



BeFriending Creation

A Publication of

QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS

Affirming our essential unity with nature

Vol.32 Number 1 • Jan-Feb-March 2019

A Quaker Youth's Journey in Climate Activism

By Kallan Benson

AS A 15-YEAR OLD QUAKER, I am accustomed to silence. I understand it is not empty; it can hold profound power. I have felt my spirit resonate in the silence of my Quaker community, but silence has recently taken me outside the meetinghouse to the steps of the Maryland State House. This time, I am hoping my silence will open the way for spirit to move others, specifically the legislators who will be considering the Healthy Green Amendment to the Maryland State Constitution.

Annapolis Friends Meeting offered my first opportunity for activism, the first People's Climate March in New York City in 2014 when I was nine. I marched with a group of Quakers that spanned eight decades in age. My 8-year-old brother and I could seldom see beyond the person in front of us, and the eldest in our group navigated the four-mile route with walkers, but we were all hopeful and glowing on the drive home. I was inspired by the size and positive energy of the crowd; the clever messages of the signs; the creative, powerful art; and even the friendly courtesy of the police. During that march, I evolved from concerned kid to a committed activist.

In the days surrounding the 2016 presidential election, my passion landed me a bicycle, pedaling with Low Carbon Crossing from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. to lobby congress with Citizens' Climate Lobby. We watched the election returns in an area of Pennsylvania where human health, drinking water, air quality, and agricultural land are impacted or threatened by fracking activities. Maryland had a temporary moratorium on fracking that legislators would be reconsidering in the upcoming legislative session. In February 2017, I took to the streets of Baltimore with a group of young Friends, canvassing for a permanent fracking ban that was approved by the end of March.

I realized most kids were very concerned about the future of our planet, but they could not come to the second Peoples Climate March because they didn't have an adult willing or able to take them. I wanted to make sure their concerns were represented and noticed, so I created the outline of a giant monarch butterfly and an earth background on a twenty-four foot play parachute.

Read more on page 3



Kallan Benson sits in silent protest to advocate for the Healthy Green Amendment in Maryland.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 A Quaker Youth's Journey in Climate Activism By Kallan Benson
- 2 From the Clerk's Table
- 4 Inside Quaker Earthcare Witness
- 5 Building Communities of Action with Project Drawdown By Ruth Darlington
- 6 Selfcare Freedom Through Plant Medicine in Diaspora Communities By Pamela Boyce Simms
- 8 Changing Together? The COP24 By Frank Granshaw and Annette Carter
- 9 So You're Ready to Take Action Against Climate Change By Josephine Ferorelli
- 10 Finding Peace in Troubled Times By Jay O'Hara
- 12 Let Nature Teach By Dan Kriesberg

BeFriending Creation

Vol. 32, No. 1, Jan-Feb-March 2019.
Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**.
ISSN 1050-0332. Published quarterly.

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. Please share our work widely and broadly, always attributing it to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Interested in being a member of QEW? Membership is open to all who demonstrate a commitment to support the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness and who support its work at the Monthly or Yearly Meeting levels, or through other Friends organizations. Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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.

Steering Committee Clerk:

Mary Jo Klingel,
mjklngelftlq@comcast.net

General Secretary:

Shelley Tanenbaum, P.O. Box 6787,
Albany, CA 94706. 510-542-9606;
shelley@quakerearthcare.org.

BFC Editor:

Hayley Hathaway,
37 Trailsend Dr., Canton, CT 06019
hayley@quakerearthcare.org.

Website: www.quakerearthcare.org

Twitter: [@quakerearthcare](https://twitter.com/quakerearthcare)

Facebook:

facebook.com/QuakerEarthcare

Earthcare Calendar

April 15, 2019 Deadline for
articles for April-May-June issue

From the Clerk's Table

Dear Friend,

"OK, but what does Quaker Earthcare Witness REALLY DO?" Years ago, when asked that question, I would try to articulate something about a really good online presence. Now I can talk about all the amazing things that our staff and our Yearly Meeting Representatives are doing across the nation, but that still does not capture all of what we do.

Friends in QEW bring a spiritual presence to earthcare work. We work within the structure and support of Quaker testimonies. What we are seeking is yet bigger than that. It is connected to what we do in worship, the surrender, the struggle to listen, the reassurance of an energy greater than our own, both through the community and through the Light.

There are days when I do not even know the questions, much less have any clear answers. There are days when this work is frustrating and discouraging.

