



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

Affirming our essential unity with nature

Volume 26, Number 6 • November-December 2013

In this issue of BeFriending Creation, we explore the theme of divestment, thanks to guest editors Paula Kline, of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and Tom Jackson, of Dover Friends Meeting.

A Friend's-Eye View of Divestment

by Tom Jackson

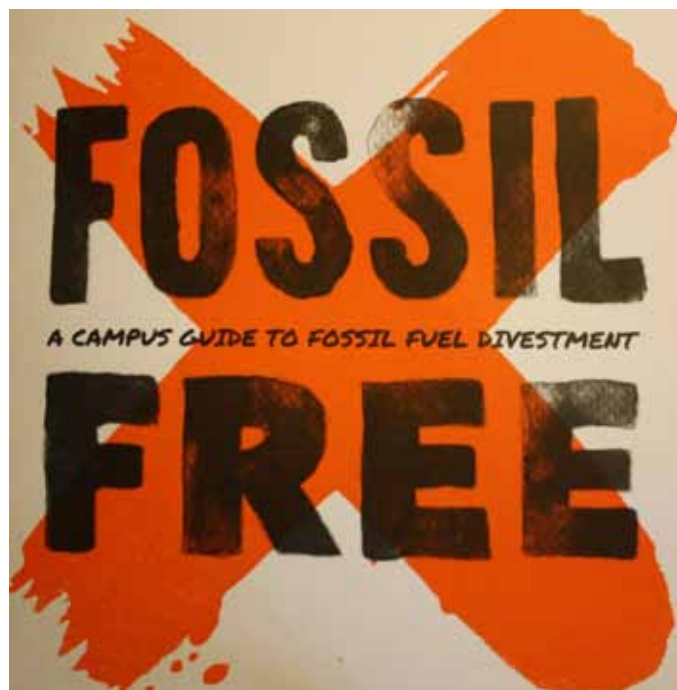
In February 2013, Dover (NH) Friends Meeting divested of its one investment that had direct holdings in fossil fuels. After completing the divestment, we wrote a letter to the fund company telling them why we divested. We also wrote an epistle to Friends, telling them why we took this step, and we asked them to consider the idea for their Meeting or organization. Since then, I have sent news of our leading out to as many Friends Meetings and organizations as possible.

The response has been interesting. From most Friends, there has been no response. Among those who did respond, there have been many who said they had either begun considering divestment, or they were going to present the epistle to their Meeting and try to begin consideration of the idea.

The few responses that challenged the idea of divestment were based not on the science of climate change, but rather on questioning the effectiveness of divesting of fossil fuel company holdings.

A Friend in North Carolina wrote a one-line response asking if those of us at Dover Friends were also going to stop using motorized vehicles. The implication, of course, is that it was futile to divest of fossil fuel companies if we were all still polluting the environment with our cars. I sent a response back to the Friend, explaining that his question went exactly to the point that there are still far too few practical options available for Friends who want to make changes that may have some positive effect on our concern over climate change.

For a number of years I have heard Friends and non-Friends ask, "What else can we do?" Many people listed the things that they had been able to do in response to



climate change, which of course often included getting a more fuel-efficient car, changing light bulbs, tightening up insulation in the house, eating less red meat, etc. But people had run out of ideas that were practical and doable under most people's circumstances. What else could be done to affect change, either by better energy use or to make a statement to the companies that continued to do everything they could to ward off change?

See *Divestment*, page 3

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BeFriending Creation

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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 10, April 10, June 10, August 10, October 10, and December 10.

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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.

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Earthcare Calendar

December 10, 2013. Deadline for article submissions for January-February 2014 *BeFriending Creation*.

Letters to Share

"WHAT CANST THOU SAY" ABOUT SPIRIT-LED EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF EARTH, about your own stirrings toward care for the planet, in relation to the vision and thoughtful action of Quaker Earthcare Witness as a whole? We'd like to hear from you. Send your letters to Katherine at katherine@quakerearthcare.org, and share your thoughts and leadings with Friends and caring others throughout North America.

September 29, 2013

Dear BeFriending Creation,

Like most Quakers, I take stewardship of the environment seriously. I try to keep my carbon footprint small at home and in my workplace. I recycle, and I call my congressperson when there's an important vote. Then I attended a talk given by Bill McKibben at Swarthmore College in May 2012, which made me think about the need for a bold response to the problem of climate change. Our elected officials are not leading effectively on this issue. How could I be part of a force that would shift the public discourse, and create openings for leadership?

The movement to pressure universities and religious institutions struck a chord with me. I could see the value of this approach. Divestment alone will not turn the tide of over-consumption of carbon fuels, yet it can be a valuable piece of the puzzle. It's healthy to put divestment proposals before the influential trustees of large institutions and invite them to take a principled position on investments. It brings the immorality of making profits by ruining the environment under scrutiny. One of the strongest reasons to get involved in the movement for divestment is that it has captured the passion and imagination of the next generation of young leaders. It's great to back them up as they learn how to be powerful activists—we'll need all their passion and skills in the decades to come.

See **Nancy Sleator**, page 15

To the Editor:

I admire the programs that Mt. Toby Meeting has instituted. The Dime-A-Gallon Fund is a simple way to raise money and to raise awareness at the same time. The Voluntary Carbon Tax Witness is a wonderful means to encourage fossil fuel frugality. Furthermore, I really appreciate the generosity of this Meeting who donated the money they raised to QEW—one of my favorite charities!

