

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



QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS

Worship with Attention to Climate Finance

**Quakers Join Across
Continents to Call on
Vanguard to Stop Funding
Dirty Fossil Fuel Projects**

On Friday, October 7, 150 Quakers gathered in-person and virtually to “worship in action” at strategic locations to call on Vanguard, one of the world’s largest investment companies, to make better on its commitment to the planet’s future.

Almost fifty members of Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT) walked ten minutes from a train station outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to a quiet Main Line street where they unfolded metal chairs and sat down for thirty minutes of powerful Quaker-style silent worship across from the home of Tim Buckley, CEO of Vanguard.

In London, 60 British Quakers held their own meeting for worship outside Vanguard’s London offices, holding signs in silence that read “Vanguard invests in climate destruction” and the Quaker Advice and Query, “We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will.”

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BEFRIENDING CREATION

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Image Above: EQAT worships outside of CEO Tim Buckley’s home. Photo by Rachael Warriner/EQAT.



From the Editor's Desk

Dear Friends,

This fall, Quaker Earthcare Witness has been doing a new thing: offering a season-long course. Fourteen Friends from the US, Canada, and Australia are gathering each week to engage with their ecological grief, using a model designed by our partners at the Good Grief Network. Each week, we listen deeply about our experiences living within climate breakdown. This week, course participants are reflecting on the importance of rest amidst such colossal planetary threat. In the words of Báýò Akómoláfé: "The times are urgent; let us slow down."

For 35 years, Quaker Earthcare Witness has offered spaces where Friends can pause, "sink down to the seed," and wholeheartedly recognize the plight of the planet and work to make change at the same time. Our organization's work has been to engage in Spirit-led contemplative action that has led to experiments across North America, from the Finca la Bella project in Costa Rica, to land restoration in Iowa, to mutual aid in Nova Scotia, to online skill-building and resource-sharing across many time zones. Our work is to help create the spark for Friends to take steps toward a world where all living things are sacred.

I invite you to slow down and rest as you engage with this issue of *BeFriending Creation*.

As John Lubbock says, "Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass on a summer day listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is hardly a waste of time."

As Earthcare Friends, we know this to be true.

After you read and rest, I also invite you to make a donation to support Quaker Earthcare Witness and *BeFriending Creation*. Can you help us build this growing movement of Friends caring for the Earth?

In peace and friendship,

Hayley Hathaway
Editor, *BeFriending Creation*

DONATE by sending a check to Quaker Earthcare Witness, P.O. Box 6787 Albany, CA 94706 or at QuakerEarthcare.org/donate

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Our Vision & Witness

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

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

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

BeFriending Creation

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

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

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Donate at QuakerEarthcare.org.

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Quaker Earthcare Witness gathered 50 Friends from dozens of states and territories across North America and the UK over Zoom. Shelley Tanenbaum, QEW's General Secretary, said, "We could feel the heart connection flowing from the triangle of our three groups." As we worshiped on the screen, we could see the groups gathered in Pennsylvania and London. Friends online remarked on the surprising power of this unique worship—it felt deeply gathered with Spirit "in the room." One Friend shared that we were all spokes, connected to the source.

As one of the largest asset managers in the world, Vanguard has the means to pressure fossil fuel and other companies in its portfolio to shift their business practices away from climate destruction and into alignment with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.

"We are bringing the urgency of the climate crisis to Tim Buckley's doorstep," explained Carolyn McCoy, a Philadelphia Quaker and one of the EQAT's founders.

Online, one Friend prayed, "I need Buckley to help me find the solutions and put the solutions in place."

In London, the Bristol EarthQuakes group broke out in song, singing "You will never take away my voice," as they walked from St. Paul's Cathedral to the Vanguard offices. They delivered a letter to Tim Buckley, urging him to support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

These actions are part of a global campaign focused on these large financial institutions. On September 21, eight people from EQAT and Extinction Rebellion Philly were arrested at Vanguard Headquarters for refusing to leave when they were denied a meeting with John Galloway, Global Head of Investment Stewardship, who has refused to meet with representatives



of the campaign, despite a year and a half of requests.

