

November 19th @ 7-8pm Eastern/4-5pm Pacific

The Quaker process is hard work, as we struggle to form consensus. All the while, our struggle involves deep listening, deep discernment, and summoning the integrity to walk our talk. In the Spirit of SPICES, can a set of emergent values focus ecojustice work? Learn more at EmergeValues.org

EMERGE

Could a New Set of Values Help Restore
Our Right Relationship
With Earth and Its Living Communities?

Protect our Earth Save the IRA

Keith Runyan

QEW Mobilizes to Protect US Climate Law: Reflections on our “Protect Our Earth | Save the IRA” Campaign

When Donald Trump won the U.S. presidency, it was clear the political landscape for climate action had shifted. As the new General Secretary of Quaker Earthcare Witness, I felt a responsibility to help mobilize the Quaker community to protect what we could. We had already been preparing for difficult years ahead - considering how Quaker meetings might serve as sanctuaries for migrants and climate refugees, and how they could become hubs of local resilience.

The most promising opportunity emerged in mid-November at the Friends Committee on National Legislation’s annual meeting. Daren Caughron, FCNL’s lead lobbyist on energy and environment, explained that the Biden-era climate tax credits

- central to the Inflation Reduction Act - could potentially survive repeal efforts. More than 80% of IRA clean energy investments were flowing into Republican districts, funding wind, solar, geothermal, and grid projects in coal country and rural areas. This was the largest climate law in world history, with the potential to keep gigatons of CO₂ out of the atmosphere.

QEW launched the “Protect Our Earth | Save the IRA” campaign that winter. We built an original database linking every IRA project to its congressional district, which allowed us to target 22 House districts and three key Senate seats in Utah, Arizona, and North Carolina. Volunteer “district leads” were recruited to coordinate local actions and report back weekly. By March 2025, more than a dozen district leads had signed on.

From March through June, we hosted monthly Action Hours that combined spiritual grounding, policy updates, and live advocacy pushes. Participants logged phone calls and emails to representatives in real time. QEW also developed call scripts, letter-writing guides, and district-specific fact sheets. Given

the political climate, our messaging emphasized fairness, jobs, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of IRA projects were located in Republican areas.

Through an email letter-writing sign-up system, we engaged 371 Quaker meetings and allied organizations in critical districts, many of which committed to contacting lawmakers. Personalized letters went to 57 monthly meetings in targeted districts. Our systems logged 177 unique phone calls and 1,106 unique emails to members of Congress, with another 180 calls estimated during Action Hours. Many actions taken likely evaded our systems.

QEW staff also traveled to Washington in February 2025 for meetings with congressional offices and to speak on an FCNL panel. District-level teams met with staffers for Rep. Kevin Kiley (CA-03), Rep. Jen Kiggans (VA-02), and Rep. Juan Ciscomani (AZ-06). In Iowa, a district lead published an op-ed urging Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks to oppose repeal. Partnerships with FCNL, Environmental Voter Project, Climate Power, and local environmental justice groups strengthened our reach.



The repeal effort, wrapped into what was called the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” did pass. But not everything was lost. Our coalition’s advocacy won the following three concessions:

- » The removal of a 60-day “commence construction” cliff that would have killed most new wind and solar projects. Instead, projects retained the standard window to begin construction.
- » Preservation of credit transferability, allowing towns, tribes, schools, and nonprofits to continue monetizing credits.
- » A delayed phase-down of wind and solar production and investment credits, beginning in 2026 rather than immediately.



In the end, in the words of Citizen’s Climate Lobby the final bill was “25% less damaging” than the one initially passed by the House. Though we could not stop the repeal of home solar and EV incentives nor the elimination of environmental-justice and ecological restoration programs, still, the changes we fought for preserved two years of critical funding for the U.S. energy transition to take place.

This campaign underscored that grassroots advocacy can make a difference even on defense. We did not stop the bill, but we did shape its final form. The two-year reprieve means projects can break ground, networks can deepen, and the next generation of organizers can prepare for the work ahead.

Finally, the campaign showed the importance of spiritual grounding. Many participants said that starting with worship gave them the courage to keep calling and writing, even when the odds looked bleak. That combination of faith and persistence is something QEW can continue to offer uniquely in climate justice work.

The reconciliation bill and Trump policies are an existential assault on our environment and represent a major setback for U.S. climate policy. But the “Protect Our Earth | Save the IRA” campaign showed that with clear strategy, broad partnerships, and faithful persistence, Friends can play a meaningful role in shaping outcomes. The fight for climate justice is far from over, and the experience gained through this campaign will be essential for the future of QEW and Quaker environmentalism.



Mini-Grants

Need Some Funding to Kick Off an Earthcare Vision?

The QEW Mini-Grants program may have you covered. Our Mini-Grants Working Group works to support Friends Earthcare projects. We fund proposals up to \$500.

ANY proposals and visions related to Earthcare are invited, but we especially welcome proposals focusing on one or more of these priority areas:

1. Responding to or preparing to meet the Climate change crisis.
2. Supporting regional and/or global biodiversity.
3. Redressing issues of environmental injustice that impact underserved or disempowered communities (especially communities of color) preferably in North America, but other locations will also be considered.
4. Involving and engaging youth in responding to the above issues and/or transforming the consciousness of the rising generation to act in unity with the Earth as caregivers for our planet.

Find funding criteria and procedures at: QuakerEarthcare.org/mini-grants.

