



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

Affirming our essential unity with nature

Volume 28, Number 6 • November-December 2015

What We Want From COP21

By Shelley Tanenbaum, QEW General Secretary

Greetings, Friends! As you read this, I am in Paris along with a handful of QEW folks, dozens (hundreds?) of European Friends, 40,000 climate policy wonks and (we hope) many hundreds of thousands (millions?) of grassroots activists on the streets all over the globe. You have the advantage of knowing what is going on, while I have written this article several weeks in advance of the actual events.

What are we seeking from the Paris conference of the parties (COP21) and from the masses of people assembled to voice their concerns about global climate chaos? Can we raise up concerns for the world's most vulnerable people—people living in poverty in the low-lying wetlands of the world, in the path of hurricanes and typhoons, in the shadow of retreating glaciers, in the over-heated and parched deserts and near-deserts? Is this the start of a transition to living in right relationship with the natural world, providing a habitable world for future generations and other species?

Our first task is to confront the despair that many of us have felt for the past decade or more. This is a despair that comes from predictions of a vastly different and nearly uninhabitable planet within our (or our children's) lifetimes and a despair that comes from a world in denial or self-absorbed greed.

At QEW's October Steering Committee meetings we were led by a master to get in touch with that despair—not to ignore it—and to use our deep passion and concern as a way to empower our work. Joanna Macy provided a sample of her most recent workshop, the Work that Reconnects. She set us up in dyads with one of us representing a person from 200 years in the future and the other being our present selves. As a person from the present, I felt honored and appreciated by my partner from the year 2215 for my work as a climate activist. I also felt ashamed for my culture, for being



so slow to react to this crisis and for caring so little for both our fellow human beings and species who are at risk, as well as for future generations. This mixture of pleasure for being appreciated and sorrow for being so slow had the interesting effect of strengthening my resolve to continue this work. I call her a master because Joanna found a way to reach each of us in our hearts as well as our heads and to embolden and excite us to do this great work.

To help identify what we want from COP21, I am turning for guidance to CARE, an international humanitarian organization working to end global poverty (<http://www.care-international.org/>). They have created the following list of goals for the conference:

- Keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Cut emissions from fossil fuels drastically. Speed up the transition to renewable energies.
- Build climate resilience and adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable and marginalized people, and address the loss and damage they will face.

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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 20, 2015. Deadline for article submissions for January-February 2016 *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. ❧

Dear Friends,

FCNL is doing great work to shift the political environment and get Republicans to cosign a bipartisan resolution that climate change is real and that we must act to reduce carbon emissions so that other important climate change legislation can happen. They have a Republican, Rep. Chris Gibson (NY), who has come out of the closet to declare that and others are about to sign on due to the efforts of Jose and Emily. I just returned from FCNL. Jose Aguto and Emily Wirzba gave excellent updates on FCNL work. It was good to see them again and to again appreciate how they represent us in DC.

I found out that General Mills and Cargill support a carbon tax now because they understand that many of their operations around the world will be in the wrong places as the climate warms without emission reductions. For example, Dr. Jerry Hatfield, the director of the USDA Climate and Environment Laboratory in Ames, Iowa indicated at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Iowa Academy of Science that climate models predict that night temperatures by 1940 in the Midwest could be in the 90s at night and that would sterilize corn pollen making corn production impossible. This change could bring the corn processing industry to a screeching halt in most of the US and devastate the Midwestern economy. Jose and Emily reported that many influential business leaders are coming out in support of a carbon tax on fossil fuel production with revenues used to offset increased costs of fuel for ordinary people.

I spoke to a really wonderful group of Master Gardeners in Marshalltown, Iowa recently. They already were planning to plant a butterfly garden next spring so my talk was timely. I will be speaking to my oldest son's Biology classes at Iowa Mennonite High School soon. I will be praying for Jose and our 4 QEW representatives who are going to Paris.

Blessings to all,
Jim Kessler
Grinnell Friends Meeting



Read a Good Book Lately?