Vanguard is not acting as a good steward, investing billions in coal expansion, which is a huge financial risk to Vanguard customers, as well as potentially catastrophic for future generations. This year Vanguard received the worst possible score—zero out of 30 on their climate commitments — in a scorecard ranking 30 major asset managers released by Reclaim Finance.

Part of a month of climate action by people of faith around the world, the October 7 worship also coincided with the 250th anniversary of the death of Quaker abolitionist John Woolman, who visited the homes of Quakers profiting from slavery to encourage them to change course.

"Today, all of us have a role to play in standing up to those who are recklessly threatening our future for short term profit," says Eileen Flanagan, co-director of EQAT. "Tim Buckley's role is especially large because his influence is especially large. This may put him in the line of fire of the right wing campaign against responsible climate action, which is why I am praying for his courage, even as I pray for my own strength to continue challenging one of the most powerful asset managers in the world."

To learn more, visit:

- » QuakerEarthcare.org
- » FixMyFunds.org
- » EQAT.org
- » Quaker.org.uk
- » StopTheMoneyPipeline.com



EQAT worships outside of CEO Tim Buckley's home. Photo by Barbara Benton/EQAT.



UK Friends worshiped outside of Vanguard headquarters in London. Photo by Siobhan Haire, Quakers in Britain

QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS IN 2022

This year, the effects of climate change and ecological collapse have been more than evident. Starting in June, torrential rains flooded Pakistan, with many areas still under water leaving tens of millions at risk. In September, Hurricane Fiona devastated Cuba and Puerto Rico (with Puerto Rico still recovering from Hurricane Maria 5 years ago), and Hurricane Ian overwhelmed Florida and much of the US southeast. Fires such as the Mosquito Fire in California burned vast areas at an intensity that is now “typical” for these times. These are just a few examples. “Intensity” seems to be the catchword of 2022.

QEW has been able to respond to the escalating climate and ecological disasters with more intensity, too. Thanks to generous donors and our team’s hard work, we are now able to offer significantly more programs and resources. Here are highlights from our work in 2022:

- » We regularly sponsor an online worship-sharing space to build community and deepen our faith and are currently partnering with Ben Lomond Quaker Center.
- » QEW offers mini-grants to Quaker meetings, churches, and other Quaker groups to support hands-on projects that foster Earthcare.
- » Over 220 people registered for Hayley Hathaway and Gayle Matson’s Ecological Grief workshop. They also launched a 10-week course on the topic.
- » 118 people joined a 3-part discussion series on the book, *The Depth of Our Belonging: Mysticism, Physics and Healing* by Mary Conrow Coelho.
- » Through our QEW Presents! program, we connect speakers to monthly and yearly meetings to offer talks on a wide variety of Earthcare concerns.
- » QEW staff, volunteers, and allies were featured in Friends Journal’s May 2022 climate issue.
- » QEW participates in a monthly meeting of international Quaker organizations working on climate.
- » The Publications Committee updated key print resources, like *Soil: Begin with the Beginning*, *Divestment as Lived Faith*, *Contemplative Action in the Time of Climate Change*, and *Eco-Justice*.
- » We hosted presentations on eco-spirituality, environmental justice, activism, and population during the virtual Friends General Conference annual gathering.
- » We sent three observers to the COP26 in Glasgow, published articles about the UN climate summit, and sent four observers to COP27.
- » We joined the global campaign to divest from asset manager Vanguard in collaboration with Earth Quaker Action Team and UK Friends.
- » We were awarded a grant from the Elizabeth Ann Bogert Memorial Fund for the Study and Practice of Christian Mysticism to develop resources on eco-spirituality and ecojustice.
- » We continue our work to consider racial and environmental justice in all of our actions, including in our partnerships with other organizations and coalitions.