Then there are the days that make it all worthwhile. I had such a day in the last meeting for business where I am an attender. The plan was to begin discernment on the Spiritual State of the Meeting report, but one of the Ministry and Council Clerks said we were going take time to discern where we are as a meeting on climate change. The first person to speak referenced the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, and the urgency of the work now. Others spoke about their concerns and the importance of our work as a meeting community. One of the last two who spoke said she was feeling like she had wakened to the reality of climate change, and knew that it will need the actions of the entire meeting. The last person said, "Not only actions, but a change of consciousness."

What does Quaker Earthcare Witness really do? We are Quakers working for the healing of the earth and all life on earth, and we are motivated by love.

Mary Jo Klingel, Clerk

From the Community

Quaker Earthcare Witness received a donation with the attached note: *"This comes from Friends in Northampton [MA] Friends Meeting who voluntarily tax themselves for their carbon footprints. Each quarter they direct their contributions/'tax' to an organization working on climate change. Thank you for that vital work."* For a carbon calculator, [<climatecalculator.org>](http://climatecalculator.org)

To make a donation to Quaker Earthcare Witness, visit [<quakerearthcare.org/donate>](http://quakerearthcare.org/donate) or send a check to Quaker Earthcare Witness, P.O. Box 6787, Albany, CA 94706. Thank you.



Continued from page 1

Over 1600 kids signed and shared their concerns on that parachute. Their words in orange, blue, and green marker filled the scene with color, and those giant butterfly wings helped our hopes for a sustainable future fly down Pennsylvania Avenue and around the White House on April 29, 2017.

Last January, my collective art project inspired Parachutes for the Planet, an international art initiative through the Mother Earth Project. Communities of youth around the world have already created over 900 parachutes to share their concerns about climate change and their hopes for the future. Parachutes decorated the National Mall in Washington, D.C. during the youth-led Zero Hour March and the third Peoples Climate March in San Francisco.

In November, with support from Annapolis Friends and hospitality extended by Toronto Friends Meeting in Canada and Saranac Lake Friends Meeting in New York, I shared my activism on a panel at the Parliament of World Religions and the Wild Center's annual Youth Climate Action Summit.

In December, I joined the Sunrise Movement advocating for a Green New Deal and I was moved by the inspiring determination and clarity of 15-year-old Greta Thunberg, who began striking from school in Sweden, calling for bold action on climate change. While she addressed the 24th UN Climate Conference in Katowice, Poland, I joined the growing international Fridays for a Future movement. I organized a strike on December 7. We played an atmospheric CO₂-themed hopscotch at the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington, D.C.

“Quaker practice has shown me that silence often speaks louder than words, so I will strike without speaking until my leaders pass the Green Amendment and show me the concerns of youth have been heard. I am counting on their hearts to hear more clearly than their ears.”

to protest the administration's delegation, which was promoting the use of coal and other fossil fuels.

At the opening of the Maryland General Assembly on January 9, Greta's inspiration brought me back to Annapolis and my Quaker roots. For years, my activism has focused on giving youth a voice, but our leaders still seem determined not to listen. Quaker practice has shown me that silence often speaks louder than words, so I will strike without speaking until my leaders pass the Green Amendment and show me the concerns of youth have been heard. I am counting on their hearts to hear more clearly than their ears.

Kallan Benson is a Friend from Annapolis Friends Meeting.

Join QEW in St. Paul, MN April 11-14



ARE YOU LOOKING to build stronger Earthcare connections? You are invited to attend Quaker Earthcare Witness' Spring Steering Committee Meeting on April 11-14, 2019 at Twin Cities Friends Meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Our sessions are a great way to meet each other, share about our stories and projects, and worship together. You don't have to be a Steering Committee member to attend. The QEW Steering Committee is made up of Yearly Meeting Representatives and at-large members.

At these meetings we establish QEW's goals for the following six months and build our community so that we can witness in the world for Earthcare.

Visit quakerearthcare.org/upcoming for more information and to register.