Traditionally, our first issue of the year offers book, video, and website reviews from Friends far and wide, so please send your reviews, reflections, and suggestions to katherine@quakerearthcare.org for our January-February issue of *BeFriending Creation*! ❧



COP21, from page 1

- Protect the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable and marginalized people.
- Scale up financial support for vulnerable and marginalized people.
- Ensure actions to tackle climate change, advance gender equality and human rights.

How well are we doing, as you read this article?

At this point we do not expect that the Paris agreement will be enough in the long-term, but we hope it will launch a process for drastically reducing carbon emissions. At present, the greenhouse gas reduction goals and financial pledges that have been made are only enough to keep global warming down to about 2.5-3.5 degrees C (depending on who does the analysis). This is clearly not enough, with some scientists saying we need to keep warming down to 1.5-2 degrees C. COP21 needs to be the beginning of a 50-year process of periodically ratcheting up our goals and ratcheting down our carbon emissions. I have my own list of specific benchmarks that can be used to evaluate the climate talks in Paris in 2015:

- Firm commitment to decrease anthropogenic greenhouse gas emission by 2030.
- Revisit the greenhouse gas emission goals every five years—to build in a way to decrease emissions beyond what is agreed to in Paris.
- View the Paris agreement as the starting point in a significant trend downward in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Decouple economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Green Climate Fund (a fund set up to encourage richer countries to support renewable energy and sane environmental practices in developing countries) must be handled with transparency and be a legitimate use of funding.

We Quakers often seed new movements. We all know about the role Friends played in the abolition of slavery. Did you know that the AFSC arranged for

Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King to travel to India and study Gandhian non-violence? Did you know that one of the chief architects of the civil rights movement was Friend Bayard Rustin?

At the October Steering Committee meetings, it was exciting to learn that Friends played a role in launching Joanna Macy's career of leading workshops on empowerment. She told us that the place we were meeting, Ben Lomond Quaker Center, was the site of her first empowerment workshop. Joanna has spent her life teaching us that we can't get rid of despair, but we can use the pain of the world to open up wider and to be present. Her first set of workshops were on Despair and Empowerment. Later, she created the Council of All Beings. Now, she is fully engaged with the Work that Reconnects, connecting mind and body with spiritual and political concerns.

“Even if you think it is unlikely to have a good future, aren't we called to try?”
—Joanna Macy

During worship-sharing after Joanna's workshop, a Friend told this story:

“There is an enormous flock of birds in the sky, all flying in the same direction. Suddenly, they all move in another direction. Who is the one bird that changed the direction? What can I do? There needs to be a great turning. There are one or two birds who start the turn. We are those birds.”

And another Friend added:

“We already have the knowledge and information that we need. What I learned this weekend is how to better use that knowledge and information. We have what is right and what is true.”

I am honored and emboldened to continue this work with Friends like you. ∞

Lift Your Voice! Share Your Concern and Your Solution

Thanks to a grant from the Obadiah Brown Fund, QEW has launched a video project called “What Canst Thou Say?” encouraging Friends to send in short (1-3 minute) selfie videos that share (1) your primary concern for the earth today, and (2) your solution (or where you think we should begin). We've been getting some great videos and the range of concerns and leadings are amazing. Please take a look at our videos on the QEW Videos playlist on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjsfk5k6iBqzDQx6tnShvEBEhBRZ7p0>) and send your own by email to katherine@quakerearthcare.org. ∞



QEW Gives Thanks for the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*

QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS (QEW) gives thanks for the papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*. We share the conviction that all life is sacred and interdependent, and that the natural world is an infinite source of awe, wonder and wisdom. We unite in the urgency to transition away from human systems, values, and lifestyles that are weakening Earth's natural planetary health, causing the suffering and extinction of other species, and deepening the disempowerment of vulnerable peoples.