The authors, members of the Mt. Toby Friends Climate Witness Committee, finish their excellent article by pointing out an analogy. Slavery, they state, was deeply imbedded in our culture and economic system, and we as individuals and as meetings responded to overthrow this abominable practice. Quakers should now work together to prevent global warming more than 2°C by limiting use of carbon-based sources of energy.

Although I strongly agree that we should work to limit use of fossil fuels and to increase the use of renewable sources of energy, I find the analogy between obliterating slavery and becoming carbon neutral a bit more

See **Dick Grossman**, page 15



Divestment, from page 1

Divestment, done publicly and with the recognition that in and of itself it is not enough, is a next step that can and should be done, based on Quaker values.

Questions from a few others were posed, and those questions were based on whether trying to work with fossil fuel companies might not be more effective than divesting, which eliminates the ability to act as a shareholder and speak directly with a company's decision makers. (Note that only direct holders of shares in these companies can go to shareholders' meetings. If you have funds holding these shares, you are only entitled to petition the fund's manager to take a stand for you at the company's shareholder meetings.) Talking with the captains of industry may sound like the "nicer" approach, but many people concerned with the climate change issue have been lobbying these companies for a quarter of a century. Remember the blistering hot summer of 1988? Ever since then, the subject has been under discussion, and try as they may to exclude themselves from an honest discussion about these matters, the fossil fuel industry has still been hearing from us. Yet they have done nothing of significance when it comes to action. Many of us believe at this point that talking with the tiny group of decision makers in that industry is futile. They have not taken heed of religious, moral, scientific, or even some business-based arguments. Those of us who believe that divestment is a good next step and a powerful statement, particularly



if the movement grows, see the language of money as the one language that may effectively speak to the leaders of the fossil fuel industry.

For Friends, though, there is a peculiar perspective that is added to the argument for divestment. As a Quaker I see it as the Friend's bottom line on this issue. Perhaps this query sums up the idea best: Can we, as Friends, knowing what we now know about the effects of fossil fuel emissions on the ecosphere, in good conscience, continue to profit from that industry? More and more Friends are responding to this question with the answer, "Nay." ❧

Green Micro Lending: An Alternative Way to Invest in Renewable Energy

On the occasion that a Friend questions the sensibility of divesting from fossil fuel investments, I've seen a few patterns forming. Some among those who question seem to think that those of us who advocate divestment must, in the alternative, expect that the newly divested funds would then be put into a renewable energy stock, mutual fund, or exchange traded fund (ETF). While we are not investment advisors, I can express my personal observation: stocks in renewable energy companies have performed abysmally to date, much as I hate to admit it.

There is a much more conservative investment into which the money could be placed, and it would in an alternative way be an investment in renewable energy. Friends Meetings, Quarterlies, or Yearlies could take their divested funds and create a green micro-lending fund based on a plan similar to the cooperative funds that many states now offer. An investor in the fund

receives a percentage based on the percentage that the borrower pays back to the fund. The borrower can then purchase an energy alternative for their home (or Meeting), and the fund and its investors make a profit that exceeds that of a savings account and other investments. With current home improvement loans in the range of 6 percent, a Meeting, Quarterly, or regional that starts a fund like this could offer a good return on investment to individuals who contribute to the fund.

Most Meetings prefer to have investments that are relatively stable, and this alternative type of investment provides that. It is true that a Meeting or other Friends organization choosing this alternative will need a small committee to administer the fund, but for those Friends who see the value in this process from the initial divestment to finding constructive and profitable things to do with that newly freed up money, the enthusiasm will be ongoing. ❧

Dover Friends Meeting Epistle on Divestment

Many are the Vanities and Luxuries of the present Age, and in labouring to support a Way of living conformable to the present World, the Departure from that Wisdom that is pure and peaceable, hath been great. —John Woolman, from “On the Slave Trade”

Recently Dover Friends Meeting held a short series of workshops at which members of the Meeting were given the chance to learn more about Meeting’s finances and management thereof. During the first of three workshops, a number of Friends expressed their concern over making sure that Meeting’s investments were consistent with our Quaker values. Specifically, the concern of climate change has become great for many Friends, and several expressed an interest in divesting from any significant holdings in the fossil fuel industry.

After finding that one of Dover Friends Meeting’s holdings in a Vanguard fund did have significant amounts of fossil fuel stock, the Meeting reached consensus that it was not consistent with our values to continue owning shares in that fund, and we divested of the shares, putting the money into a fund that has no fossil fuel holdings.

Meeting then agreed that the logical next step was, rather than remaining silent about what we had done, to let Vanguard know why we had divested, i.e., that it was not just a financial move that would otherwise go unnoticed at Vanguard-- it was a move based on principle and faith. The letter sent to Vanguard regarding this matter is attached to this epistle.

We now wish to share with Friends Meetings, other Quaker establishments, and individual Friends our belief that it is time for Quakers to take a similar step toward a future which will eventually allow us to tread more lightly upon the Earth.

For many years now, climate scientists have been warning us about the effects of fossil fuel use on the Earth’s climate. As early as 1995, a majority of the world’s climate scientists agreed that humankind was changing the globe’s climate.

A mere two tenths more of a degree (centigrade) average temperature will double the number of Katrina-strength Hurricanes. Recently a leading scientist pointed out that even the middle prediction of warming by the end of the century will make Earth hotter than anytime in the past 35 million years. The icecaps would



then take longer to melt, but when they do the result will be 65-100 feet of sea level rise.

Around the world, stability and well-being are threatened by the effects of climate change. Millions of people may die in this century as a direct result of climate change, and the people most likely to pay the highest cost are our poorest global neighbors.