Inside Quaker Earthcare Witness

- Our QEW Yearly Meeting Representatives are reaching out to monthly meetings to offer resources and support for Earthcare action. Do you know who your Yearly Meeting Representative is and would you like to connect with them? Send an email to shelley@quakerearthcare.org.
- The Population Working Group updated their pamphlet *Friends' Witness on Population*, are researching the ecological limits to human population, and are organizing conversations with young adults on questions of childrearing.
- Our Mini-Grant Committee wants you to apply for a mini-grant to fund your earthcare project. They've produced a new flyer with all the info you need to apply, which you can download at quakerearthcare.org/minigrants.
- QEW's Continuing Council Committee is tasked with doing the official business of the organization between our fall and spring Steering Committee meetings. The Committee met on Saturday, January 26. They approved a somewhat higher 2019 budget, which included additional funds for staff healthcare coverage and allocated \$3,000 from last year's budget surplus as the seed money for a new website.
- Each month 35 QEW Friends make a sustaining donation that allows us to be a Quaker voice for Earthcare. It is easy! You decide how much you want to contribute each month and let us know—we can set this up with your credit card or you can set it up with your bank. Monthly donations range from \$10-190. It is very helpful for QEW to have sustained income that we can rely on throughout the year. If you can join these 35 treasured Friends, please contact our General Secretary, Shelley Tanenbaum (shelley@quakerearthcare.org, 510-542-9606).

Research on the Cape: QIF

Quaker Institute for the Future sponsors a week-long seminar for Friends and other like-minded folks each year. Topics are on ecology and environmental and economic justice. Friends bring their own research or project topic, so that they can take time to focus on their work and receive supportive feedback. Each morning, participants will hear two presentations and engage in "Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Research." Each afternoon, participants have time and space to focus on their own work. Each evening, the group gathers for informal discussions.

"I too am always in gratitude and wonderment at the Quaker process. I am so thankful and so energized after this week spent with you all." — Participant in the 2018 seminar

This year, the seminar will be held at the West Falmouth Meetinghouse on Cape Cod, MA, September 9-13. For more information and to sign up to attend, see quakerinstitute.org/?page_id=1101



A big crowd at the Introduction to Project Drawdown workshop in Moorestown, New Jersey in January. Photo: Elizabeth Endres

Project Drawdown In Practice

By Ruth Darlington

WHEN PAUL HAWKEN'S book *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming* came out in 2017, many hailed it as the "new Green Bible." I rushed to get a copy. When I held it in my hands, it felt like proof that there really was something we could do to stop global warming. After all, over 200 experts had found 80 solutions already in use around the world and 20 more in development and had shown how they could reduce greenhouse gas emissions to levels needed to turn back global warming. Here was hope at last!

But the book focused on what others were doing, not an action plan for me. Then I received an invitation to an "Introduction to Project Drawdown" workshop at a nearby public library led by the Pachamama Alliance, a group "dedicated to bringing forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet." Their workshop, created in partnership with Project Drawdown, offered the opportunity to study the solutions in *Drawdown* with an eye toward identifying what I could work on with others in my community.

Soon I attended a more in-depth series of four workshops. There we had time to research solutions, to report back to the larger group, and to form partnerships to take action. We discussed different levels of climate action, too—personal, friends and family, local community, and national/global. So much of the advice we've been given about climate change has been about individual lifestyle changes: changing lightbulbs, putting up solar panels, driving less, etc. After making those changes, it seemed the best we could do was lobby our elected officials and support environmental organizations. And yet, working with family and friends, and especially in our local communities, may actually be more effective.

I've begun to facilitate Drawdown workshops with support from my friends in the Pachamama Alliance. I led an Introduction to Drawdown at the Tri-Quarter Gathering of the Burlington, Haddonfield, and Salem Quarters in southern New Jersey. Since then, my Meeting in Medford, NJ has hosted the Introduction and the four-workshop series. At every workshop, people say the same thing: they need to do more and

want to find others they can work with to make the wide-ranging changes needed to stop climate change before it's too late. We need each other!

Recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Wildlife Federation, and 13 US agencies tell us just how serious the climate crisis is and how quickly we must act. Since attending the Peoples Climate March in New York, I have been led to raise awareness about climate change and empower people to act. Quaker communities, including my monthly meeting, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Eco-Justice Collaborative, and Quaker Earthcare Witness, have given me the courage to keep going rather than give in to despair. Promoting Drawdown workshops, with their focus on the spiritual nature of this work and on building community to implement solutions, is the latest step in this journey.

Ruth Darlington is member of Medford Friends Meeting and is a QEW representative for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