Although some language and sections of the Encyclical clearly reflect Roman Catholic tradition, by far most of the Encyclical speaks compellingly to us all. We find common ground with *Laudato Si'* on a wide range of interwoven issues: the commonly held but mistaken understanding of humankind's "dominion" over the earth (Chapter II*); an economic system founded in "misguided anthropocentrism" (122); a false trust in the free market (190); the "throwaway culture" (16, 20); a "self-centred culture of instant gratification" (162); and a "culture of consumerism". (184) We readily support the call to "integral ecology" (Chapter IV); "responsible simplicity" (214); "sustainable and diversified agriculture" (164); and an "integrated approach to combating poverty" (139).

In accepting the common findings of the vast majority of research scientists, Francis acknowledges climate change as a civilization-wide crisis (25). QEW has for many years accepted the reality of climate change, and seen it, and other symptoms of our separation from nature, as deeply spiritual and moral challenges. We are encouraged that Francis supports grassroots organizations working for a global transition from fossil fuels to renewable forms of energy. We support his invitation to "every person living on the planet. ... to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home" (3). We align with visions of progress grounded in human dignity, sustainability, and beauty to "reverse the downward spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us" (163), and for a "bold cultural revolution" (114).

QEW acknowledges some differences with the Encyclical. We hold deep concern about the rapid increase in human numbers which, along with excessive consumption, contributes to the destruction of the natural world. We believe Spirit speaks equally to all persons; we work to move beyond patriarchy and toward full social equality. In faithful recognition of past

harms and contemporary concerns, QEW's North American network joins with indigenous peoples in repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery. Despite these differences we stand in solidarity with the urgent call for systemic economic and lifestyle changes that will protect our common home, vulnerable peoples, and a future for all life.

QEW is among the many faith groups and secular organizations expressing solidarity with Francis' critique, and his vision of an integral ecology, justice and interior peace. A summary of *Laudato Si'* was published in the July/August, 2015 issue of Quaker Earthcare Witness' *BeFriending Creation*. Another Friends' organization, Friends Committee on National Legislation, has also issued a public statement, as has New England Yearly Meeting. Reciprocating Francis' open-hearted invitation to interfaith dialogue and action, we invite everyone to learn more about QEW's work, including our founding principles, and about the Friends World Committee for Consultation's The Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice.

The Encyclical, the tremendous interfaith response, and the clear desire for ongoing dialogue and action, remind all of us that we are not alone in this work, and that in the face of the immensity of our current crisis, we must be guided by Spirit toward a renewed life. We continue to encourage Friends and others to initiate interfaith dialogue where we live, inviting all voices into a conversation on our shared future. We strongly encourage all people not already involved with interfaith and interdisciplinary actions towards the healing of our common home to take this to heart.

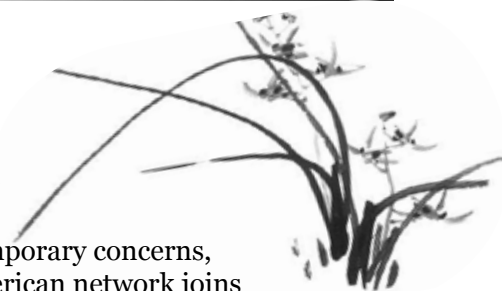
Many of us ask, along with Francis, "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? ... Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us" (160). We encourage all to engage with Francis' words, as we work to discern our role in the story that is unfolding on our planet.

Quaker Earthcare Witness is in continuing conversation and action to move this forward.

We welcome your participation. Contact us at info@quakerearthcare.org. ☞

* References are to chapters or paragraphs in *Laudato Si'*.

** QEW's response to the Pope's encyclical was approved at the October 22-25 Steering Committee Meeting, with two Friends standing aside.



What the Pope Said

By Mary Gilbert, QEW Representative to the UN

ON THE MORNING of Thursday, September 24, 2015, Pope Francis addressed the Congress of the United States, speaking slowly in English. On the morning of Friday, September 25, he addressed a "high-level" meeting of the UN General Assembly, speaking rapidly in his native Spanish. Both speeches were full of valid points, but the two were very different from each other. Francis was not being inconsistent; he was being selective in the way he spoke to each audience.

