



BeFriending Creation

A Publication of

QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS

Affirming our essential unity with nature

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We, The Future Generation, Ask You To Choose Us

Excerpted from strikewithus.org

ON SEPTEMBER 20, three days before the United Nations Climate Summit in New York City, young people and adults will strike all across the US and world to demand transformative action be taken to address the climate crisis. Millions of us will take the streets to demand a right to a future, and we're inviting you to Strike With Us.

With the consequences of climate change becoming ever more clear and dire with each passing day, a new powerful wave of the climate movement has been swelling up over the last couple of years. Young people around the world have been rising up to defend our future, and have been going on strike – every week, all over the planet – for months. On September 20, for the first time, the adults are joining us.

We, as a global society, are at a crossroads. We have a decision to make. Are we going to choose money or power or are we going to choose the future? The September 20 strike is an invitation to everyone to choose us. Choose the kids, choose humanity, choose the future.

Led by a diverse coalition of youth-led and adult-led organizations, September 20 is an intergenerational day of striking that will launch an entire week of climate action across the world...

September 20 is only the beginning. We must carry this energy to the 2020 elections, and beyond to ensure real, bold action is taken to address the climate crises. This is history in the making, and it's time we take back the narrative to save our futures.

Quaker Earthcare Witness encourages Friends across the United States to mobilize for climate action rooted in our deep faith and tradition.

- **How will you participate in the climate strike?**
- **How will your meeting engage in climate action?**
- **How can older Friends be allies to youth?**
- **What will you and your community commit to do after September 20th?**

CLIMATE STRIKE

SEPT 20

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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. 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.

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Earthcare Calendar

September 30, 2019 Deadline for
articles for Oct-Nov-Dec issue

A Note from the Editor

SIXTY FRIENDS loaded onto a school bus in the heat of an Iowa summer to visit Jim and Kathy Kessler's 30 acres of restored prairie and oak savannah. For two decades, the Kesslers have worked daily to bring back the native flora and fauna, a labor of love and faithfulness. I felt so hopeful on the land. You could see the earth healing.

This issue of *BeFriending Creation* touches on stories of home and loss. All of us are going to lose something dear to us because of this climate reality—if we haven't already. As Friends, we must continue to build our spiritual power to face these crises.

Intermountain Yearly Meeting approved a climate minute this year that speaks to these difficult times:

We unite with those who are already experiencing the stresses of this crisis...We know that there is much about these times that can cause us to feel fearful, angry, and helpless. We seek to be gentle with ourselves and one another, to take time for our feelings, seek ways to release our own stress, as we continue the work. At the same time, our integrity insists that we acknowledge our part in causing the current crisis, and accept our responsibility to act.

From a global perspective, Americans have used, and continue to use, a disproportionately large share of fossil fuel resources, while those who are most vulnerable to climate disruptions overwhelmingly bear the negative impacts. Although we are clear that speed is not our only priority, we need to face the reality that there are real tipping points, and our national failures to act are decisions with as much impact as other action choices we can make.

The Kesslers show us one way to make an impact. How can you? Visit <quakerearthcare.org> for resources. Let's dig into our faith and get going.

Hayley Hathaway, Publications Coordinator, Quaker Earthcare Witness



Photos: Jim Kessler takes Friends from Friends General Conference Gathering on a tour at his home in Grinnell, Iowa.

From the Clerk's Table

I HAD NO idea Iowa was so beautiful. My apologies to Iowans, but I just never thought about it. Driving across Iowa to the Friends General Conference Gathering was magical, with one little farm after another nestled in green fields. The windmills were breathtaking, bright white in the sunlight, the blades turning in slow, stately circles. I could not stop staring at them. They were so compelling because they looked so hopeful.

At the FGC Gathering and at North Carolina Yearly Meeting—Conservative, I participated in one workshop about climate change and led two small discussion groups. At all three, people were willing to talk about the hard topics, their fear and despair, grief and sense of helplessness. At NCYM-C, I asked: What do Friends have to offer?

That is such a critical question. My answer is that we have Friend's process and Friend's testimonies. Friends know how to sit still, and wait in the Light, and for the Light. We know we do not have to let our anxiety and fear push us into premature action. We know how to be silent in the Light and trust that Way will open. We know that our work is defined by all our testimonies, especially integrity and simplicity, and that we are better able to do this work when we do it in community. What a profound set of resources.



