



# BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness  
*Affirming our essential unity with nature*

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## From denial and despair to action on climate change

**Bob McGahey**

**Celo (N.C.) Friends Meeting**

**AUSTRALIAN ETHICIST** Clive Hamilton's *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change* is both deeply sobering and salutary. It awakens us not only to the climate war we have shrunk from engaging, but to its likely result if we do not. As the climate data gets more and more alarming while the international political response remains gridlocked, Hamilton states what many of us deeply sensed at the time, that Copenhagen December 2009 was the "last hope for humanity to pull back from the abyss."

Hamilton answers the book's subtitle, "*Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change*," in a series of no-nonsense chapters: *growth fetishism, addiction to consumer life, denial in a myriad of forms*, and the "new foundation" (Descartes) upon which the others are built, *disconnection from nature*. Each of these chapters is compelling, but I found the one on denial particularly enlightening. I have blogged about one of the cornerstones of recent Republican policy, climate denialism, trying to understand the curious phenomenon ("Why Educated Republicans Are in Denial about Climate Change" <[ecospirit.blogspot.com](http://ecospirit.blogspot.com)> April 25).

Hamilton's searching analysis takes us into historical roots with the fall of the Berlin Wall, closely followed by the breakup of the Soviet Union (1989–91), to reveal how quickly the Conservative Right seized upon a new enemy, environmentalism: "*America did not fight and win the wars of the twentieth century to make the world safe for green vegetables*" (Richard Darman, the elder Bush's OMB director).

My blogpost argues in terms of Nietzsche's Will to Power (conservatives embrace it and liberals don't), but Hamilton's analysis is more telling. The twin ideas of progress and mastery of nature "define modernity itself" for conservatives, and progress is identified for

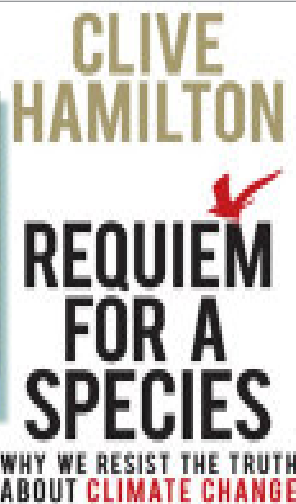
them with unfettered growth. He goes into detail tracing the conservative think-tanks, initially founded by nuclear war hawk-scientists, and how they have systematically and effectively worked to undercut the liberal critique of human overreach. And if there is collateral damage, it can easily be managed by geo-engineering, whose origins lie with those same mili-

tary-scientific heroes of the right.

Hamilton outlines where we are headed in a chapter entitled "The Four-Degree World." It is the briefest in the book, for he relies on Mark Lynas's brilliantly documented *Six Degrees*. I am reading that as well, and I am in the midst of the terrifying long chapter "Three Degrees." In *Requiem*, all that Hamilton needs to do is point to what is now the

consensus view of climate scientists of where we are headed—*4 degrees Celsius warming*—which he gets from attending a pre-Copenhagen global conference in Oxford of climate scientists with which he frames the chapter. As opposed to public statements, these sober and shaken researchers shared among themselves their deepest fears based on the dawning truth that global civilization was not coping with a situation that the scientists were finding was much, much worse than the 2-degree C warmer world they had initially assessed.

**"RELINQUISHING** our rosy view of how the future will unfold is a task more difficult than it may appear because the vision of a stable and sympathetic future undergirds our sense of self and our place in the world." "Awakening to the prospect of climate dis-



**Requiem, next page >>**

>> **Requiem**, from previous page

ruption compels us to abandon” these comfortable beliefs. Thus begins a powerful final chapter in which Hamilton argues that we must “despair, accept, act.” Earlier, he acknowledged the adaptive quality of unrealistic illusions about the future; they keep hope alive, producing action (Shelley Taylor, *Positive Illusions*). But he seizes upon Taylor’s key distinction: “*Illusions respond and adapt as reality forces itself upon us, while delusions are held despite the evidence of the outside world ... evidence that large-scale climate change is unavoidable has now become so strong that healthy illusion is becoming unhealthy delusion.*”

Many of us have had exposure to Joanna Macy’s despair and empowerment work. Hamilton enlists her approach in conclusion, founded upon the necessity of admitting despair when honest hope has been exceeded by planetary events. As those of us who have trained with Joanna know, by allowing despair we can work through it to a more realistic ground for action. Denying negative emotion slowly shrivels the amplitude of positive emotion as well. We may continue to act, but with less and less belief in our own actions. Our energy dries up, for it is fueled by the internal lie of false hope.

Reading Hamilton, Lynas, and Joanna Macy’s latest book, *Active Hope* (co-authored by psychologist Chris Johnstone), I have been forced to admit that, although I had worked through Joanna’s Circle of Gratitude, Despair, and Re-imagining more than once, I was stuck once again in denial and powerlessness. The bad news has helped me bottom out once again, and my acceptance has deepened and ripened into renewed action. That action is directed at helping others get on with the process while remaining alert to opportunities for effective public demonstrations, including civil disobedience as I am led.

Despair, accept ... act! After accepting the immensely challenged state of affairs—read Lynas on the projected death of the Amazon in a 3-degree world, for a sample (*Six Degrees*, 137–42)—we have one final chance. Like Bill McKibben in his masterful piece in his August 2, 2012 *Rolling Stone* article, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math” [see sidebar >>], Hamilton calls us to mobilize a mass movement “to build a countervailing power to the elite and corporations that have captured government,” thus holding the catastrophe to something within the reach of our imaginations. Though it is tempting to think of a benevolent dictator who might achieve results more rapidly, we really “must democratise survivability” through a new radicalism that “aims to shift the ground of politics itself.” *To the ramparts, Friends!* ❖

## Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math

Bill McKibben

excerpts from <[www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719)>

“...here are some hard numbers about climate change: June broke or tied 3,215 high-temperature records across the United States. That followed the warmest May on record for the Northern Hemisphere—the 327th consecutive month in which the temperature of the entire globe exceeded the 20th-century average, the odds of which occurring by simple chance were  $3.7 \times 10^{-99}$ , a number considerably larger than the number of stars in the universe.

