



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness
Affirming our essential unity with nature

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FCNL & the Moral Call to Conscience on Climate

by Emily Wirzba, FCNL

I OFTEN BECOME OVERWHELMED knowing that climate disruption is causing global temperatures to increase, sea levels to rise, and ecosystems to be irreversibly damaged. At times I become so frustrated at the seeming inability of the U.S. to take meaningful action, despite the immense scale of the problem. I reflect on what actions I can personally take to work for an Earth restored. While there are numerous ways for individuals to take action, we at the Friends Committee on National Legislation would like to share with you one path forward.

The need for U.S. Congressional action on climate disruption is clear. In order for global greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050—the level that most scientists argue is necessary to prevent irreversible damage to our earth—the international community must agree to a global, binding emissions reduction agreement. Without strong support from the U.S. government, however, such an international agreement won't be very effective. Bipartisan, Congressional recognition of human-caused climate disruption is essential to catalyzing strong U.S. commitments to the UN climate negotiations.

Many Americans are deeply concerned about climate disruption and want action taken to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, in Congress, legislative solutions to climate disruption are obscured by a fog of partisanship.

Following the tenet of Alcoholics Anonymous, before you can solve a problem, you must first admit you have one. Unless there is bipartisan recognition of



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human-caused climate disruption in Congress, meaningful discussions around the most effective ways to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions cannot occur.

How can we show Congress that climate disruption is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity? How can we work in a truly nonpartisan fashion to advocate for an Earth restored?

When I attended the QEW Steering Committee meeting in Chicago this past October, I was inspired to learn about the ways many of you were working for healthy communities and creation. I am eager to see how the FCNL working group committee can con-

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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

June 10, 2014. Deadline for article submissions for July-August 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.

February 24, 2014

Dear Editor,

When I read wishful thinking like [that offered in the review of *The God Species*, Jan-Feb 2014], I always wonder exactly who is the "we" that will solve all these problems for the whole world, and who is the "us" that will feed eight billion. I am convinced that the only real solutions will be small and local. The idea that humanity is cohesive enough for "us" to solve this problem in one way for the whole world strikes me as flagrant hubris. Remember the story of the Tower of Babel?

I'm certain that high-tech projects like nuclear power plants, hybrid GMOs, and high urban densities of more than a few hundred people are not a bridge to the future.

Is methadone really a good way to extricate oneself from addiction? I doubt it.

Rather than investing lots of money, time, and fossil fuel energy in these wishful bridges, I predict more of us would be better off in the longer term if we invested instead, just once, in truly sustainable steady-state alternatives such as permaculture, composting privies, eco-villages surrounded by greenbelt, passive solar homes, etc. After all, if we invest in the suggested bridges of nuclear power, smart growth, GMOs, etc., we will just have to invest all over again in what's actually sustainable.

Muriel Strand, P.E.

April 21, 2014

Dear Editor,

I have some comments about the 2014 March-April issue of *BeFriending Creation*. The first is about Clerk Taylor's column. I certainly applaud his concern to be consistent. However, there appears to be a big inconsistency in his second paragraph referring to, "The FCUN working group." It has been about 10 years since our organization changed its name from Friends Committee On Unity With Nature to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Also, it is not clear to me what "introductory statement" Clerk Taylor is referring to. It does not seem to relate to the Vision and Witness statement on page two. I might also suggest that "using the term *contemplative action*" is just the world's latest buzz word and not a particularly Friendly term. Further, your readers would have been better served if Clerk Taylor had written out the five statements of purpose instead of Charles Schade's. Finally, there's the "CCC." If I hadn't been on the Steering Committee before, I would not know what it means. After all, Friends strive to be inclusive.

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FCNL, from page 1

tinue to strengthen the relationship between QEW and FCNL. I believe that as faith communities continue to work together, we can better accomplish the changes we seek.

Faith communities have played significant roles in social movements throughout history. Now, more than ever, we believe that the faith community is needed to elevate the moral frame within which to discuss climate disruption. Remaining silent in the face of this great challenge tacitly endorses Congressional inaction.