Only a few short years ago, many Friends expressed concern over climate change in the context of it being a problem for their children and grandchildren. Dealing with the effects of climate change will be a problem for future generations, but it is also a problem for us right now. The loss of Arctic ice cover has already led to the jamming of the jet stream that gave us such a crazy winter this year along with Hurricane Sandy, and is responsible for the tens of thousands of deaths in heat waves in Russia and Europe in recent years past, as well as the horrid drought in the American Southwest and Northern Mexico, resulting in serious damage to agricultural output. And yet we have had only a tiny taste of what is to come. We, as Friends, have determined that we must divest from fossil fuel holdings because bankrolling their continued use will lead to catastrophe, and sooner than one would like to think.

We are clear that this decision to divest is consistent with Quaker values. The Earth and all its life is God’s creation. In Genesis 1:26 God gives “dominion” over all other life on the planet to humans. As Friends, we understand the word “dominion” to be synonymous with stewardship. Jesus stated that the greatest commandments are, “Love the Lord your God with all your

Continued on next page

heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Knowing that the effects of climate change will adversely affect populations worldwide, with the greatest impact upon the poorest people of the world, we believe that we have a responsibility to take every measure possible to ease the impact upon them, and on God's other creatures as well. As good stewards of the Earth, we seek to find ways to tread as lightly as possible on it, and one step in doing so is to refuse to be invested in the business of burning more fossil fuels.

Many Friends have wondered how we can free ourselves of our dependence on fossil fuels. While making practical changes in one's daily life is a good starting point, many Friends have found it very difficult to make changes because of costs involved and our dependence on fossil fuels of various types for decades. A starting point, though clearly not the end point, is for Quaker-related organizations to look at the investments they have made, and divest accordingly. We look now to investing in the future, rather than in the past.

We can not afford morally or financially to keep investing in the assured destruction of our civilization. Two hundred and fifty years ago John Woolman exhorted us to stop enslaving men and women; today

we need to stop enslaving nature. Unchecked, slavery eventually results in rebellion, and while the revolutions of men are bloody enough, nature's final rebellion against our abuse of her delicately crafted carbon balance will eliminate our species with overwhelming floods and fires. Yet this need not happen, if we walk cheerfully over the earth, speaking to that of God in every one of us that abides in love, rather than greedily betting on profits from fossil fuels.

Prayerfully,

Dover Friends Meeting

For Friends who want to read John Woolman's essay, please visit <http://www.qhpress.org/texts/oldqwhp/wool-496.htm>. ☞

Find out more about divestment. Visit our new section of the QEW website called **Fossil Free Friends**, developed by Paula Kline and Tom Jackson: <http://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/fossil-free-friends>

Please share the link with with your Friends!

Speaking Out about Divestment

The following is a copy of the divestment letter Dover Friends Meeting sent to Vanguard after realizing that a portion of funds invested with the company were being used in support of fossil fuel companies. It is our hope that our letter may serve as an inspiration for your Meeting's interest, seasoning, and action in divesting from investments that harm the environment.

Greetings,

Recently the Dover (NH) Friends Meeting, a Quaker Meeting first gathered in 1662, sold its shares in the Vanguard International Equity Index Funds All World Ex. USA Small Cap Index Fund ETF (VSS). We recognize that our transaction was not one which would ordinarily come to your attention, had it been strictly for financial purposes. In fact, the transaction was a deliberate divestment from the ETF because of its substantial holdings in fossil fuel companies.

Dover Friends Meeting reached a consensus among its attending members that because of our deep concern over the changing climate, and our understanding that an overwhelming majority of climate scientists worldwide attribute these changes to human activity, specifically emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, that we should divest from any funds that own significant amounts of shares of fossil fuel business

companies. Since VSS has significant holdings in a number of fossil fuel companies, we could no longer in good conscience remain invested in this security.

Members of the Society of Friends have, from the denomination's origins, had a deep concern for peace and social justice. John Woolman, a Quaker from Mount Holly, NJ, traveled to Friends Meetings in frontier regions of what became the United States, and in England, urging fellow Quakers to stop any participation they had in the slave trade, and abolish slavery. He also spoke out about animal cruelty, economic injustice and other issues. It is our belief that a modern day John Woolman would urge his fellow Quakers to divest from any stock, or fund that contains shares of fossil fuel companies. We intend to encourage our fellow Friends to do so.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. ☞

REInvestment at Earlham College

The Responsible Energy Investment (REInvestment) campaign at Earlham College, in Richmond, Indiana, has been working with Earlham's Socially Responsible Investments Advisory Committee (SRIAC) to develop a screening process for Earlham's current investments in Coal. We are part of a coalition of over 250 colleges/universities working on fossil fuel divestment campaigns. We are specifically targetting Coal due to the incredible harm caused by Mountain-Top Removal, the burning of Coal, and the place Coal holds as the main energy provided in our lovely state of Indiana.

Our Quaker roots and ideologies distinguish Earlham College from most Liberal Arts institutions. These Quaker philosophies influence the daily functioning of the College through our Principles & Practices which dictate how decisions are made in our community. As part of the Earlham College community, the REInvestment campaign acknowledges and incorporates the Principles & Practices and Quaker traditions into our mission on campus.

To find out more about Earlham's REInvestment campaign, visit <http://earlhamreinvestment.wordpress.com>.



"There is an experience of the Eternal breaking into time, which transforms all life into a miracle of faith and action. Unspeakable, profound, and full of glory as an inward experience, it is the root of concern for all creation, the true ground of social endeavor. This inward Life and the outward Concern are truly one whole, and, were it possible, ought to be described simultaneously...."

—Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 1941

**Thanks to Roger Hansen for sharing this quote.*

Minute to Friends Fiduciary Corporation

By Friends Meeting at Cambridge

Following is the divestiture minute the Friends Meeting at Cambridge passed in early October. The minute is to Friends Fiduciary Corporation in Philadelphia where we have meeting funds; at the time of the writing of this minute, FFC had more than 6 percent of their portfolio in fossil fuels.

Spiritual and ethical grounds lead us to this request. Our commitment to stewardship of the earth combines with recognition that at this time we need some energy from fossil fuels. Recognizing that shareholder advocacy has a place and has somewhat impacted the policies of fossil fuel companies, we are nonetheless concerned that the pace of response to climate change is inadequate to address the current crisis. We wish to demonstrate commitment to stewardship and our future. Accordingly, we request that FFC invest no further funds in fossil fuel companies, divest its current holdings in such companies, and

seek to invest in companies active in alternative sources of energy.

While FFC's divestiture may have no major immediate or financial impact on fossil fuel companies by itself, this action is consistent with our core Quaker beliefs. In light of recent weather-related damage to our environment and economy, we especially support a greater focus on alternative sources of energy. Further, we hope that the commitment demonstrated by divestiture will prove valuable by raising awareness and providing more leadings on energy, spiritually-led investment, and concerns of Friends Meeting at Cambridge.

Friends' part in reducing our dependence on fossil fuels is small but significant. It is also consistent with our principles as we invest in the manner of Friends, led by Spirit, and to educate others about the effects of our current energy use.

Friends Meeting at Cambridge

Fossil Fuel Divestment and Quaker Witness

By Brian Drayton

Fossil fuel divestment is an important new strand in the movement to combat climate change and move our society to a more sustainable and reverent way of life. Whoever is drawn to it should get into it, as soon as they can. Having said that, one might ask: Can it be a part of a Quaker Earthcare witness? What could that mean? Does fossil fuel divestment matter, and if so, to whom? Here are some brief reflections.

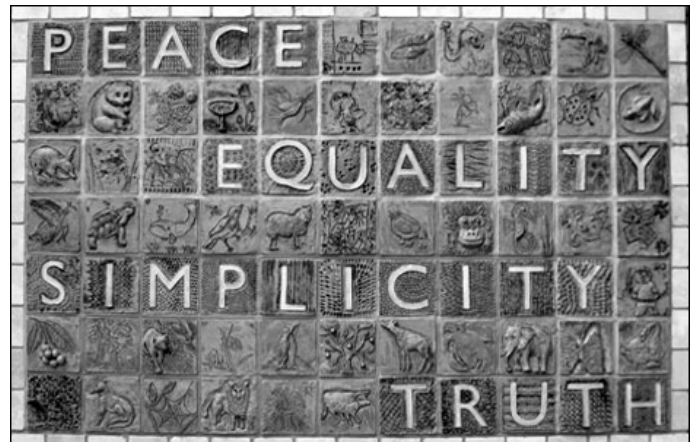
The Beginnings of a Leading

Elias Hicks, on his deathbed, was taken with cold, and his family spread a cotton quilt over him. He showed signs of agitation and plucked repeatedly at the blanket until someone, remembering his long discipline of not using slave-produced cloth, replaced the quilt with a wool blanket, free of that taint. He then relaxed into its warmth.

It is very common for a conscientious person—of whatever creed or none—to realize that a particular practice or material or food has become a trouble or distraction, and that he or she could not feel inward peace without abstaining from it. Friends are familiar with this sense of inward requirement and also are familiar with the consequences that often follow: the pain of being different, the arousing of discomfort or even outrage in others—not to mention physical or financial costs. The costs and disruption may be desirable, if they stir up the Witness of God's spirit in those not yet sensitive to the concern. The growth required to be faithful to the insight may arouse strong inhibitions, whether of pride or fear or conflicting commitments. If the pointings of the Spirit are persistent, the barriers must be dissolved and overcome by a focus on the love and truth we feel will be more fully available if only we can be faithful. Such challenges and dilemmas constitute the shape that the Cross takes for us, until we grow into a greater freedom and integrity, through the faithfulness required of us now, under these conditions. So the concern gains strength and form in the person feeling the stirring, and it becomes part of his or her way forward.

From Leading to Testimony

A testimony, in Quaker parlance, is a statement by the spiritual body. How does an individual leading become a testimony? Emerson, speaking of the movements of history, wrote, "Every reform was once a private opinion, and when it shall be a private opinion again, it will solve the problem of the age." This describes very well what has to happen if the concern of an individual is to become a testimony.



The wall of the Peace Garden at Horfield Quaker Meeting House, Bristol, England.

First comes the individual sensitivity to a concern, and then comes the slow growth of understanding as implications of the insight are worked (or discovered). At some point the person begins to feel towards a response in action. The first response may be a withdrawal from something unacceptable. What's more, the person may not be joined in this concern by others, and it is a gift and a challenge for a community to remember in concrete terms that there are many gifts, but one Spirit, and that one may need to abstain or do something that is not required of others (see Romans 14). Each one must get busy with what they're called to (and no more, yet).

It is very useful to recognize what changes or growth in personal capacity are demanded to maintain our sense of inward peace or balance as we live into the concern. We gain peace, safety, and power by staying close to our Guide, and doing so will have a cost in effort, courage, persistence, patience. In order to be

Continued on next page

faithful, while being constrained by the Gospel law of love and integrity, we must (to some degree at least) become different people – stronger, sweeter, more truthful.