We all shape what we say according to whom we are speaking. How did you discuss the disaster in Haiti or Nepal or the violence in Paris with members of your Meeting? With your spouse or close friend? With worried teenagers or with a 7-year-old in your life?

In talking to Congress, the Pope was gentle and encouraging. He spoke of the peaceful core of all religions and the danger of polarization. He talked movingly about immigrants and refugees, the importance of family, and being at the service of dialogue and peace rather than resorting to war.

His particularly compelling quotes about business, the earth, and the environment include these:

- "Business (can be done in)service to the common good....(which) also includes the earth."
- "the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."
- We are called "...to avert the most serious effects of the environmental deterioration caused by human activity."

He spoke differently, and much more strongly, on these same subjects at the UN. His tone was forceful and admonishing. For example, he spoke of

- "...oppressive lending systems which, far from promoting progress subject people to mechanisms which generate greater poverty, exclusion and dependence."
- "...power badly exercised," stressing that "no human individual or group can consider itself absolute, permitted to bypass the dignity and the rights of other individuals or their social groupings."



Pope Francis addresses the U.S. Congress.

- "a true right of the environment does exist ...we human beings are part of the environment ... Any harm done to the environment ... is harm done to humanity."

He correctly put together the humanitarian and environmental wrongs that are being committed. ".... a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged..."

I could go on quoting this powerful speech. Instead I urge you to read the entire text of Francis' address to the UN General Assembly. If you can find the time, read his message to Congress too. Ask yourself why these two speeches, only one day apart, ring so differently. Which audience do you identify with? Which message speaks to you? And, of course, ask yourself how you might—and will—respond.

Read Pope Francis' Speeches Online

Full text of Pope Francis' address to the US Congress (6 1/2 pages): <http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/24/politics/pope-francis-congress-speech/>

Full text of Pope Francis' address to the United Nations General Assembly (approximately 11 pages): https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/transcript-pope-francis-speech-to-the-un-general-assembly/2015/09/25/3dea72e8-6382-11e5-b38e-06883aacba64_story.html ↵

Using Right Language in Our Earthcare Conversations

PEOPLE OF FAITH all over the world care deeply about climate change, and a group called Our Voices, which is a campaign for global multifaith climate action, asked UK-based nonprofit group Climate Outreach to design a study that would help us learn more about the type of language that is most helpful when we're speaking to people of other traditions or faiths.

The group developed trial narratives and tested them with multifaith groups to see how language helps or hurts collaborative earthcare efforts. Here we point out some of the fascinating main findings of this study, but you can read more about the study and the report by using the link given at the end of this article.

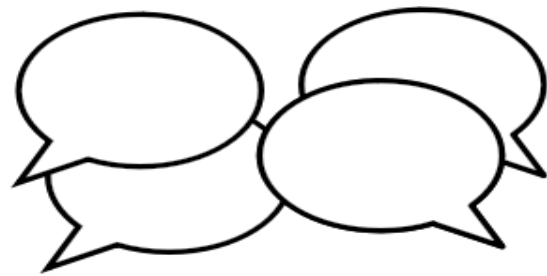
Five big lessons when talking with others about climate change:

1. Be cautious with blame and fear.
2. Present threats and solutions in terms of core values.
3. Promote rewards of stronger faith and belonging.
4. Create a narrative arc.
5. Find specific language for each faith within a narrative theme.

Five narratives that work:

The study showed that these narratives worked well in a multifaith group, speaking to something true within each tradition and person:

1. Earth/Creation care: "God/the divine is manifested in/speaks through the earth/natural world around us. We have a sacred responsibility to care for the earth. The natural world is a precious gift."
2. Moral challenge: "Climate change is a moral challenge. It is harming the poor and vulnerable - the very people our faith tells us to protect. We should care for these people, not worsen their lives. It is our responsibility to preserve the legacy of our parents and provide for the future of our children."