“Meteorologists reported that this spring was the warmest ever recorded for our nation—in fact, it crushed the old record by so much that it represented the ‘largest temperature departure from average of any season on record.’ The same week, Saudi authorities reported that it had rained in Mecca despite a temperature of 109 degrees, the hottest downpour in the planet’s history....

“So far, we’ve raised the average temperature of the planet just under 0.8 degrees Celsius, and that has caused far more damage than most scientists expected. (A third of summer sea ice in the Arctic is gone, the oceans are 30 percent more acidic, and since warm air holds more water vapor than cold, the atmosphere over the oceans is a shocking five percent wetter, loading the dice for devastating floods.)

“Given those impacts, in fact, many scientists have come to think that two degrees is far too lenient a target. ‘Any number much above one degree involves a gamble,’ writes Kerry Emanuel of MIT, a leading authority on hurricanes, ‘and the odds become less and less favorable as the temperature goes up.’ Thomas Lovejoy, once the World Bank’s chief biodiversity adviser, puts it like this: ‘If we’re seeing what we’re seeing today at 0.8 degrees Celsius, two degrees is simply too much.’...

“‘There have been efforts to use more renewable energy and improve energy efficiency,’ said Corinne Le Quéré, who runs England’s Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. ‘But what this shows is that so far the effects have been marginal.’ In fact, study after study predicts that carbon emissions will keep growing by roughly three percent a year—and at that rate, we’ll blow through our 565-gigaton allowance in 16 years, around the time today’s preschoolers will be graduating from high school. ‘The new data provide further evidence that the door to a two-degree trajectory is about to close,’ said Fatih Birol, the IEA’s chief economist. In fact, he continued, ‘When I look at this data, the trend is perfectly in line with a temperature increase of about six degrees [Celsius].’ That’s almost 11 degrees Fahrenheit, which would create a planet straight out of science fiction.’...

## Living on Earth host preaches ‘sustainable abundance’ to New England Friends

Louis Cox

**I’VE LISTENED TO** National Public Radio’s weekly program *Living on Earth* for many years, so I was excited by the prospect of meeting the show’s host, **Steve Curwood**, who would be giving the keynote address at the 2012 sessions of New England Yearly Meeting.

Curwood was explicit in linking current ecological crises to his Quaker faith. He grew up in Friends Meeting at Cambridge (Mass.) and was active in its Young Adult Friends group. Before embarking on his current radio broadcasting career, he worked as a staff writer for the *Boston Globe*. Eventually he was led to devote his journalistic talents, and his faith, to giving fuller coverage to ecological issues than they typically receive in the mainstream media.

Curwood set the tone for his message by leading Friends in the song, “*He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands*.” Quakers talk about the “inward Light,” a revelation that is constantly occurring in us, he said. But where does it come from?

He described the inward Light as a creative force that permeates the universe. We participate in its creativity when we study the patterns of nature and attune our lives to its rhythms. Regular communion with nature is essential to our spiritual growth.

“*When we take time to contemplate the awesome beauties of nature, what is there not to love?*” he asked. The problem is that the natural world also has mysterious, terrifying aspects that some people want to demystify and control. Genesis 1:28 refers to humans as having “dominion” over Earth, but that doesn’t mean that we have been put in charge. In the context of the rest of the Bible, abuse of nature is not to be condoned in any way, he said. “Stewardship” comes closer to the original sense of our being part of Creation, entrusted with its care and flourishing.

Curwood said that nature itself is a perfect model of “sustainable abundance.” It is a closed loop in which there is no such thing as waste. It is amazingly productive when the processes that have evolved over billions of years are not disturbed. Many of the grave problems we face today are due to our ignorantly violating its principles.

Billions of tons of climate-destabilizing greenhouse gases, which nature had stored safely underground

over many millions of years, have been released in the past 100 years. Billions more are ready to be released, because there are still enormous profits to be made from them.

In light of Bill McKibben’s alarming update on climate change in a recent issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine [see sidebar, page 2], it is clear that things have to change radically, and very soon, Curwood said. We need to offer an alternate model to demonstrate that meeting our needs with renewable resources does not have to involve draconian sacrifices, and that it makes better business sense than pouring money down a rabbit hole of fossil fuels.

We have today the necessary knowledge and technologies for sustainability if we would only learn how to use them appropriately, Curwood said. Many leaders who represent the *status-quo* are blocking change by trying to persuade us that sustainability is only an individual concern. The only way ahead is for all of us to work together, he said.

Curwood cited examples from history about how social change happens in the face of opposition from vested interests—the abolition of slavery, the granting of women’s suffrage, the end of apartheid in South Africa, to name a few. What made the difference is that those movements’ leaders approached the issues from a *moral* place.

A simplistic us-versus-them outlook is not helpful, however, when we are all complicit to some degree in the damage being done to the planet. “*Exxon is part of us, not an evil out there. The mass of people have heavily invested in the petroleum-based economy,*” Curwood said. “*Forgiveness is important to conflict resolution, as was shown in South Africa. We need to move forward together. We can do this only if we tap our faith.*” Curwood said Quakers can do a lot just in terms of their historic *peace testimony*; a war is being waged against nature, God’s creation, and we need to be calling that war a moral transgression.