This inward work must be borne in mind because at some point we may feel it important to “go public,” or seek company: to invite, call, or challenge others with the possibility that this concern may be theirs as well as ours. If we bear in mind that this requires of them (as it required of us) not only a change of opinion but also a change of self, we will understand sympathetically that, even if our message arouses the Witness in them, they will need to grow into it, just as we did (and continue to do). For them, as for us, faithfulness will have a cost, and it may be more than first appears.

If the concern is answered by the Witness in others and grows lively and fruitful in them, then the community life can work to support its spread and growth until it becomes a stable, reliable feature of Quakerism as practiced in that community. Once it becomes a typical feature of Quaker culture—without losing its living roots, or becoming ritualized—then it has become a testimony, a statement about what we have discovered about the divine life as humans can embody it. Emerson’s cycle has been completed, from an individual to and through community, received and fruitful in its component hearts.

Is It Quaker Enough?

The anxiety of some Friends to wait to find a way to make a distinctively “Quaker” witness on an issue like fossil fuel divestment seems to me mistaken. Our persistent aim should be to keep pace with the Guide (“Was thee faithful? Did thee yield?”). On the other hand, Friends have a very distinct way of nurturing a concern, which will give it all the Quakerishness it needs. A social witness is not, as we understand it, a bolt out of the blue, unconnected to all prior experience. It is, rather, a further insight into what the divine life requires of us, if we are to continue fresh and clear in that life. The new concern, if it takes root in soil deeply enriched with Quakerism (“the Gospel as traditionally held by Friends”), will be interwoven with other insights about peace, truth, worship, and the rest. In the part of the growth of the concern is the gradual discovery of the harmony and interconnections it has with other “testimonies,” so that one’s understanding and faithfulness is enriched and renewed as a whole. Indeed, our seeking to be true in other matters is very likely to make us more “vulnerable” to new concerns and new service.

The most fully worked-out portrayal of this some-

times astonishing process is seen in John Woolman’s growth. It is never a waste of time for someone seized by an opening concern to revisit his journal and essays with this question in mind.

Purity and Joy

When we feel a fresh concern arising, a sense of renewed engagement and commitment comes with it. It is tempting to imagine using this concern as an instrument for some other purpose: Maybe we should do this to get the young people more involved! Maybe we should do it to enrich our worship! Nowadays, many meetings that are anxious to seek new members publicize Quakerism more effectively. If we get on the divestment bandwagon, maybe it will attract new members! To employ a concern this way, or to argue for it because of its collateral effects, is something to be resisted, as a little thought will make clear. We have to be careful that we don’t move from being an instrument of the Spirit in the concern to making the concern a tool for unrelated ends.

Outreach and meeting growth are great things to pay attention to, and even to carry as a spiritual concern. But a leading to be held in integrity should be received as a gift, like any spiritual gift. It is to be attended to with purity and for its own sake and extended only as the Holy Spirit leads, from within the concern, as you might say. But we shouldn’t fear: part of the winsomeness of an authentic spiritual path is integrity.

Acts of love and truth will attract people as these acts reach the Witness in them, if the concern includes public action and public advocacy. If in living out a concern we stay with the gift as it’s given, our words and deeds “may preach among all sorts of people, and to them,” as Fox says. Then we may indeed get attention because of our witness, but the curious will follow that trail to discover a people whose witness is one fruit of a challenging and dynamic spiritual life.

Finally, if the concern is truly “in the Life,” one of its rewards will be joy, in and around our growing understanding of the wounds of the world: “We write these things so that your joy may be complete” (1 John: 1). With such a lifecycle, with its individual and community waiting, struggle, love, and joy, a concern like divestment from fossil fuel investments—a cause already taken up in many groups outside our Quaker enclave—could become one of our newest testimonies. And like the many testimonies Friends have made over the centuries, it will turn out to be a new form of our oldest, most basic testimony: the surprising and reliable work among us of the Inward Teacher. ❧



SosteNica: the Sustainable Development Fund of Nicaragua

The Divest from Fossil Fuel movement is only one part of a larger divestment movement that each of us can join. There are many ways Friends can begin to divest from the old economy: We can develop a “divestment strategy,” work on expanding our “divestment portfolios,” begin to calculate our “return on divestment,” and buy local. We can also make sure that our purchases and our investments, wherever possible, help to strengthen the new economy while withdrawing support from the old economy, which is causing so much harm to so many.

One way to do this is through micro-lending that supports community development. Back in 1992, long time Quaker Alan Wright founded SosteNica: the Sustainable Development Fund of Nicaragua, to support small farm families and small businesses in sustainable ways. Today, SosteNica’s work integrates environmental and educational projects with financial services such as micro-credit, creating a holistic and long-term approach to the alleviation of poverty in Nicaragua. Their loan programs are designed to strengthen Nicaraguan communities. SosteNica affords the productive poor of Nicaragua — small farmers and micro-enterprises—access to credit that is otherwise scarce. The combination of thoughtful First World investment and careful, socially conscious lending to the poorest, creditworthy borrowers of Nicaragua creates an opportunity for sustainable growth.

SosteNica works in three program areas: micro-finance, agro-ecology and green housing. In each of those areas, they use their loan portfolio and donated funds to advance sustainability in Nicaragua. Their agricultural training program, known as Sos Productivo (which means, “You are Productive!”) teaches organic methods of agriculture, composting, soil conservation,

and crop rotation. Their housing program aims to design and build low-cost homes using natural building materials and eco-technologies such as composting toilets, fuel-efficient stoves, grey water treatment, rain water capture, and edible landscaping. They are working on a green credit program that will make loans used only for “green” industry. At the end of August 2013, SosteNica’s Credit Program was serving 9,809 clients with \$8,094,533 outstanding.

