

# Quaker Earthcare Witness

## Earthcare for Friends

### Unit 4

#### Ideas for programmed Meetings and churches

by Ingrid Fabianson, M.Div.

**B**ELOW ARE a sample Sunday service, three sample sermons, and a sample Sunday School lesson. This format could be used with any of the topics in this book. Each unit includes ideas for scripture selections and hymns, and provides background material for a sermon. The person preparing the sermon may wish to look for resources in Appendix B to provide suggestions to the congregation for where to find more information. Included in Appendix A is the Friends United Meeting Minute on Caring for Creation, approved at the FUM Triennial in 1999.

Another helpful resource may be *Earthcare for Children, A First Day School Curriculum*, also published by Quaker Earthcare Witness. (See Appendix C for more information on Quaker Earthcare Witness publications.) This book may be helpful in finding age-appropriate material for the children's time during Sunday services.

Although the primary focus of the book is on adult religious education, many of the activities could be used by the whole congregation before or after services. The "Population Resources Exercise" (from Unit 13) is more engaging with a larger group participating.

#### Sample Sunday service

Theme:

Appreciating and Caring for Creation

\_\_\_\_\_Scripture\_\_\_\_\_

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you: or speak to the earth and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you....*

—Job 12:7–8

*In the Lord's hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all human kind.*

—Psalms 24:1 (NRSV)

\_\_\_\_\_Hymn\_\_\_\_\_

For the Beauty of the Earth

*For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies  
For the love which from our birth, over and around us lies  
Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.*

*For the beauty of each hour of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale and tree and flow'r, sun and moon and stars and light;  
Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.*

*For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight,  
For the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.*

Prayer

God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things . . . to whom thou gavest the earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of (humankind) with ruthless cruelty so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live not for us alone but for themselves and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life. Amen

—St. Basil the Great (329–379 C.E.)

As quoted in *Earth Ministry*, September-October 2000

Devotion

OUR PLANET IS SUFFERING from overuse and a blatant disregard for the ecosystems that support life. If we, as Quakers, seek to continue growing in compassion and forgiveness, how do we use our gentle wisdom to help stop this environmental crisis? How do we attend, as agents of Divine Grace, to God’s covenant for the earth? How do we cope with our own feelings of despair as we open our hearts and minds to the wounds being inflicted on nature? Where is our loving service required and how do we discover this place of action? If the Quaker ministry of right action calls us to service, then how do we effectively educate those who are ignorant and challenge those who exploit?

Psalm 104, 1–13 “Hymn to God the Creator” (NRSV)

*Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great.*

*You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment.*

*You stretch out the heavens like a tent,*

*You set the beams of your Chambers on the waters,*

*You make the clouds your chariot,*

*You ride on the wings of the Wind,*

*You make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.*

*You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken.*

*You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.*

*At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.*

*They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them.*

*You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.*

*You make springs gush forth to the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst.*

*By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches.*

*From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.*

Sample sermon

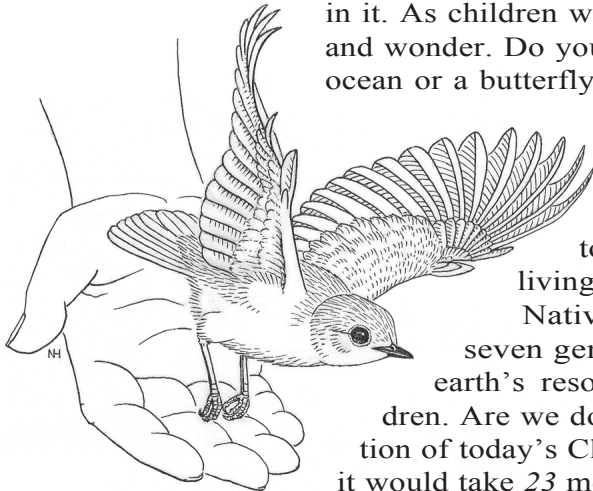
Compassion in Service to the Earth

I CHOSE JOB 12:7-8 AND PSALM 104 for this theme because those who are close to creation are “in God’s hand.” Just as Saint Basil asks God to enlarge within us this fellowship with all living things, our own spiritual growth is tied to Creation and the natural world. We can be unaware of this connection and move through our days blind to the beauty of the sunrise or the dew in a spider web. If we are removed from that place we call “home,” however, we remember the meadows, the bird calls, and the smell of sea air. If we recall our childhood, we experience again the scent of a spring rain on newly mown grass or the flash of a cardinal, red against the snow. These memories sustain us in times of separation and connect us to family, place, and

## Ideas for Programmed Meetings and Churches

roots. Nature connects us to where we find meaning in our lives.