**Thank you for helping make all of this possible!
Show your support at QuakerEarthcare.org/donate.**



Jus Tavcar

Prioritizing Environmental Justice as We Transition Into a Green Economy

With the historic passage of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in August, a significant amount of funding has been issued for developing green technologies that are set to advance the U.S. economy.

We join with the rest of the environmental community in celebrating this monumental legislation, which sets the nation on a path to cut emissions by 40% by 2030. The government is financing tax credits and developments in solar and wind power, energy storage technology, and domestic clean energy supply chain and production. The IRA also allocates funding to low- and zero-emissions public vehicles, as well as tax credits for purchases of electric vehicles.

Critically, the legislation also includes investments in energy developments for communities historically marginalized by fossil fuel-produced climate change, known as environmental justice communities.

Allocations to environmental justice communities in the IRA, worth \$60 billion, include grants to support community-led projects in disadvantaged communities and funds dedicated to bonus credits for renewable energy sources in low-income areas. Additional funding is intended to boost the resilience of Native communities

and the landscapes that serve as their food sources, which have been impacted by climate.

But these provisions, although historically outstanding, are just the first step. As the federal government enacts the Inflation Reduction Act, we must ensure that it prioritizes the needs of communities that have historically borne the brunt of environmental harm in this country.

We already see an example of this tension in central California. The Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) in San Luis Obispo County has submitted a proposal for federal approval of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary in the Morro Bay offshore area. NCTC filed a submission for the sanctuary in 2015 to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). But the proposal, on track to be approved by 2023, is now interfering with the plans to build a large floating offshore wind farm.

Plans for the farm promise to create over 2,000 jobs over a five-year period and help speed up California's goal of producing five gigawatts in offshore wind energy by 2030 and 25 gigawatts by 2045. The Morro Bay wind farm has, with other similar projects in the area, the potential to produce 4.6 gigawatts, enough to power 1.6 million homes.

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON



NATIONAL LEGISLATION

However, the Chumash community in the area is concerned by the fact that the wind project would place more than 380 wind turbines northwest of Morro Bay, about two and a half miles offshore. Some proposals for implementation are inside the boundaries of the planned sanctuary. If built in the area or immediate proximity, the turbines could harm the ecosystem, including its delicate seafloor.

As the negotiations continue between stakeholders we remain focused on ensuring a sustainable, just future for all parties involved. Though green technology developments are an exciting piece of the new legislation, we must be aware of the people and land that are vulnerable to new developments.

We urge you to call on your lawmakers to support the Environmental Justice for All Act. If passed, the bill would fortify environmental regulation, improve health equity, and support local frontline organizations focused on the health of their communities.

Jus Tavcar is the program assistant for sustainable energy and environment. In his work, Jus lobbies Congress to pass policies in favor of transitioning into a just green economy. Learn more at [FCNL.org](https://fcnl.org).



Photos of the China Folk House and the beauty of the region.

Kimberly Benson

Inspiring the World to Come Together Along the Blue Ridge Introducing the Friends Wilderness Center & the China Folk House Retreat

About 300 million years ago, the Earth demonstrated that unity is physically possible. Laurasia and Gondwana merged, forming a world with one continent and one ocean. The convergence uplifted the Central Pangean Mountains, raising the depths of the ocean toward the Light and ushering in the Carboniferous period, the exploitation of whose deposits underlie much of the division and destruction we experience today.

In the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia, near the geographic center and remnants of that geologic convergence zone, Friends Wilderness Center (FWC) and the China Folk House Retreat (CFHR) are aspiring toward a figurative global conjunction, bridging divides in humanity, building community with nature, and lifting all toward the Light and a brighter future.

FWC carries forward the legacy of Henry and Mary Cushing Niles, Quaker civil rights and peace activists who appreciated the power of nature to heal, restore, and inspire those seeking to bridge divides in this world. In 1974, they conserved 1500 acres of their personal property between the Shenandoah River and Appalachian Trail to serve and inspire their community of

activists who sought to overcome division and build a peaceful, equitable world.