SosteNica offers socially conscious investors in the U.S. an opportunity to use their financial resources constructively, while having a positive impact on a struggling developing country’s economy. Friends who are interested can find out more at www.sostenica.org. ☞



Workshop participants learn to plant a living fence.

The path to a world without poverty is based in dignity, environmental stewardship, and strong community values.

Active Neutrals

Young Adult Quaker Justin Wright has co-founded an Alternative Dispute Resolution non-profit organization called Active Neutrals, which has now run multiple negotiation trainings for an energized, mobilized, and fast-growing group of fossil fuel divestment activists: college students across the US.

Active Neutrals is a group of professional neutrals who have joined together to provide training, facilitation, mediation, and coaching services to the relevant stakeholders involved in public dialogues about social change. Their current areas of focus are gender equality, income equality, and sustainable resource management.

In the area of resource management, Active Neutrals' goal is to provide training, individual consultations, and coaching to opposed parties involved in conversations regarding resource use (for example, investment in fossil fuels). Active Neutrals looks to empower participants in these conversations around social change to implement the best practices of negotiation and effective communication, allowing them to shift away from conflict and confrontation towards dialogue, understanding and constructive, joint problem-solving. As we know from the Apartheid Divestment Campaigns and the Anti Vietnam War Protests of the 1960s, college students are often well-positioned to catalyze social change, both on campus and beyond; those involved in the fossil fuel divestment movement are therefore ideal clients for Active Neutrals.

On September 6th and 7th, 2013, Active Neutrals taught college students communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills tailored to the challenges they are currently facing as activists. The curriculum provided a new framework for thinking about and preparing for negotiations, hands-on exercises, and a four-party role-play designed to simulate a real-life divestment negotiation. It was a diverse group, with representation from the University of Delaware, Temple

University, Haverford College, Bryn Mawr College, and community activists from West Chester and Montgomery counties. End-of-training evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Participants cited improved communication skills and new shifts in campaign strategy. The interest in these trainings is growing; in the last six months, Active Neutrals has also trained students and community activists at Swarthmore College and Tufts University.

Active Neutrals' trainings are aimed at promoting alternative modes of conflict resolution, such as mediation, facilitation, and interest-based negotiation.

Unsurprisingly, Active Neutrals' work strongly aligns with Quaker testimonies. Equality, environmental stewardship, and social justice are all guiding principles for the organization, as is a commitment to peace. Active Neutrals' trainings are aimed at promoting alternative modes of conflict resolution, such as mediation, facilitation, and interest-based negotiation. Through the use of exercises, games and role-playing, Active Neutrals encourages participants to take others' perspective, increasing awareness and tolerance. Fundamentally, the work of Active Neutrals embodies purposeful action based in integrity and respect for others. We care for ourselves, others, and the planet through practicing intentionality in how we communicate, listen, and make decisions; this is an ethos Active Neutrals

shares with its Quaker roots.

Friends are invited to get involved with the work of Active Neutrals by providing student scholarships or hosting a local training. Or, if you are part of a divestment campaign or are an administrator at a school whose students are currently involved in a divestment campaign, Active Neutrals can work to support you. Please contact Justin.wright@activenetrals.org (Active Neutrals is under the care of the Eco-Justice Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting). ♻



Friends Fiduciary Creates a Fossil Free Investment Option

Great news for Quaker investors! Friends Fiduciary Corporation (FFC) has announced a new Fossil Free Fund.

Friends are called to be patterns and examples. Many Friends experience a moral incongruity owning companies that knowingly continue to cause global warming for profit.

In a recent communication, FFC shared, “We are aware that there is a range of opinions on the divestment issue and that these views may continue to change over time. Because Friends Fiduciary wants to be able to serve all Friends’ meetings, churches, schools, and organizations, including those that may reach a different decision on this issue [preferring low carbon investments], we are developing a new investment pool that constituents may opt into that will exclude fossil fuel investments consistent with 350.org’s divestment goal (the Carbon Tracker Top 200 Fossil Fuel Companies). The fund will adhere to FFC’s Quaker investing guidelines and our active shareholder advocacy work will include the companies in this fund. In addition to the fossil fuel screen, the fund will maintain an allocation to alternative/sustainable energy investments.”

Quaker investors will be glad to learn that research suggests minimal or no risk for divestment to investment portfolios. Aperio Group reported on two studies to analyze the impact of divesting from: (1) the Filthy Fifteen, a group of coal utility and extraction companies designated by the coal divestment campaign as the dirtiest public companies to hold; and (2) the exclusion of the entire industry of Oil, Gas, and Consumable Fuels. They found that, “The portfolio becomes riskier by such a trivial amount that the impact is statistically irrelevant. In other words, excluding the Filthy Fifteen [worst companies] has no real impact on risk,” Geddes says. “The impact of screening for coal and carbon is far less significant than skeptics often presume. Anyone on an endowment board facing that decision should do the investment math.” You can read the full Aperio Group report at http://www.aperiogroup.com/system/files/documents/building_a_carbon_free_portfolio.pdf.

In May 2013, the Associated Press commissioned a study based on the returns of the S&P 500. They found that an endowment of \$1 billion that excluded fossil-fuel companies would have grown to \$2.26 billion over the past decade, while an endowment that included these investments would have grown to \$2.14 billion.