We at FCNL believe that faith communities are uniquely suited to issue to Congress a moral call to conscience on climate disruption. Faith communities are grounded in a care for creation that will enable our children, the vulnerable, and future generations to thrive. As people that strive to see the light of God in each individual, we can build bridges with those around us, seeking our commonalities rather than our differences.

We know that many Congressional leaders privately admit the realities of climate disruption, yet feel like they don't have the political space to publicly say so. By appealing to our legislator's faith or moral background, we can create the space for meaningful dialogue on climate disruption.

At FCNL, we seek to amplify the faith note in the chord of climate advocacy, enabling the powerful, moral messaging of the faith community to be uniquely articulated and expressed. We urge our constituents to hold quiet conversations with their members of Congress from the basis of their religious, ethical, or moral perspectives, calling upon them to express bipartisan recognition that climate disruption is happening and human-caused, and to commit to taking action.

Though bipartisan recognition is not a tangible legislative goal, we view the current prospects for meaningful climate legislation like seeds tossed onto rocky ground or shallow soil. In order to have deep and fertile soil for legislative solutions to flourish, we need bipartisan recognition in Congress. No climate legislation will pass either the House or the Senate unless it's bipartisan.

The seemingly simple action of communicating with your elected representative is powerful, vastly underrated, and accessible to all. Members of Congress respond to the political will that we as people of faith can create. While at times we become overwhelmed by the amount of money that influences politics, we must remember that the only antidote to organized money is organized people. If we truly are concerned about the effects of climate disruption on our earth, we must

continue to use our voices and take responsibility for the world we seek.

It is easy to get involved in our strategy. We ask that individuals convene interfaith delegations to speak with their members of Congress from the heart about why they view action on climate disruption to be so vital. We ask that people show their members of Congress that people from all faith and civil-society backgrounds are concerned about rising sea levels, more frequent and intense storms, and increasing temperatures. This message is much more powerful when it reflects a diversity of backgrounds, so we urge you to gather as many faith traditions as possible in your delegation.

We suggest that people tell stories about how climate disruption is already harming communities, and why that matters as people of faith. We recommend that individuals ask their members of Congress to organize a bipartisan acknowledgement of climate disruption, either through a Congressional resolution, press-conference, or statement. Finally, we suggest that people urge their representatives to have discussions with those across the aisle about how to best take action, urging them to have enough political courage to become national leaders for their grandchildren.

If this strategy resonates with you, FCNL can provide as much assistance as needed to help these quiet conversations go smoothly. We have materials that you can give to your legislators. We have created a "road-map" for interfaith lobby visits and are happy to walk individuals through this entire process.

Quiet conversations from the heart at the grassroots level allow us at FCNL to have incredible opportunities to visit with offices in D.C. that often have previously declined our invitations to meet. Already, we have seen how powerful the constituent and student visits are in our lobbying efforts, when framed by the moral call to conscience. We urge you to view our resources online at <http://fcnl.org/issues/environment>, and to contact jose@fcnl.org and emily@fcnl.org with any questions you have about how to get involved. ☞



Earth Literacy?

by Brad Stocker, Ed.D.

WHEN I SAY THAT I FACILITATE Earth Literacy—as I recently did at the Palm Beach Friends Meeting—the question often comes: What is Earth Literacy? In this article, I'd like to introduce QEW friends and readers to the concept and invite you to engage the question.

Let's establish a simple framework and context for this exercise and get an idea of how we can think about literacies. Usually we think of literacy as language literacy, but the word literacy has come to be applied to many skill/knowledge areas. Now we have math literacy, computer literacy, science literacy, and others, including Earth Literacy. In all these literacies we have lexicon, skills, knowledge, outcomes, and ways to check on mastery. We also have some data about the consequences of illiteracy in these areas.

In language literacy, we have a universal measure that we expect a person to be able to read at the 6th grade level. For adult functional language literacy, one skill set would be that the person can read and accurately fill out job, loan, or other applications. We know the many consequences of illiteracy include higher crime and imprisonment.

