

Quaker Earthcare Witness

Earthcare for Friends

Unit 5

Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth

by Kim Carlyle

Purposes of this unit

1. To make the connection between our concerns for peace and our concerns for ecological integrity. This relationship becomes clear as we approach the issues from a broader perspective and consider them in a longer time frame.
2. To see from a broader, ecological perspective that God's Creation is an interwoven fabric. Everything is interconnected and what is done to a single thread affects the whole.
3. To discern long-term causes and effects, to learn where the seeds of war were planted, how they were nurtured, how they blossomed and bore their awful fruits. With this knowledge of history, we can work at prevention.
4. To take our peace work beyond reaction (protesting government policies, trying to reconcile those with differences, attempting to limit the use and type of weapons, and working to alleviate the suffering of war) to emphasizing the reduction or elimination of conditions that can lead to war.
5. To teach the value of prevention, just as healthcare and fire-fighting professionals have done. It's time for peace activists to put this tool into their kits. War, its preconditions, and its aftermath have devastating environmental implications. Destruction of the environment increasingly is a precursor to war.
6. To become proactive, and therefore more effective, in our peace work. We must make the connections: Peace on Earth must include Peace *with* Earth.

Sacred texts and other inspirational readings

The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

—Isaiah 24:4–6 (NIV)

I told (the Commonwealth Commissioners) I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust, according to James's doctrine... I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strifes were.

—George Fox, 1651

Oh, that we who declare against wars and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the Light and therein examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures and the furniture of our houses and the garments in which we array ourselves and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions or not. Holding treasures in the self-pleasing spirit is a strong plant, the fruit whereof ripens fast. A day of outward distress is coming and divine love calls to prepare against it!

—John Woolman, *A Plea for the Poor*, 1763–64

Care for God's Creation

George Fox "...lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars and [he] knew from whence all wars did rise, for the lust, according to James's doctrine" (Journal/1651). It is the same lust (cravings, desires, self-centeredness) that causes violence in war, and which causes us to do violence to God's creation. The "life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars" also takes away the occasion for violence against the creation.

The concern for the care of God's creation has long been implicit in our Christian testimony. We recognize that our historic peace testimony is a testimony to living in harmony with the world in a covenant among God, humanity, and the creation (Gen. 9:8–13), a covenant the renewal of which was foreseen by the prophets as in Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom (11:1–9), by Paul (e.g., Rom. 8:12–17), and in the great commission when the risen Christ told the eleven, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15 NRSV, the AV has "all creatures"). Implicit in our testimony on simplicity is the understanding that we will not take more than we need, particularly (and here we move into the testimony on justice) if it means depriving others, including future generations, of their basic needs.

We call upon Friends to examine their own lives to see if their own patterns of consumption reflect self-centeredness and greed rather than a concern for living harmoniously in the creation, that we might witness to the world that harmony. We call upon the nations of the world, and in particular our own governments, to enact laws and reach agreements which will protect the creation from the effects of human exploitation, greed, and carelessness.

—Approved at Friends United Meeting Triennial Sessions, 1999

The notion of Friends being in unity with nature is really important, but it's off to the side. This issue belongs front and center with the Peace testimony—because this degradation of the earth's ability to support creation is rapidly becoming a leading cause of war.

—Steve Curwood, host, "Living on Earth," National Public Radio program, speaking at the 2001 FGC Gathering

As I watch us, the human species, destroy the earth for our own purposes, I think that we believe, mistakenly, that the planet belongs to us and that we are the masters of it. Really we belong to it... We have to take corporate action to repeal the policies that commit structural violence against our living planet...

—Joe Volk, Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation
speaking at the 2001 FGC Gathering

Hymns and songs

I've Got Peace Like a River. *Worship in Song, a Friends Hymnal*, # 246.

A Song of Peace. *Worship in Song, a Friends Hymnal*, # 304.

Issue presentations

Living in a Radically New Way

SINCE 1955 when he registered as a conscientious objector, Karl Meyer has been an activist for peace, advocating nonviolence, organizing demonstrations, and refusing to pay taxes to finance war. Over the years, he has come to realize that an essential piece of the peace witness has been missing. Recently he wrote:

The avaricious momentum of our culture drives us inexorably into repeated outbreaks of hot war. We cannot reverse our own participation in this process of culture simply by holding more demonstrations and events for peace... We must think about where we are going and understand how our own economic and social patterns of life contribute to the overall momentum of violence.

Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth

Our lifestyles not only contribute to the occasion of war, they also contribute to our ecological crisis. Karl Meyer also asserts that, in addition to the hot wars that erupt all too frequently, since the middle 20th century we have lived with an ongoing subtext of two quiet wars:

One is the low intensity war of Western culture against the biological viability of our mother Earth. The other is the imperial war of U.S. culture against weaker countries for control and exploitation of the limited material resources of our planet.

These quiet wars—one of exploitation, the other of ecological destruction—are inextricably linked and provide the framework for this section. The lesson of this unit was put most eloquently, again by peace (and earth) activist Karl Meyer:

The experience of my whole life tells me that we, in America, must learn to live in a radically different way. We must consume less, destroy less, and share the wealth of Earth with all that is alive around us, or we cannot have lasting peace with all who need to survive and thrive with us on the same planet.

Peace on Earth is peace *with* Earth.

The occasion of war

TO LIVE in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars, we must understand what conditions lead to human conflict. Throughout history, the seeds of war have always included populations in contention for scarce resources and land, as well as basic injustices and abuses of human rights. In our contemporary world, these causes are greatly magnified as 80 million people are added to the planet each year, as powerful multinational corporations require increasing levels of production and consumption, and as the limited resources of God's creation are plundered and wasted.

- ❖ The richest 20 percent of people on earth account for 86 percent of the world's private consumption.
- ❖ The poorest 20 percent of people on earth account for 1.3 percent of the world's private consumption.
- ❖ Over his or her lifetime, a child born in an industrialized country will consume more resources and contribute more pollution than 30 to 50 children born in developing countries.

The seeds of war are nourished by the burgeoning human population, by an increasing rate of consumption in the rich countries, and by an unequal distribution of wealth throughout the world.

Let's look at some specific problem areas:

Water

AS PRIVILEGED MEMBERS of a technological culture, we often take for granted the fundamental elements of life. We turn the sink tap, open a cold drink, or shop for food in the supermarket, giving little thought to the precious water that makes so many goods and services readily available. Many of us cannot even name our local water source or explain what happens to the water that goes down the drain. Water scarcity, for us, is a temporary restriction on watering the lawn or washing the car, a minor inconvenience—at least for the present. But for the majority world, it's a completely different story. It's an occasion of war.

In *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit*, Vandana Shiva explains that many wars, often described as cultural clashes or ethnic conflicts, are actually water wars. Israel's extensive industrial agriculture requires irrigation from both the Jordan River and its groundwater. "The 1967 war... was in effect an occupation of the freshwater resources from the Golan Heights, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the West Bank." After describing Israel's disproportionate share of regional water, Shiva states, "The water apartheid, demarcated along ethnic and religious lines, is fueling the already heated Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

There are scores of other water hot spots in the world. Turkish dam projects on the

Euphrates River will reduce Iraq's water allotment by 80 to 90 percent; for the ten African countries that share the Nile Basin, allocation has been a source of unending battle; and even in the United States, armed federal officers were called to quell a dispute between farmers and tribal leaders and environmentalists over the Klamath River in Oregon.

Friends concerned about peace in the world and Friends concerned about ecological integrity should be concerned about the global water crisis.

- ❖ 508 million people live in water-scarce countries; by 2025, 3 billion people will live in 46 such countries.
- ❖ The World Health Organization estimates that 1.3 billion people do not have access to clean water.
- ❖ A pound of wheat can be grown with 60 pounds of water.
- ❖ A pound of meat requires 2,500 to 6,000 pounds of water.

In the 1980s, The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency reported that wars of the 21st century would be fought over water, as wars of the twentieth century had been fought over oil.

Petroleum

FROM THE JAPANESE INVASION of petroleum-rich Indonesia in World War II to the present hostilities in the Middle East and Central Asia, the last century has seen demand for oil resources become a primary cause of war.

The United States' economy depends on oil. Its foreign policy is driven by this dependence on oil. It requires a global military presence to ensure the flow. Part of the motivation for the events of September 11, 2001, which initiated the so-called War on Terrorism, was the presence of U.S. troops in the holy land of Saudi Arabia.