EDUCATING GIRLS / ELIMINATING FOOD
WASTE / LOW FLOW HYDRO / SHARING
ECONOMY / SOLAR MICROGRIDS / FUEL
CELLS / GREENROOFS / LIVING BUILDINGS
/ DYNAMIC SKINS / AIR HEAT PUMPS /
KITE SAILS / ROTATIONAL GRAZING /
SMART GRID/SMART METERS / SOLAR
FARMS / TIDAL ENERGY / WIND TURBINES
/ CONGESTION PRICING / GREYWATER
SYSTEMS / HIGH SPEED RAIL / VERTICAL
FARMING / AFFORESTATION / AVOIDED
DEFORESTATION / BIOCHAR / BIOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE / CARBON FARMING
/ NO-TILL FARMING / PASTURE CROPPING / BIKING / REFORESTATION /
DEMAND RESPONSE / LOW-FLOW FIXTURES / SOLAR HOT WATER
/ SOLAR PV / CHILD HEALTHCARE / FAMILY PLANNING /
PYROLYSIS / ENERGY STORAGE / WHITEROOF /
ALGAE BIOFUELS / CAR EFFICIENCY / AGRO
FORESTRY / CENTRATED SOLAR /
RECYCLING TRUCK BUILDING /
INTEGRATED SOLAR /
REFORESTATION /
BIOMASS
HEAT

SELFCARE FREEDOM Through Plant Medicine in Diaspora Communities

By Pamela Boyce Simms

ENVIRONMENTAL resilience-building at its best reflects nature's magnificent, layered interconnectedness. Imagine if local resilience-building against the backdrop of accelerating climate change were to take place in neighborhoods, towns, cities, states, regionally, nationally and among allied countries, facilitated by a constant communications flow among all scales via a permeable membrane!

Envision a world in which control of food production, access to clean water, renewable energy and everything that's needed for an Earth-protecting way of high-quality living were to rest in the hands of environmentally literate communities at every governance scale! Hold that intention.

Sparked by the Quaker Earthcare Witness United Nations Working Group in 2016, the QEW African Diaspora Coalition launched a

"Grow Your Own [Herbal] Medicine" Project with that deliberate intention. Driven by partners in marginalized communities of African descent, the Diaspora Earthcare Coalition's goals are to: 1) put increased control over the ability to treat illnesses that chronically plague the Black community directly into the hands of African Americans, 2) localize production of plant medicine which is crucial to resilience and survival in times of climate disruption and 3) foster African American agro-economic self-reliance.

The Diaspora Coalition's medicinal herb production project interconnects communities which grow their own plant medicine at the hyper-local level. The project also fosters regional interchange among population nodes throughout the Diaspora around small-scale value-added herb production. The Earth's fractal-patterned web of life is the organizing model.



Above: Community members El Ha Ghan and LaNoana Odom sort herbs as part of the Diaspora Earthcare Coalition's medicinal herb production project.

Below: Community residents, including author Pamela Boyce Simms, harvest ginkgo at Taylor Memorial Arboretum of Widener University, a coalition partner.



People of color experience heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and lead contamination at exponentially higher rates than do whites. The herbs that local Coalition partners grow are those which treat health conditions that are prevalent in communities of African descent as a function of prolonged stress, poverty induced diet, and longstanding institutionalized, and systemic health disparities.

Chester, Pennsylvania, a city of 30,000, is the local epicenter and operational prototype for the plant medicine project. Formerly a prosperous industrial center, Chester, which is 71% African American, is now mired in intergenerational semi-literacy, trauma, and poverty. There are no descriptors that adequately capture the depth of exploitation, environmental degradation, and health trauma that the residents of Chester continue to bear.

The QEW African Diaspora Earthcare Coalition has engaged and built close relationships with several Chester herb grow-sites and a major wildcrafting site partner over the past two years. The Coalition's eclectic group of Chester community partners, including the Chester Senior Center, Widener University's Taylor Memorial Arboretum, Shiloh Baptist Church, Chester Friends Meeting, Swarthmore College's Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility, and Stetser Elementary School, to name a few, have initiated medicinal herb education and production for local consumption.

Coalition partners rekindle knowledge of plant medicine that was not so long ago a living, vibrant part of African American cultural knowledge. Following an herbalism immersion in propagation, planting, maintenance, harvesting, and processing methods, Chester residents grow, add value to, and learn about the healing effects of plant medicine and its uses.

The Coalition conducted a successful and bountiful fall 2018 wildcrafted herb harvest of ginko, Goldenrod, Valerian, Willow, Mimosa, Black Walnut, Mulberry, and Bayberry, and began value-added production of herbal teas and tinctures. Herbs and herbal products will be distributed free of charge to Chester residents in tandem with herb-education classes conducted by project consulting clinical herbalists.

Herb education classes initiated in the fall of 2018 at the Chester Senior Center generated excitement about the power of herbs to support

health. Enthusiastic champions emerged who are ready for action with the advent of the spring planting season.