As a child, I spent long days in my father's Seattle garden. My favorite spot was under the dining room window, where the dahlias grew. I would crawl back in that green cave and watch the sunlight through the colors overhead. God once spoke to me there. God said: "Don't give up. You have important work to do." I do not remember why I wanted to give up, but I do remember the sacredness of the moment, surrounded by a sea of blazing pinks and reds with the moist earth smell at my feet. A Great Spirit and I met in that greening cave, and I was shown the Divine in the natural world.



Not all of us have mystical experiences in nature, but all of us find comfort and sustenance in it. As children we seek out the natural world and are filled with awe and wonder. Do you remember the first time you saw a mountain or the ocean or a butterfly cocoon? Can you recreate within you the sense of blessing and grace you felt when a new puppy licked your face? Creation sustains and nurtures us. We are partners in the world, different but equal. As we come to recognize the sacredness of Creation, we come face to face with our own divine nature. Our reverence for all living things becomes the key to peace and harmony within. Native American elders have told us to live for the next seven generations. This means preserving and nurturing the earth's resources for our great-great-great-great-great grandchildren. Are we doing this? I've heard it quoted that if the entire population of today's China developed Western lifestyles equivalent to our own it would take 23 more Earths to maintain all of us. Every day we hear of one more extinction, or a new illness due to pollution, or extreme episodes of heat due to global warming. The glaciers in Glacier National Park are disappearing. What are we going to do? Creation is calling us to acts of reverence for the sake of those to come.

AS CHRISTIANS, we have made a covenant with God to live in harmony with God's created world. As Quakers, we have always been concerned that our outward life reflect inner truth. Our generation has been given the honored task of making others aware of the imbalance in the natural world, a balance undone by our own making. We can do this by honoring God's Creation and living a life of aware simplicity. This is our "important work." Lives depend on it.

Let us take time to wonder, to use our imaginations, to grasp the complexity of the web of life within which we live. We are miracles, each and every one of us, brilliant and capable of returning Creation back to the healthy state God meant for it to be.

But be warned. As we fall more in love with Creation, we become more aware of the acts of slashing and burning, polluting and flooding. We have to witness the loss of great vistas, the damming of pristine rivers, the loss of species, the draining of ponds and wetlands. Sometimes it feels as if our own skin is being cut, the pain is so deep. But we cannot hide in denial; we must do what we can where we are. Remember the old saying, "Act locally; think globally"? It still applies. At the local level we can become role models, teaching others by example. We can form groups so that we do not feel so devastated at the losses and yet share the joys of the successes.

This is my invitation to you. I encourage you to continue growing into persons of compassion and forgiveness *in service to the earth*. It will take all the strength you have. You will lose many acres of precious land before enough people have enough consciousness to recognize that their grandchildren's future is at risk. Your heart will break as you face those who are shortsighted and filled with hunger or greed. It will take all your compassion and all your forgiveness to continue to move forward, tested just as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were one century ago, for a battle of equal worth. You cannot do it alone. Like that great social movement that occurred before us, it will take a group of dedicated people, and then another group and another group, until the wisdom (or fear) becomes great enough to create real change.

In closing, I want to remember some of the voices that have come before us: the Celtic Christians, who so loved the earth they spoke in music like this: *Almighty God, Sun behind all*

*suns...the sunshine of thy presence is shown forth,”* or Hildegard of Bingen: “*(God says) I, the fiery life of Divine Wisdom—I ignite the beauty of the plains, I sparkle the waters, I burn in the sun, the moon, and the stars....*” Or the passion of the psalmists or the sensuality of the Song of Solomon ...the wonder of Creation reverberates down through the ages.

