



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness
Affirming our essential unity with nature

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An Experience in Lima: The UN Climate Change Conference

By Lindsey Fielder-Cook
QUNO Climate Change Representative

THIS DECEMBER, JONATHAN WOOLLEY, the Director of Quaker UN Office (QUNO) Geneva, and I travelled to Lima to attend the latest round of international negotiations held under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These talks are working toward December 2015, when negotiators will gather in Paris to adopt a new, legally binding climate change agreement that will apply to all countries.

What Is a COP?

The Conference of Parties (COP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) form the annual decision-making session for the UNFCCC. This session, the COP 20 and CMP 10, was attended by some 6,300 government officials, 4,000 UN, intergovernmental and civil society representatives, and 900 members of the media. It was an extraordinary and exhausting experience; and disturbing too, when tensions and mistrust countered progress on ensuring that the most vulnerable today and in future generations are spared from suffering the effects of catastrophic climate change.

The Focus of the COP

The COP oversees a vast range of issues which seem to increase each year, making it difficult for a small country delegation, let alone a non-governmental organisation (NGO) like QUNO, to follow everything. This year, issues were organised primarily within three groups: the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technologi-



100 Peruvian children deliver a 2.2 million-signature petition calling for 100% Clean Energy to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Photo by Avaaz.org.

cal Advice (SBSTA), and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). This third group was at the centre of a crisis, and its work the most relevant to the creation of a new climate change agreement.

But the COP is more than the negotiations. In one area, negotiators work painstakingly on acceptable language, while in another, intergovernmental and civil society organizations are sharing information, brainstorming new ideas, and building networks through a packed schedule of side events and press conferences, and among rows of information booths. Negotiators attend side events whenever possible and at times participate in their panels, but negotiation schedules are gruelling. In turn, registered civil society

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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

February 20, 2015. Extended deadline for article submissions for March-April 2015 *BeFriending Creation*.

Quaker Statement on Climate Change

"It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part of it?"

—William Penn, 1693

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), and Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) have developed a joint statement on facing the challenge of climate change.

We invite all Monthly and Yearly Meetings and other Quaker organizations to join the statement.

The text of the statement and an accompanying letter can be found on our website at: <http://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/jan-2015-facing-challenge-climate-change-shared-statement-quaker-groups>.

Please read the statement and share it with your Monthly and Yearly Meetings. We hope to continue the discussion and to raise our Quaker voices together! ☞



Apply for a 2015 QEW Mini-Grant!

Do you have a great idea for an Earthcare project you want to do with your Monthly Meeting or other Friends group? Apply for a QEW Mini-Grant! This year we have increased our match funding and now offer up to \$500 for projects that meet our application criteria.

We are now accepting applications for Friends projects which:

- Improve your immediate environment
- Involve, inform, and educate members young, old and in between
- Create opportunities to improve and learn about your own local ecosystems
- Provide spirit-led, meaningful work and create fun for all participants

You'll find more information and our application form online at <http://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/quaker-earthcare-witness-mini-grants>. We want to encourage your good work in your local community--all as integrated parts of our lovely One and Only Planet.

Our deadline for QEW Mini-Grant applications is **May 2, 2015**.

To ask questions of submit your application, contact Maia Wolff, Clerk, at maia.wolff@gmail.com. ☞



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representatives can attend some (though not all) negotiation sessions, and NGO groups, such as those representing research, environment, gender, or business, are allowed to make brief statements only at certain times during the COP.

Moving through Crisis and toward Success

Negotiations at the COP in Lima were described frequently as “rushed.” The list of final SBI and SBSTA decisions was short on “decisions made,” and long on “no agreement has been reached.” However, the trust and confidence between countries was strengthened through the Adaptation Fund, where financial pledges surpassed the initial fundraising target, and the ground breaking Multilateral Assessment, during which 17 developed countries (known as Annex 1 countries) gave presentations on their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction progress and took quite often critical and blunt questions from all Parties, developed and developing.

In addition, confidence grew through the decision that the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (especially critical to countries already experiencing catastrophic climate change) would be fairly distributed between 10 developed and 10 developing countries, with a clear distribution of regions/needs in the latter.

Yet most attention and crises occurred in the ADP, which had to produce decisions in Lima for progress on work toward adopting a new climate change agreement in December 2015 in Paris. The ADP’s work also aims to increase pre-2020 efforts among developed countries, including GHG mitigation and support to adaptation needs in developing countries (including climate finance); strong leadership from developed countries is critical in gaining confidence within developing countries to support a new climate change agreement applicable to all countries.

Yet the ADP had been facing increasing tensions over the last year, and this atmosphere fed into Lima as negotiators faced the sensitive tasks of defining what exactly “intended nationally determined contributions” (INDCs) entailed, how these INDCs would be reported, alongside how pre-2020 (pre new climate agreement) mitigation and finance commitments from developed countries would be improved.