**I WAS GRATIFIED** to see how well Curwood, a *BeFriending Creation* reader, had reflected the basic QEW message. I also noticed that he hadn’t made any reference to the *prevailing growth-based economic system* as a major driver of ecological destruction. After his talk I gave him a copy of the latest QIF booklet, *It’s the Economy, Friend—Understanding the Growth Dilemma*. Maybe this seed will sprout up in a future installment of *Living on Earth*. Stay tuned. ❖



Steve Curwood

## After a disappointing Rio+20: *Civil Society does not give up!*

ALTHOUGH JUNE'S RIO+20 WORLD SUMMIT was a major disappointment, it has been a busy summer. Some hard-won, positive points need vigorous follow-up. As the Women's Major Group said, *"The disappointments and missed opportunities are not forgotten; rather, they are repositioned as fuel for continuing to fight for gender equality, alongside eliminating poverty, protecting biodiversity, mitigating climate change, addressing the current failing economic system, and ensuring universal enjoyment of human rights."*

Let's start with some names of people and organizations that you have not run across in the domestic news. Domestic news sources do not report all that is important. These names are.

### Inside the UN

UN Secretary General **Ban Ki-Moon** is pulling together a group to develop **Sustainable Development Goals** to supplement the failed Millennium Development Goals. We hope there has been a learning curve here that will help.

Globally agreed "performance indicators," looking at human (and possibly Earth's) well-being, will be developed to be used alongside the GDP to measure the success of policies and programs.

The **Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)**, which we've been following for years, will be upgraded to a **"high level political forum."** This "forum" is as yet undefined, and will bear watching. "Universal membership" will replace the current rotating membership of 53 nations. The importance of Civil Society is mentioned throughout, but an active role for organizations like QEW will still have to be fought for.

The **UN Environmental Programme (UNEP)** will also be upgraded to include universal membership. UNEP will now be the unquestioned environmental coordinator of the entire UN system, be more able to spread its science-based knowledge, be a stronger regional presence around the world, and promote transparency and engagement of Civil Society.

An effort to create the position of **UN Ombudsperson** for Future Generations was diluted to just asking the Secretary General to start a process leading to a report on the issue. In the future there may be such a job.



Mary Gilbert  
QEW Representative to the UN

### Outside the UN

**Civil Society gatherings**, not under the auspices of the UN, for learning about the issues and working on what is needed, are planned for many places. I know about three of them, will attend two, and hope to find responsible Quakers to attend the third.

**Civicus**, a huge organization of hundreds of NGOs, is holding a **World Assembly** in Montreal the first week in September, and I plan to be there. Another gathering I will attend, **"People's Sustainability Treaties in a Post-rio+20 Future: Advancing a Global Citizens Movement around Sustainable Development,"** will be held at Ramapo College in Mahway, N.J., for five days in October. I know at least half of the speakers from the UN, and they are voices to which I pay attention. The keynote address will be given by **Uchita de Zoysa**, who shepherded the 14 Peoples' Treaties that were endorsed at the non-UN event parallel to Rio+20 in Brazil in June.

**Rights for Sustainability**, a function of **IBON International**, a human rights and democracy development organization, will also host a meeting in October in Nairobi, Kenya.

**There is a war on—a war against people and the planet—dominated by greed and abetted by ignorance....**

### Inside me

I am experiencing a renewal of my leading to be doing this work of finding and reporting to you what I can understand about UN and related happenings. It feels like a rededication. When I began attending UN events 12 years ago I was astounded at how little my very educated and concerned friends—Quaker and otherwise—knew about international affairs, aside from the regrettable military and commercial adventures of our countries.

Maybe six years later I came home for a weekend in the middle of a two-week CSD meeting, so overwhelmed that I didn't want to talk. I was learning so much Bad Stuff that I thought I had to become a prophet, let everybody know, or be a failure at my

**Civil Society, next page >>**

## YM workshop links Transition Towns, Quaker values

**QUAKERS and TRANSITION TOWNS**—a match made in heaven? —That’s one way to convey the idea behind a two-day workshop that Steve Chase of Putney (Vt.) Friends Meeting and co-founder of the new Quakers in Transition project <<http://quakersintransition.wordpress.com/>>, led at New England Yearly Meeting sessions in Smithfield, R.I., this past August.

The Transition Town movement has captured the imaginations of thousands of people around the world, including many Quakers, who are convinced that relocalization of community life, economy, and food/energy production is the best way to gain the resilience needed to thrive in a warmer, more crowded world with declining access to cheap fossil fuels. Chase began recruiting Quakers to the Transition Town movement when he realized that its permaculture-based principles of “*Earth Care, People Care, Fair Share*” were strikingly similar to Quaker testimonies. He was particularly taken by the *upbeat, inclusive spirit* underlying much of the movement, which has resulted in hundreds of officially registered Transition Towns—concentrated for now in the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Europe, but



Steve Chase

spreading rapidly around the globe. The movement’s generally positive attitude stands in contrast to much of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century environmentalism, which tended to prophesy doom-and-gloom and push people into feuding camps. “*What makes Transition so appealing and effective is that it’s more like a block party than a protest,*” Chase told the group.

Chase led off with an overview of Transition Town objectives: 1) We need to tap into the collective genius of the community (including the skills and knowledge of the elders) to address resource depletion and climate change while increasing equity, fairness, and economic stability. 2) We need to develop and implement an Energy Descent Plan to show our community how to use less energy and fewer resources, on the premise that life in such a community can be more resilient, abundant, and fulfilling than under the current conditions of oil dependency. Life with less energy is inevitable. It’s better to plan a gradual descent in energy consumption than to be taken by surprise. 3) If we wait for government to act it will be too little too late. If we act as a community it might turn out to be just enough, just in time. But we have to act *now*.