FWC's recent management transition revived that foundation of activism and elevated the climate crisis as a focus for this mountain ministry. Kimberly Benson and her family (Carl, Kallan, and Reece) bring to their stewardship their passion for sustainability, protection of the environment, and a just and equitable future for all. FWC continues the tradition of offering services and facilities by donation, to remove financial barriers to those seeking restoration and spiritual renewal in nature.

While divisions in our country and the world appear to have expanded in recent years, FWC has partnered with CFHR to bring the world together, connecting West Virginia and China during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. Chinese villagers, faculty and students from Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC, and Appalachian bluegrass artists joined together to save a traditional farmhouse from inundation by a hydroelectric dam project. West Virginia timber framers volunteered their labor to learn Chinese joinery, raising the structural framework of the house from the Mekong River gorge and slopes of the Himalayas onto a

new foundation at FWC between the Shenandoah River and the Blue Ridge. Ordinary people came together during a global health crisis to bridge political, philosophical, and physical divides to form community from mountain ranges a world apart.

CFHR invites visitors to explore sustainable building practices of the past and future, offering hands-on experience with hempcrete (a sustainable building method expanding in popularity) and ancient techniques of traditional Chinese construction. Volunteers, including high school summer campers, have contributed to the construction of the largest hempcrete walls in North America.

CFHR is an extraordinary project helping FWC expand community, develop as a center of sustainability, and improve comfort and accessibility.

In one little corner of the Blue Ridge along the geologic remnant of global convergence, FWC and CFHR are joining in community to seek the Light and inspire the world to come together.

Kimberly Benson is a Quaker climate activist, member of Annapolis Friends Meeting, and General Manager of Friends Wilderness Center. Learn more and visit at friendswilderness.org.

Dispatches from the Population Working Group

Stan Becker, Tom Cameron, Dick Grossman, Roy Treadway

World Population Reaches 8 Billion

As ecological disasters of all kinds threaten our planet—disasters worsened by increasing population—the number of humans on the Earth reached 8 billion in November, according to the United Nations Population Division. This marks the continuation of the very rapid growth of world human population in the past two centuries. The number of our own species has increased from 1 billion in 1830, doubling to 2 billion in 1930, and again doubling to 4 billion in 1974. By 1994 our population reached 6 billion, and only 28 years later, in 2022, to 8 billion. United Nations current projections show that by 2046 our planet could be home to 10 billion humans.

Unfortunately, with the rapid increase of our numbers and our ever-increasing consumption of the world's resources, humans and their activities have invaded virtually every ecosystem on the planet, pushing many other species to extinction. These high numbers magnify all of the problems of our ecosystem and reduce the chances of success of all other environmental solutions. Clear and consistent scientific evidence shows that our growing population is contributing to significant problems.

Conversations on population are complex, difficult, and often dismissed because they intersect with matters of race, sex, and immigration. Historians have documented that some past population activism was rooted in eugenics, sexism, racism, and colonialism. Although reproduction is usually considered a very personal matter, some religious groups have coercive limitations on marriage and reproduction. Around the world, nearly 160 million women want to space or limit births, but do not have access to modern methods of contraception. Those women in developing countries often have poor access to reproductive health programs, which may face logistical problems and which need international support.

Because population is a key factor in the human ecological footprint, we must acknowledge the historical problems and the complexities of talking about population, while we continue to seek solutions rooted in justice that are consistent with our Friends' testimonies and that will reduce humanity's environmental impact.

Stan Becker, Tom Cameron, Dick Grossman, Roy Treadway are members of the QEW Population Working Group.

Susan F. Newcomer

Family Planning Helps the Planet

Addressing population growth in human terms, not as the bugbear "overpopulation," necessitates addressing sexuality and childbearing, two particularly sensitive topics.