The concept of INDCs came from a last minute “huddle” of delegates at the COP 19 in Warsaw as a compromise to enable each country to set their own

targets rather than having these targets defined internationally, by the UNFCCC or any other such body. Transparent, fair, verifiable and legally binding INDCs from all countries could enable the global community to close the GHG emissions gap, so that we can keep global temperature rises to 1.5° or 2°C above pre-industrial levels. At the moment, current global emissions have risen higher since 2010 than ever before, placing us on track for up to a 4.8°C global mean temperature rise by 2081 (compared to 1986–2005 temperatures), an unprecedented rate of temperature rise that will have catastrophic consequences on the ability of human beings to thrive on the planet.

In Lima, there were disturbing exchanges in the first week of the ADP which continued to undermine trust and confidence. By the second week, the “draft



United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivers a speech during COP 20 in Lima.

text” was finally opened for negotiation and grew to some 58 pages of options, which was then deemed too unwieldy to reach consensus in the remaining negotiation time. The Co-Chairs then replaced this with a “bare bones” draft of four core pages, which caused profound concern particularly among developing countries. Unable after long night sessions to establish the consensus necessary for a decision, the Co-Chairs handed authority to the COP President, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, who then worked around the clock with Parties. These efforts reintroduced assurances which went missing from the Co-Chairs’ “bare bones” text, yet were critical for consensus. These included: acceptance of a more balanced approach to mitigation and adaptation action, specific references to the Loss and Damage Mechanism, specific reference to climate science including the need for the global temperature increase to be limited to 1.5-2°C, and clearer reference to the principles of the UNFCCC Convention.

The time spent reclaiming “red line” assurances from negotiation groups meant that any goodwill needed to gain traction for a strong INDC reporting system, supported by developed but not all developing country parties, was weakened. So too were the issues for which many NGOs had worked hard to gain political support; for example, reference to human rights, the influence of climate justice, and recognition of zero carbon emissions by 2050 or 2100 (note: not zero *net* carbon emissions, which implies off-setting and carbon capture to maintain use of fossil fuels).

Yet Lima ended with some successes. First, the negotiation crisis went from outright rejections of the text by well over half of the 190 countries to consensus with all. Second, the crisis made clear that “differentiation” (what is a fair distribution of responsibilities between countries) and climate finance must be clarified if Paris is to succeed with a new universal climate change agreement.

It is easy to feel outrage when what is at stake is the ability of the most vulnerable today and in the future to avoid global catastrophic climate change. But it is less easy to be a champion delegate or delegation that courageously seeks to build bridges. Champions are those who publicly recognise the others’ concerns, who seek to better understand rather than ignore the fears feeding reactions around them. We seek this from our decisionmakers—taking responsibility for action within our own lives, while in turn asking them to take responsibility and lead with courage in supporting a fair and sufficient agreement for all. This would reflect the extraordinary energies in 2014, a year which saw, among other actions, the publication of the most comprehensive climate science to date through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th Assessment Report, the UN Climate Change Summit in New York alongside more than 2,800 climate change awareness events in a reported 166 countries, the most

ambitious EU targets yet to mitigate GHG emissions, and a political breakthrough between China and the U.S. on proposed emission reduction action.

What Is Needed?

For the poorest and the most vulnerable who see their very survival threatened now by climate change, the negotiations are a profound moral call to conscience. But for many, the primary political direction from governments through their negotiators is to protect their country’s economic development and competition, which most often is dependent on fossil fuels. And 78 percent of current temperature warming is due to the combustion of fossil fuels.

The climate change negotiations are primarily about current and future economic competition, not about the environment. As long as this remains the priority of nations, it is difficult for negotiators to move from “how does this affect us?” to “how does this affect others?”. The abolition of slavery in the 1800s became possible when the narrative moved from an economic to a moral one. We aspire to this narrative shift in the climate change negotiations, to enable the global community to speak for humanity.

Through the initial support of QEW, QUNO has been observing negotiations sessions at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 2012. In 2013, QUNO initiated “quiet diplomacy” efforts in the form of off-the-record dinners during negotiation sessions (though not at the COP 20) to give space for more sincere and open discussion between a diverse group of negotiators. This work continues.

Lindsey Fielder Cook
Representative on Climate Change
Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva ☞



Check Out the Current Issue of Friends Journal on Climate Change January 2015

The first issue of *Friends Journal* for 2015 focuses on climate change, and one of the articles is written by our own General Secretary, Shelley Tanenbaum. Shelley shares how her spirituality and witness on climate change flows like a braided river from the connected concerns of peace, justice, and earthcare.

Also in this issue, former General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt has contributed a review of Douglas Gwyn’s *A Sustainable Life* (QuakerPress, 2014). You can find out more about the current issue by going to <http://www.friendsjournal.org/category/2015/january-2015/>. ☞

Eco-Resources

from Friends

We like to begin each new year with an offering of Earth-friendly resources—in print, video, and web content—shared by QEW members and friends. This year we have a good mix of inspiring and informative sources to recommend. Thanks to all who participated!