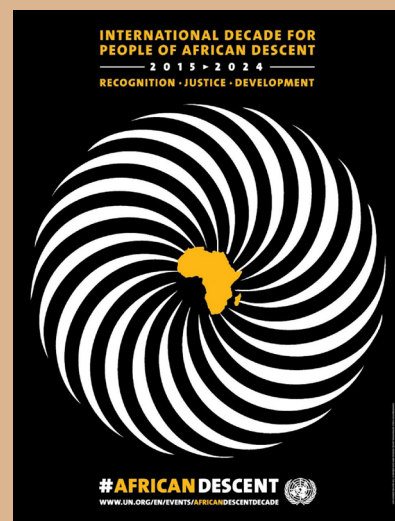
The treasure trove of partners' local experience and shared regional wisdom then inform supranational forums at the UN, specifically through awareness raising side events at the UN High Level Political Forum (UNHLPF) on the Sustainable Development Goals. The annual HLPF which takes place at UN Headquarters in New York is a forum that brings together all member states and specialized agencies for official meetings, special events, non-governmental side events, and educational sessions.

The HLPF is the primary mechanism for the review of countries' implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by UN member states in 2015. 2019 will mark the third year that the QEW UN Working Group's African Diaspora Earthcare Coalition will convene an HLPF awareness raising side event.

Coalition partners fully understand the existential need for increased selfcare sovereignty among marginalized people of African descent. African Diaspora Earthcare Coalition partners, in collaborative community, enthusiastically embrace plant medicine as a key to autonomy and environmental resilience at this critical juncture in the Earth's climactic history.

Pamela Boyce Simms works with international Quaker, Buddhist, and African Diaspora Earthcare networks. Reach her at: pbs9@georgetown.edu.

“Environmental resilience-building at its best reflects nature’s magnificent, layered interconnectedness.”



SUPPORT THE AFRICAN DIASPORA EARTHCARE COALITION

This year the African Diaspora Earthcare Coalition, convened by QEW, will organize three special side events during the United Nations' High-Level Political Forum as part of the UN Decade of People of African Descent.

One event will focus on water issues and another will address the theme “Grow Your Medicine: Traditional Herbal Medicine in Global South Environmental Resilience-building.” The third event will be called “‘We Remember’: Youth of the Yazidi, Armenian, Somali, and Tibetan Diasporas Speak in Solidarity.”

The events will take place close to UN headquarters in July. We need your help to make this unique grassroots project possible by making a donation at <crowdrise.com/quakerearthcare>.

Changing Together? The COP24

By Frank Granshaw and Annette Carter

IN DECEMBER 2018 the 24th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (COP24) met in Katowice, Poland. Their task was to hammer out the rulebook by which the world could achieve the goals set forth in Paris in 2015 during COP21. As Quakers from the Pacific Northwest, we had the privilege of being part of the Quaker Earthcare Witness delegation to this event. After yet another year of record drought, storms, floods, and heat waves, we went seeking news and ideas to help our communities respond to increasing climate threats.

Many attendees described the experience as “trying to get a drink from a fire hose.” At nearly 25,000 people, we came from 190+ countries as negotiators, support staff, journalists, and representatives of environmental, social justice, faith and youth groups, universities, local governments, businesses, and many others. We all mingled in a single complex, enabling a wealth of spontaneous interactions with negotiators and observers from around the planet.

This was a COP ripe with ironies. Discussions about swiftly transitioning to a renewable energy economy took place in the heart of Polish coal country. The event motto “Changing Together” contrasted sharply with a trend towards increasing populist nationalism. The hopes of increased action in response to the dire warnings from the scientific community were often overshadowed by formidable resistance from major fossil fuel producing countries. It frequently felt as if a thumb on the scales of decision making was tilted toward economic growth at the expense of environmental health and social justice.

These ironies were reflected in the negotiation outcome, which some observers characterized as the “bare minimum.” After much delay a rulebook was forged, a few countries put forth increased ambitions, and the World Bank called on increased funding for climate mitigation and adaptation. At the same time, negotiators from major fossil fuel producing countries actively sought to downplay a recent report from the International Panel for Climate Change outlining the consequences of failing to make a swift and decisive move to a low carbon global economy. Discussions

about wealthy developing countries living up to their responsibilities as major emitters and a great many other climate justice issues were largely side-lined.

In short, there was much reason for disappointment. But it was also quite clear that while the negotiations may have been the reason for the conference they were not all of it. The observers and other non-negotiators formed a powerful community characterized by enormous creativity, energy, and the will to leave a positive legacy to future generations. While the shortcomings of the negotiations drove home the lesson that if change is to occur it will happen from the bottom up, the presence and activities of this community gave us a window into how that change would happen. Being part of a larger interfaith presence gave us insight into the importance of faith in this endeavor, both in providing a moral compass for dealing with what feels to be insurmountable problems, and providing the spiritual resilience to do so.