IN THE LAST 200 YEARS human beings have harmed the natural world to the point of possible extinction. We know it; we have to act. We can encourage others and ourselves to adopt a new attitude toward the earth, to learn to use the earth’s resources wisely, to be a voice for the earth, and to honor life, the cosmos, and our connection to the universe. How we do this is for each of us to decide.

Quaker Meetings can study these questions and the testimonies, putting them into practical action, adapting them to the needs of the earth. In this way we can be God’s hands in cultivating a deep respect for the creative forces that support life. Through meditation and expectant waiting, the way will open. The action that follows will ensure that our grandchildren’s generation will know what we have known and see what we have seen. Are we the last generation to see glaciers in Glacier National Park? Or can we, through a creation-centered ministry and reverence toward Earth’s great gifts, reverse the tide in time?

### \_\_\_\_Sample Sunday School lesson\_\_\_\_

In preparation for this lesson, I suggest the following resources and actions:

1. Have your Meeting join Quaker Earthcare Witness and order copies of all their pamphlets for your library. Read them and talk about them.
2. Discover and contemplate Meetings’ queries regarding Creation.
3. Meditate on and respond to the questions below:

*What else can we do as stewards of Creation?*

In order to encourage others to honor and respect God’s Creation, we must understand and respect it ourselves, as well as teach the tools needed to sustain it. The Quaker testimonies provide us with one map for teaching sustainable living. The *testimony of integrity* calls us to act with wisdom. We know we have an obligation to be responsible stewards of the earth. The *testimony of peace* recognizes that all life is sacred; we must answer to that of God in all Creation. The *testimony of equality* calls us to acknowledge that planet Earth was not created just to serve humans and thus begin to live with the right sharing of resources. The *testimony of simplicity* calls us to conserve our resources and live within our means, avoiding a practice of immodest consumption.

Living within the Quaker testimonies requires spiritual discipline and time for reflection. As we quiet our environment and our minds, our “needs” diminish and we see the value of the things around us and our place within them. Our lives can become more balanced. We find ourselves avoiding the step that would crush the last violet of summer: we become aware. “Way opens” to see the sacredness of Creation and the miracle of life. We can evolve into restored people who live sustainable life-styles, in balance with ourselves and with the planet. Our growing awareness of the holy in Creation, together with the sacred task of restoration, will deepen our compassion, give our lives meaning, and help us find our prophetic voice in the service of those who have no voice. We can thus find peace in the natural world.

In the dark of the Moon  
In the dead of night  
In the dead of winter in flying snow  
the world in danger  
wars raging  
families dying  
I walk the rocky hillside  
sowing clover.

—Wendell Berry

## Ideas for Programmed Meetings and Churches

### Questions

1. Do my values and my visions for the future sustain the earth and its resources?
2. What can I do at the local level to help Creation?
3. Discuss the biblical references to Creation and humans' responsibility to it.
4. Discuss the relationship of the following activities to the ministry of caring for Creation:
  - ❖ Eating habits.
  - ❖ Consumerism.
  - ❖ Population growth.
  - ❖ Global climate change.
  - ❖ Sustainable energy.
  - ❖ Right livelihood.
  - ❖ Staying aware.
  - ❖ Changing hearts in a challenging time.
  - ❖ Sustainable development.
5. Create a prayer to say on Earth Day.

### Closing

In closing, I call you into silent worship. As we enter the silence, please consider the following queries, remembering the Quaker testimonies of simplicity, justice, equality, and peace:

*Is my Meeting concerned that human interaction with nature be responsible, guided by a reverence for life and a sense of the splendor of God's continuing creation?*

*How am I helping to develop a social, economic, and political system which will nurture an environment which sustains and enriches life for all?*

*Am I aware of the place of water, air, and soil in my life?*

(Silent worship) (Thank you)

### Poem

#### The Peace of Wild Things

*When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in  
fear of what my life and my children's lives may be, I go and lie down where  
the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.*

*I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax themselves with forethought of  
grief.*

*I come into the presence of still water.*

*And I feel above me the day blind stars waiting with their light.*

*For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

—Wendell Berry, 1998, Counterpoint Press

### Prayer

Dear Mother/Father God:

Thank you for this greening Earth, for the creatures large and small. Thank you for the delicate and intricate systems that sustain us. Help us, Dear Lord, to live in harmony with Creation, honoring our covenant to you to live in balance and beauty. Help us to harmonize our longings with our needs as we encourage others to do the same. Guide us in wisdom so that we may educate as well as challenge those who are harming your design. Continue to show us your presence in all created things, in the sun and the moon, in the soil and in the air, in the unfurling leaf and in the wood drake's nest. We ask this in the name of our Lord, amen.