Coming Back to Life: The Updated Workbook to the Work that Reconnects

By Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown

Reviewed by Judy Lumb
Caye Caulker, Belize

Coming Back to Life by Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown is expanded and updated from their book of the same name published in 1998 (New Society Publishers, 2014, Gabriola Island, BC). The Deep Ecology work of Joanna Macy, also called the “Work that Reconnects,” dates back to the 1970s. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken her workshops and many have become facilitators and held their own workshops, so this approach is relatively well known. Molly Young Brown joined the work in 1987. This book is intended as a guidebook to provide the tools needed to offer workshops, but it is much, much more.

In her Preface, Joanna Macy writes, “Our aim was to unblock the feedback loops so that people can trust their own experience and speak the truth of what they see and feel and know is happening to their world.”

In her Preface, Molly Young Brown writes, “I believe we can cut through denial and take a good hard look at the dysfunctional economic system that has captured humanity and is destroying our life support system.”

The first three chapters, “To Choose Life,” “The Greatest Danger—The Deadening of Heart and Mind,” and “The Basic Miracle—Our Nature and Power,” set the theory, making use of the authors’ backgrounds in applied living systems thinking and psychosynthesis to assess our relationship to the current condition of life

on Earth. I found this section breathtaking. I had to read it slowly because every sentence was a profound, quotable one.

As anyone who has been exposed to one of these workshops knows, they begin by acknowledging the pain and grieving over our feelings about the current situation. In that process we often find deep pain that has led to denial or avoidance that blocks our ability to act. Having swept away those blockages, the work goes on to develop the energy and vitality needed to act.

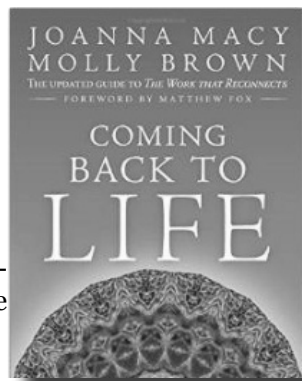
There is an excellent chapter with good advice on how to facilitate a workshop. Many exercises give good ideas that can be used in any setting. For example, several of the exercises involve the use of four voices: the presenter, one with the opposite view, the viewpoint of a non-human that is affected by that particular situation, and the view from future humans whose lives are affected by choices made now. Each exercise is explained and then the specific method used is delineated in detail, including suggested text for guided meditations. Even if the reader is not involved in presenting workshops, the book can be used for personal uplifting and energizing, especially as there is so much negativity about us.

A special chapter on “Work that Connects with Children and Teenagers” draws from the authors’ wealth of experience delivering workshops to various ages in various situations. I was so engrossed in the chapter on “Learning with Communities of Color” that I nearly missed a bus. Joanna describes her experience, knowing that most of her workshop participants were middle-aged white women and that communities of color experience the current situation in very different ways. When she conducted the first of those workshops including Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, she encountered a depth of pain that she had not encountered before. Subsequently those workshops were led by facilitators of color, three of whom write of their experiences in the book.

The last chapter includes six powerful guided meditations and two litanies, all of which could be useful in a variety of settings. The Appendices provide important documents, including Chief Seattle’s Message and the texts of several rights declarations.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who has

Continued on next page



concerns about our future on Earth, whether you have been involved in any of these workshops. It will lift up your spirits and give you the energy and vitality to act on your concerns. ☞

Quaker and Naturalist Too

By Os Cresson

Reviewed by Mary Gilbert
Friends Meeting at
Cambridge

THERE I WAS, AT THE AGE OF ALMOST 13, away at camp for the first time. This camp ran a 24-hour recruitment program for being born again and baptized in the lake. There was a lot of pressure, so that none of us would leave at the end of the week without this conversion ritual. As I recall I held out until Thursday or Friday, but I wasn't that strong; I wound up in the lake with the others, and I've never really lost the assumption that other people want me to come over to their religious beliefs and faith language.

The push to agree can also be found among Quakers. Decades later I had an argument with a weighty Friend at Pendle Hill, in which said Friend told me I was wrong for not wanting to pray "in Jesus' name." Now much older, I was able to stay true to my own experiences, which happen not to be Christian, or even theist. In my Meeting a rainbow of theology is accepted and welcomed. There may be some quiet tolerating going on, however, obscured by just not talking about differences of belief, which holds us apart from real unity.

The Book: Quaker and Naturalist Too

Os Cresson is a member of Iowa Conservative Yearly Meeting and of Quaker Earthcare Witness, where we served together on a committee. He is a lover of language and a careful thinker. Until I read his book, I didn't know that he is also a serious historian. His book, published by Morning Walk Press in 2014, is lively with voices, and easy to read.

Following a foreword by David Boulton, well-known British Quaker non-theist and historian, the book is organized into three sections.