Photo: Tyler Silvest, Summer Sunset over South Franklin County, Iowa north of Iowa Falls, Iowa. Creative Commons License/Flickr

When we don't even know what to ask for, we can literally pay attention to the gifts that arrive. The FGC Gathering is one place where simple conversations become gifts of the Spirit. I was reluctant to go inside my first night of the gathering, so I was sitting out on a perfect summer evening watching the fireflies. A man I didn't know walked by, and said hello, so I said, "Are you seeing those fireflies?" We ended up talking and he eventually sat down to talk more. He is an environmental engineer whose company works on retro-fitting buildings so they are more "green." If there was anyone at the Gathering that I would have wanted to talk to, who better than a green engineer? I can't explain it, but I am coming to trust it. Sort of like trusting that, on this lovely summer morning, there are windmills in Iowa.

Mary Jo Klingel, Clerk, Quaker Earthcare Witness

You're Invited

Fall Steering Committee Meeting

Join Quaker Earthcare Witness for our 2019 Fall Steering Committee Meeting at Pendle Hill in Wallingford, Pennsylvania October 3 - 6, 2019. All are welcome! Visit quakerearthcare.org/upcoming

Donate

Can you make a donation to support Quaker Earthcare Witness? Visit quakerearthcare.org/donate or send a check to Quaker Earthcare Witness, P.O. Box 6787, Albany, CA 94706. Thank you!

Earthcare Outreach



Would you like a Quaker Earthcare Witness display for your meetinghouse or to use at events like Quarterly and Yearly Meeting gatherings? Write to hayley@quakerearthcare.org.

Displaced by Climate Change: Diaspora Communities Share Wisdom

By Pamela Boyce Simms

ON JULY 10, 2019 Lorenz Nehma told the story of the Yazidi people, a religious minority in the Iraqi/Syrian region, during the Quaker Earthcare Witness side event at the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF). He shared their history from early persecution and acts of genocide under the Ottoman empire to the present day. He lamented,

“My people, the Yazidi People, are dying because of ISIS and almost no one knows this. ISIS killed Yazidi men, enslaved the women and children in 2014 and were burning Yazidi crops as of this past June, 2019.”



Photo: Abraham Kromah. Diasporas and Displaced Populations Project members

Lorenz is a founding member of the QEW African Diaspora Earthcare Coalition's Diasporas and Displaced Populations Project (DDPP). (He's also an intern at Pendle Hill). The Project brings together members of ancient and old diasporas to inform groups currently in transition, and prepare to support waves of future populations displaced by climate change.

Members of the QEW African Diaspora Earthcare Coalition organized a roundtable event at the United Nations High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals in New York. At the roundtable were voices from these diasporas: African (American, Barbadian, Beninois, Guinean, Liberian, Somalian, Trinidadian) Armenian, Jewish, Palestinian, Yazidi, Quaker allies and friends from Irish, Scandinavian and Lenape diasporas. This work is made possible using sociocracy and dynamic governance tools derived from Quaker process.

Jamal Aden, a Somali refugee who works as the Diaspora Coalition's Youth Programs Coordinator, recounts his experience of the UN event:

“Somali people, my people, have suffered for close to 28 years. The people who are most affected by drought, civil war, and lack of government are the nomads. Somali nomads depend on their animals and move from place to place to find plants that their animals can eat. Due to lack of rain Somalia has experienced prolonged droughts and the nomads face famine.

Sharing the reality of the Somali nomads at the United Nations side event gave me hope that I could bring awareness to the situation of these people who deserve to be heard, their struggles acknowledged...”

Six million Somalis currently face starvation due to civil war and the impact of climate change on drought patterns. While the basic needs of 70 percent of Somalis depend heavily on a regular climate pattern, climate change-related desertification has overtaken Somalia over the past ten years. Climate change feeds armed conflict in Somalia by exacerbating tensions between clans and increasing migratory flows. 1.5 million Somalis were internally displaced as of 2016 and nearly two thirds of Somalis live outside of the country (UNHCR).