In math literacy, we can expect a person to be able to perform basic mathematical functions (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) and apply those functions in real situations such as managing bank accounts, balancing a check book, and figuring simple and compounded interests. There is a certain overlap with language literacy in that many arithmetic problems are framed within language and posed as what some of us came to know as word problems. This kind of overlap foreshadows the interconnectedness that is an essential understanding in Earth Literacy, too.

For computer literacy we might expect that a person could identify the essential functional parts of the computer—mouse, keyboard, monitor, etc.—and have basic understanding of files and folders. The person should be able to navigate the Internet, use basic software such as word processors, and work with email.

According to National Science Education Standards, scientific literacy is the knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in society, and economic productivity. It includes specific abilities such as logical reasoning and awareness of the nature and function of theories and scientific method.



Science literacy helps the person distinguish between real and junk science and between fact and belief.

With this simple framework, ask yourself: What would it mean to me to be Earth Literate? Include the elements mentioned in the second paragraph. Other questions may arise as well, such as: *What skills do I need? What language, terms, definitions are essential? What knowledge, sensibilities, and awareness do I need? What information is basic to be Earth Literate? What do I need to know about Earth and myself to be Earth Literate? Am I Earth Literate?*

As you reflect on the questions, please write down your answers. This is a serious request for you to do a serious exercise which has deep value. Writing your answers is important because when we put our ideas in words, we commit to them and the exercise. It will also allow us to share our ideas more easily with others.

Many of us have been working in the enviro/ earth-friendly/eco advocacy/support/activist field for awhile, sometimes in harmony, and sometimes at odds with each other and ourselves. Essentially we often have not come to agreement because we are not Earth Literate and often do not share even common language. The many definitions for “sustainability” floating around make the point.

My simplest definition for Earth Literacy, the elevator one I use is this: Earth Literacy begins with knowing and understanding the implications of the science story of the creation and the evolution of our Universe and Earth told with an infusion of spirituality. It doesn't say it all but even then I have seen so many eyes glaze over. This is why I came to see in Palm

See **Literacy**, next page

Beach that our approach to the story needs to be basic, playful, deep, and engaging and not a “talking head” approach. I also realized that there is a deep fragmentation of science literacy which is undermining Earth Literacy.

I have become aware that our Western, European, Judeo-Christian dominance of U.S. culture, politics, and education is so profoundly infused with a specific narrative that almost everyone—religious or not—can give some rendition of the creation story as told in the Old Testament and Torah. This version of Earth’s creation seems better known and more deeply ingrained in our psyche, our culture, and our consciousness than the science story.

“So what!” you might exclaim, but it’s better if we ask, “So what?” because then we come back to the crux of not only what Earth Literacy is but why Earth Literacy is as important as any of the other literacies. The short answer is that being literate enables. It enables literate persons to make informed, better decisions, and take positive life-affirming actions toward maintaining right relationships, as global citizens, with and within Earth, and to join a progressive movement of

continuously evolving and expanding their literacy. It is also important to remember that illiteracy comes with great costs and severe disadvantages. So, when you take time for your reflection, I invite you to list the costs of Earth Illiteracy as you see them.

Now, what do you want everyone to know about what it means to be Earth literate? What do you want your kids and grandkids and cousins to know? What do you want seven generations from now to know and to build on? Please send your ideas to my email: earthsibling@gmail.com. I will put them together and share what we have in common and thus, we can continue an ever deepening discussion of Earth Literacy. I will then share the working definition I have for Earth Literacy.

When exploring Earth Literacy in workshops, we explore these questions and get in touch with the bubbles from the Big Belch—bubbles, according to Cynthia Brown’s book, *Big History*, which were involved in the beginning of life on Earth. Isn’t that a magical idea—bubbles bouncing together got stuck on each other, and came together to form the essential cells that evolved into us! ♪

BeFriending Earth: an Introduction to Earth Literacy

by Mary Jo Klingel

PLEASE CONSIDER INVITING Brad Stocker from Miami Monthly Meeting to offer an Earth Literacy Workshop at your monthly, quarterly, or yearly meeting.