In the first section, "Unity," Cresson guides us beyond tolerance toward active love of each other, based

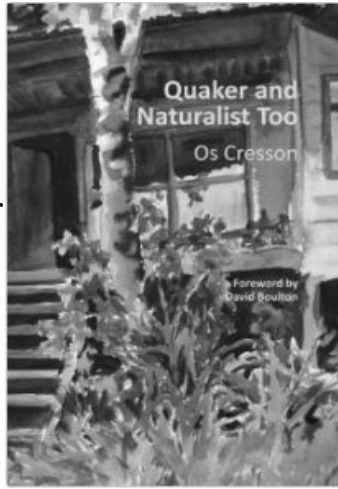
in mutual confidence of acceptance despite differences. He sees each of us using the language that proceeds from our personal experience, not holding back because of the different words we use or the theology they imply. He says, "This contrasts with our usual practice of ignoring or hiding differences, limiting dialogue to terms we all agree on." (p. 9) More than half of this section is an anthology of quotations from Quakers through the years, demonstrating through many voices that this kind of diversity is truly part of our heritage.

In the second section, "Quakers and Naturalists," Cresson addresses the question of whether science and Quakerism are at odds. He has met Quakers who are skeptical of science. I have not run into this, possibly because I live near Cambridge (MA) with so many universities. Cresson suggests active Quaker outreach to scientists.

The third section is "History." He provides convincing statements from early and modern Friends showing that non-theism has been present among Quakers from our beginning. Then he turns to what he calls "religious naturalism in the time of Fox," looking at what Quakers and non-Quakers wrote about finding God through nature. Some held views similar to what we call stewardship, seeing God as Lord and Creator and humankind as responsible for the care of God's Creation. Others found divinity in the unity of all being. Jacob Boehme, who was widely read by Friends, wrote, "[C]onsider how the whole Nature ...is together the Body or Corporeity of God..." and "We can...in no wise say that God's essence is something far off, which possesses a special abode or place, for the abyss of Nature and creation is God himself." (p. 108) This quotation "speaks my mind" exactly.

The largest section of the book, over a third of the total pages, consists of appendices, glossary, publications on Quaker non-theism, bibliography, and source notes. I write this in gratitude, because I love it when someone does years of research for me and shows me where I can find the original material.

I recommend this book to Friends and others who are interested in unity within theological diversity and how we conceive and experience divinity in the natural world. ☞



Learn about YAFs & QEW

Following the Young Adult Friends conference at Pendle Hill last year, Emily Higgs was interviewed in relation to the *Friends Journal* article that resulted. You can watch Emily's video on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvyTAPI-OAM&list=PLgJRRovFyUI7-pefLB5ei81g-ZRRt9ArY>

Climate, Food, and Violence: Understanding the Connections, Exploring Responses

By Judy Lumb, Phil Emmi, Mary Gilbert, Leonard Joy,
Laura Holliday, and Shelley Tanenbaum

Reviewed by Keith Helmuth

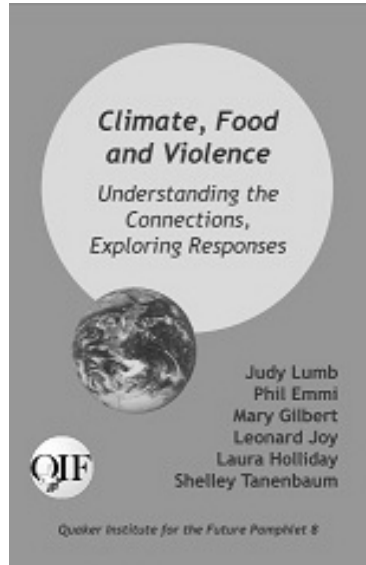
THE NEXUS OF CLIMATE DISRUPTION and food insecurity leading to societal breakdown and violence is one of the most fraught scenarios of our time. This is not a new story. Both the 14th and 17th centuries were times of climate change that resulted in food shortages, famine, increasing societal violence, and outright war.

The contemporary situation is potentially much worse. The greenhouse effect of fossil fuel use is pushing the climate system into a scale of change that will likely bring extreme consequences for human adaptation. The global scale of potential disruption for human settlement and economy is unprecedented. In addition, and making the situation even more ethically vexed, is the concentration of wealth that will allow a privileged elite to shield themselves from the societal breakdown and likely violence that will become endemic in regions of deprivation and poverty.

Responding to the mission of Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF), a group of six researchers and writers have produced a 107-page book that gathers critical information and analysis on the network of connections between climate disruption, food insecurity, and deadly violence. But more than this, the book also gathers critical information and analysis on what can be done to improve food security and advance food sovereignty, thus forestalling social breakdown and violence in the face of climate stress.

When QIF was established in 2003, its founding document described one of its roles as doing background research that would be helpful to Friends Committee on National Legislation. The proposal for this research project and QIF Pamphlet was brought to the 2011 FCNL Annual Meeting in Washington. The project was positioned to update and amplify a briefing paper on food insecurity and violence that FCNL had previously produced. Complimentary copies of *Climate, Food, and Violence* were provided to all FCNL staff in October 2014.

Working as a QIF Circle of Discernment, the six participants collaborated over a period of more than two years gathering, combining, and refining the core



information analysis to provide the reader with a solid understanding of this complex situation. Coordinated by editor and writer Judy Lumb, the Circle of Discernment was composed of Phil Emmi, Mary Gilbert, Leonard Joy, Laura Holliday, and Shelley Tanenbaum.