Lorenz describes his experience of the Diasporas and Displaced Populations Project with other college students who are refugees and recent immigrants, seasoned environmental activists, and Quaker elders:

“We all share something together. We have similar stories. Our people suffer because of religious persecution, terrorism, colonial exploitation, bad climatic conditions and so on. We all want to give our people suffering in our home countries a voice; an opportunity to share their stories. I hope we will reach more people. We learned that we're not the only ones suffering!

Continued from previous page

What I really like is that we all have different attributes/characteristics/backgrounds but understand each other with respect because we are all together for the same reason."

New York Yearly Meeting and QEW representatives who attended the UN event shared their thoughts:

"I am heartened that these young people have come forward to bring their unique perspectives to learning about climate change and its effect on people now. Their engagement is inspiring."

-Alice McMechen, New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) Representative to Quaker Earthcare Witness



Photo: Abraham Kromah, Jamal Aden, Lorenz Nehma, Sekou Swaray, youth voices of the Somali, Yazidi, Liberian diasporas

"The clearest message I got from listening to Sekou [a Liberian DDPP project participant] is that he is convinced, that if people were educated about climate change, this would make the difference. His optimism convinced me. That is a clear call to action that I can understand and follow."

-Ruth Bryan, NYYM

"It was a vivid, firsthand experience. I was able to feel the pain and see the sadness on the faces of these representatives of displaced populations. I was also awed by their resilience and courage amidst overwhelming obstacles and their dedication to helping the people of their diaspora."

-Janet Soderberg, NYYM Earthcare Working Group

Pamela Boyce Simms works with international Quaker, Buddhist, and African Diaspora Earthcare networks. For more information about the work of the Diasporas contact her at pbs9@georgetown.edu.

School's Out

By Shelley Tanenbaum

This past June was the hottest June on record, ever. This July was the hottest month ever recorded.

Earlier this summer, temperatures were so high in France that exams were cancelled. You might not realize how significant this is, so let me put it in perspective by telling a story of one of the most important lessons that I learned in school, even though it had nothing to do with the subject of the class, mathematics.

During the spring of 1972 I was a freshman at University of California, Berkeley. That spring, demonstrations broke out about Peoples Park—by then the university had fenced off the park. Most freshman lived in the dorms closeby. I lived in an apartment just up the street from the park.

The demonstrations turned ugly and the police got more aggressive, using tear gas to disperse the crowds. Of course, everyone in the area including freshmen in the dorms were also gassed.

Many of my classmates asked our calculus professor to cancel or postpone our midterm. They complained: "We couldn't study, we were choked by the tear gas and there was all this commotion." Our professor, one of the best educators I had in my years of college, looked at us amusedly. In his thick French accent, he told us privileged UC students part of his story.

When he was a math student in Paris, he and his fellow students asked their professors to cancel exams when the Nazis invaded their city. NON, was the answer. My lesson for life was whatever problems I am facing, to keep them in perspective. Tear gas, fencing off a park, these were nothing compared to losing their country to fascism, and even then, the exams went on as scheduled.

So when France cancelled exams due to the extreme heat, it was a very big deal.

Shelley is QEW's General Secretary and a member of Strawberry Creek Meeting in California.

When Climate Change Gets Personal

By Gayle Matson

FOR 60 OF MY 65 YEARS I lived in Seattle and Portland, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and lush forests. The natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest is truly spectacular, though climate change has brought even rainier winters to the area. Last year, after pining for sunnier weather and a less congested city, I relocated to the pretty college town of Chico, California.

I definitely got my wish for less rain. In July, August, September, and October it did not rain one single day in Chico. By the morning of November 8th it still had not rained. As I sat outside that balmy morning with Quaker friends visiting from London, one of them looked up at the dark clouds gathering on the horizon and said, “We’re getting some rain!” Then we saw the sun peeking out, low and weirdly blood-red, and I said, “Oh no, it’s fire.” I called out to one of my new neighbors as he walked his dog, and pointed at the sky with a quizzical look. “There’s a little fire up by Paradise,” he called back. “How far away is that?” I asked. “Maybe 12 miles as the crow flies,” he answered.