It seems that because of oil, the U.S. meddles in other nations' internal affairs to a degree that has earned it widespread enmity. Part of the motivation for the invasion of Afghanistan by the United States was to establish control so a pipeline could be built to transport natural gas and oil from central Asia to Karachi, Pakistan. U.S. Special Forces are training Georgian troops to defend the Baku-T'bilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and are training Colombian troops to protect the Cano Limon pipeline.

These seeds of war are nourished by consumer demand for fuel to power the world's 500 million automobiles and to provide comfort, convenience, and consumer goods for the affluent. In all seasons, we can enjoy fresh fruits, vegetables, and flowers that are transported thousands of miles with petroleum energy. We think little of traveling great distances by airplane or short distance by automobile. And we think less about the consequences of our use of fuel.

- ❖ 78 million barrels of oil are consumed each day.
- ❖ Demand for oil will exceed oil production by 2014.

The burning of oil is responsible for an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂), which has intensified the natural greenhouse effect and is changing our climate.

Global climate change

IN ITS DECEMBER 1995 SECOND ASSESSMENT REPORT, the Climate Impacts Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated, "Climate change is likely to have wide ranging and mostly adverse impacts on human health, with significant loss of life." The adverse impacts on humanity will include changing weather patterns, rising seas, and spread of disease.

The increased moisture in the atmosphere from rising temperatures will increase storm severity—floods in some regions, droughts in others—and alter local climates. As productive agricultural regions become arid, people will suffer from disruption of food supplies and from water scarcity. Large numbers of people will be forced to migrate.

As warming seas expand and glaciers melt, the rising oceans will submerge entire island nations and inundate coastal plains. Ancient cultures will be lost, and millions of refugees will seek higher ground. Try to imagine the chaos as 25 million Muslims flee coastal Bangladesh and enter Hindu India.

Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth

Ross Gelbspan wrote about climate change in *The Heat is On*:

Long before the systems of the planet buckle, democracy will disintegrate under the stress of ecological disasters and their social consequences....it is the poor, precarious, nations of the developing world that would face the threat of totalitarianism first. In many of these countries, where democratic conditions are as fragile as the ecosystem, a reversion to dictatorship will require only a few ecological states of emergency. Their governments will quickly find democracy to be too cumbersome for responding to disruption in food supplies, water sources, and human health—as well as to a floodtide of environmental refugees from homelands that have become incapable of feeding and supporting them.

- ❖ Since 1900, heat-trapping CO₂ emissions have increased 12-fold, to almost 7 billion metric tons per year.
- ❖ The earth's average temperature could increase by 10.4° F, causing a sea level rise of more than half a yard.

Since global climate change is a result of human activity, the social and ecological stresses will be exacerbated by increasing numbers of humans.

World population

STAN BECKER, speaking on Friends' population concerns at the 2001 FGC Gathering, told a plenary audience: "I pray that the divine will infuse our hearts and minds as we consider what I believe is the greatest problem facing humanity at this time in history."

Friends' concern for population stabilization is based on love and compassion—every child brought into the world should be wanted, loved, and cared for. But increasing population is putting great stress on our ecological support systems as well as our social structures.

The poorest countries in the world are the fastest growing in terms of population. For example, Afghanistan now has 26.8 million people. It is projected that the population will reach 45.9 million by 2025, 67.2 million by 2050. Today in Afghanistan one out of seven infants die before their first birthday; seven in ten of the people are undernourished; life expectancy for men is 46 years; for women, 44 years. These people live in conditions worse than brutal. It will become unspeakably worse as their population expands.

Other countries have similar conditions, with similar projections. Many of these countries, including Afghanistan and Iraq, will have a "population bulge" of unemployed 15- to 24-year-old males in the near future. The United Nations has identified this condition among the precursors to war.

- ❖ Each day there are 200,000 more human mouths to feed.
- ❖ Each day 35,000 people (mostly children) die from starvation.
- ❖ World population will reach 8 to 10 billion by 2050.
- ❖ The 49 least developed countries will triple in population.

War on God's Creation

WHEN WE DEGRADE THE NATURAL WORLD, we desecrate God's Creation. Given that the first and greatest commandment is to love God, we commit a crime of the first order when we dishonor God by corrupting and polluting what we were entrusted by God to care for.