Chapter 1 succinctly covers what is now known about the causes and effects of climate change. Chapter 2 deals specifically with the relationship of food production and climate change. Chapter 3 picks up the control of food, which is passing more and more from the sovereignty of local and regional communities to transnational corporations. Chapter 4 details the way climate change is already

affecting access to food and water, and the way these conflicts are leading to violence. Chapter 5 catalogues a list of responses to food insecurity and climate change that can intervene in a wide variety of ways to address the developing situation. Chapter 6 then lays out the specifics of positive response from the personal level to matters of national and international policy and global environmental governance. The book is fully referenced and includes a bibliography, both of which provide excellent guides for further study.

If you realize how critical climate change is in the context of the human future, but are not likely to dig into the scientific and social research documenting it or read a full-length book on the subject, this QIF Pamphlet will fill you in on what is happening, what may happen if current trends continue, and what can be done to alter the situation toward a better outcome. It is ideal for study groups who are reaching for a more fully rounded and ethically grounded understanding of the crisis that is building and what must be done to mitigate its effects.

Climate, Food, and Violence can be ordered directly from Quaker Institute for the Future c/o Keith Helmuth (ekhelmuth@mindspring.com). It is available from QuakerBooks of FGC and from Quaker Book Service (CYM, Ottawa). It can also be ordered through your local bookstore or purchased in either hard copy or as an ebook from Amazon. The book also can be downloaded, as can all QIF Pamphlets, from www.quakerinstitute.org. ☞

A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation

by Douglas Gwyn

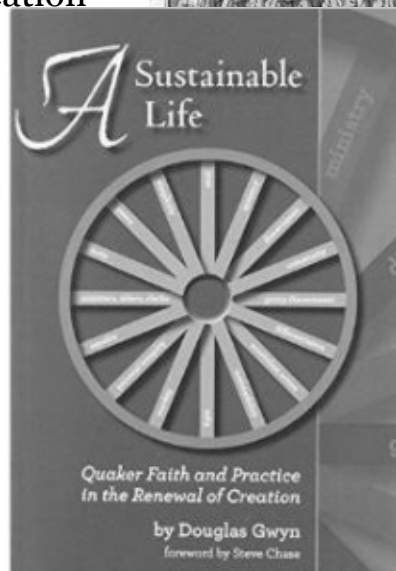
Reviewed by Katherine Murray
West Newton Friends Meeting

IN 2014, WE SAW MANY HOPEFUL AND ENCOURAGING SIGNS that the world is beginning to “get it” about climate change. We also saw heartbreaking events, species slipping closer toward extinction, major disruptive weather events, and the ever-pervasive challenges of power and money at work in the systems we swim in. A growing number of concerned Friends, caring others, meetings, organizations, and more are joining the conversation and seeking a common dialogue about sustainable solutions. There is so much to learn, so much need, so many obstacles, and so much urgency that we risk being immobilized: It can be a challenge to get clear about which issue we should take on and where to begin.

In his book, *A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation*, Douglas Gwyn encourages Friends to begin with the stillness of our roots; he invites us to settle and be nourished by the deepest movement of spirit. He makes the case—and makes it well, in my opinion—that a truly sustainable life begins with the first motion of love and blossoms in reverent right order—in us, our meetings, and we hope, throughout our world.

Gwyn’s book is inspiring (especially if you love reading the writings of early Friends), but he doesn’t trade reality for a purely hopeful view. Gwyn is realistic about what is needed and offers a well-structured process of discernment for Friends, designed to help us seek clarity within ourselves and explore continuing light in our meetings. He uses the image of a wheel with spokes to present 16 energies along eight axes that move sustainable living forward in the Friends tradition. These pairs of qualities include *light* and *seed*; *worship* and *ministry*; *personal integrity* and *discernment*; *equality* and *community*; *ministers, elders, clerks* and *group discernment*; *unity* and *differentiation*; *peace* and *nonviolent action*; and *simplicity* and *sustainability*. And, as Gwyn says on page 149, “The empty center represents the place of unknowing we experience as we live within these tensions and paradoxes.”

Ultimately, sustainability means living from a place



of peace and light at our deepest levels, radiating outward through the concentric rings of our influence in the world. And this approach moves us toward a greater sense of wholeness for the world on all levels, not into specialized factions of folks siloed around different issues. Sustainable living is healed living for all. As Gwyn offers on pages 24-25, “The horizon of destiny revealed in the last half-century is the urgent need for the human race to find a sustainable balance with the resources and life systems of

the earth. But that destiny will not be reached without a just, equitable, and peaceful society among humans.”

This book is a deeply thoughtful work that is both rich in history and Friends tradition and long in structure and opportunities for discerning what it means to live a truly sustainable life, individually and corporately. Readers learn where the seeds of our faith and practice originate; they are invited to consider the meaning and effects of our dearest testimonies; they hear the voices of formative Friends who have shaped our tradition and given evidence of the light in preceding generations—George Fox, John Woolman, Thomas Kelly, William Taber—and may be introduced for the first time to voices of contemporary Friends and lesser-known early Friends as well.