3. Balance: "Climate change is disrupting the natural balance in the world. The seasons are coming at the wrong times. Climate change is a message that something is wrong."
4. Action: "Our faith is our way of life. It is what we say and do every day. We have been arrogant, ignorant, greedy and wasteful. To fulfil our duty we will live by our principles, gladly living a simple, contented and fulfilled life. We recognise the need for action at all levels—government, business, nations and community—and in our personal lives."
5. Personal pledge: "Climate change is important to me and my faith. I accept this truth and will share it. I will make a commitment to change myself and defend/protect the world."

Language to avoid or use carefully:

A number of words and phrases tested negatively with participants, evoking fear or judgment and a sense of polarization. The study suggests that we be careful when using the following terms in relation to climate disruptions issues:

- Justice
- Natural limits
- Signs and tests
- Disobedience
- Proselytizing
- Religion
- Forgiveness

To learn more about the study, go to <http://climateoutreach.org/resources/our-voices-4-page-overview/> and click the Download button to download the Global Multifaith Campaign Guide. ↗

Quaker Faith and Fellowship

Do you enjoy discussing ideas, events, practice, and more with other Friends? You may want to visit and register for Quaker Faith and Fellowship, a Friendly discussion forum that hosts online conversations in English, German, Dutch, and Danish: <http://www.quakerfaithandfellowship.org/forum/index.php?appContentType=0> ↗

River Spill Is a Signal to End Business as Usual

By Richard Grossman

IN COLORADO, OUR ANIMAS RIVER received a serious insult in August of 2015. Fortunately the river seems to be recovering, but we cannot predict what the long-term effects will be.

Contractors working for the United States Environmental Protection Agency recently released a huge amount of toxic water and tailings from the Gold King Mine. The water spilled into the Animas River, originally named “el rio de las animas perdidas” or the “river of lost souls”.

It wasn't long before the finger pointing started. The EPA was blamed not only for the spill but also for the long delay in notifying our community. To the EPA's credit, they are taking responsibility for the accident and for monitoring its environmental effects. There is also talk of compensating the businesses for their loss of revenue.

I am impressed that the EPA's chief, Gina McCarthy, came to Durango to take command of the event. This is so different from the way the chief executive of BP reacted during the Deepwater Horizon disaster. While his well was polluting the Gulf of Mexico, Tony Hayward went to a sailboat race.

I know little about mining and mine remediation, but I have had plenty of home maintenance projects go awry. I can understand how the contractors working for the EPA could make the mistake that resulted in this tragedy. Fortunately the EPA is accepting responsibility, but I'll bet that they will be careful in hiring those same contractors again!

The laws that govern hard-rock mining were written over 140 years ago, when the west was wilder and the number of people of European descent was small. Mining claims were inexpensive and easily available. The laws allowed mining with little concern for environmental protection or for remediation. This has led to hundreds of mines such as Gold King where the value was extracted and the shaft abandoned. Water continues to flow through many of these mines, picking up silt and poisonous metals, as it has for decades. Before the deluge on August 5th up to 250 gallons of contaminated water poured out of the Gold King every minute—that's 360,000 gallons every day! The flow



Photo Credit: Jerry McBride/The Durango Herald/ Press Association/AP

has increased significantly since the dam was broken.

Folks have been concerned about pollution from the mines in Silverton for years, but insufficient remediation has been done. Being inundated by an estimated 3 million gallons of sickly orange water at one time has finally brought attention to the problem. Unfortunately, it includes international attention that puts southwest Colorado in a bad light.

This is an opportunity for those who believe that the government is too big and has too much power to be critical of the EPA. Many politicians have wanted to abolish it. We should be wary of their efforts to use this spill as an excuse. That doesn't make much sense to me, however. If we didn't have any laws that controlled mining, the Animas would run orange every day!