Over the years, Quakers have addressed "episodes of sexual activity" as "sacred, as an expression of a couple's love for each other" and addressed contraception by saying "the separation of sexual intercourse and reproduction via contraception is appropriate."

In my experience as a social demographer interested in research on family planning, I know there are several actions that will make a difference. They are:

- » Making sure that all girls worldwide get at least an 8th grade education.
- » Working with local groups that address climate and conservation issues to include family planning programming in their work.

- » Educating all people of all ages about respecting and protecting their bodies and reproductive rights. Providing age-appropriate basic education about bodies and sex does not harm children.
- » Respecting people's desires not to marry and/or have children. Families come in a variety of shapes and sizes.
- » Providing information about and easy access to a range of contraceptives to all women and men in every country. States where contraceptives are accessible and affordable are also the states that have lower abortion rates and lower population growth rates.

Getting the message out that having fewer people everywhere is essential for care of the earth.

Susan F. Newcomer is a demographer who retired from the US National Institutes of Health in 2017. She is a member of the Chapel Hill NC Friends' Meeting and the QEW Population Working Group.

Allen McGrew

On the Debts We Owe the Past and the Ghosts of Our Becoming

Convinced Friends may wonder why they should accept responsibility for the abuses of Quaker boarding schools that received Native Americans over a century ago. If so, they might also ask whether they can claim the heritage of John Woolman, George Fox, Margaret Fell, and other historical Friends. We might also ask whether the descendants of those harmed have the luxury of denying the still-living legacy of the injustices done to their ancestors?

For my part, I cannot indulge the luxury of picking or choosing which aspects of Quaker heritage I choose to claim or disclaim. My mother's great grandfather, Joel Johnson, was a supporter and sometimes trustee of one such Quaker boarding school, White's Institute in Indiana.

White's Indiana Manual Labor Institute was founded with a bequest to Indiana Yearly Meeting by Josiah White, a Pennsylvania Quaker, industrialist, and philanthropist. After a few difficult years of low enrollment, in 1882 the Trustees contracted with the federal government to provide education for Native American children for an annual payment to cover boarding costs. At its peak, eighty-seven Native American children from thirteen different tribes were in attendance.

One of those children was a Lakota girl from the Yankton Reservation, Zitkála-Šá ("Red Bird," also later known by her missionary and married name, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin). She attended Earlham College, and became a leading voice for Native American people. She gained acclaim for writing the libretto and songs for the first Native American opera, *The Sundance Opera* (1913) based on sacred Sioux rituals, which her people had been banned from performing. Subsequently, in 1926, Zitkála-Šá founded the National Council of American Indians to lobby for the rights of full U.S. citizenship for native peoples.

The discovery of Zitkála-Šá's poignant writings brought home for me personally the acute trauma inflicted on the native children at White's, trauma in which my own family and community had been complicit. She writes:

"...I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now



The first class of students at White's Indiana Manual Labor Institute. Courtesy of Worthpoint.com/worthopedia/photos-american-indians-whites-institute-wabash-indiana

my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder."

And now I must ask, what am I to do with such knowledge? What am I to do with the awareness of my own family's complicity in this harm? Am I to renounce my ancestors? Could I? Would that not seem like cheap distancing or hollow chest-thumping? On the other hand, are mumbled, vague land acknowledgments at the start of meeting for business sufficient? Do the descendants of those who were so harmed even want to hear my moaning about the guilt of my ancestors, or would they turn to me and ask, So what are you going to DO about it? Have I sought them out? Have I listened to their voices and heard their needs to bring healing? Have we, as the broader Fellowship of Friends?...

The deeper question posed by historical obligation is not what we owe the past, but how will we repay that debt in the present for the sake of the future?

Visit QuakerEarthcare.org to read the full article. Allen McGrew is a member of the QEW Steering Committee, worships with Dayton Friends, and is a professor at the University of Dayton in Ohio.