Sermon 2

Returning to Eden

by Ralph Greene

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT tells of how God moved through chaos to create form from formless-ness, substance from the void, order from confusion, light out of darkness. The Creator made the stars, sun, planets, moon, water, sky, land, vegetation, and the creatures of sea and land in a progression which would make many scientists comfortable. God came not as a construction worker but was a creator. C.K. Chesterton observed that “the difference between construction and creation is this: that a thing constructed can only be loved *after* it is constructed; but a thing created is loved *before* it exists.” When God looked over creation, God saw that it was good. Then God created humankind, charging them saying, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” as good stewards; never exploiting, wasting, or despoiling it but taking care of creation in the service of God. God looked over all of this and saw it was very good. God planted a garden and placed the man and woman in this bountiful place. God rested, calling on human creatures to live the sabbath life, to honor all that is holy in creation. The world could then sing songs of praise:

*Morning has broken, like the first morning,  
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!  
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word!  
Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven,  
like the first dew fall on the first grass,  
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,  
sprung in completeness where His feet pass.  
Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning.  
Born of the one light, Eden saw play!  
Praise with elation, praise every morning,  
God's recreation of the new day!*

—Eleanor Farjeon

GOD GAVE THEM all the fruits of the garden. In this place there were two special trees: the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. As it turned out, it was to be a short journey to the tree of knowledge but an arduous journey to the tree of life. God commanded them never to eat from the tree of knowledge, or death would be their due. After a time, the human creatures were tempted to taste of the forbidden fruit and suddenly became aware of their nakedness. When God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, he grew very angry because of their disobedience and forced them out of the garden. And so it is that God's love can be tough love. Immediately God knew that they would suffer and come to know the darkness of the soul and death in their body, but God had compassion on them and clothed them so that they might be warm.

From that time, God became a lonely lover, walking the garden of the earth with anger, anguish, sorrow, yet holding out the gifts of hope, love, and faith that human beings could partake of the tree of life. Still, the enticing taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge remains intoxicating. Through the amazing fruit of knowledge, humans' attempt to exercise god-like powers of life and death over creation. This great idolatry of human mind and flesh as “ruler” of the universe has unleashed untold misery on creation: destruction, wars, violence, hunger, poverty, alienation, and death. Humankind, created in God's image, found itself curiously “like God” in the desert but no longer with God in the garden. With knowledge there was a pursuit of happiness but the loss of joy; a joy which can only come from being in the presence of the Creator. So it is that God despairs but never gives up as long as there is at least one willing to journey to the tree of life.

It is said that hell is a place where there is no hope and no future. This has become a condition of impoverished peoples worldwide. This hell gives rise to violence, revolution, terrorism. A minority of people in privileged places have a unique opportunity to make a difference in creation and in the lives of others. Knowledge knows of environmental concerns, ecology, organic

## Ideas for Programmed Meetings and Churches

living, sustainability, peacemaking, mutual concord, arbitration, mediation. Yet these ideals become lost in the fog of information and political agendas. It is as scripture teaches: Humankind has outsmarted itself having partaken of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. In spite of our technology we descend farther into the hell of violence, war, poverty, destruction, despair, and alienation.

Scripture tells us that humankind is invited to journey from the abyss to the tree of life. Out of the secular morass the journey begins with an encounter with God. The journey is undertaken not with knowledge but with wisdom. Wisdom moves in faith, not having answers but knowing that the destination is the tree of life. Walt Whitman said it well in his poem "Song of the Open Road":

Wisdom is not finally tested in the schools,  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof.