By noon it was dark as night and cars were bumper-to-bumper, streaming out of town. Air quality wasn’t affected right away—the smoke rose straight up over town and traveled west to the Bay Area. My neighbors were going about their business; no one seemed panicked. “Should we be worried?” I asked my neighbor. “I have a go-bag packed, myself,” she said. “I can’t really see how the fire would reach us here,” I said hopefully. “That’s because you don’t know the area,” she replied.

By evening, survivor stories and apocalyptic video of the hellacious escape down the hill through the firestorm began appearing on the local news. Chaos had descended upon Chico. Evacuees were desperate to know the fate of their homes, pets, neighbors, and loved ones. None of us knew then that 86 deaths had occurred and 19,000 structures had been burned, most in the first five or six hours of the fire. Some 52,000 people were under evacuation order from their homes and workplaces. Shelters were overflowing, the fairgrounds were full, the Walmart parking lot became a tent city. Chico residents scrambled to make room in their homes for displaced friends, relatives and co-workers. My neighbor took her son’s family of four,



Above: The author wearing a standard mask after the fire.

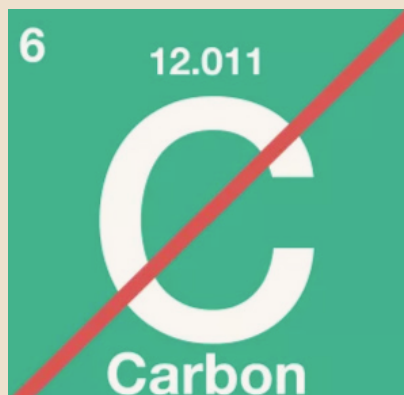
Left: The fire as seen from the Landsat 8 satellite on day one. The yellow dot is where the author's house is.

their two big dogs, and her daughter-in-law’s mother into her two-bedroom home.

It took more than two weeks to contain the Camp Fire. The total property damage was estimated at \$16.5 billion, a quarter of which was uninsured. More than 240 square miles were burned. Three Chico Friends Meeting families lost their homes. Two relocated in Chico, and the other moved closer to family in another state. Many Chico Friends took in evacuees, and some continue to house fire victims. Chico Friends Meeting received contributions from meetings and individuals around the US and abroad and established a fund to help those most affected by the fire with the least access to other means of support and assistance. The wider Chico community stepped up to the challenge of disaster relief and continues to stretch to accommodate the needs of fire victims. The town’s population expanded by 20 percent overnight, stressing infrastructure such as roads, schools, water and even sewage.

I first awoke to climate change as a moral issue when I heard Bill McKibben speak some 15 or more years ago. Since then, like many Friends I have taken what steps I can to reduce my carbon footprint—changing my travel habits, altering my diet, driving an electric car, installing solar panels on my Chico home. But on November 8th, 2018, climate change got very, very personal for me, and now I am called to do more. I’m not sure yet exactly what that activism will look like, but I am clear that I’ve got to take it up a notch and work more proactively for climate justice.

Gayle Matson is a member of Bridge City Friends Meeting in Portland, Oregon.



Renewable Juneau

By Margo Waring

IN JULY, Renewable Juneau launched a new project called Juneau Carbon Offset Fund (JCOF). Businesses and travelers, residents and “outsiders” are asked to offset their carbon footprint by using Juneau Carbon Offset Fund.

While other carbon offset programs support such activities as distant tree planting operations which are difficult to monitor, JCOF works to convert fossil-fuel heating systems in lower-income households to systems run by renewable energy, conversions which would not happen without access to the Fund.

The Fund’s disbursements are selected by a diverse committee of community members who represent minority communities, religious affiliations and housing specialists. We appreciate any support given to this tax-deductible effort.

For more, visit
<juneaucarbonoffset.org>

The Call and Response

By Mey Hasbrook

THIS SUMMER at the Friends General Conference Gathering’s Earthcare Center, I spoke on “Transformative Earthcare: 18th-century Benjamin Lay for Today.” I shared how this third-generation Quaker lived a radical life at the intersections of concerns that continue to weigh upon us today. In the 2017 biography *The Fearless Benjamin Lay*, we find a person of integrity whose spiritually-rooted activism provoked fellow Quakers. He was dedicated to sustainability among all “fellow creatures” including humans.