Decolonizing Quakers is a group of North American Friends seeking to learn and share the truth of the history that Quakers and Indigenous Peoples have lived through on this continent. They want to acknowledge the wounds resulting from this history for all peoples impacted, engage in actions that move toward justice, and recognize the dignity of all.

In 2022, this group created a "model minute" for Yearly Meetings to consider, in response to a call from the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition for churches to find their records and to estimate the current value of the contributions they made to these schools. On the next page are two examples.

Learn more at DecolonizingQuakers.org.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting, 2022

Minute of Support for Indigenous People

The North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends repudiates the Doctrines of Discovery: the religious basis for European colonization around the world. We acknowledge and regret Friends' role in the ensuing genocide, land theft, and forced assimilation of the peoples indigenous to this continent, including Friends' role in operating and legitimizing compulsory schools for Indigenous children. We affirm the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We commit to courageously and compassionately listen and face the learning required to comprehend settler colonialism and establish rapport with Indigenous people. We intend that these relationships will guide us to develop thoughtful, grounded actions to oppose the ongoing systemic dehumanization and material dispossession of the original peoples of the land on which we live and worship. Spirit calls us towards truth, racial healing, and transformation, following the Indigenous wisdom of respect for the earth and all its beings.

We see this Minute as one expression of the 2019 NPYM Uprooting Racism Minute.

We call the Meetings and Worship Groups of NPYM to commit as led, to each of the following actions:

To self-educate about the history of Indigenous life before European contact, the arrival of settler colonial peoples, and the current effects of colonization specific to one's region. We encourage Friends to compensate Native people who provide us with their expertise, and to learn how to interrupt anti-Indigenous behavior and language.

To self-educate about Quaker involvement in compulsory day and boarding schools for Native children, where language, religious, and cultural assimilation were violently enforced, and where kidnapping, torture, and preventable child death were common. Transgenerational trauma from the violence of coercive family separation and from these schools persists today.

To provide opportunities for collective lamentation: times and/or spaces to acknowledge, grieve, and integrate these truths, with the guidance of Spirit.

To recognize that integrity requires us to uphold the self-determination and sovereignty of Native nations. Friends acknowledge that it is not the place of non-Indigenous people to define or decide the priorities or realities of Indigenous people, and that 'right relationship' requires respect for Indigenous people's autonomy and leadership.

To act in solidarity with the reinvigoration of local Indigenous cultural knowledge and wisdom. For example: language restoration; land, air, water, and wildlife stewardship; food and medicine; wildfire management techniques; spirituality; mental and physical healthcare; programs for youth; and Native-led healing work.

To explore the sources of our properties and wealth, and invest in Native nations or Native-led projects that support Indigenous rights, health, or autonomy. These investments could include sharing property, paying rent as suggested by tribes, or returning the land. Example projects include efforts to protect missing and murdered Indigenous relatives; federal recognition of tribes; supporting

Southeastern Yearly Meeting, 2022

Minute on Native American Boarding School Healing

Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, meeting as Winter Interim Business Meeting, approves adding a line item to the budget for a recurring annual donation to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition of a minimum of \$300.00 with the hope of increasing that amount in the future. This donation is a beginning acknowledgment of the Quaker role in being among the strongest supporters of the federal policy that called for the forced assimilation of Indian children through the operation of some 30 Quaker Indian boarding schools.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting seeks to form a relationship with the Coalition to understand from them what additional support Friends can give. We encourage all Quaker meetings around our country to become familiar with the organization and its highly effective work in healing the ongoing trauma caused by the schools: [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#).

treaty rights; legislation repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery; ecological protection movements like Standing Rock or coal train opposition.

To identify ways in which the commitments made in NPYM Minutes are finding life in our Meetings, within each annual State of the Society report and/or to NPYM's Anti-Racism Working Group and/or at an event hosted by the NPYM Peace and Social Concerns Committee. By sharing, we expand the collective sense of what is possible.