My experience of reading *A Sustainable Life* was one of savoring. I found I was unable to read the book quickly and wanted to give it good seasoning time as I reflected on stirring passages and let my own ideas stir around and rise in conversation with all that Gwyn so effectively presents. I would encourage any Friend who yearns to align action with spirit to spend time with this book. Perhaps by allowing our roots to be nourished and nurtured in this way, we will blossom into a gathered sense of sustainable living we can share and model for the world. Gwyn makes this sound achievable and worth striving for: “The mind centered in the light sees the wisdom of God in the natural order. The heart turned to the light shares God’s compassion for all creatures. We find ourselves in the oneness and common interest of all things and strive to play our part.” (p. 64) ♪

Q&A with Douglas Gwyn

Author of *A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation*

Doug Gwyn, the author of *A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation*, generously agreed to be interviewed for this issue of *Be-Friending Creation*. Thanks, Doug!

1. *You explain how your thought and interests developed through several books, always including the thread of your concern for the Earth. Was there a defining moment or experience that let you know it was time to begin actively working on this book? If so, what was it?*

The leading for this book began with the opportunity to teach a basic Quakerism class at Pendle Hill in the fall term of 2011. I decided to see if I could re-cast the usual categories of faith and practice within the horizon of our growing concern for living sustainably. I had noticed over my years of study that what we now call *sustainability* is an implicit theme woven through early and traditional Quaker writings and the Quaker testimonies. I just needed to bring that out more explicitly. In Quaker beginnings and renewals over 350 years, we have framed our faith and practice in various ways, based upon different challenges and fresh inspirations. In this century, it seems clear that sustainability is the challenge/opportunity we face most urgently. It is the horizon within which we are going to live. Moreover, life at Pendle Hill, in community and on a very special 23 acres of land, brings earth-care sensibilities to the fore in our minds. So I realized that it was time at last to try to put this vision together. After teaching the course once, I had a three-month stint as a Friend-in-Residence at Woodbrooke, and I realized that it was a perfect opportunity to work the course sessions into chapters of a book. I taught the course two more times at Pendle Hill and got feedback on the chapters from course participants, adding to my sense that this book creates a compelling whole-vision.

I had never thought that I would attempt to write an introduction to Quakerism—there are so many out there already. And this book is in some ways a bit beyond entry-level reading for new Friends and interested seekers. But it both introduces and re-conceives Quaker faith and practice in a way that I hope can contribute to renewed Quaker relevance.

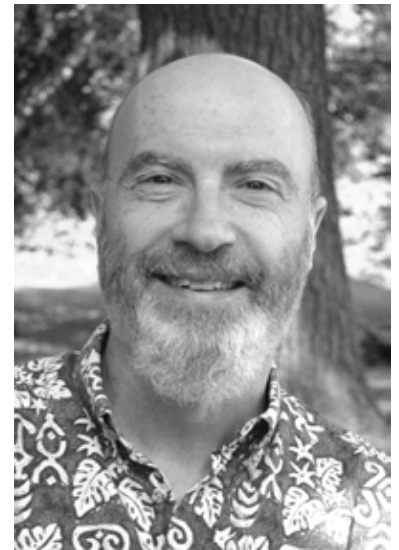
2. *Do you feel Friends have something unique to offer the world as models of sustainable living?*

Yes. Many Friends are connecting with a variety of Eastern and neo-pagan spiritual traditions for stronger connection to the earth, But I feel we have always had a special, prophetic role at the fringes of the wider Christian family, to bridge between western Christianity and other religions, and to a closer felt connection with the creation/natural world. That is one reason why the book emphasizes the prophetic-Christian understanding of Quaker spirituality. We have many potential allies and collaborators in the churches. Liberal Friends have been too dismissive of the wider church, largely because the media tend to report mainly right-wing, regressive movements among Christians. Let's look in all directions for links we can make in our work for a sustainable life. We have things to teach and model, and things we can learn from others too.

3. *Do you have a particular place or landscape you seek out to feel God's presence and/or find peace? If so, can you describe it for us?*

I grew up in Indiana. I've lived in a variety of places in North America and in England, each with its own natural beauty and sense of God's presence. But I always feel most at home in the landscape of Indiana, even if my calling in ministry hasn't put me there much of the time over the years. I particularly feel at home in the woods. I sense the community of creatures most peacefully and vitally there. I was a state park naturalist for three summers in Indiana, which was a very rich time—especially in contrast to the nine months of each of those years I was living in Manhattan, at Union Theological Seminary. I loved both environments, but the summers kept my connection with the earth strong.

4. *I love the framework of the 16 energies and 8 axes. How did this framework arise for you? Have you*



discovered in your own growth and in meetings you're familiar with that different groups and individuals seem to be more easy with some and not so much with others?

Over the years, my biblical and Quaker studies have been supplemented by the perspectives of dialectical philosophy, both Hegelian and Marxist. That influence was important in formulating the eight axes, as eight dialectical energies that vitalize our faith and practice. I have also discovered more recently a dialectical stream of biology, particularly the work of Richard Lewontin and Richard Levins. Actually, I think of the eight axes of Quaker faith and practice as a kind of Quaker DNA, where the sixteen energies pair up like the nucleic acids in a gene, and the wheel is more a double-helix. I dropped that from the book, because I was concerned that it might over-complicate things for readers (and I wondered if it might be pseudo-science). But the book argues strongly for the unity of spiritual and material reality and I haven't quite let go of the Quaker DNA idea.

