

# How to develop a vital Friends in Unity with Nature group

A successful local Friends in Unity with Nature (FUN) group depends, we believe, on careful nurture of individual spirituality and the life of the group, balanced with more outward directed study of ecological situations and the undertaking of projects and actions. An FUN group can be a rich adventure, as we must all see a change in consciousness so desperately needed if we are to take appropriate action towards a viable human-Earth future.

When your local group meets, we suggest that over a period of three or four meetings you try to include the four components as outlined in this leaflet. These seek to reflect an emphasis on both the inward and outward journeys. It is easy to fall into busyness, focusing too much on projects and missing the desperately needed focus on changes in the human heart and consciousness.

To start a group, all you need are a few people in your Meeting or local area who are sympathetic to spiritually-based ecological work. You might start by showing a video, holding a discussion or worship, or having a vegetarian potluck supper, and sharing the recipes. You may form around a local issue or a more general alarm at the degradation of our environment and its toll on the human spirit.

Quaker Earthcare Witness of the Americas (QEW) stands ready to help with resources (next column), ideas, and general encouragement, and consultation. (See QEW's address on the other side.)

## Resources from QEW

- ◆ *Walking Gently on the Earth: an Earthcare Checklist*, by Jack Phillips.
- ◆ *Healing Ourselves and the Earth*, by Elizabeth G. Watson.
- ◆ *Population is People—A Friends Perspective*, edited by Stan Becker et al.
- ◆ *EarthLight*, a magazine of spirituality and ecology and the New Story.
- ◆ *BeFriending Creation*, the bimonthly newsletter of QEW.
- ◆ *Caring for Creation: the Biblical Basis of Earthcare*, by Lisa L. Gould.
- ◆ A number of leaflets on population, energy, simplicity, living lightly in the city, and the spiritual dimension of earthcare.
- ◆ A list of videos to borrow.
- ◆ A list of books and study guides.
- ◆ A list of speakers.

See the QEW address on the other side.

## Changing the human heart and consciousness

**Goal: To grow in experience and understanding that all Earth beings form a community filled with the Divine Light.**

- ◆ Celebrate the sanctity of Creation through worship, meditation, worship-sharing, song, dance, and exercises (such as the Cosmic Walk and the Council of All Beings) that move us to know ourselves as Earth beings in a world suffused with Divine Light.
- ◆ Meditate on written accounts of revelations of the divine in nature (such as John

Muir) and in the person (such as Meister Eckhart). Study the Bible and what it has to tell us about caring for the Earth and the human place in Creation. Study the wisdom of the Quaker heritage as it connects the spiritual life to our ecological setting. Central to Friends testimonies is that "there is that of God in everyone." QEW challenges Friends to consider extending this concept to "that of God in everything." Explore the implications of this new revelation through worship and discussion.

- ◆ Seek other sources of wisdom that nurture an understanding of the human relationship to Creation, such as:

–The New Universe Story, a modern origin account of the 14-billion-year epic unfolding of the universe to its present state of beauty, diversity, and complexity. Many people have discovered it has vast implications to help us embrace our embeddedness in the Earth, and simultaneously find a place for full religious experience and inner leadings.

–Native American spirituality.

–Zen Buddhism.

–Deep Ecology.

- ◆ Identify the gifts of group members so that all may contribute to the group and its work.
- ◆ Recognize that the well-being of the Earth is a fundamental religious concern.