Jim Kessler

A Spirit-Led Journey to Sustainability: Grinnell Friends Church Solar Field

By way of introduction, Grinnell Friends Church, which is on the edge of Grinnell, Iowa, is a growing pastoral Meeting that averages 100 to 115 worship attenders on a Sunday morning. Our building is located on 3 acres adjacent to the main highway into Grinnell from Interstate 80. We are deeply committed to serving our community in tangible ways. For example, our recycled furniture ministry, Renewed Hope Home Furnishing, provided free used furniture and donated bedding for more than 400 materially poor and immigrant families in our area during 2024.

I had hoped for many years that Grinnell Friends Church could transition to solar power. The desire seemed like an impossible dream due to financial constraints. Our large building, which includes a worship center that seats up to 150, an educational wing, a large foyer, and a fellowship hall/gymnasium, has always been heated and cooled entirely by electricity. Our annual bill for electricity during 2024 was close to \$8,000.

However, the Spirit moves in mysterious ways to make the seemingly impossible happen. About a decade ago, the farm that surrounds our property was in an estate sale. A family member contacted me, as Clerk of the Meeting, to ask if we wanted to purchase a third of an acre that bordered two sides of our property. We had less than a week to decide. I contacted our pastor, the chair of the Trustees, the chair of Stewardship, and Bob Burnham, a weighty Friend. Without time for Monthly Meeting approval, it was decided to purchase the additional land. We were all forgiven for moving ahead. How we might use that land in the future was a mystery.

One of our members, Dr. Jim Hoeksema, is a retired William Penn University Technology professor. Jim had installed solar panels at Quaker Heights, our Iowa Yearly Meeting Camp. Later, with help from a QEW Minigrant and other generous donations, Jim constructed a solar field with battery storage at the Friends Theological College in Kenya.

Obviously, we had the expertise in our midst to plan a solar field for our needs. In 2024 Velma Burnham bequeathed a significant amount of money to Grinnell Friends. We waited for instructions from her family about how they desired that the money be spent. Bob Burnham, her husband and a man of few words, was a spiritual giant in our midst. He was in his nineties and was still the person we looked to for wisdom. During mid-June of 2024, Bob approached the Grinnell Friends Trustees and proposed that we should use a portion of the money to install a solar field that would supply all the electricity for our building. A few days after Bob approached the Trustees, he fell, suffered a brain injury, and passed. In late June of 2024, our Monthly Meeting approved installing a solar field that will cut our annual utility bill to about \$300. By late October 2024 the solar field was installed on the third of an acre that we had purchased a decade ago. Our dear friends, Bob and Velma, left us with both a rich spiritual legacy and a way to completely eliminate our electrical carbon emissions. What a blessing!

Jim Kessler is a member of Grinnell Friends Church in Grinnell, Iowa. He has been active in QEW since 2012. Jim frequently shares presentations about the importance of native plantings and habitat restoration to all of life.



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In *Common Ground*, Flanagan weaves together inspiring stories of grassroots organizing against the corporations most responsible for the climate crisis. She shows that as deadly heat waves, wildfires, storms, and floods become more widespread, ordinary people can build powerful movements for change when we find common ground and act together. *Common Ground* argues that our best hope for survival lies not in technology or elections, but in acting in solidarity with all life.

During our time together, we will engage in a variety of activities that nourish our spirits and ground our actions:

- » **Worship:** We will begin and end each day in expectant, Spirit-led worship, opening our hearts to divine guidance.
- » **Plenaries and Deep Discussion:** We will engage in meaningful conversations through a video from Bill McKibben, and with Geoffrey Garver and Eileen Flanagan in person.
- » **Community Building:** We will share meals, stories, and laughter, strengthening the bonds of our community, whether in person at Powell House or through shared online presence.

This gathering is not just a meeting; it is a spiritual retreat and a call to action. It is a chance to draw on our collective strength, to listen for what the Spirit is asking of us, and to leave with a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper connection to our community and to the Earth we cherish.

Learn more and register for the Fall Gathering at QuakerEarthcare.org/FallGathering2025



Photo by Rik Panganiban



Claude Leboeuf

The Messenger

They seemed to be powerful and majestic
 Truth is, they were petty and spiteful
 Truth was frightening to them
 It made them feel cold and empty
 They used beautiful sounding lies
 To hide it from other people
 The lies were like a blanket
 Making them warm and cozy
 Time passed and they became more frightened of Truth
 One day, they buried it deep in the Earth
 Truth spoke to Earth
 Earth listened and felt angry
 Earth became a huge muscle clenching and releasing Truth
 A Messenger appeared
 Even though he wasn't powerful or eloquent
 Messenger was genuine, The Real Deal
 Truth reached to Messenger like a welcoming hand
 Messenger reached back
 They greeted like old friends
 Pride and eloquence flowed into Messenger like a river current
 Ferocious dignity carried him
 To the beautiful lies
 The lies had become a wall confronting Messenger
 Messenger spoke Truth quietly to the lies
 Lies called back with sarcasm and insult
 Messenger's feet became like tree roots
 Reaching deeply into Earth
 Earth gripped Messenger possessively
 Messenger's voice became a steel rod
 Attacking the wall of lies
 Lies and Truth shouted at each other
 Dancing a ballet of Rage
 The wall of lies abruptly collapsed
 Earth capture Messenger with savage integrity



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Common Ground: One Community – One Earth

Quaker Earthcare Witness Fall Gathering
October 16 to 19th, 2025
at Powell House and Online (Hybrid)

Each fall, Quaker Earthcare Witness gathers to rejuvenate and reconnect. Our community is strengthened during this time of worship, fellowship, play, and deep work. Our Fall Gathering is open to anyone who is engaged (or interested!) in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

The challenges of our time—from a warming planet to deepening social divides—call for urgent action and unity. We have chosen the theme Common Ground: One Community – One Earth, based on Friend Eileen Flanagan's new book, *Common Ground*. This theme will guide our work and our time together.

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