Within the last six months, FFC has excluded coal companies and the utility companies related to coal. They have also sold their interests in Exxon, Chevron,

and ConocoPhillips. FFC is committed to continuing their shareholder advocacy for any fossil fuel companies that they continue to own within the Consolidated Fund.

The new Fossil Free Fund will be available in January 2014. Interested Meetings and organizations should contact Friend Fiduciary at (215) 241-7272 or by email at info@friendsfiduciary.org. ☞

This is Where We Live

By Pablo Neruda

*The day had spread itself
and everything was light
and the sea was beating
like a salty lion,
many-handed.
All that deserted space was singing
and I, lost and awed,
looking toward the silence,
opened my mouth and said,
“Mother of the foam,
expansive solitude,
here I will begin my own rejoicing,
my particular poetry.”
From then on I was never
let down by a single wave.
I always found the flavor of the sky
in the water, in the earth,
and the wood and the sea burned together
through the lonely winters.
I am grateful to the earth
for having waited
for me
when sky and sea came together
like two lips touching;
for that’s no small thing, no?—
to have lived
through one solitude to arrive at another,
to feel oneself many things and recover
wholeness.
I love all the things there are
and of all fires
love is the only inexhaustible one;
and that’s why I go from life to life,
from guitar to guitar,
and I have no fear
of light or of shade,
and almost being the earth myself,
I spoon away at infinity.*

Highlights from the October 2013 Steering Committee Sessions

Our Steering Committee met for four days at the end of October—combining presentations, business, committee/working group meetings, and fellowship. It was a delight, as usual, to see so many of you and a pleasure to meet several new folks. Here are some of the highlights; the official minutes will be posted soon on the business site (if not already done by the time you receive this).

We heard presentations from David Schaad and Kenyatta James on local responses to climate change (Vietnam and Philadelphia); both described creative approaches to serious problems facing local communities.

We heard strategies for national responses to climate change from Jim Cason (FCNL) and Jim Davis (Kairos, Canada), and we welcomed FCNL intern, Emily Wirzba.

We learned about the links between climate change and growing population, and discussed our reactions to the problem in worship-sharing.

Our committees and working groups had an opportunity to meet twice during the sessions. Our Sustainability Faith and Action working group decided to focus on Quaker divestment from fossil fuels for the

next year. Please contact Dick Grossman or Shelley Tanenbaum if you want to join this effort.

Next year, the Steering Committee will meet at the Cenacle again in April 10-13, 2014 and at Pendle Hill for our fall meeting, October 2-5, 2014. I am looking for Monthly Meetings who can host our sessions in 2015 and beyond, just as Cambridge Friends and Boulder Monthly Meeting did in 2012 and 2013. Please let me know if your Meetinghouse is a possibility.

Lastly, I want to welcome Roy Taylor as QEW's clerk. He brings with him a wealth of experience, boundless energy, and a passion for Earthcare. This coming year QEW will emphasize outreach to the Quaker community. Roy and I are both available to speak or conduct an interest group about QEW at your Yearly Meeting—please let us know if you would like us to join you there. We also have a wealth of material about Earthcare for each of you to bring to your yearly and monthly meetings. Please contact Katherine Murray for details.

Shelley Tanenbaum
QEW Clerk, October 2011- October 2013

Thanks, Anne!



By Roy Taylor and QEW Publications

When we were all together in Chicago in October, we had a chance to thank Anne Mitchell, our General Secretary, for her time with us. Anne joined us three years ago at a time of transition for this organization. She was able to make several great contributions to QEW during her tenure.

To help us organize, Anne developed a set of priorities for us to be following. This started a process we are still continuing, as we strive to be more focused and to coordinate better within the separate moving parts of QEW's larger group.

Anne also has been wonderful at making broader connections with other Quaker organizations and opening the way for collaborations that will further our work for Earth. These relationships include the two QUNO's, AFSC, FWCC, CFSC, and Britain Yearly Meeting.

Quaker Earthcare Witness will continue to benefit from both this change in process and the relationship building that Anne has started for us. Her gifts have been a blessing. And we look forward to her continuing relationship with us in other capacities as her interests and leadings dictate. Anne, we wish you all the best! ☺



*Anne Mitchell, QEW General Secretary,
2010-2013*

Moments from QEW in Chicago



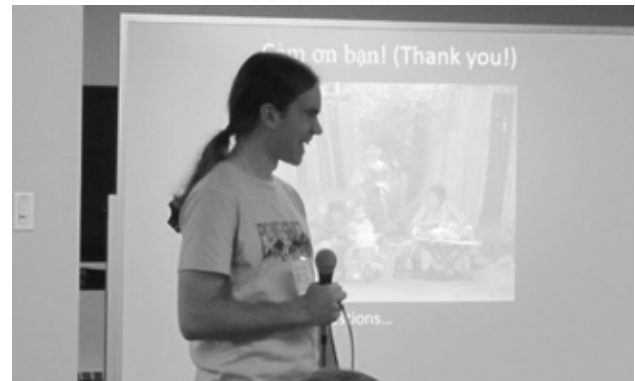
QEW Committees and Working Groups enjoyed face-to-face time.



"The Impact of Population on Climate Change: Our Response?" with Ken Lawrence, Dick Grossman, and Roy Treadway.



Kenyatta James of Green Street Meeting (A QEW Mini-Grant recipient) presented on their local response to climate change.



David Schaad, QEW Mini-Grant recipient, presented what he's learned about environmental needs and solutions in Vietnam.



Friends Farzeen Mahmud and Ranae Hanson were inspired to lead an activity in which we named the ways we're grieving for Earth.