We left with a sense that although the task ahead resembles Sisyphus unendingly rolling a stone uphill, we are part of a very diverse, creative, and passionate international community who are refusing to give up hope. A situation that left us with a challenge summed up in the words of another Quaker, Lindsey Fielder Cook, “Our children and future generations don’t need our anger and despair, they need our courage and our commitment to

act. They need our spirit to build solidarity at a time when science has detailed the suffering and destruction we could avoid if we act urgently, effectively, and fairly.”

Frank Granshaw and Annette Carter are both members of Multnomah Friends Meeting in Portland, Oregon, gardeners, hikers, occasional beekeepers, grandparents, and retired teachers.



COP24·KATOWICE 2018
UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

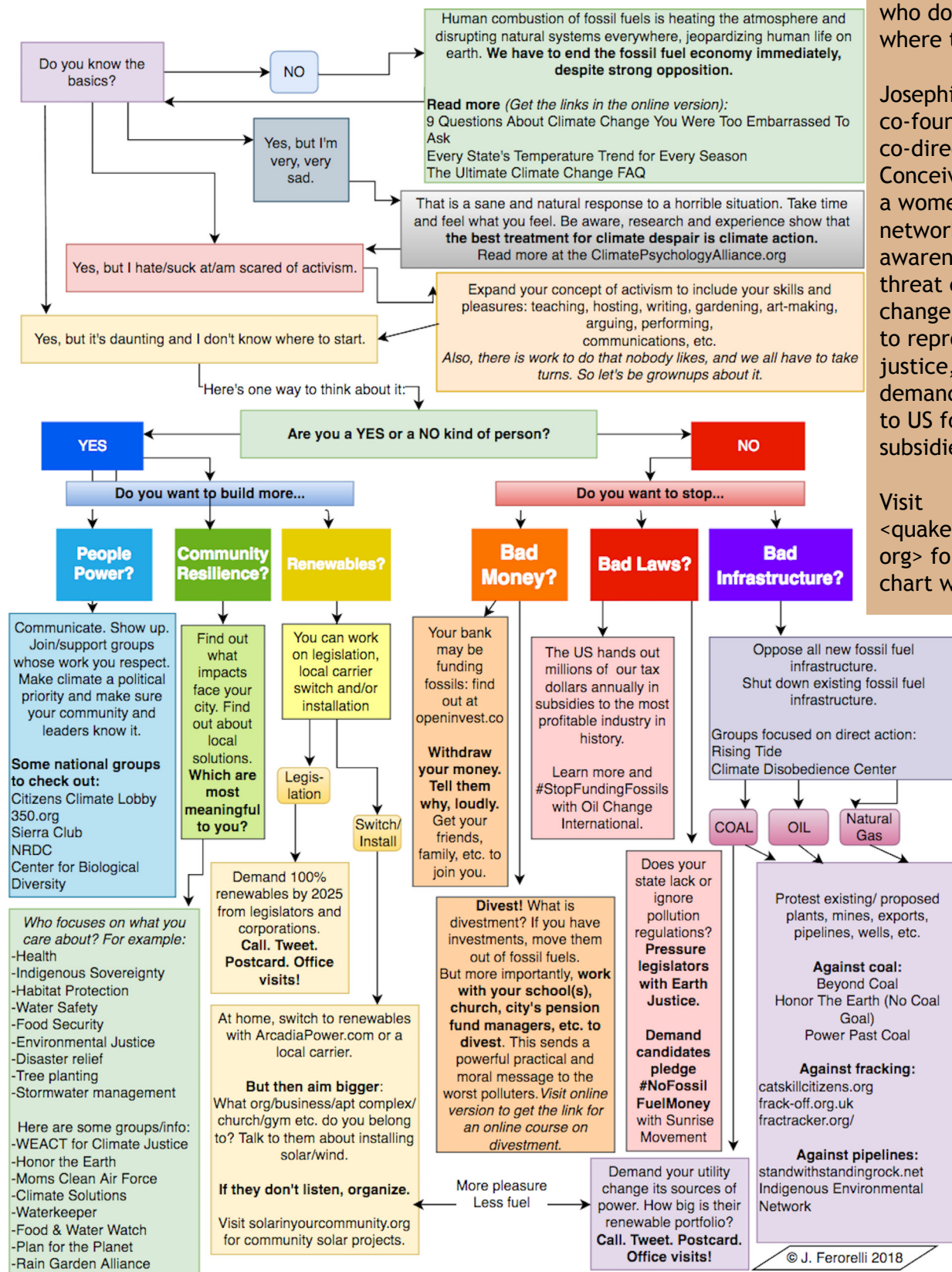
Read more reporting on the COP24 on our website: *The Bare Minimum* by Lindsay Fielder Cook, Representative for Climate Change at the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva, and *The Changing Context of UN Climate Negotiation* by Phil Emmi.