When Brad offered his workshop at Palm Beach Meeting, the Meeting just north of me, I knew I would be going. Friends asked me why: wasn’t I literate enough about the Earth? I didn’t have a reasonable answer. I just knew I needed to go.

It was a fine workshop, well worth attending. Brad is a good teacher, well informed and easy to listen to. His messages about caring for our Earth resonated with the workshop participants. That was all good, but it was not what made the workshop memorable.

What made the workshop magical is that we played. Really, we played like kids.

It took me a while to relax into the day. I arrived as I do at most environmental workshops: things are worsening, perhaps catastrophic, and I must be very serious and productive. I had to adjust to the surprise of having fun. When I was able to relax, I could see that there is a sweetness to be felt, inside us and around us. We can slow down enough to see the magic in one another and the Earth. The meta-message is that we have enough time to be present to beauty. We have time to remember what it is like to be a little child



and fall in love with a snowflake or a leaf or a chipmunk.

The workshop gave us gifts on many levels, including balancing the learning of the mind and the learning of the heart. The best part was going outside and re-connecting with the joy and beauty freely given by our lovely green planet-home.

To schedule a workshop, you can reach Brad by phone at 305 661 5954 or by e-mail at brstocker@yahoo.com. Please put Earth Literacy on the subject line to identify your request. ♪

Epiphany

By Angela Manno

Out of the depths I cry unto you,
Oh Presence, Maker of this perfect world
Out of this silence but for my own breath

Out of the darkness and weightlessness
The black infinite night
Encrusted with countless stars, cool, distant, white.

I turn my gaze, not ready fully to take in
The Spectacle below:

A slow procession of green and earthen landmasses
Mountains undulating
Grazed by gentle, drifting clouds
A miraculous harmony of soft and brilliant hues
Vast oceans
Shining with sunlight

From a well of tears
Come flooding . . . a sense of Being,
Connection, and yes Love
It's all alive, life within Life.

Garden of Eden
Suspended in space,
Nothing holding it up
No fulcrum upon which it spins

But wait . . .
Two new continents have come into view
And now, suddenly
The other side of the world is before me!

I must think:
Have I some special right to gaze upon such Beauty,
The living host of all we know: all of history and music
and poetry
And art and birth and death and love and tears?

What have I done to merit this moment?
This glimpse of Divinity,

Devastating Beauty,
Mother of us all?

Though I float miles above,
I am a part of that Life,
Tied to her through her breath
Which I take with me
In a tank on my back

I am afloat in the infinite sea
My heart races
There is no up or down . . .

But there is worship
There is the bursting of my heart
There is the cry from the most profound depths:

See where you live, Humanity!
See your own Self!
This tiny, miraculous island of life
Adrift in the vast cosmos

We are so alone, so fragile.
There is nothing more glorious

So said the Saint:

"Because the divine could not image itself forth in any one being, it created the great diversity of things so that what was lacking in one would be supplied by the others and the whole universe together would participate in and manifest the divine more than any single being."

And the writer of Hindu texts: "I am Beauty among beautiful things."

For all eternity there is but one Earth.
I will tell them, I will make them understand . . .

Plunging back into you in a ball of fire,
I will not forget your face,
I will remember you, Jewel of the Universe,
Most Holy Ground, Home.

© Angela Manno 2009

Commentary: In beginning a new body of artwork, I looked for inspiration in the ever-expanding file of quotations I had gathered over decades from numerous sources: world literature, spiritual traditions, physics, cosmology, indigenous wisdom, and ecology. In my search, a quote from Michael Collins, pilot of Apollo 11 (the first lunar landing) command module, struck me to the core: "I think a future flight should include a poet, a priest, and a philosopher ... we might get a much better idea of what we saw."

Sensing a new urgency to Collins' point, particularly as we continue to unravel the biosphere at an ever-increasing rate, and realizing that such a flight crew would probably not be forthcoming any time soon, I thought to myself: I will try my hand at it. After all, as a visual artist, I interpret and condense experience into images like a poet, I approach my art as a form of ministry/service, and I am a natural philosopher, prone to the pursuit of wisdom. Plus I have spent many hours in conversation with the astronauts and in reading what they have written and absorbing what they witnessed. Their accounts have been a deep and abiding source of inspiration to my art and have an urgent message for the world. ∞

This poem and commentary were originally published in the book, *Held in Love: Life Stories to Inspire us Through Times of Change* (Ed: Molly Young Brown and Carolyn Wilbur Treadway).