Throughout human history, environmental destruction has followed in the wake of war. Recall the Romans salting the fields of defeated Carthage. But with today's warfare methods and technology, the destruction occurs before, during, and after the conflict.

Weapons testing sites, military bases, and munitions plants are notorious for their contamination of air, soil, and groundwater. Military operations devastate the environment with bombs, smoke, and chemical defoliants. The aftermath of conflict includes residual herbicides, unexploded weaponry, and ruined croplands.

In Vietnam, the damage to ecological systems is still evident after three decades. More than 10 percent of the country was sprayed with an estimated 100,000 tons of Agent Orange, an

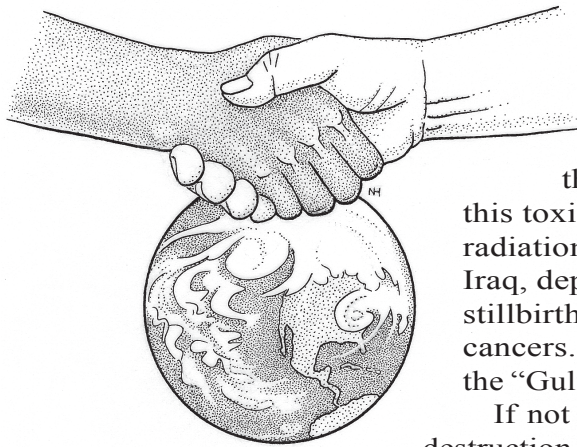
environmentally persistent, highly toxic herbicide. High concentrations of this defoliant still exist and have wreaked havoc on complex ecosystems, endangering wildlife and destroying half of the country's mangrove forests.

During the Persian Gulf War of 1991, more than 600 oil wells in Kuwait were set ablaze by retreating Iraqi troops. The cloud of toxic smoke blocked the sun and poisoned the atmosphere, releasing almost a half-billion tons of climate-warming carbon dioxide. Numerous oil spills, in the Persian Gulf (4 million barrels) and in the desert (60 million barrels) killed birds by the thousands and percolated into the ground water, devastating fisheries and livestock.

One hundred million land mines remain in place after the numerous regional conflicts of the last century. The Red Cross estimates that between 1,000 and 2,000 people are killed or maimed by these devices every month. Most detonations occur in peacetime, and most victims are civilians, with children being the most vulnerable.

When a heavy bomb explodes, it generates temperatures that exceed 3,000 degrees Celsius. Not only does this heat annihilate all living matter, it also destroys the lower layers of soil.

Regeneration of this earth can take so long that for practical purposes it is destroyed.



A recent innovation in the technology of destruction is Depleted Uranium (DU). Because of its extreme density, shells made of DU are very effective at penetrating targets. On explosion, they release uranium oxide into the air. When inhaled, this toxic substance remains in the body, where it releases radiation for the remainder of the human's or animal's life. In Iraq, depleted uranium residue is blamed for increases in stillbirths, birth defects, childhood leukemia, and other cancers. Veterans groups in the United States blame DU for the "Gulf War Syndrome."

If not bad enough by itself, all this environmental destruction creates a snowball effect. Since the devastated land can no

longer support the human population, environmentally ruinous mass migrations occur. And the concentrations of refugees put such stress on the host region that the likelihood of new conflict arises. So the environmental destruction of war begets more environmental destruction, and sows the seeds for more war.

BUT EVEN PEACETIME human activities have declared war on God's Creation. Our consumer culture demands more and more goods and services. Our unhealthy economic structures rely on growth, but growth on a finite planet is not sustainable. Especially harmful are the extractive processes: drilling, mining, and lumbering.

Around the world, the extraction of oil has devastated the environment and destroyed cultures. Roads are carved through rainforests. Drilling sites contaminate fresh water. Leaky pipelines spill millions of gallons of crude oil on pristine tundra. Indigenous people are pushed to the brink of extinction. Local economies are upset, governments are corrupted, and wealth becomes concentrated among a few. Oil refineries pollute the air, soil, and water of the impoverished communities that surround them.

The extraction of coal, notably in Appalachia, devastates entire communities, removes mountaintops, destroys watersheds, and leaves behind hundred-million-gallon toxic slurry ponds. Even so-called clean coal technologies will have to deposit coal's mercury and other toxins somewhere.