**AS PART OF THE WORKSHOP**, QEW Publications Coordinator Louis Cox, who has been active in his own town’s Transition planning group, was asked to talk about the similarities he saw between Transition Town principles and Quaker values:

- ❖ Quakers, he observed, tend to be less confrontational in engaging those who hold differing views.
- ❖ They value and cultivate unity through active listening and searching for the “third way” that integrates divergent interests.
- ❖ Quakers believe that simplicity in lifestyle lowers our level of consumption and reduces competition for scarce resources.
- ❖ Quaker commitment to equality and peace also ties in naturally with meeting our basic needs locally and cooperatively through honest labor, rather than through speculation and exploitation of people, animals, and the planet, Cox said.
- ❖ The idea that Transition Towns can foster more enriching, satisfying, and connected lives bears an intriguing resemblance to early Friends’ vision of the Peaceable Kingdom, which is available to all, not just those who call themselves Quakers.

**Transition Towns, continued on page 10 >>**

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>> **Civil Society**, from previous page >>

leading. I knew I had to share what I learned; picture a body organ stuffed with poisons, and with no outlet. But I really didn’t want to be a prophet. They stone prophets, throw them in deep wells, assassinate them. Prophets have no friends and are not invited anywhere. I hid out in the back yard and avoided my family all day Saturday.

On Sunday I woke up with a saving thought. Yes, there is a war on—a war against people and the planet—dominated by greed and abetted by ignorance, but I don’t have to be a prophet. I can be a *war correspondent*. This summer I finally figured out the difference. A prophet preaches blame and tells people to repent. A *war correspondent* just tells them what is going on, and they figure out themselves what is required of them.

I will end with a quote from my friend Sascha Gabizon, of Women in Europe for a Common Future, whom I got to know at a UNEP meeting in Nairobi:

*“We will not stop now. We will continue to build the strong networks and partnerships created throughout the Rio+20 process.”* ❖

## My Journey with FCUN / QEW

Roy C. Treadway

### Bloomington-Normal (Ill.) Friends Meeting

I WAS NOT PART OF THE ORIGINAL formation of Friends Committee on Unity with Nature 25 years ago, but I heard about this event with the enthusiastic reporting of Bob Wixom at Illinois Yearly Meeting a couple of months later. A year afterwards, in 1988, I attended the Friends General Conference Gathering, spending much of my time at the FCUN Center, intrigued by the many exiting ideas shown there by many good people.

As a demographer and human ecologist by professional training, for over two decades I had already held well-grounded concerns about population growth and its impact on Earth, including through my work in developing countries where I saw first hand to the impact of population growth on people's lives. Stan Becker, whom I had met professionally at the Population Council in New York in the 1970s, quickly involved me in the population and resource concerns of FCUN, and Bob Wixom, Bill and Alice Howenstine, and others continued to entice me to be engaged in the broad Earthcare outreach of FCUN.

In the ensuing years, while I was a sporadic attendee of FCUN meetings (participating only when our family came to the FGC Gathering), I looked forward to staying in touch with the broad vision of FCUN through *BeFriending Creation*, an important part of the outreach of FCUN. Through Stan's persistence, I became involved in the Population Concerns Interest Group, helping to write several population tri-folds, mostly by letter and telephone conferences. Even at a distance, I felt very much involved in FCUN / QEW.

Only when I retired in 2003 was I able to attend QEW Steering Committee meetings on a regular basis. As a result of my comments on a QEW list, Judy Lumb invited me to write articles for *Quaker Eco-Bulletin* on population and nuclear energy (the latter with my wife, Carolyn W. Treadway). The spiritual depth of Friends involved in Earthcare helped me focus and be involved. Many have inspired me as I search how we should be living and responding to the environmental threats of nuclear power, the Keystone XL pipeline, climate change, overconsumption, and continuous



Roy Treadway at a QEW Annual Meeting in New Mexico

growth. I have been uplifted by the many natural places where we met—Indiana Dunes, Ghost Ranch, Burlington, Vt., and Bellingham, Wash., among others—while realizing how much an impact our going to these marvelous places has on Earth; easily accessible sites, such as Chicago, fit the mission of QEW better.

During my almost nine years on the Steering Committee, I have been involved deeply in the triumphs and struggles of QEW. My hope for QEW is that it will continue to bring a deeply spiritual message about how we should live with the renewable resources God provides for us, not exploiting or polluting our Earth, its water and biosphere, and respecting all species. It is also my hope that we bring this message to all Friends, no matter what their background, beliefs, or source of spiritual grounding. ❖

## “...No Peace without a Planet”

Ruah Swennerfelt

Burlington (Vt.) Friends Meeting

Former FCUN / QEW General Secretary

LITTLE DID I KNOW, as I prepared to go to the 1991 Fifth World Conference of Friends in Honduras, that I was headed for a life-changing experience. I expected that I would meet wonderful Friends from around the world and that I would be enriched and renewed from the experience. I was to co-lead a daily worship-sharing group with a man from Kenya, and my focus was on preparing spiritually for leadership with a group of theologically diverse Friends.

One member of the worship-sharing group was Bill Howenstine, a Friend from Illinois. I remember immediately feeling a kinship with Bill. I appreciated his easy-going manner, genuine friendliness, and fabulous smile. His presence in our group was very helpful when our theologies were challenged. So, I was very willing to attend an interest group that Bill and his wife, Alice, were leading one afternoon.