I opened the session with this found poem, “The Call”, from Psalm 96 (verses 1, 6, 11, 12, and 13a; NRSV) and paired it with an original poem of my own, “A Response.” The combination resonates Lay’s compelling commitment, the gift of the Earth, and our ongoing responsibility.

The Call...

Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, & all that is in it.

Let the fields be jubilant, & everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes...

A Response...

Hear the Living Water.
Talk to Creation
– human and non-human.

Care for all Relations
– Two Leggeds, Four Leggeds, Winged Ones.
Walk lightly on the Earth.

Live in harmony among all Nations
– the Swimmers, the Crawlers, the Plants.
Protect the Water, the Children, the War-torn.

Remember the Ancestors.
Travel deep along their Roots.
Remember, there is one Tree of Life.

Arise in the branches.
Bring forth shelter and shade.
Lift up everyone.

Mey is a member of Kalamazoo Monthly Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, and has a traveling minute to share her ministry. Learn more at <femestiza.com>.

Earthcare, Our Spiritual Journey Home

By Mary C. Coelho and Mary Jo Klingel

“WHAT DOES THAT have to do with me?”

That’s how some people respond when told that another tree frog species or primate species in a distant tropical forest is critically endangered or has gone extinct because of humans’ voracious appetites for limited resources.

We modern humans have been very successful at shielding ourselves from the discomforts and dangers of the natural world. This also has led to a tragic alienation from other species. In many ways both subtle and overt, we are taught from birth to think of ourselves as superior and independent. We no longer see ourselves as part of a living web of interdependent relationships. This loss of awareness and caring has encouraged lifestyles that relentlessly tear at the web of life, making us vulnerable to extinction ourselves.

Why is it commonly assumed that the natural world exists only to satisfy humans’ demands? In his book *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry says that our basic attitudes are products of a largely unconscious story that our particular version of human culture instills in us.

That story survived through millennia because it served us well when the human species was relatively weak. Now that humans have become the dominant species on the planet, we urgently need a new story that affirms our kinship and solidarity with the rest of the

life community. We need a new story that can evoke the psychic and spiritual energy required for the work ahead.

Modern life has shaped us into primarily goalsetting, thinking beings, separated from our deepest feelings, intuitions, and senses. We show our disconnection when for example we throw trash out the window of a car. The resulting loss of natural beauty and wholeness only perpetuates our loneliness, isolation, and despair.

In this New Story we find a home for the heart. We see that everything is integral to an emerging sacred whole. We see that the Divine permeates and transfigures all of Creation.

Our alienation from nature cannot be healed by the kinds of technological developments and political and economic systems that led to our alienation in the first place. We need to identify the outdated spiritual beliefs and practices that may be barriers to our caring more deeply and speaking more effectively to the heart of our psychic and ecological self-destruction. By focusing on the

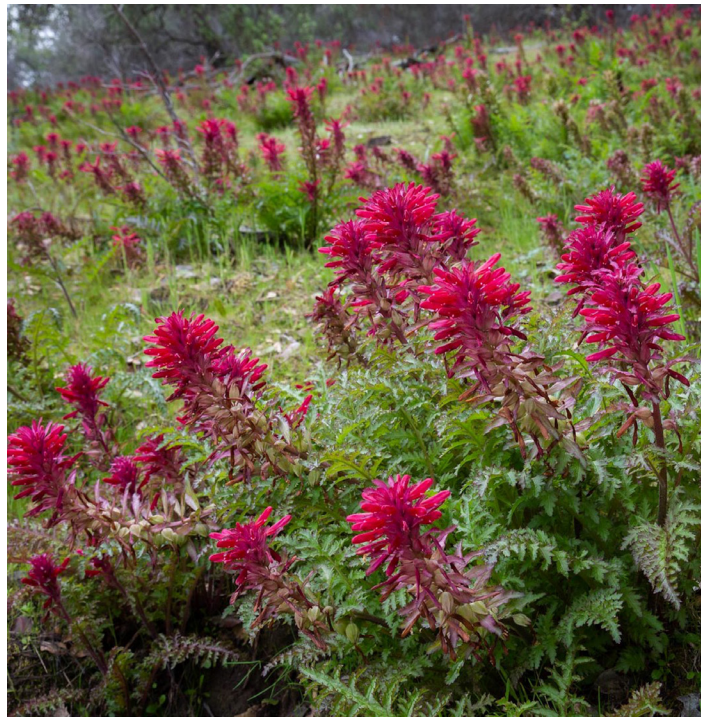


Photo: Kathy Barnhart

spiritual dimension of the global ecological crisis we can learn once again to feel the deep cry from our heart and soul for new ways to see our planet and ourselves.