Tom Small

Regeneration: A Matter of Life and Breath

Breath is what unites us. It unites us with the “other.” With all of creation. Breath is the rhythm, the flow of life itself. Call it *Ch’i*. Or *ruah*. Or *spiritus*. Or *rta*. The universal breath, life force, or rhythmic pattern of all being. When we interrupt the flow of breath, stifling the life force, we separate ourselves from the “other,” whether a person, a culture, or the very earth herself.

In separating and dividing, we allow or even empower ourselves to dominate the “other.” And so it is in our oppressive, relentless suffocation of the earth. Our denial of the earth as a living, breathing real person.

Breath is Life. The earth breathes through her forests and her soils. We ravage the forests and starve the soil; and we don’t let up. So most of the earth’s soil is dead or diseased, more so in the United States than in any other country of the world. Consequently, we are among the most unhealthy nations on earth.

Healthy soil is alive with organisms, trillions of them in every cubic foot. Healthy soil contains essential minerals with plant and animal residues, stored in humus and released only as needed. Healthy soil provides clear passages for air and water, which it purifies and enlivens. Healthy soil sequesters carbon. Healthy soil regenerates itself—and us. Soil is health—for plants, for food, for all creatures.

Industrial agriculture, disrupting all these processes, reduces living soil to dead dirt. Heavy machinery and intensive tillage squeeze air and carbon from the soil. Compaction greatly reduces soil’s ability to retain, cycle, and cleanse water. Chemical pesticides and fertilizers kill soil organisms and disrupt or replace natural cycles of renewal and re-creation.

Regenerative agriculture restores soil to life, by allowing earth to breathe. By reducing tillage, regenerative agriculture preserves soil structure and humus. More a process than a substance, humus is the creative “life force” of the soil. It embodies the slow, steady breath of dissolution, preservation, and renewal, the self-organizing, sacred patterns of life.

Nature, in her annual and generational cycles, heals herself. She generates from her “chemistry” what Walt Whitman, in his poem “This Compost,” calls a “resurrection.” The Earth, “calm and patient, grows such sweet things out of such corruption.” As Sir Albert Howard told us 75 years ago in his seminal book, *The Soil and Health*, “Nature is the supreme farmer.”

How then shall we heal ourselves? How do we participate in the “chemistry” of “resurrection”? How do we recover something of what we have lost, our primal wholeness, our Unity with Nature? How shall we breathe together with the earth, whose breath we breathe, who *breathes us*?

If you want to make small changes, change the way you do things. If you want to make major changes, change the way you see things.

– Gabe Brown, 2018

For a hunter-gatherer, there is no separation between predator and prey, between plant and gatherer. “Self” and “other” are interrelated and interconnected. They breathe together, a perfectly sincere conspiracy. Each one reflects the other, as the water selflessly reflects, in its depths, the mountain, forest, and cloud. Or as the swooping eagle coincides with the fish rising to the surface.

Thus does the hunter see the prey giving himself, the plant sharing her energies and “chemistry.” Thus do indigenous people affirm, “We belong to the Land,” or “We are the River, or the Forest.” There is no “other,” only a complex web of relationships, continually arising, flowing, transforming. We Are One. In the Lakota language, *Mitakuye oyasin*: All Our Relations.

How then shall we begin, you and I, so far removed from hunter-gatherer Unity with Nature, and colonized by a language and way of seeing that habitually separate self and other, disrupt relationship, seek domination and supremacy?

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Grow our own food? Buy local and organic? Join a CSA? Well and good. Not good enough.

Participate, as we are able, in the patterns, the relationships that involve the passing of the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, and the breathing of forests. The Menominee speak of these patterns as *napanoh pemecwan*, flowing repeatedly. It is this that Daoist Gary Snyder calls the practice of the wild. Lao Tse invokes this as the Tao, the way, “the process through which all things arise and pass away.” For George Fox, this is “the Word which was in the beginning, by which all things are upheld: wherein is unity with the creation.”