By Mary Gilbert, QEW Representative to the UN

Timetable for the SDGs

In March the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) completed 12 months of stock-taking in 37 areas of human interaction with our natural environment. As of April, the OWG was left with only 20 days to put together a first draft of recommendations for the SDGs; five days each in April, May, June, and July. This draft must be submitted to the General Assembly (GA) before September 2014, and the final version of the SDGs is to be negotiated and accepted by the GA a year later, in September 2015.

Nexus versus silo thinking

I have been writing for years now about the subtle and total intermeshing of the delicate, elaborate systems that make our world a living entity and enable the lives of all species. All these systems are really one system of overwhelming complexity. We can talk about its various aspects separately for convenience, as we do about our bodies' circulatory and digestive systems, but Earth's natural systems are no more separable from the whole than those that keep our bodies going.

Nexus thinking is an effort to get a handle on this complexity. You can't really grasp a nexus using ever so many cause-and-effect connections because a nexus involves constant, multiple feedback loops in every direction. Many of these are simultaneous, so that what you started with is already changed by interactions as you begin. Some effects are hard to see because they have built-in delays. Other effects are unexpected because they are flat-out counterintuitive.

Nexus thinking is the opposite of the much more common silo thinking that surrounds us and gives rise to the idea that if the only tool you have is a hammer,

everything you see looks like a nail. Specialists in water systems may understand dams and sewers but don't necessarily think in terms of the internal structure needed by healthy soil to hold moisture. City planners may not consider rural needs for thriving local economies and a comprehensive rural-urban system.

It is very hard to think outside the silo of your expertise, where perhaps you have been successful in your field without recognizing its inherent limitations. To participate in nexus thinking you have to leave behind the disciplinary silo of your training and take in the values and principles of other fields that you've dismissed as externalities. Even when you have a cognitive grasp of the complexity involved it is very, very difficult to interrupt thinking habits so as to work well with people from other disciplines. Many people are working hard to see that the SDGs will be developed with nexus thinking.

Goals, targets, and indicators

The SDGs will include up to 10 goals. Under each goal there will be a cluster of targets, chosen to show progress toward the goals. Each target will be measured by several statistical tools called indicators. Nexus thinking should be evident in both the targets, which can be more inclusive than usual, and the indicators, which can be applicable to several targets. Although the OWG is not tasked with finding indicators, for the five days in May, UN statisticians will be present at OWG sessions to get an idea of what will be needed.

The challenge of getting data that are both useful and comparable among countries is enormous. Some countries don't even have census data. There is question about who will pay for the training and the data collection and analysis once targets and indicators are determined.

UN, *continued from page 7*

Colombia and Guatemala have come up with a Dashboard approach in which there would be a set of internationally agreed overarching goals, but countries would be able to create their own targets. This would set up built-in buy-in by the countries, which would not have had someone else's priorities forced on them. The idea involves finding a balance between global concerns and internally determined national needs. The following link is to a superbly conceived, easy-to-follow PowerPoint presentation that is too good for me to try to condense. <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/DashboardProposalColombiaGuatemala.pdf>.

Life outside the silos

As a genuine non-expert in every field I can think of, I have the advantage of not having to fight my way out of any disciplinary silo. In a way that gives me a head start. However, like the danger of a silo thinker not understanding someone else's silo thinking, we non-specialists also have a tendency to simplify and discount things we don't have much information about. It is possible that some of these suggestions incorporate factors I would be glad to have if I did understand them.