The burning of coal and oil are responsible for soot, ground level ozone, and acid rain. The air pollution exacerbates respiratory illness, especially for asthmatic children and the elderly. It has poisoned most of the lakes in the Northeast and is responsible for the decline of our Eastern hardwood forests.

Healthy forests cleanse our air and water, prevent soil erosion, and store carbon that would otherwise likely end up as atmospheric carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas. (In fact, about a quarter of the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide is due to deforestation.) Forests also

Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth

retain the moisture from rainfall, absorbing water like sponges. Without trees, most rainwater drains away to the rivers and oceans. Without the shade of the forests, the ground quickly dries up. The climate becomes hotter and drier. Aside from these utilitarian purposes, forests are places of spiritual renewal. Yet throughout the world, humans continue to cut the forests down. Eighty square miles of tropical forest are lost each day.

These are but a few examples of the war that humans wage against God's Creation.

Questions for reflection

- ❖ Refer to the George Fox quotation in Section II. What does it mean in the 21st century "to take away the occasion of all wars?"
- ❖ Refer to the John Woolman quotation in Section II. In the 21st century, what are the seeds of war?
- ❖ *This is the word of the Lord God to you all, and a charge to you all in the presence of the living God; be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.*
—George Fox, 1656

Have we earned the right to walk cheerfully over the world? That is, are we patterns and examples?

- ❖ What legacy for world peace do we want to leave to our children? To their children?
- ❖ What can we do in the next five years that would increase the chances of world peace 10 to 20 years from now?

Illustrative activities

1. Try whether the seeds....

- a. Choose a product (e.g. athletic shoes, cut flowers, books and paper products, etc.) and describe the social and environmental costs and consequences of its production, distribution, use, and disposal. Describe how the costs and consequences might nurture the seeds of war.
- b. Do the same with an item of food (banana, coffee, chocolate, asparagus in December, etc.).
- c. Do the same with a recreational activity (resort vacation, golf, skiing, etc.).

2. War on Creation

- a. Discuss and list some of the negative environmental consequences of war.
- b. Discuss and list some of the negative environmental consequences of consumption of what John Woolman would call "superfluities."

3. Reflection

To End All Wars
(from Karl Meyer)

*Nonviolence
Simple Living
Sharing Earth's Resources
Reverence for Life
Service to Others*

WE BELIEVE in a unified Earth, in which we respect the life force in all other beings, and support the diversity and survival of all the many forms of life. We believe in one human community across all national boundaries. We seek to abolish war, and to live peacefully with all people.

Earthcare for Friends—A Study Guide for Individuals and Faith Communities

To this end, we will need an equitable social economy in which every person has access to a reasonable share of land, housing, and secure means of family livelihood.

Because of ordinary common responses in human nature, we believe that nonviolent methods, in the hands of those who understand them, can be more effective for defense of freedom and justice than any array of weapons and force. To advance this understanding, we commit ourselves to further invention of nonviolence, and active education of ourselves and our children in the use of nonviolent methods in social and political affairs. The future of Earth will depend on those who learn to live together without killing or harming one another.

We must also stop destroying the natural physical and biological fabric of Earth that sustains all life. To do this we have to live lightly and simply, consuming less, and nurturing ecological systems to sustain and restore the life patterns of Earth.

My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.

— Thomas Paine

Unit 5. Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth

Videos

Environmentalists Under Fire (21 minutes) from Sierra Club and Amnesty International's Human Rights and the Environment Campaign. www.defendtheearth.org; 800/213-2650.

- ❖ *God's Creation and Global Warming* (14 minutes), NCC/NRPE, (can be borrowed from Quaker Earthcare Witness)

Websites

- ❖ The 2001 Quaker Peace Roundtable: Workshop: The Environment and Peace Witness; <<http://quaker.org/qpr/carlyle.htm>>.
- ❖ FWCC Peace Conference Workshop Report: "Peaceful Prevention of Deadly Conflict Taking Away the Occasion of War"; <<http://www.friendspeace.org/peace?50@93.zfqEaX11ajn.4@.ee7cc56>>.
- ❖ "Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth" pamphlet on web (and ordering information): <<http://www.quakerearthcare.org/ecowitness/peaceearth.html>>.