I think that this catastrophe (to use the word the Herald chose for its headline) will finally motivate cleanup of the Silverton mines. Even more important is to prevent future hard-rock mining problems by changing the ancient mining laws. Furthermore, this spill should motivate legislators to pass “good Samaritan” laws to protect people who work to clean up the mines from liability if things go wrong.

But maybe there is a broader lesson to be learned from the Gold King misfortune. Let me ask a couple of questions: what are we doing now that will result in Gold King-like problems in the future? Are companies charging enough to pay for cleanup that will be

Continued on next page

required in the future? I think you know what my answers will be.

Let's look at electricity. Much of our power is generated using coal; indeed, we have two coal-fired power plants just across the border in New Mexico. Testing the mud at the bottom of Narraguinnep Reservoir north of Cortez showed low levels of mercury until about the 1970 stratum, when those plants started up. We are advised against eating fish that are caught there, a consequence of mercury from the power plants. A neurotoxin, mercury is especially bad for the most vulnerable—developing fetuses and the young. Yet the coal companies are trying to reduce the price they pay to the government for coal mined on federal land and they fight public safety regulations.

Climate change is much worse than the mercury problem since it affects all of life. Future generations may never recover from the damage we are causing with anthropogenic climate change. ♪



Photo credit: Shaun Stanley, AP/ NY Daily News

Editor's note: This essay was first published in the Durango (Colorado) Herald, where Richard Grossman writes a monthly column, "Population Matters!" It is the only regularly appearing newspaper column dealing with issues of human population. If you would like to receive future columns by email, contact Richard at: richard@population-matters.org



Encounter with the Wild

By Harold Branam, Savannah Monthly Meeting

*As we walk out in blooming Sunday
heavy with azaleas, dogwoods, and wisteria,
the vaulted sky looms purplish-blue
like a backdrop behind our neighbor's house.*

*Down along the marsh a hawk
skims the tops of palm trees
then circles back with its eyes
fixed on our five-pound toy poodle.*

*Marsh hens send their clackety alarm
reverberating through the tall grass
like sonar to mark our human path.
We return for breakfast before the rain. ♪*



From the author: At FGC Gathering, I took the "Sustainability Spectrum" workshop led by QEW and was inspired to send this poem for possible publication in *BeFriending Creation*.

My poetry has been published in *Friends Journal*, *Appalachian Journal*, and other magazines and read by Garrison Keillor on NPR's *Writer's Almanac*.

I am a member of Savannah Monthly Meeting and of Southeastern Yearly Meeting's Earthcare Committee.



“I Hear Your Cry”: Joining the Lamentation of the Earth

By Samuel Mahaffy, Olympia Friends Meeting



Mount Spokane.

THE QUIET OF THE SUMMER NIGHT is shattered by an eerie wail. It is a plaintive and distressed cry. It is distinctively different from the usual night sounds on our three acres in the country. Absent tonight is the hooting of the two owls in conversation with each other. In this dusk hour, we normally hear the rising orchestra of the coyotes—first one, then a few, then a chorus—out to bound across the fields as a pack, celebrating their hunt for field mice and voles.

Tonight, those familiar and comforting sounds are absent. There is only this enduring wail. I am pulled outdoors into the dark night, seeking to understand what creature might make such a sound and what distress raises this lament. The cry seems at once both close by and far away. It is a lasting lament.

I am perplexed and troubled by the sound. I push it aside. Perhaps I am imagining this. The acres around our home have long been in a conservation trust. This is a wildlife corridor and wetland habitat at the base of majestic Mount Spokane in Eastern Washington. Deep snows in the mountain sometimes bring deer and elk down from the mountain, following the watershed. They may be trailed by a mountain lion seeking its next meal or simply distancing itself from the lights of the ski resort at the top of the mountain. When our daughters were six, we watched in amazement as a young mountain lion basked in the sun on the rolling hill behind our farm home.