WISDOM RECONCILES US with the Creator in the cool of the day, and we do not have to be afraid or feel that we have to hide our nakedness. We become humble, obedient learners in the school of Christ, where the three "R's" of repentance, redemption, and reconciliation are experienced, not taught. It is a singing of the old Shaker hymn "Simple Gifts" as we journey, finally understanding the meaning of "coming 'round right." It is giving testimony along the way, with confidence, for we can speak of community, harmony, equality, and simplicity with new insight. This encounter is life-changing and therefore is not for the faint-hearted or comfortable, who are continually tempted to eat the forbidden fruit of Eden. From our testimony comes our ministry. Our hands become the hands of God through ministries of stewardship and reconciliation.

Through wisdom we understand the fullness of Psalm 24 (the steward's psalm) for the psalm raises several queries and then gives a blessing to the steward:

*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.  
Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord, Who may stand in his holy place? They who  
have clean hands and a pure heart, who do not lift up their soul to an idol or swear by  
what is false. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God the Savior.*

—Psalm 24:1-5

WHO SHALL ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN of the Lord and come to this holy place? The journey takes us through the whole of scripture from Genesis to Revelation. But it is only by wisdom that humankind can come to the tree of life. We see images of what it is like to feast at the tree of life in the last few verses of Revelation. "Then the angel showed the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse." It is as Christ has said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." (Revelations 21). This is holy ground, the beginning of the end; a returning to Eden.

This is holy ground, we're standing on holy ground,  
For the Lord is present and where God is is holy.  
These are holy hands. He's given us holy hands,  
He works thru us and so these hands are holy.  
These are holy lips, He's given us holy lips.  
He speaks thru us and so these lips are holy.  
These are holy times, we're living in holy times,  
God loves thru us and so these times are holy.

—Christopher Beatty

*RALPH GREENE has served as an educator and as pastor of several Quaker Meetings in Maine and Massachusetts. He is presently sojourning with St. Stephen's University in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, to develop a program of stewardship and reconciliation which is international, intercultural, and interdenominational in scope.*

Sermon 3

Letting Go of Fear

by Bill Stevens

WHEN I LOOK at our destruction of the earth and ask *why* we are doing what we are doing, I see two things going on:

Our plunder and pollution are partly consequences of a worldview that assumes that:

1. Nothing is sacred.
2. Nature is to be conquered, controlled, and consumed rather than revered.
3. We are masters of the universe, above nature, with no limits.
4. The world is defective (a problem to be solved).

But I think all of us would agree that something more is going on than just a worldview. Our busyness, obsession with work, and overconsumption are also part of a *spiritual issue*. Why are we so busy (paving the world over, chopping down the forests, draining the aquifers, exhausting ocean fisheries)?

It has something to do with our inner restlessness, insecurity—fear that we are not good enough or that if we stop our hectic pace, uncomfortable thoughts will intrude.

Not feeling good about ourselves, we try to earn our worth through work and accomplishment. Martin Luther called it “works righteousness.” We apply this religious enterprise to the secular sphere. Or we try to prove what marvelous people we are by buying a humongous house or prestigious car.

Further, to cope with our fear born of the fragility of life, we erect bulwarks of security: We surround ourselves with lots of things. Unfortunately, these strategies don’t work; we are only fooling ourselves, and with dreadful consequences—destruction of the earth itself.

The core spiritual issue, I believe, is *fear*. All the negative and destructive things we do in life are ultimately rooted in fear. This is the conviction of Gerald Jampolsky in his little book *Love is Letting Go of Fear*. All destructive activity (war, plunder of Earth and neighbor, excessive consumption, addiction, anger, greed, hatred) all are rooted in fear.

That fear is the central issue of the destruction of the earth is suggested in Old Testament, where Adam hid from God because he was afraid. (Genesis 3:8-13)

(Note also in verses 12 and 13 Adam’s resort to *blaming*, a typical indicator of *addiction*, which many observe to be another spiritual factor in the destruction of the earth.)

We think that Adam was afraid and hiding because he didn’t have any clothes on, but really it was because he had been stripped of his innocence (living in simple, trusting harmony and balance with nature).

I think this chapter may be a primordial memory of what went wrong in God’s good creation (the theme of Chapter 1) with the emergence of agriculture and civilization, namely the loss of simple trust and wonder, which were replaced by greed and the need to control.

Through fear, Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden paradise. That’s our story as well.

(Another important environmental insight in Genesis 3:3: “Of the tree in the midst of the garden you shall not eat.” This verse clearly states there are limits to our consumption; when we transgress these limits we are cast out of the garden.)