SO YOU'RE READY TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Josephine Ferorelli created this flow chart—a helpful resource for anyone who doesn't know where to start.

Josephine is the co-founder and co-director of Conceivable Future, a women-led network bringing awareness to the threat climate change poses to reproductive justice, and demanding an end to US fossil fuel subsidies.

Visit quakerearthcare.org for the digital chart with links.



Finding Peace in Troubled Times

By Jay O'Hara

ON CHRISTMAS EVE I went out with my in-laws to church service in upstate New York. The big crowd gathered in the chapel on the campus of Cornell University, and the minister hit all the right notes for this presumably liberal crowd: alluding to the occupant of the White House, pleading the cause of the immigrant, and giving voice to the yearning for peace and calm.

But something felt deeply off for me. In the midst of the carols and candlelight, the minister expressed a longing for silence, calm, stability, and peace in this time of upheaval. She claimed that the time is coming where the strong and gentle people will win.

Honestly I don't think it's going to work that way.

What can winning mean when we are exceeding multiple tipping points of irreversible cataclysm? What can winning mean when untold millions are doomed to suffer? What can winning mean when right now millions suffer the injustice of poisoned water, toxic land, and unbreathable air, often because of the color of their skin or the poverty they were born into?

Here is where this message hits me and my work on climate justice at the end of 2018.

While injustices, grinding poverty, and oppression continued unabated, much of the liberal US, much of the climate movement, and much of the Quaker world,

hungers for a particular peace and calm enabled by an escapist life of privilege. This definition of peace flows from a position of privilege in which those realities don't disturb the lives of many white liberals when there isn't daily outrage spewing from the White House. It's out of sight and out of mind.

We are entering an age of increasing conflict. If the movement for climate justice is going to make the future better, reduce emissions, and reduce the harm, we are going

“Have we found that place of peace that passes all understanding and allows us to bear the cross, not as a burden but as the gift that we are given to serve in these times?”

to have to put aside any hopes for that sort of “peace.” I believe we are going to have to cultivate an inward calm and clarity that is infectious, and invite others who hunger for justice into bold action in a world that rages further into disaster. We are going to have to nurture an inward peace that carries us into direct action confronting the juggernaut of the carbon industrial machine.

But the Quaker way, and the example of Jesus, is to put away the hope that everything is going to

turn out OK. It is to know intimately the experience of a redemption that comes not from winning, not from running away, but from faithfully following the Spirit into the very depths of hell on earth.

Are we ready, as Friends, to trust God enough to step out in this way? Have we found that place of peace that passes all understanding and allows us to bear the cross, not as a burden but as the gift that we are given to serve in these times?

I have hope that Friends may shine this light brightly this year. My secular climate work with the Climate Disobedience Center in 2018 focused on creating structures for activists to build up some of that personal and interpersonal resilience. If you're feeling a call to step out in front of the empire, and build a team to stand in the way of the fossil fuel industry in this new year, I'd invite you to check out our climate disobedience praxis groups. You can find the invitation at climatedisobedience.org/invitation.

Many blessings for all that you did to take necessary action in these troubled times this year. I'm grateful to be on this journey together.

Jay O'Hara is a member of Sandwich (MA) Monthly Meeting and co-founder of the Climate Disobedience Center.

Continued from page 12

Holding the red eft taught them knowledge I could never explain with words. After every child had the chance to hold the creatures in their hands, I would place the efts softly on the ground and respond to a chorus of more questions. From then on the children were more attentive, more aware, and more in tune. With senses wide open, they discovered other wonders as well. It might have been a frog or a fungus. Perhaps a rock with a fossil that spoke of ancient times or feathers from a bird killed by a fox.

A key to a more sustainable world comes from red efts and the other hold-in-your-hands creatures. They teach wonder with their faint touches of toes, and the “S”-swerves across the palm of a child’s hand. There are countless wonders in the wild, but it takes direct contact with wild nature to learn stewardship, and we need stewards of the land. The children always hold red efts with the care of a surgeon’s hand. They learn to care and be attentive.