Jim Cason of FCNL and Jim Davis of Kairos Canada shared hope and possibility by presenting national opportunities for climate change action.

Nancy Sleator, *from page 2*

By chance, I encountered another Friend, who was looking for someone to work with her on some divestment projects. Together we came up with the idea of figuring out how to use social media such as Facebook and Twitter as platforms for reaching alumni, including our own college friends. The voices of alumni in backing up the student call for divestment convey the depth, breadth, and seriousness of the movement.

I was way out of my comfort zone. I reasoned that as the climate changes, we're all going to be out of our comfort zones, so I'd better face my discomfort and become adept at using social media. I invited a couple of younger colleagues from work to help me get started. I invite you all to "like" our page, "Alumni Supporting Fossil Fuel Divestment" (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Alumni-Supporting-Fossil-Fuel-Divestment/398342870264397?fref=ts>). We're using it to make suggestions to alumni for ways to get involved. Resources for alumni, and for students who want to work with alumni are nearing completion, and we'll be using Twitter and Facebook to make them widely available.

I know the effort to address climate change will go on for many decades to come. I'm pleased with our first steps, and I look forward to seeing the divestment movement grow.

Warmly,
Nancy Sleator
Lansdowne Monthly Meeting
Lansdowne, Pennsylvania

Dick Grossman, *from page 2*

complicated than it might initially appear. Although I am not good at history, it seems that one of the reasons that slaves became less desirable was the Industrial Revolution. Work done by human muscle was replaced by work done by machines. The fuel for work went from food to wood and then very quickly to coal and other fossil fuels.

What, then, will replace fossil fuels? Renewable energy sources can go a long way toward this transition, but there are limitations to what they can replace. Furthermore, there are many people in the world who still use muscle (either their own or animals') to do their work. These people would love to have the privilege that we in rich countries have enjoyed for the past 200+ years of harnessing fossil fuels.

I remain optimistic that we can slow the production of greenhouse gases, and that Quakers can be leaders in this effort. But I also think that we should be realistic.

A study several years ago suggested that the least expensive and most desirable way to decrease carbon emissions is by decreasing the number of emitters. I don't know too many people who want to consume less, but it is estimated that there are 222 million women worldwide who do not have access to modern contraception, but want to have control over their fertility. I am sorry to say that some of these women live in the USA.

QEW (and its predecessor, Friends Committee on Unity with Nature) has had a long-term concern about human population. As we work to decrease our carbon footprints we should also keep in mind the millions of people who have children by chance, not by choice.

Dick Grossman

Business, *from page 16*

Indigenous Peoples and other very sound groups representing many millions of people. These coalitions do have power, as shown in the run-up to the World Summit last June (Rio+20) when an open letter from NGOs to the High Commissioner of Human Rights stopped powerful countries from eliminating all reference to human rights in the outcome document. I plan to report more on the developing civil society landscape.

But Am I to Be a Prophet?

Some years back, attending the UN, I became aware that there is a war going on against Earth and all of us

who participate in our planet's living systems. I came home and sat in my backyard, not wanting to talk to anyone, wondering whether, now that I had woken up, I was called to be a prophet. Must I now warn people about the coming downfall? Tell them to repent? I did not at all want to be a prophet, and I went to bed unconsoled. I woke up unconsoled and wandered again into the yard where I had an enlightening thought. "I don't have to be a prophet. Yes, there is a war on. Well then, I can be a war correspondent. Right?" Right.

I intend to speak more strongly in these pages, reporting on the war. I won't be like a prophet telling you what to do. I will trust you to ask in prayer, alone and with others, how you are led forward. ☞

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Business Takeover at the UN



by Mary “the non-prophet” Gilbert
QEW Representative to the UN

When you come into a complex phenomenon like the UN it takes time to get a fix on what’s happening. Your perceptions keep changing. It can be hard to tease apart your own new learning from any changes going on in the confusing institutional environment you are learning about. I am referring here to a gradual takeover of the UN by transnational corporations, which at first I didn’t see because I was busy learning the ropes.

Business in the Driver’s Seat

Since I began attending UN sessions in 2001, I have seen a stunning increase in the influence of business over decisions made at the UN. A year ago I wrote in *Befriending Creation* about a proposal from the World Economic Forum that would put corporations formally in charge of governance on global issues. (<http://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/calling-all-voices>) The proposal stated that the components of this takeover would not appear all at once but would show up little by little in international trade agreements. I believe we are seeing this now in the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) that is being fast-tracked through the U.S. Senate, and in the proposed EU-US

Free Trade Agreement, both of which are of concern to FCNL. (See <http://fcnl.org/search/?q=TPP>.)

This takeover trend is also taking place in UN climate negotiations. An article in the October 17, 2013 issue of *Corporate Europe* stated, “Last week’s ‘pre-COP’ saw around 40 ministers and negotiators meet for three days with representatives from big business. Some of the most polluting, climate-damaging companies were present... (T)he meeting to decide this November’s negotiating agenda was an invite only affair for government and business, with civil society excluded. So no public scrutiny, no accountability, and only the Minister’s own conclusions to indicate what was discussed.” (<http://corporateeurope.org/blog/big-business-allowed-precook-climate-negotiations-behind-closed-doors-foreseeable-future>)

The Excluded Voices

In reaction to this trend, numerous civil society umbrella groups are coalescing, insisting on being part of the discussion. Reports are coming from Via Campesina, Rights for Sustainability, Third World Network, the South Center, Peoples Treaties for Sustainability,

See **Business** on page 15