It is all different now. The retired 95-year old gentleman who owns the acres surrounding our home had long ago put them into conservation trust. “I am just a steward of this land; it is not mine,” he stated when we first met him. Today, his life circumstances have changed. He feels he can no longer afford to leave the acres set aside in a conservation trust. Botched medical care has left both he and his wife struggling to

maintain the quality of their own lives. The stewardship of this land, once high on his list of life priorities, is now not his focus. The acres have been leased out for wheat farming. The grasslands that have been undisturbed for more than a decade are now tilled, planted, and sprayed with chemicals.

The evening news is full of accounts of refugees displaced from their ancestral homes by wars and regional conflicts. The creatures that are our neighbors are also refugees. Their habitat has been destroyed in just a few nights with giant machinery. Flood lights illuminate creatures scurrying for safety out of the pathway of this massive destruction of habitat as tillers roll across the once undisturbed grasslands. The speed with which this natural habitat is destroyed is astounding.

I become certain that this lament I hear is a plaintive collective cry of the refugee creatures and the shattered habitat. I share that sense with only my family. It is difficult to speak of such things. I am a guy with a PhD. I must be capable of some “rational” explanation for this sound. Am I just imagining this wail? Some nights later, my twin daughters and partner hear the same wail in the middle of the night.

We are also leaving this place we have called home for several decades. We moved here to create a quiet sanctuary for the sensory development of our very premature twins, born at less than two pounds each. They needed to grow up without the overwhelming stimulation of city life. Now, they are off to college and it is time for us to leave. It is evident that this little paradise—where coyotes bound across our yard at night

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and eagles covet our chickens from their roost high in the trees—will never be the same.

The moving van is in front of our home. We are actively grieving the loss of this special place that has nurtured our family. A car pulls up. An elderly neighbor lady, clearly troubled, stops and rolls down her window: “Have you heard something crying in our valley? I thought maybe it was a lost child. I have been very concerned.”

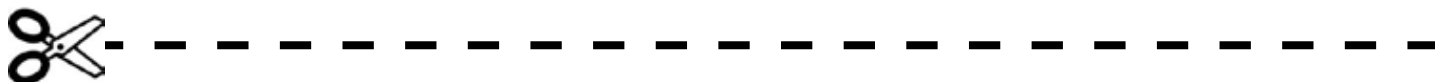
This is the lament of the earth. I hear your cry. Lamentations is such a biblical, Old Testament sounding word. It conveys a sense of people in captivity, collective grief, the loss of community. We don’t do lamentations well in our western culture. I grew up in East Africa. The village in Eritrea that was my childhood home knew how to lament together. I remember the collective grieving and public wailing on the day that President John F. Kennedy was killed. The mourning from far away, in this village that was touched in the 1960’s by Peace Corps volunteers from the United States, is real.

Does a sense of compassion, our spiritual values, or just our sense of being human, compel us to “weep with those who weep?” Dare we attune also to the weeping of the earth and join that lament? Might we weep together for the suffering of the earth and its creatures as well as for the suffering and hurt we cause each other?

Is there a sorrow carried deeply and privately within us individually that is calling to become a shared and public lament? Can we take the risk of speaking aloud: “I hear the sound of the earth crying?” If we “teach our children well” will we help them to attune to not only the spectacular beauty of this planet on which we journey, but also its grief and woundedness?

Like a cleansing rain on a dry and thirsty land, our lamentations might cleanse our hearts and renew our energy to be stewards and warriors guarding and protecting that which is most precious. To a planet that is hurting, might we say: “I hear your cry.” ☞

About the author: Samuel Mahaffy is a writer, public speaker, and organizational consultant who holds a focus on conflict transformation and peacemaking. He was born and raised in Eritrea, East Africa and earned his PhD from Tilburg University in the Netherlands through The Taos Institute. He is the author of *Relational Presence: Decision Making beyond Consensus* and a soon to be published book *Relational Presence: Discovering the Sacred in Decision Making*. He recently moved his ‘tribe’ from rural Eastern Washington to Olympia, Washington where he fellowships with the Olympia Friends Meeting. You can follow his writing at www.samuelmahaffy.com or on twitter @SamuelMahaffy.