Four centuries of scientific work has culminated in the stunning discovery of our common origin with Earth and the universe.

Physicists are moving away from an objectified, predictable model of reality that was once thought to be completely explainable. Many scientists now approach reality as an energetic, interconnected, field of relationships.

Although highly structured and enduring, what we consider “solid” matter is actually 99.99 percent “emptiness,” a vast, non-visible creative realm out of which the physical world of atoms is born.

Scientists now know that Earth was formed 4.6 billion years ago from simple elements formed during the initial flaring forth of the universe, as well as from more complex elements forged in exploding stars. Earth’s beautiful,

Quakers Coming Together to Care for the Earth

THROUGHOUT 2018 several public Friends came together via video conference calls and one face-to-face meeting to discuss what we as Quakers are called to do about the interlocking ecological issues affecting all of creation.

Participants of this group include Friends across the Quaker spectrum and those affiliated with Evangelical Friends of North America, Friends United Meeting, Friends General Conference, plus Quaker Earthcare Witness.

The group worked with Friends World Committee on Consultation (FWCC) to produce a short video *Quakers Coming Together to Care for the Earth*, which showcases Friends sharing their personal testimonies on environmental justice, earthcare, and stewardship.

The 20-minute video includes a guide that you can use when watching the video with your meeting or faith community. Visit quakerearthcare.org/fwwvideo to watch and for the guide.

1. How does my love for the earth connect to my heart and soul?
2. What changes in the environment am I noticing where I live?
3. What is God calling me to do? What does my faith require of me?

Continued from previous page

balanced ecosystems, each with a multitude of species, are the fruits of a very long co-evolutionary process. Humans are a part of a diversified unity that includes everything from hippos to mushrooms, river otters to bacteria, butterflies to orchids, and coral reefs to redwoods.

This new awareness is bringing about a hopeful spiritual awakening. It is leading us to accept with humility our role in this exciting ongoing cosmic story. In this New Story we find a home for the heart. We see that everything is integral to an emerging sacred whole. We see that the Divine permeates and transfigures all of Creation.

Traditional stories teach us about wise balance, restraint, and the high price of arrogance and alienation. Many ancient myths and images embody knowledge of the rhythms of the seasons and inherited wisdom regarding birth, death, and regeneration. Supported by these powerful spiritual traditions, we come to know with awe, reverence, and gratitude the unifying, creative depth of the natural world.

The New Story prepares us for further evolution in human consciousness, to become active participants in the creative Earth process. We embrace its mysteries as part of our healing. We find in it a larger context for our individual gifts and wisdom. We learn from the New Story that love is more powerful than exploitation, that community works better than domination, and that out of despair can come empowerment and hope. The New Story gives deeper spiritual roots to our ethical leadings. Friends' processes of discernment and seeking the Light become part of the spiritual journey home.