I anticipate that the outcome of work on the SDGs

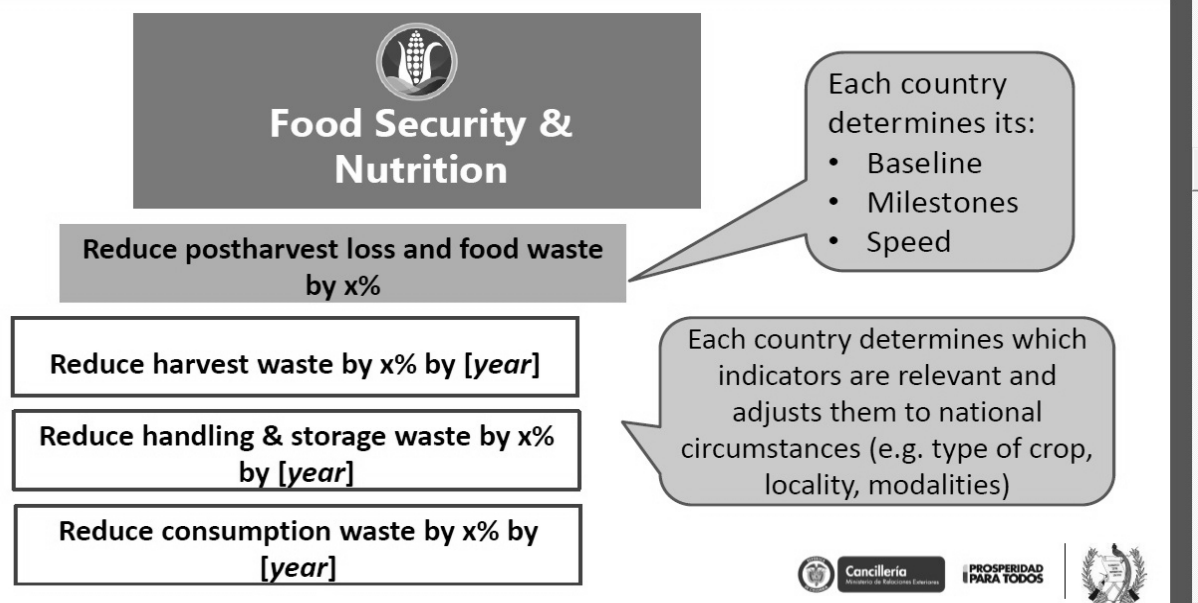
will for me be full of personal disappointment, but I can and do hope for some measure of wisdom for humankind in the post-2015 agenda.

Planetary boundaries and sustainable sourcing

At the end of my articles I usually say, "Here are the facts; discern how you are called." This time I am making suggestions you might want to act on. Here are two things you can do that will cost nothing:

1. Improve the public conversation. Many ordinary folks as well as decision-makers are still averse to talking about "climate change." I've been looking for useful phrases that they might hear better. "Planetary boundaries" and "planetary limits" are not common in the general public conversation and absent in the "financial community." Let's inject these phrases into more of our talk.
2. Promote better purchasing by local governments. In the U.S., some states and municipalities are way ahead of the federal government in making beneficial changes in how they do things. Find, support, even start a campaign for sustainable sourcing, sometimes called "green procurement," by your local governments. This can make an enormous difference, both in physical effects and in public education. ☞

An Example



A Brief Update from Downunder

By Robert Howell

THE AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS RESPONSE to Climate Change was established in 2008 (<http://www.arccc.org.au/>). It is an initiative focused on multifaith environmental action, linking with like-minded groups such as 350.org, Go Fossil Free Australia, the Australian Student Environmental Network, The Vital Few, and Market Forces. The latter two groups are aimed at encouraging superannuation funds to invest more in the low-carbon economy and to pressure the “Big 4” banks to stop funding destructive fossil fuel projects.

The first religious organization to go Fossil Free in Australia and New Zealand was the NSW/ACT Synod of the Uniting Church in April 2013. The Melbourne Unitarian Church, the Canberra Regional Meeting of Quakers, and five of the seven dioceses of the Anglican Church in New Zealand have passed similar resolutions.

Aotearoa New Zealand Quakers made a Statement on Environmental Sustainability in 2000 (<http://quaker.org.nz/ym-statement-on-environmental-sustainability>). A testimony was adopted in 2010. Earth stories of Individual Quakers are available at <http://quaker.org.nz/earth-friends>.