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Thank you, Friends!

Vase, from page 12

Creek in Berkeley, CA) included several messages, all of them centered and coming from a place of spirit. Three of these particularly touched me and I am led to share them with you.

First, Paris seems to have touched greater numbers of sympathizers than numerous other violent attacks in recent months. If, like me, most of your friends and social media contacts lean to the left, you have probably also seen an outpouring of matching concerns for victims in other locations. The message we heard last Sunday asked us to let people grieve in whatever way they need to grieve. Their outpouring of concern for Parisians, perhaps because they have visited or have Parisian friends or somehow feel a closer link to Paris than elsewhere, is valid and should be honored, not criticized. Their concern will help open themselves up to caring for the victims of violence wherever they may be.

Next, we grieve, but we also wonder why these things happen. A message that tried to answer that question described the human need for inclusiveness. Nearly all of us crave a sense of belonging. When we feel disenfranchised with the community around us, we are likely to lash out, sometimes in extremely disturbing ways. Who amongst us is feeling excluded? What can we do to create a community that embraces diversity while connecting with shared values?



And lastly, what can be done in the face of such brutal violence? The final message I want to describe included the ancient Japanese story of a prized ceramic vase that had broken into many pieces. The vase was repaired using a technique known as *kintsugi*, where the broken pieces are reassembled in the original shape with lacquer mixed with gold, silver, or platinum. The repaired pottery takes on a fabulously rich and beautiful appearance that often enhances its original design, yet clearly shows evidence of past breakage. Kintsugi pottery, with obvious yet spectacularly beautiful repair work, is a stunning metaphor for repairing our broken world.

Joanna Macy teaches us that we can't eliminate our despair about the current state of climate change and earthcare, but instead we can use that despair to deepen our commitment to change. Let us stitch our world back together with golden love. ♪

\$\$\$ QEW \$\$\$

Supporting Spirit-Led Advocacy for the Earth

We ended our fiscal year recently (November 1, 2014 through October 31, 2015) and the overall assessment of our financial picture is only so-so. We are running a small deficit but we have resources to cover this. We have two part-time staff members who do their best to keep costs down to match income, but that means what we are able to do is limited by the amount of funding available. Shouldn't we be doing more in these times of climate change, decreasing biodiversity, water stress, and increasing population?

Please keep our need and hope for increasing impact in mind when you get our fundraising letter. Your generosity is greatly appreciated and your donations will be put to good use! We especially welcome new monthly donors. Monthly donors tell us this option is more convenient for them and it helps us to stay afloat all year.

Thank you, Friends!

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Fixing (Healing) a Broken Vase (World)

by Shelley Tanenbaum, QEW General Secretary

Events are surely unfolding anew as you read this article. I wrote this on November 20, not quite a full week after the violent events in Paris. We have all become more aware of the equally appalling and violent events in Beirut, Burundi, Syria, Kenya, Mali, and the list goes on.

Several Friends' organizations have issued statements of condolences for the victims and pleas for peace and justice for all people. Those issuing worthy statements include the American Friends Service Committee (<http://www.afsc.org/story/responding-isis-attacks-afsc-calls-no-more-victims>), Friends Committee on National Legislation (http://fcn.org/events/annual_meeting/2015/to_friends_in_france_and_lebanon/) and New England Yearly Meeting (<http://neym.org/news/choosing-love-season-fear-new-england-quakers-respond-paris-attacks>). FCNL's message included this prayer from Peter 3:8-9: "Do not repay wrong with wrong, or abuse with abuse; on the contrary, retaliate with blessing, for a blessing is the inheritance to which you yourselves have been called."

I pondered what I could possibly add to these statements, and as usual, our Quaker practice came to my rescue. During First Day on November 15, Meeting for Worship (Strawberry



In the Japanese art of kintsugi, broken pieces of a vessel are put back together with laquer mixed with gold, silver, or platinum, enhancing the beauty of the piece.

See Vase on page 11