You're right that different individuals, groups, meetings, and probably branches of Quakerism may have different strengths and weaknesses among these 16 energies and need to balance their faith and practice accordingly.

5. *What do you hope Friends will take away from your book? Do you have a vision of where Friends' "prophetic imagination" could lead?*

Chel Avery, who edited the book for FGC Quaker Press, called it "deep sustainability." My main concern in the book is to help Friends see the deeper implications of a sustainable life, and the wider ramifications of Quaker faith and practice in this new century. My hope is that the interaction of the two will renew us, probably in ways I can't foresee.

6. *What's next for you, writing-wise?*

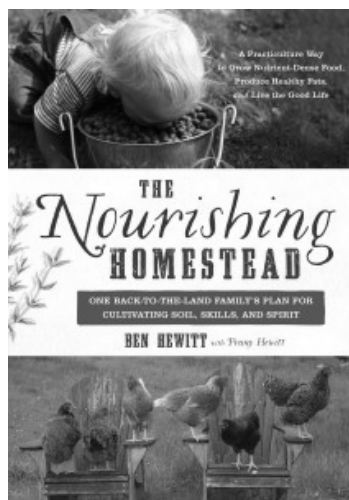
2014 was a little publication-crazed. Besides the sustainability book in July, a Pendle Hill pamphlet on Quakers and Christ came out in February, a new edition of my first book, *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Times of George Fox*, appeared in November, and a new history of Pendle Hill (*Personality and Place: the Life and Times of Pendle Hill*) finally became available in December. In general, I'm hoping to slow down a bit. However, my new part-time pastoral work with Durham Friends in Maine does allow time for writing, and I've been groping my way toward something on the Quaker peace testimony for today. I guess I can't help it. ☞

The Nourishing Homestead: One Back-to-the Land Family's Plan for Cultivating Soil, Skills, and Spirit

By Ben Hewitt with Penny Hewitt
Reviewed by Katherine Murray
West Newton Friends Meeting

ONE BEAUTIFUL MORNING LAST SUMMER, my granddaughter Ruby and I stood side-by-side in the garden, picking first green beans and then blueberries. She had her favorite blue basket and I'd grabbed a colander, and as we picked, we talked about vegetables and things like soil, butterflies, and frogs. Suddenly she looked up and said, "You know, Nana, you really have a farm here."

I smiled and said, "Well, *sort of*," but I knew from the reverberating of my heartstrings that she had named my secret dream: A simple, gentle homestead where I live in close harmony with the land, in peaceable kinship with all that grows, appreciating and contributing to the web of blessing in which all life flourishes.



Reading Ben Hewitt's new book, *The Nourishing Homestead: One Back-to-the Land Family's Plan for Cultivating Soil, Skills, and Spirit* (Chelsea Green, 2014) made me feel like my heartstrings had been plucked yet again. This lovely, practical, story-and-philosophy-filled book makes real the dream of the wannabe homesteader: Finding the perfect spot; cultivating the land; living simply, sustainably, and with reverence for what you grow, raise, and reap.

But this isn't just an inspiring book for armchair dreamers: It is packed with how-tos, recipes, tools, techniques, and more. Hewitt calls their homesteading *practiculture* because none of the current terms seem to fit exactly the way they are choosing to live and work with their land. Practiculture captures the idea of practical agriculture, with a special emphasis on the *culture* aspect, which Hewitt points out is "defined by our work with the land, cultivating

its teeming populations of beings and bacteria. The longer I do this work, the less I feel as if we are practicing agriculture so much as we are simply practicing culture.” (p. 27)

In fact, Hewitt is highly attuned to the various cultures in his ecosystem: he writes of the soil as a “living, breathing entity” and shares how his early perceptions of piglets as “meat with feet” changed to a feeling of reverence, respect, and gratitude for the many blessings—relational as well as practical—the pigs bring to his life.

The Nourishing Homestead touches on everything a new homesteader might need to know, from selecting property (including red flags that should make you run the other way) to building the infrastructure; selecting, raising, butchering, and processing animals; growing truly nourishing, nutrient-rich food; and making financial choices for sustainability. Along the way, readers get stories, recipes, delightful photos, plans and diagrams, and a huge list of every possible tool you might need for a variety of homesteading tasks.

I was particularly fascinated by Chapter 5, “Soil and Gardens,” in which the author takes us deep into the soil and introduces us to the 500 million bacterial organisms that help provide the living basis of our thriving ecosystem. I was inspired by the idea that everything we are, do, or have in some way connects back to the soil that supports us. I’m also taking away the seed of the following idea, about the healthiness and hardiness of our gardens, as a spiritual concept I want to sit with in the remaining silence of this winter:

“The role of insects and diseases in nature is to attack organisms that aren’t fit for reproduction. Pests and disease are not the cause of crop failure, but rather symptoms of an already failing crop. With their simple digestive systems, larval forms

of insects can digest only simple carbohydrates. If your plant cells comprise complex carbohydrates and complete proteins—as they do in healthy plants—they become inedible to these pests. Put simple, it’s not food to them anymore.” (p. 107)

That idea makes me wonder not only about the healthiness and hardiness of our plants but also our bodies and our souls. I think this seed will be nutrient-rich fodder for reflection.