I wasn't totally sure what the interest group was about except that Bill and Alice were representing an organization called Friends Committee on Unity with Nature (FCUN). You have to know that I had been a long-time peace activist with a jail record from civil disobedience actions, and I felt very committed to working for a peaceful and just world. I also cared about the environment, and that summer I was building a solar-powered house. But *I hadn't connected my environmental concerns with my faith.*

It turned out that Bill and Alice were not only co-founders of FCUN, but had continued to be very ac-

Ruah, next page >>

>> **Ruah**, from previous page

tive with the organization over the four years since its founding. I found out that Alice was just as engaging as Bill and hoped I could continue a relationship with them when we all returned to our separate, busy lives.

Anyway, I was very interested in what Bill and Alice had to share and picked up a bunch of FCUN literature and purchased a little FCUN booklet titled, *Healing Ourselves and the Earth*, by Elizabeth G. Watson (also one of the FCUN founding group).

That night I began reading the booklet, and part way through, my heart leapt and my spirit opened to the words, “*There will be no peace without a planet.*” These words were quoted from Mary Ann Percy, another FCUN activist. In that very moment I realized that all the peace and justice work I was doing, though helpful in the moment, would be without purpose if Earth could no longer carry the burden of humans’ excess waste and overconsumption. I reflected that night on how I might consider my work to be for peace, justice, and care for Earth.



**Ruah helps Friends calculate their eco-footprints at an FGC Gathering in Virginia.**

I joined FCUN the next day and began a new journey, helping to start a unity with nature committee in my Meeting and becoming active with New England Yearly Meeting’s unity with nature group.

Over the next few years I eagerly waited for each *BeFriending Creation* newsletter to arrive and read it cover-to-cover. I began to find ways to deepen my relationship with Earth and to re-write my own understanding of my relationship to Spirit.

In 1994 the FCUN Steering Committee was meeting at Woolman Hill Conference Center in western Massachusetts prior to the FGC Gathering in nearby Amherst. I and a F/friend had already prepared to lead a workshop at that Gathering on “Finding the Divine in Nature,” so we decided to attend the FCUN meeting as well. After registering for the event I saw the announcement in *BeFriending Creation* for the position of General Secretary/Business Manager and thought, “*This is just the right job for me!*” I immediately sent in my résumé, and the rest is history.... ❖

## Wisdom or dangerous lies?

**THERE IS A PROVERBIAL SAYING** that has been widely used in business settings, and which I have encountered a couple of times recently in churches. It is repeated to affirm what many see as an essential truth, but this one is a dangerous lie.

*“If you’re not growing, you’re dying.”*

How many times have you heard that line? It is a six-word summary of the modern ideology that is at the heart of our environmental crisis. It is uttered frequently to support the notion that growth—and especially economic growth—is essential.

The proverb presents growth as the only real option. *Grow or die.* The intention of the saying, apparently, is to deny that any rational person could choose a path other than constant, aggressive, growth and expansion.

The other options to growth are not named in the proverb, but those options clearly exist.

Sustainability is the preeminent alternative. Rather than growing, sustainability looks for a long-term commitment to staying within reasonable limits. Sustainability is not (as the proverb would suggest) a path to death. It has been the natural world’s way of maintaining life through billions of years. When it comes to the fate of Earth, sustainability, not growth, is the only real option for life.

On a more local or personal scale, going smaller can be a good path to life. “*Doing more with less*” and voluntary simplicity look to reduction instead of growth, and discover abundant living in liberation from more and more stuff.

Despite the saying’s claims to self-evident truth, growth is not the only option. And in many cases, it is not even a viable option....

It is important to challenge false proverbs whenever and wherever we encounter them. One style of response is a simple statement like “*Hogwash!*” A more focused counter-statement to the “grow or die” theme is used by a friend as a signature line on many of his e-mailed letters: “*Unlimited growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.*”

If we are going to have success in challenging the ideology of [endless] growth, we need to work harder at building our own sound bites for sustainability and simplicity. We need short, clear “bumper sticker” statements that challenge growth and affirm the alternatives. We need to repeat them often enough that they become proverbial and self-evident.

—The Rev. Peter Sawtell  
Executive Director, Eco-Justice Ministries

## BeFriending Creation's

**BEFRIENDING CREATION ARCHIVES** reveal that for the first few years the newsletter was indistinguishable from the fledgling organization that had created it. Before e-mail and unlimited cellular service, anyone who wanted to be part of the movement relied on this monthly 6- to 8-page, manually laid-out and offset-printed news sheet to learn what was going on and to be involved in FCUN's work.

Launched in the fall of 1987, the newsletter was delightfully funky and unpolished, with little effort put into graphics. It was seen mostly as a practical way for FCUN members to communicate, to collaborate, to plan, to envision together.

Dozens of active supporters were regularly sending in letters, articles, book recommendations, and announcements. Their submissions conveyed the nervous excitement of taking on something that was felt to be vitally important that no one had tried before. In the absence of existing models, there was a lot of experimentation and debate about how and where to move forward.

Fervor and commitment were palpable, reminiscent of the awakening that mobilized 17th-century Friends—Publishers of Truth—calling on Spirit for openings to help resolve the seemingly intractable conflicts, paradoxes, and dilemmas of their day.

For the first two years, *BeFriending Creation* was under the care of FCUN co-founders Bob Schutz and Jack Phillips, both of whom brought extensive writing and editing experience. Monthly meeting contacts spread the word, and circulation climbed into the hundreds across the continent.

Early issues carried lively discussions about possible names for the new organization and its newsletter; reports of new Friends in Unity with Nature groups (with some doubts over whether the acronym "FUN" was helpful or not); and news of regional and national conferences on such related concerns as caring for Creation, eco-justice, and bioregionalism. There were many letters to the editor responding to previous articles and letters. The editors made liberal use of inspirational quotes and poetry, and maintained a bulging calendar of eco-events.

The newsletter became an energetic forum for many crucial questions: —How did Quaker values, testimonies, and traditions figure into FCUN's message and mission? —How would Friends respond when accused of being "nature worshippers"?