I am saying, then, that fear may be the central spiritual issue in our destruction of the earth. And overcoming fear is what the Gospel is all about.

At Jesus’s birth, Luke 1:30, the angel said to Mary, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” Also, in Luke 2:8–11, the angel said to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid.” At the end of Jesus’s life, Matthew 28:5, the angel tells the two Marys, “Do not be afraid.” In verse 10, Jesus says it to them.

It’s so easy to brush over these verses as just filler, especially since they were spoken by angels (whom we may not take seriously today). Or we may think these verses are addressing the fear associated with seeing an apparition. But they are like bookends, marking the core concern of the Gospel, overcoming fear, which I believe is the core issue in the environmental crisis. I don’t believe these pronouncements are accidental; they are fundamental truths.



## Ideas for Programmed Meetings and Churches

SO, HOW IS FEAR OVERCOME? That's the great spiritual question. Jesus made it plain that it is not by amassing possessions. Only love overcomes fear, says Jampolsky in *Love is Letting Go of Fear*. True security, meaning, and worth in this life are rooted only in God's love, for only love overcomes fear. I John 4:18 states it succinctly: "Perfect love casts out fear." This link between love and overcoming fear is right there in Luke 1:30: "Don't be afraid... you have found favor with God." Surely favor is a form of love.

Letting go of our busyness and overconsumption and destructive ways means letting go of fear by receiving God's love. Here is the church's central mission, and the core solution to the environmental crisis: the proclamation of God's love. (The solution is not just a political enterprise, getting our systems and terminology rightly structured.) Our worth, value, and security are a gift of God's love. They are not based on anything we do or accumulate.

This fundamental Christian truth is beautifully expressed in Henri Nouwen's powerful little book, *Life of the Beloved*. Without a sense of belovedness, the things we do become frantic and destructive (of self, relationships, and the earth). This book was written to his secular, non-religious Jewish friend, Fred, who yearned for something to cling to.

Nouwen based this treatise about belovedness on two great transformative moments in Jesus's life where he experienced his own belovedness: His baptism and His transfiguration.

So many things in life undermine our sense of belovedness, tell us we are no good, second-rate, third-rate, or not even worth rating. They put us down, tell us we are worthless, defective.

"Becoming the Beloved is the great spiritual journey we have to make," Nouwen says. To nurture us on this journey, I'd like to share the following words from his *Life of the Beloved*:

Aren't you, like me, hoping that some person, thing, or event will come along to give you that final feeling of inner well-being you desire? Don't you often hope: "May this book, idea, course, trip, job, country, or relationship fulfill my deepest desire"? But as long as you are waiting for that mysterious moment you will go on running helter-skelter, always anxious and restless, always lustful and angry, never fully satisfied. You know that this is the compulsiveness that keeps us going and busy, but at the same time makes us wonder whether we are getting anywhere in the long run. This is the way to spiritual exhaustion and burnout. This is the way to spiritual death.

Well, you and I don't have to kill ourselves. We are the Beloved. We are intimately loved long before our parents, teachers, spouses, children, and friends loved or wounded us. That's the truth of our lives. That's the truth I want you to claim for yourself. That's the truth spoken by the voice that says, "You are my Beloved."

Listening to that voice with great inner attentiveness, I hear at my center words that say: "I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths of the earth and knitted you together in your mother's womb. I have carved you in the palms of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with a care more intimate than that of a mother for her child. I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at every step. Wherever you go, I go with you, and wherever you rest I will keep watch. I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and drink that will quench all your thirst. I will not hide my face from you. You know me as your own as I know you are my own. You belong to me. I am your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your lover, and your spouse... yes, even your child... Wherever you are I will be. Nothing will ever separate us. We are one."

Friends, the core truth I wish to express: We are beloved of God. We don't have to earn it or prove it; just accept it. We don't have to destroy the earth looking for a substitute. Then savor life. Life is a gift to be savored, not a problem to be solved.