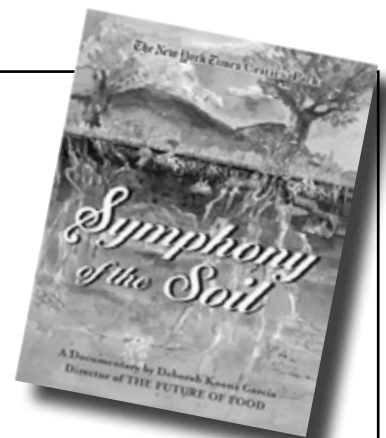
Early in the book, Hewitt describes a period of income-related vulnerability that threw him for a loop. It was in late 2008 and 2009, when the U.S. economy was in a serious spiral. He writes that he began to see the world as “a cold and stingy place” and the more uncertain he felt, the more he projected those characteristics onto the world he experienced. Much later, he discovered that his view of the world had changed to warm and abundant. In Chapter 9, where he writes candidly about money and homesteading, he shares how easy it now is to live as though abundance is the rule: “...time and time again, we are stunned to realize just how generous the land truly is. How generous our animals are.” (p. 300)

Whether you are interested in sustainability, nutrient-dense gardening, practiculture homesteading, or wondering how you might live closer to the cycles of the land and in tune with spirit, *The Nourishing Homestead* offers a vision of living in alignment with your beliefs and priorities. As Hewitt says, “In many ways, our homestead has allowed us to write the rules for our own economy, one in which we can afford to revere the things we hold sacred and refuse to allow our fear to become someone else’s profit. Sometimes I think this is reason enough to live this way.” (p. 300) Friend or not, this writer speaks my mind. ♪

Symphony of the Soil

A film by Deborah Koons Garcia
Reviewed by Adrian Ayres Fisher
Illinois Yearly Meeting

2015 IS THE UN YEAR OF THE SOILS. Anyone who would like to understand why living soil is so vitally important would do well to watch “Symphony of the Soil,” directed by Deborah Koons Garcia. This beautiful, poetic film blends science, agroecology, activism, and hope into an inspiring mix that explains how good soil is formed and why it matters so much. Living soil is a complex mix formed over time of minerals, organic matter, and billions of “critters” whose actions turn plain dirt into the fertile matrix that ultimately supports all life on earth. It has long been thought that agriculture inevitably depletes the soil, and (of course) industrial agriculture worst of all. “Symphony” highlights the work of scientists and farmers around the world who are contributing to our understanding of how this does not have to be the case and pioneering soil-regenerating ways to grow food. More information can be found at <http://www.symphonyofthesoil.com/>. ♪



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A Good Way to Start the Year

by **Shelley Tanenbaum, QEW General Secretary**

Amazingly, there is quite a bit of good news to start the year, among all the doom and gloom (not that these aren't also part of our reality). Here are a few things that are making me hopeful and giving me ideas for how to shape my year, in mixed order of importance:

- New York State has banned fracking.
- President Obama has promised that he will veto the Keystone XL pipeline if it passes Congress. Almost no one thought this was possible three years ago, when protests against the pipeline began.
- Pope Francis is expected to produce an encyclical on the environment early this year, with an emphasis on climate change as a moral issue.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected to adopt regulations for limiting CO₂ emissions from power plants by mid-year.
- As an example of what can be done state by state, California has a policy goal of cutting petroleum used in cars and trucks by 50 percent within the next 15 years.
- 400,000 people turned out to march in support of global action on climate change in September 2014. Pressure is ramping up for an international agreement at the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) in Paris at the end of 2015.



Quaker Earthcare Witness ended the year with a boost from all of you. Our discussion list-serve is livelier than ever: ideas and inspiration are shared daily. We are spinning off a book discussion group, and we have the capacity to host other idea-specific discussion/planning groups as they arise. As a result of our organizing for the Peoples' Climate March, many new folks have joined our network; I often hear how much they appreciate finding kindred spirits among us and their new energy is reinvigorating longtime supporters. Friends are engaged at all levels and in growing numbers in their earthcare work and in recognition that earthcare, peace, and justice are interconnected. For more details about the 2013-14 fiscal year, our annual report is posted on our website at <http://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/quaker-earthcare-witness-annual-report-nov-2013-oct-2014>. Our end-of-year fundraising appeal—a vital means of support for any non-profit organization—has been bringing a good result, and we continue to accept donations online at <https://secure.quakerearthcare.org/civicism/contribute/>. Thank you, Friends!

My daily inspiration comes from this quote, framed and sitting above my desk:

“Make the impossible become feasible and the feasible become inevitable.” —Bob Massie ∞