—What could they learn from other kindred movements, such as eco-feminism?



## exciting first years

—How would they get other Quaker organizations on board, and how could they build bridges to the other

branches of Quakerism? —How could they collaborate with their counterparts in the spirituality-and-ecology movement that were sprouting up in other faith traditions?

—Why maintain a Quaker organization when there are other groups already doing good "environmental" work? —Do Friends have a unique voice and vision to bring to the global ecological crisis?

Articles showed growing awareness that population/consumption and the looming "greenhouse effect" would soon become overarching issues. Although a popular slogan was, "*Think globally and act locally*," many Friends were turning their attention to the coming 1992 UN Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, recognizing that many global ecological problems could be addressed only at the international level.

The newsletter also helped the Steering Committee prepare for its face-to-face meetings. Its pages were where a lot of internal questions about incorporation, goals statements, and structure were threshed out. There were also monthly reports from the treasurer, committee clerks, plus annual reports from yearly meeting representatives.

**EVENTUALLY** such business matters were shifted to e-mail. Reports were bundled into advance materials for the spring, summer, and fall Steering Committee meetings. Electronic technology speeded up decision-making, but it also tended to marginalize those without e-mail. It also meant that the general readership was becoming less aware of, and less involved in, the work of the Steering Committee.

As a result of these developments, by the time a paid editor was recruited in the fall of 1989, the newsletter seemed to have less of a clear, compelling purpose. There was talk of using it more as a networking-and-action tool, but the recent shift to bimonthly publication (plus rising postage costs) seemed to render this role impractical. Many Friends were already networking by e-mail by then.

The balance of newsletter coverage gradually shifted from recent and upcoming events to more lengthy, issue-related articles. *BeFriending Creation* evolved into a respected—but less closely followed—Quaker journal. What will it become as QEW charts its next 25 years? —Louis Cox



## Activists call Trans-Pacific Partnership bad news for Earth and the 99%

**“NOT ANOTHER F\_\_\_ TRADE AGREEMENT!”** read a tee-shirt that a Canadian Friend wore to a QEW Steering Committee meeting a dozen years ago, as activists’ eyes were turning to closed-door negotiations over the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). As a farmer, he had seen first-hand how the earlier North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), ratified during the Clinton administration, had brought environmental degradation and economic injustice to many people of all walks of life.

The FTAA was defeated with the help of protests by laborers, farmers, “fair trade” organizations, indigenous peoples, non-industrialized countries, environmental groups, and average citizens who realized that “free trade” and economic globalization were being promoted for the benefit of the few, at the expense of the health, prosperity, and well-being of the general population and the planet.



Resistance breaks out in Japan

Today another fast-tracked “F\_\_\_ Trade Agreement,” the **Trans-Pacific Partnership** (“NAFTA on Steroids”) is being incubated by the wealthy and privileged, according to an alert forwarded Angela Manno, a QEW supporter from New York City.

The negotiations now include the United States, Australia, Peru, Vietnam, and Malaysia, with several others, including Japan, expressing interest in joining. Official negotiations began in Melbourne, Australia, on March 15, 2010. Nine negotiation meetings were held in 2010 and 2011. The 14th round of TPP negotiations is set for Leesburg, Va., September 6–15, 2012. *[Who has ever heard of any of these?]*

Here is how Ken Gale, host/producer of a program called “Eco-Logic” at radio station WBAI 99.5FM-NYC, sees it:

“The TPP is thousands of pages already. It would have to be to override so many laws in so many countries. Various representatives of corporations and governments have been ‘negotiating,’ which seems to be their word for the actual writing of the document. There are 27 different chapters on different subjects. Nothing has been released to the public. All countries refuse to do so. No one from the press is allowed to see any of this. Corporate lobbyists, on the other hand, are allowed to be part of things, see text, write text, etc. There has been a small handful of leaked documents that are on <[www.citizenstrade.org](http://www.citizenstrade.org)>.”

“They want to be able to shift jobs anywhere and regulate democracy to keep it from spreading. As jobs move away, tax base goes away and there is less money for social programs.

“Big Oil wants to head off environmental regulations. The U.S. and all countries (except Australia) are pushing for a dispute resolution process to challenge any new environmental law that would be in the form of tribunals headed by the World Bank, not a local court. Nothing in these tribunals would be made public except for the ruling.

“Democracy is not even being considered. Air, water, land, wildlife and people are not being considered. Small business is not being considered. All these regulations are for multi-national corporate elites. To make the rich and powerful even richer and more powerful. And us, less so. (I don’t need to spell out how the nuclear industry will use these regs,

do I?)

“Recent history has shown what happens to the American people when Wall Street is unregulated. People lose homes, bank accounts, jobs, etc. Wall Street wants TPP for even less financial regulations. Worldwide financial stability is *not* on their agenda.

“Indigenous rights laws and labor laws (including anti-slavery laws) throughout the Americas and Asia can be considered ‘restraint of trade.’

“One of the leaked documents is about intellectual property. There are patent proposals to extend pharmaceutical patents beyond 20 years. The cost of medicine will skyrocket. One example they gave on the conference call is the cost of AIDS medicine: \$10,000/yr or \$100 if it’s generic medicine. So after you get sick from dirty air, dirty water, bad food, etc. you won’t be able to afford the medicine.

“These are only some examples of what they’re doing. It’s very comprehensive and overriding the national laws of every country involved, throughout North America, South America, and Asia. This will affect every aspect of our lives. From huge to petty (for example, FTA laws created a situation where a country got ‘dolphin-safe tuna’ labels declared ‘restraint of trade.’)