*BILL STEVENS, after graduating from Wake Forest University and Yale Divinity School, served for 23 years as pastor of First Friends Meeting in Greensboro, N.C. He also received a Ph.D. from Drew University. From 1993 to 2003 he was director of the Glenagape Retreat Center near Greensboro. He is currently a member of New Garden Friends Meeting in Greensboro, where he is clerk of Ministry and Counsel. This sermon was originally given as the Bible lesson at the Quaker Earthcare Witness Steering Committee meeting in the spring of 2002.*

## Unit 4. Ideas for Programmed Meeting and Churches

Austin, Richard Cartwright. 1987. *Baptized into Wilderness. A Christian Perspective on John Muir.*

Creekside Press, Abingdon, Va.

Bender, Sue. 1989. *Plain and Simple.*: Harper & Row, New York.

Berry, Thomas. 1988. *The Dream of the Earth.* Sierra Club Books, San Francisco.

Callenbach, Ernest. 1998. *Ecology: A Pocket Guide.* University of California Press.

Berkeley, Calif. Cannato, Judy. 2003. *Quantum grace: Lenten Reflections on Creation and Connectedness.* Ave Maria

Press, Notre Dame, Ind.

Cornell, Joseph. 1987. *Listening to Nature. How to Deepen Your Awareness of Nature.*

Dawn Publications, Nevada City, Calif.

De Waal, Esther. 1991. *Every Earthly Blessing.* Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, Pa.

DeGrote-Sorensen, Barbara and David Allen. 1992. *Tis a Gift to be Simple. Embracing the Freedom of Living with Less.* Augsburg Press, Minneapolis.

Elder, John, ed. 1998. *Stories in the Land: A Place-Based Environmental Education Anthology.* The Orion Society, Great Barrington, Mass.

Johnson, Elizabeth. 1993. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit.* Paulist Press,

New York. Kelly, Thomas R. 1941. *A Testament of Devotion.* Harper, San Francisco.

Nachiem, Lara. 2000. *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans.* Edited by Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Harvard

University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Roberts, Elizabeth. 1991. *Earth Prayers From Around the World.* Harper,

San Francisco. Sanders, Scott Russell. 1987. *The Paradise of Bombs.*

Beacon Press, Boston.

Schut, Michael, ed. 1999. *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life, a Christian Perspective.*

Living the Good News, Denver.

Shepard, Paul. 1998. *Nature and Madness.* The University of Georgia Press, Athens, Ga.

Silf, Margaret. 2001. *Sacred Spaces. Stations on a Celtic Way.* Paraclete Press, Brewster,

Mass. Taylor, Barbara Erakko. 1999. *Silent Dwellers.* Continuum, New York.

Vandergrift, Nicki Verploegen. 2000. *Organic Spirituality. A Sixfold Path for Contemplative Living.*

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y

Vroon Rienstra, Marchiene. 1992. *Swallow's Nest, a Feminine Reading of the Psalms.*

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.

Yungblut, John R. 1991. *Rediscovering Prayer.* Element, Rockport, Mass.

Zaleski, Philip and Paul Kaufman. 1997. *Gifts of the Spirit. Living the Wisdom of the Great Religious Traditions.* Harper, San Francisco.

### Organizations

- ❖ Earth Ministry. 1305 NE 47<sup>th</sup> St., Seattle WA 98105. Newsletter: *Earth Letter.*
- ❖ Nature Conservancy. 4245 North Fairfax Dr., Suite 100, Arlington VA 22203-1606
- ❖ Quaker Earthcare Witness. 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington VT 05401-1607. Newsletter: *BeFriending Creation. Website: <<http://www.QuakerEarthcare.org>>.*
- ❖ Quaker Eco-Witness for National Legislation (QEW-NL) 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington VT 05401. Newsletter: *Quaker Eco-Bulletin.(QEB).*

### Periodicals

- ❖ *EarthLight, the Magazine of Spiritual Ecology.* Pacific Yearly Meeting Committee on Unity With Nature, 111 Fairmount Ave., Oakland CA 94611.
- ❖ *Friends Journal.* 1216 Arch St., 2-B, Philadelphia PA 19107.

- ❖ *Pendle Hill Pamphlets*. Pendle Hill Publications, 338 Plush Mill Rd., Wallingford PA 19086.
- ❖ *Presence, an International Journal of Spiritual Direction*. PO Box 3584, Bellevue WA 98009.
- ❖ *Quaker Life*. 101 Quaker Hill Dr., Richmond IN 47374-1980.