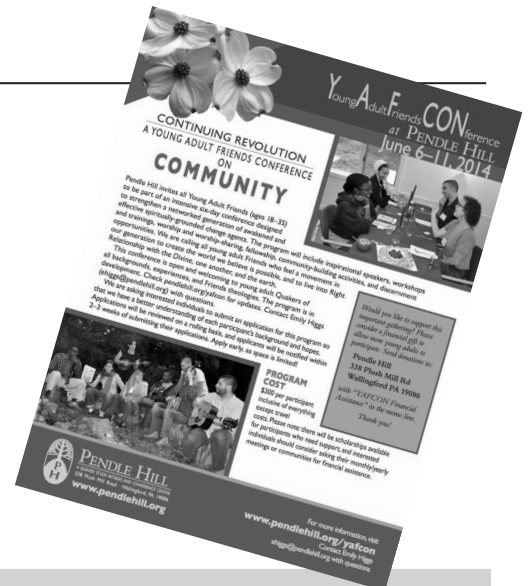
Australian Friends produced a Quaker Earth-care Statement in 2008 (<http://www.quakers.org.au/?page=298>). They have recently published Towards a Vision of a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia: Some Quaker Voices. In addition to background papers on ecological footprints, the economy, and energy, there are inspiring stories of how individual Australian Quakers are responding at personal levels (<http://www.quakers.org.au/?page=299>). ☸

Young Adult Friends Conference on Community June 6-11, 2014

There are still five remaining spots in the Continuing Revolution 2014 YAF Conference at Pendle Hill this June 6-11. QEWS support for this conference has taken many invaluable forms thus far: financial support, programmatic expertise, workshop/interest group leadership, elder accompaniment, and participant recruitment. Today we need your help with finding our last few YAF participants! Each year we have had several young adults who have heard about this conference from QEWS members, and we rely on you to help us spread the word.

Please share information about the conference with any young adults in your community who you think would be enriched by this social justice training opportunity! You'll find a copy of the flier on our Facebook page.

We hope to bring 45 young adults from around the US and Canada together this June—more than any year thus far—and with your help, we will be able to reach that goal. Any questions can be directed to Emily Higgs at ehiggs@pendlehill.org.



Mark Your Calendars!

Please join us for these upcoming events:

- **June 6 - 11, 2014:** Continuing Revolution YAF Conference at Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA
- **June 11 - 14, 2014:** FUM Triennial, at Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN
- **June 29 - July 5, 2014:** FGC Gathering, near Pittsburgh, PA
- **October 2 - 5, 2014:** QEWS 2014 Fall Meeting at Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA

Scenes from the QEW 2014 Spring Steering Committee Meeting in Chicago



Conversations on the porch



"Feet not in mouths" [courtesy of Brad Stocker]



Together in group



Sending cards to missing Friends



Conversations in circle



Maia and her son

Letters from page 2

My second comment is a concern about the fact that a page and a half of the issue was devoted to promoting Right Sharing and their blatant request for donations. Perhaps their boldness will serve as a model for Quaker Earthcare Witness.

I remain a faithful supporter of the good work that QEW is doing.

Alice M. Wald
Walhalla, SC

QEW's Response:

From Roy: Friend Alice is right to remind us of the use of acronyms that can seem as exclusionary and lead to many misunderstandings. The original article had started as an in-house report from the Clerk to the Steering Committee. Although it had gone through an editorial process it was still too much an "in-house" document. Let me try to translate terms used in the article.

The current FCUN, Friends Centering on Unity with Nature, is a working group that took on the task of discerning the original statements of purpose, adopted and made part of the Articles of Incorporation in 1990, as to their relevance to the organization today. They were re-adopted by Quaker Earthcare Witness by the Steering Committee last June during our meeting in Boulder, CO. As they now appear in our In Practice:

The Purpose of QEW

1. *To search and to help others to search for that life which affirms the unity of all creation.*
2. *To apply and to help others to apply Friends' practice to live in deep communion with all life*

spirit.