“It’s not really a trade treaty; it’s really an investors rights treaty, corporate rights treaty. All sovereignty is trumped.” ❖

*[More information, pro and con, is available on many websites. Search for “Trans-Pacific Partnership.”]*

**Transition Towns**, *from page 5*

The Quakers and Transition workshop at New England Yearly Meeting concluded with group role-playing. Each group produced an “evening news” report from 2032, reflecting how they imagined their world will have made a peaceful transition to a post-petroleum world, in terms of local economies, transportation, energy, food, and other key issues.

One group reported on an initiative called “Steady State Ocean State” (a new motto for Rhode Island?) that was inspired by the sample of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Quakers who had built many water-powered mills in that state and had made earnest attempts to provide healthy communities for their workers. The workshop’s mid-21<sup>st</sup>-century version of that vision was centered around biofuels, wind and tidal power, expanded use of draft animals, and widespread adoption of community-supported agriculture. ❖

**New Quaker Eco-Bulletin team needed**

**QUAKER ECO-BULLETIN (QEB)** is looking for a new team. As most of you know *QEB* has been published as an insert in *BeFriending Creation* since 2001, but last December we lost one crucial member of the editorial team when Sandra Lewis passed away. We have one new volunteer in Jasmine Krotkov, who has layout and editing skills.

Barbara Day and I would like to retire and pass *QEB* on to a young generation. If there is anyone who would like to join Jasmine in producing *QEBs*, please let us know. It may be that future *QEBs* will be long articles integrated into *BeFriending Creation*, but it is useful for those articles to have an editorial team for their production. Any suggestions are welcome.

—Judy Lumb  
<judylumb@yahoo.com>

**Publications Coordinator position open**

QEW, a network of Quakers in North America and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world, is seeking a part-time Publications Coordinator (print and electronic media). Louis Cox, QEW Publications Coordinator for the past 12 years, will be retiring in the near future. Approximately 20 hours per week expected for website, social media, newsletter, etc. Contact Anne Mitchell <hiringcommittee@quakerearthcare.org>.

**GREENFAITH** has launched a Good Steward Campaign—an effort to lift up the voices of Christians between the ages of 18 and 35 to speak out, blog, and write about the importance of caring for Creation. We have a website <[www.goodstewardcampaign.org](http://www.goodstewardcampaign.org)>, and we’re active on Facebook <<http://www.facebook.com/GoodStewardCampaign>>.

During the campaign season, we’re responding quickly to negative statements about the environment by political leaders. Please share this with others. Hope you’ll check it out.

—Laurel Kearns  
Associate Professor  
Sociology of Religion and Environmental Studies  
Theological School & Graduate Division of Religion  
Drew University, Madison, NJ 07940  
973/408-3009

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH** for sending the QEW pamphlet order out so promptly. They will be offered at Columbia Meeting’s booth at the Sustainability Fair here on Sept 9th, and we appreciate getting them in time to use them.

—Scott Searles  
Columbia (Mo.) Friends Meeting

**ON THE LAST PAGE** of the last *BeFriending Creation*, where you printed the Nuclear Minute from Southeast Yearly Meeting, it was submitted under my name. Actually, the minute was equally the work of Barbara Letsch and myself, with editorial and spiritual support from Jack Bradin.

It was such a long process, with so much work on both our parts, that I do want Barb’s contribution to be acknowledged.

—Mary Jo Klingel  
Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Friends Meeting

**greenfire notes**

**A NEW STORY HARVEST**—Equinox Celebration and Village Formation Gathering will be held at **greenfire farm** in southeast Ohio, from 4 to 10 p.m. September 22, 2012.

Topics will include regenerative food/water/energy, a bubble greenhouse demonstration, dedication, a potluck, music, and community conversation.

Contact Richard Hogan, co-founder & facilitator, 2767 sr 56, New Marshfield, Ohio 45766. If possible, please rsvp, 740/664-4028.

Also see: *Youtube: SolaRoof—greenfire; greenfirefarm.org; greenfire gardens; greenfire podworks*

## It's true: 'Frankenfoods' are making us sick!

**GENETIC ROULETTE**, a new video by consumer advocate **Jeffrey M. Smith** and available from **Yes! Books**, exposes how genetically engineered foods can harm you and your family.

This sometimes shocking film may change your diet, help you protect your family, and accelerate the consumer tipping point against genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Millions of acres have been planted in GMO corn, soybeans, canola, and other crops, beginning in 1995. Products containing GMOs are now on many store shelves without consumers' knowledge or consent.

Now coming to light is previously unreported compelling evidence linking those products to an alarming epidemic of food-related illnesses in humans, pets, livestock, and laboratory animals—from allergies and eczema to birth defects and reproductive disorders; from asthma and diabetes to autism and cancer.

This growing health crisis is about more than shocking official coverups—under industry pressure—of the overwhelming scientific evidence. It's also about the *moral* turpitude of a profit-making industry assuming the right to tinker with the evolutionary structure of life, and the dismal failure of government regulators to protect the public from this ghastly experimentation.

The film showcases seeds patented by Monsanto that were engineered to tolerate the company's herbicide Roundup (glyphosate), plus other Monsanto seeds containing the genes of certain bacteria that are known to kill plant-chewing insects. The problem is not just the way these products help Monsanto and bio-engineering giants monopolize a large portion of the world's food supply. It's also about the many *unintended consequences* of

using these too-good-to-be-true products, which have been shown to easily enter the food chain and disrupt a host of unrelated biological processes.