*There's a garden in our galaxy!  
And we are it!*

—Mary Southard, CSJ

## Personal leadings and individual and family changes

**Goal: To foster and support the creativity and loving energy to undertake the Great Work of creating a viable human/Earth future.**

- ◆ Spend considerable time sharing individual leadings and the manner in which they are being followed. These may be large or small. If needed, seek assistance from the group to find clearness about the leading. The group as a whole, or individuals in the group, may want to offer help to an individual with a leading.
- ◆ Commit to bioregional lifeway(s); share with the group personal decisions about lifeway changes that an individual or family has adopted. These may include, for example, changes in food choices, transportation, purchasing, energy use, food disposal by composting, landscaping, and waste disposal.
- ◆ Explore the "hidden teaching" in your household about our relationship to the natural world, e.g., do you pour toxic chemicals down the drain? If you change your own oil, what do you do with the old?
- ◆ Specifically design events with children to develop an identification with place, their ecosystem home. Scavenger hunts for natural objects are fun.
- ◆ Challenge yourselves to an increasingly more Earth-friendly lifeway, perhaps by setting a ceiling on consumption, as measured by reducing expenditures by a set percentage cumulatively each year, until a satisfactory low is reached.

- ◆ Discuss Earth-friendly ideas for holidays, vacations, parties, and recreation.
- ◆ Share with the group any individual leadings with regard to Earthcare and seek assistance from the group to find clearness about leadings.

*Let us be open to discern how the seeds of destruction of our planet are present in our ways of living.*

—John Woolman

## Becoming informed about the environmental situation

**Goal: To be informed about the health of our home, the Earth, both locally and globally, in order to have a factually sound basis for action.**

- ◆ Encourage individuals to reflect on articles, pamphlets, and books, followed by discussion in light of the Earth as a dynamic, sacred totality. Perhaps the group might all read an important book or article and discuss it. Videos are a source of valuable common experience. Use prepared study guides such as the Northwest Earth Institute's guides on simplicity, deep ecology, and bioregionalism.
- ◆ "Re-inhabit" the place where you live by engaging in activities that root you in the cycles of nature. Learn about your bioregion in such activities as nature walks, canoe trips, etc. that are fun and reveal the beauty of your particular region. To understand the human place in your bioregion, you might make field trips to areas key to the bioregion, such as the watershed(s) or the sources of food supply, and visit facilities for recycling garbage disposal and water treatment.

- ◆ Learn the natural and cultural history of your bioregion. Consider inviting local politicians, educators, and clergy persons to speak on bioregional issues.
- ◆ Communicate that the present exploitation of the Earth by human activity is causing fundamental disruptions of the natural processes on which all living beings, including the human, depend.
- ◆ Distribute announcements about pertinent conferences, as well as local and national events. Get involved in local and national political issues that affect the environment. This may include the impact of population growth, the toxic impact of chemicals, and the consequences of uncontrolled economic growth.

## Group projects and events

**Goal: To live as a community in a manner integral with the Earth systems.**

- ◆ As you develop group projects, make consultation with nature part of your discernment process. Learn to listen and watch. This means cultivating respect for all of nature, an appreciation for all life forms, for all the land. It means seeing ourselves as part of the community of life.
- ◆ Identify common concerns and opportunities that help the Meeting/group sustain and enhance the diversity and vitality of our bioregion. There are state-based native plant societies.
- ◆ Join in local cleanups, not as a duty, but as an act of humility and joy. Bend to our parent/mother Earth, who sustains and nourishes us. Join the events and projects of other FUN groups and other environmental groups in your bioregion.
- ◆ Organize fairs, picnics, hikes, camping trips, and similar outings and celebrations

- for the Meeting. Seek as a community to reconnect with place.
- ◆ Conduct a Meeting House "eco-audit." Encourage other Meeting Friends to join in meetinghouse and grounds projects that foster sustainable living.
- ◆ Discern how the Meeting as a whole can engage in the corporate witness for caring for the Earth. Support one another in carrying out that witness.

*We will enter the future as a single sacred community or perish on the way.*

—Thomas Berry

For more information or a list of other QEW publications, contact:

**Quaker Earthcare Witness**

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www.quakerearthcare.org

### QEW'S VISION AND 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 with the Earth.

# Let's Get Organized to Care for the Earth

*How to develop a vital unity with nature group*



*A local Friends in Unity with Nature (FUN) group is more than a committee with a worthy project among many worthy projects. Its members are called to be part of a fundamental change in our understanding of the nature of the human and the Earth.*