Quakers seek this as integrity, true sincerity, with no separation of inner being from outward action. Living, breathing wholeness. A way of seeing. A movement and a presence, arising from the pregnant silence, the plenum, that bodies forth the ten thousand things. The regenerative breath of all things.

You and I are responsible for renewal of this breath, this spirit, through sacred participation.

This, then, is the Way; what about the Practice?

- » To help the earth recover her breath, first catch your own breath. Slow down to the flow of life.
- » Observe Sir Albert Howard’s Law of Return. More than rebuilding soil with compost, the “Law” is reciprocity, gratitude for gift, a bonding of Love.
- » Share. Study Robin Wall Kimmerer’s doctrine of Honorable Harvest.

- » Regenerate your local farmers and suppliers: buy from them, talk with them, encourage them.
- » Recognize, honor, and respect Earth and all her creatures as persons: living systems within systems, rhythms within rhythms, self-sustained by free exchanging of breath.
- » In what and when you eat, respect the seasons and cycles of life.
- » Honor and learn from peasant farmers, Native Americans, and other indigenous peoples who preserve a speaking relationship with all that is animate (from *ana-*, an Indo-European root word meaning “to breathe”).
- » Listen to what plants and food are telling you. By learning to listen, it is possible to relearn a lost language.
- » Integrate yourself with the place where you are and all of your animate kin. They all matter.
- » Use biochar, natural plant litter, and compost to amend soil.
- » Meditate on the Testimony of Integrity.

In 1989, when QEW (Friends Committee on Unity with Nature) was just forming, Marshall Massey suggested that we first learn to see before acting. Gary Snyder in *The Practice of the Wild* asks whether there is in fact a “practice for people to follow.” Yes, he concludes, but only “When you become a real person.”

Tom Small is a member of Kalamazoo Friends Meeting in Michigan and is co-author of the book *Using Native Plants to Restore Community*.

Visit QuakerEarthcare.org for regenerative agriculture resources and to see the references for this article.



Photo by Kathy Barnhart

QEW Presents! Workshop Showcase

Living in Right Relationship with the Living World: Quaker Testimonies as Template

The bad news is coming fast now—nearly on a daily basis we’re hearing of another climate-related disaster, another breakdown in Earth’s and Life’s support systems. The web seems to be unraveling. How not to become paralyzed by despair?

What do Friends’ faith and practice, and specifically our testimonies, have to offer us for understanding and addressing these many challenges which face us?

How may we come to live in Right Relationship with the Living World, respecting and supporting the integrity of the Earth community?

In this experiential workshop, Mary Ann Percy of Bellingham Friends Meeting in Washington offers a presentation, opportunities for reflection, worship-sharing, and outdoor worship.

Email info@quakerearthcare.org to invite Mary Ann to your meeting to offer this workshop! See more at QuakerEarthcare.org/workshops.



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QEW Mini-Grants Program Working Group

Funding QEW Mini-Grants: Success!



Landscaping to divert rainwater at Fellbaum Community Health Center in Kaimosi, Kenya with support from a QEW mini-grant.

Thank you, Friends, for contributing \$10,000 to support grassroots earthcare projects across the world this fall! This represents a tremendous opportunity to expand our reach in the year ahead.

The generosity of Friends has made it possible to fund all proposals received so far in 2022, totaling over \$3000. This includes exciting international projects from Costa Rica, Uganda, Burundi, and Kenya.

What communities are you involved in that could propose an Earthcare project? We are looking for new projects and communities to support.

We especially encourage projects that directly address environmental justice, climate change, and/or those that will involve young people.

Our goal is to encourage and support Friends groups, meetings, churches, and organizations that are looking for ways to enhance their practical and spiritual relationship with Earth.

Please get in touch with us if you have a spark of an idea. Visit QuakerEarthcare.org/mini-grants or email mini-grants@quakerearthcare.org.



Two students in 11th and 12th grades point to Monteverde Friends Meeting and School in Costa Rica's new solar inverter funded by a mini-grant.