Many of the illnesses being associated with GMOs in food are in-

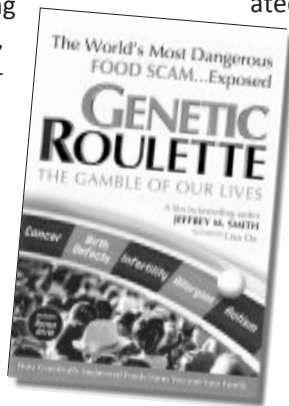
flammatory in nature, and a growing consensus is that our bodies' immune systems, not recognizing the bizarre gene sequencing in the GMO foods entering blood-streams and tissues, attack them. It's like putting diesel fuel in a gasoline engine—guaranteed to cause serious problems.

Because of the ability of GMOs to alter gene expression in tissues that they contact, it also appears that they can have effects that persist even after people and animals have stopped eating them—possibly into future generations. The film cites one Canadian study which found GMO residues in 92 percent of pregnant women and more than half of their fetuses.

And the contamination of food and animal feeds with Roundup is being linked to malnutrition, since the herbicide kills weeds simply by binding up key trace minerals that the plants need—and which people also need!

Just as outrageous is the fact that virtually all GMOs in use today have received FDA approval without independent testing. This reckless policy stems from the common "revolving door" system that has placed many former industry officials in the very agencies responsible for policing those industries. What's more, the independent tests that have been conducted show that GMO crops generally do *not* perform better than non-GMO crops.

The thesis of the film is that, in the absence of meaningful government regulation, educated consumers can stop GMOs by refusing to buy them and working for food labeling laws. ❖



## BeFriending Creation

**BeFriending Creation**, Vol. 25, No. 5, September-October 2012. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. ISSN 1050-0332. Published bi-monthly.

We publish **BeFriending Creation** to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends 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 (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Submission deadlines are February 7, April 7, June 7, August 7, October 7, and December 7.

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**Membership** is open to all who demonstrate commitment to support the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness and who support its work at the Monthly or Yearly Meeting levels, or through other Friends organizations. Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

### 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 to the earth.

**Steering Committee Clerk** Shelley Tanenbaum, <[sbeltan@pacbell.net](mailto:sbeltan@pacbell.net)>.

**Gen. Secretary** Anne Mitchell, 173-b N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401. 802/658-0308; e-mail: <[Anne@QuakerEarthcare.org](mailto:Anne@QuakerEarthcare.org)>.

**BFC Editor** Louis Cox, 360 Toad Rd., Charlotte, VT 05445. 802/425-3377; e-mail: <[Louis@QuakerEarthcare.org](mailto:Louis@QuakerEarthcare.org)>.

**Website:** <[www.QuakerEarthcare.org](http://www.QuakerEarthcare.org)>

### Earthcare Calendar

**October 4–7, 2012.** QEW Annual Meeting in Chicago. See QEW website for information

**October 7, 2012.** Deadline for article submissions for November-December 2012 *BeFriending Creation*.

# BeFriending Creation September–October 2012

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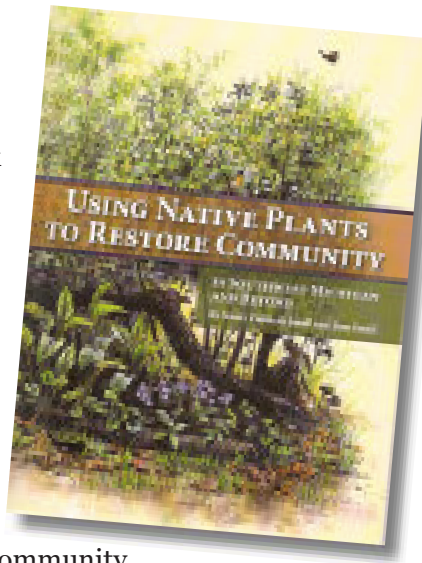
## To begin the healing of Earth, no plot is too ‘Small’

### Using Native Plants to Restore Community in SW Michigan and beyond

**THIS BEAUTIFUL** soft-cover book is the fruit of years of dedication by Nancy Cutbirth Small and her husband Tom Small to helping heal the ecological disruption caused by indiscriminate use of non-native species—starting with their backyard in Kalamazoo, Mich. It is an excellent source of practical botanical knowledge and wisdom to guide and inspire anyone who has care of a piece of property and knows their health depends on that of the biotic community.

As members of Kalamazoo Friends Meeting, Nancy and Tom were active in QEW in the 1990s—Nancy as clerk of the Publications Committee and Tom as clerk of the Steering Committee. They helped found the Kalamazoo chapter of The Wild Ones, a national organization dedicated to native plant restoration. Nancy was working hard on this book at the time of her death in 2009. Honoring her last wishes, Tom completed it and had it published in 2011.

***Using Native Plants to Restore Community*** provides perspectives on the ecological benefits of reducing the size of monoculture lawns and landscaping for biodiversity. It tells the reader how to find out what plants are appropriate for the ecological niches in their particular neighborhoods or regions. It also



provides specific information about reintroducing native plants and how to recognize alien ‘species that have become disruptive.

The authors effectively counter the common notion that good landscaping is supposed to be kept free of insect damage with an arsenal of chemicals. In fact, a good sign that a plant in your yard is an alien species is that it *doesn't* attract some insects. This may be preventing pollination and otherwise breaking the food chain for native birds and animals.

The book concludes with a large section of poems, drawings, quotations,

and essays (many written by Nancy and Tom) intended to promote a healthier way for humans to see and relate to the natural world, whether they live in the city, the suburbs, or the countryside.

These inspirational materials are an excellent way to plumb the depths of ecological wisdom that we need in order to understand and respect the natural world the way that Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and other ecological visionaries did.

Many of the illustrations are by QEW member Nancy Halliday, a professional wildlife artist and member of Evanston (Ill.) Friends Meeting.

You can buy the book for \$25, plus \$10 S&H, from Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones, P.O. Box 20324, Kalamazoo, MI 49019 <[www.kalamazoowildones.org](http://www.kalamazoowildones.org)>.