The word attention comes from the word *attendere* which means “to stretch toward.” Attention is an action; it is not a passive activity. Paying attention is a skill that requires practice and patience. The reward is wonder. Having a developed sense of wonder means using all senses. It means having and enjoying questions. There is pleasure in the mystery that comes without knowing. There is the wonder for the surprise of figuring things out and happening upon an answer. There is joy in learning for oneself. This wonder allows for more “wow” and more questions, both of which lead to true understanding of a place. This skill comes from learning in wild nature.

For many, attentiveness to wild nature is a lost and forgotten

skill, but it is still essential. Being a keen observer of the natural world was critical to our survival in the past and I argue that is still essential to our survival in the present. We need children (and adults) to pay attention to the natural world, to notice when new plants are growing, and other plants are dying. To realize some birds are arriving earlier in the spring and others no longer sing. Without paying attention to our home ground, the subtle changes that indicate what is happening will go unseen. Environmental problems go unnoticed, and when care is finally paid, it may be too late.

Research by Nancy M. Wells and Kristi S. Lekies at Cornell University found that “participation with ‘wild’ nature before age 11 is a particularly potent pathway toward shaping both environmental attitudes and behaviors in adulthood. When children become truly engaged with the natural world at a young age, the experience is likely to stay with them in a powerful way, shaping their subsequent environmental path. Unstructured play is even more influential than environmental education programs with more formal lessons.

Adults can help give the gift of nature by allowing children the opportunity to play and explore in the wild outdoors. In traditional cultures, children had elders who worked with the outdoors to guide them. Children need to know how to hold a frog just as much as how to hold a smartphone. This gift will also bring joy and prevent the fear that comes when the only talk of nature is the problems of pollution, extinction, climate change, and more. Fear does not lead to effective action. Love does.

Now that I am back teaching in a classroom the challenge is



Photo: Kathy Barnhart

to apply what I have learned in a more structured setting. I need to be more creative to get my students outdoors. I look at every lesson and ask myself, Is there a way to teach this outside? Can I structure this in a way where the children learn by their own exploration? My school is fortunate to be located near several small nature preserves. The best lessons of the year are field trips. Over the years I have moved further away from planning the trips. We simply go. It may be only about an hour, but some time is better than no time. For the whole trip, we explore.

As Lowell Monke wrote in his essay, *Unplugged Schools*, “one of schooling’s most important tasks: to compensate for, rather than intensify, society’s excesses.” We need to make up for what society is not doing. Teachers must let go of their need to be in total control of the learning process. It is better to allow the natural habitat of the child to be the teacher and guide. Taking on a role as an elder who guides by showing instead of telling. Trust in the teachings of the wild and be the best educators by taking a step back so the children can take a step forward.

Dan Kriesberg is a science teacher at Friends Academy in Locust Valley, NY.

Quaker Earthcare Witness

P.O. Box 6787

Albany, CA 94706 USA

Printed on 100%
post-consumer recycled paper

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Let Nature Teach

By Dan Kriesberg

AN EXCELLENT MEASURE of how much children are learning is to count the number of times the teacher says “Pay attention.” The fewer “pay attentions” the more learning. In my own experience of 30 years as a science teacher, a 4th-grade teacher, and even as a swim instructor, I said the fewest “pay attentions” while I worked at an outdoor education center. At the center, nature did the teaching and I was the assistant. Trees, animals, flowers, rocks, and water were all teachers. No words or lessons or websites or videos could have taught as effectively.

On every hike I led I hoped for the moment when someone would scream, “What is that?” My favorite moment was when someone had found a red eft. The bright red, lizard-like body, covered in spots, was hard to miss. More shrieking would ensue, followed by:

“Eeyou!”

“Gross!”

“Is it a lizard?”

“Is it poisonous?”

Eventually, one brave soul would ask, “Can we touch it?”

I would carefully pick up the eft, cup it in my hands, and wait for the hush of anticipation. I’d explain how this amphibian was the land stage in the life cycle of



Two red efts. Photo: Imperfect Happiness

a red-spotted newt. This little guy had begun life in a nearby pond growing from an aquatic stage into a red eft, who then crawled into the forest for a year or two before heading back to the pond where it would finish its metamorphosis into a newt. The story led to many questions.

“What do they eat?”

“How do they know where to go?”

“What do they do in the winter?”

Not once would I have to say “pay attention.”

I’d gently put the eft in the hands of anyone who wanted, but only for a few seconds. That was all it took, a few seconds. It was at that moment children came to some understanding that they do hold lives in their hands.

Continued on page 11