3. *To be guided by and to help others to be guided by the light within us to participate in the healing of the earth.*
4. *To provide resources, networking, and support to yearly and monthly meetings of the Religious Society of Friends, and to others of whatever persuasion; to help them in their search for effective ways to achieve the above objectives.*
5. *To provide a reflective and energetic forum that will strengthen and deepen that spiritual unity with nature which values the integrity, diversity, and continuity of life on earth.*

The term "contemplative action" comes from a tri-fold that was produced last year and sent to all members of the QEW family as part of our fundraiser appeal. A lot of work went into that document and we as an organization are still in the process of discerning how it will inform our work. I can assure Friend Alice that it is not just the world's latest buzz word and one that can have great meaning for Friends as they look to take their faith into effective action in the world.

From Katherine: Your point about the Right Sharing article is well-taken, Alice. I wanted to lift up this good work in case it resonated with QEW Friends, leaving the idea of our responses to these needs between each of us and spirit. I know many QEW Friends and supporters are involved in a number of issues and support a variety of efforts, so it was with the hope of furthering Friends' work and collaborating with other organizations that I included the Right Sharing story.

Water from page 12

in Revelation, the river is seen to flow past the tree of life whose leaves heal nations. Kelly told us that we are the "citizens of Eden hear and now" and he encouraged us to "open your soul to the living waters." The river cannot be contained; it flows out of Eden to the rest of the world.

I found inspiration in Kelly's use of the environmental metaphor of wading out and picking up our feet to let the living waters flow over us. The environmental challenges we are now facing are enormous and daunting. We need to allow ourselves to open to spirit for guidance as we face these challenges together. Kelly said, "The world is broken; it is hungry for what we have to offer. Relax, pick up your feet, and let the living waters carry you."

I am still singing one of the songs we sang together during the weekend: *Somos el Barco, Somos el Mar*. We sang, "The stream sings it to the river,

the river sings it to the sea The sea sings it to the boat that carries you and me" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij9zQoSJ3Mk>). . ♪



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Let the Living Water Flow!

By Shelley Tanenbaum, General Secretary

WHAT DOES FOOT-WASHING have to do with climate chaos? Leave it to worldwide Friends to give me the answer.

I had the opportunity in March to attend a section of the Americas consultation sponsored by Friends World Committee for Consultation, in Sacramento, CA (<http://www.fwccamericas.org/>). During one afternoon session, we were asked to pair up and wash each other's feet, harkening back to Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet. During the same afternoon as part of the same program, we watched Jon Watt's video reading of the Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIsSSYbk1uI>), calling on all of Quakerdom to radically change our personal lifestyles and to work toward radical changes in society in response to environmental concerns.

The link between foot-washing and the Kabarak Call is "service leadership." On the one hand, we are literally serving hand to foot, taking care of people in greater need. On the other, we are asking Friends, and ultimately all of humanity, to change the way we are living on the planet in order to create a more peaceful and sustainable world.

By the end of the afternoon, clarity emerged to link these areas of service through humility, connection, and empathy. It takes a tremendous amount of humility to kneel and wash someone's feet. Similarly, we

humans need to humble ourselves and live as though we are one of many peoples, one of many species; all of creation is valuable. Further, foot-washing is such a personal act that we lose our sense of separation—there is no "us" and "them" when engaged in foot-washing.

We need to lose our sense of "us" and "them" to change our society locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally if we are going to live in peace and harmony with creation. Finally, both foot-washing and the Kabarak Call require empathy and caring. Why do we serve—whether for an individual or for all life on the planet? Because we care.

Participants were treated to a sermon Sunday morning by Kelly Kellum, Pastoral Minister from High Point Friends Meeting in North Carolina, on the theme for the consultation, "Let the Living Waters Flow." Kellum described a whitewater river trip on which he was told that if he fell into the raging river, he should relax, pick up his feet, trust his life-vest, and let the current take him to a safe place. This advice is just as applicable in how we face the raging river of climate chaos, species extinctions, and other environmental stresses.

Kelly related the Bible story from Genesis that depicts a mighty river of God flowing out of Eden, which pours out to nourish all of creation. He described how,

*See **Water**, page 11*