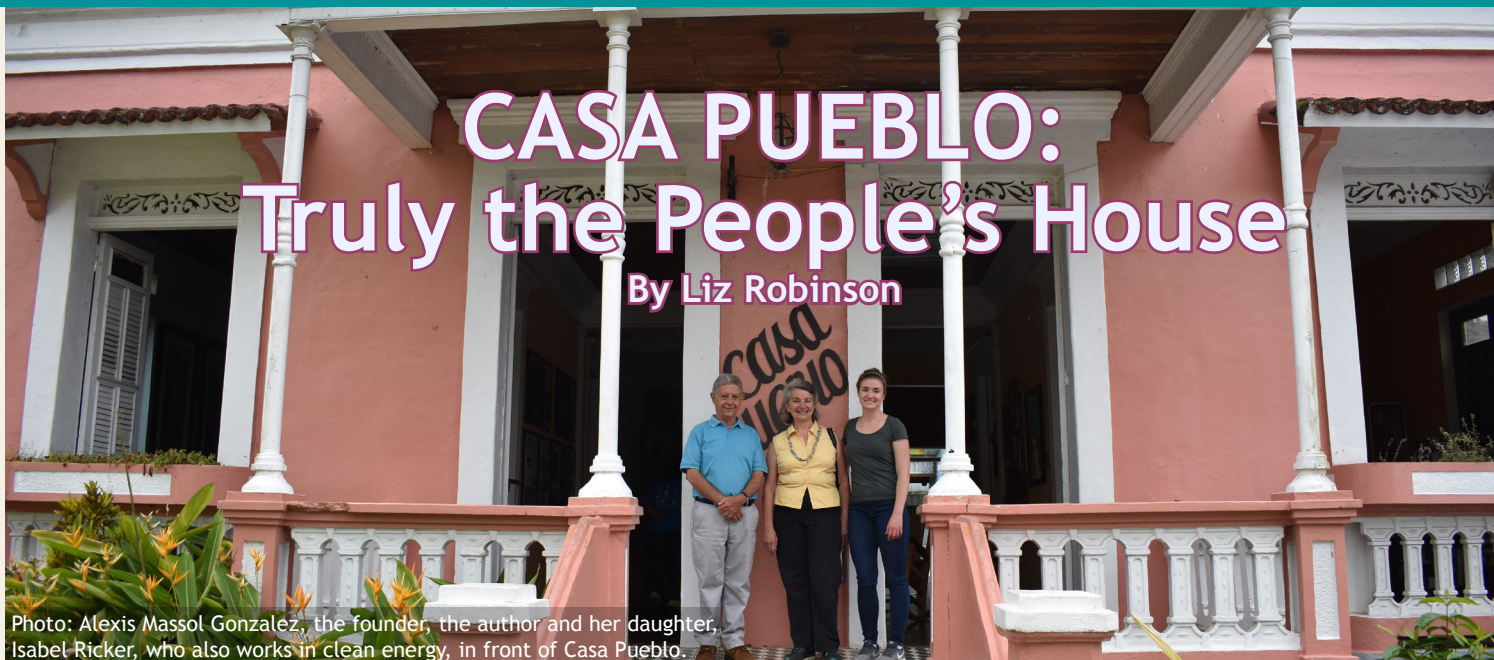
We may initially come into this deeper level of caring with the idea that we are "doing something" to heal Earth. As we grow into a restored sense of oneness, we become aware that we are also receiving something. This is our spiritual answer to the dismissive question, "So what?" When we come to care about the least of our fellow endangered Earthlings, including tropical tree frogs, we become part

of what Thomas Berry called "the Great Work" that transforms us as it renews our hopes for the future.

Some spiritual practices that may help:

1. Slow down. Seek balance in action, thought, and reflection. Breathe.
2. Study. Seek wisdom. Find and share new visions.
3. Find a community that understands and supports your calling to be a healer and peace maker. Learn to laugh and sing and work together. Take time to care for a plant, a kitten, or a child.
4. Listen carefully for the work that is uniquely your leading.
5. Know that there are many others on this path. Not all the work is yours. There is much energy for healing that we see and much that we do not. Trust it all.

This text is from a QEW pamphlet. More like this can be found at quakerearthcare.org/pamphlets. You can also order them for your meetinghouse by emailing hayley@quakerearthcare.org.



THIS STORY STARTS with Hurricane Maria and our Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting's decision to select Casa Pueblo as the beneficiary for our 12th month charitable giving. Because of its outstanding reputation, and its amazing hurricane-disaster recovery work providing solar energy to restore power to vital community services and needy residents on life support, we provided a small contribution of less than \$1,000. Then in 2018, we gave again because of their progress and leadership in Puerto Rico's effort to replace its failing electrical grid with solar energy, setting a goal of 50 percent by 2030. Puerto Rico has since set an even higher goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2050, thus joining five US states in this ambitious transition to a clean energy future.

On a recent family trip to Puerto Rico, we got to visit Casa Pueblo and meet its founder, Alexis Massol Gonzalez.

Casa Pueblo's story started more than 40 years ago when open-pit copper mining in the mountains of Adjuntas was poisoning the water supply and therefore the food chain in one of Puerto Rico's

most fertile farming areas. Alexis, a local engineer, stood up to the mining company, and with the help of family, friends, neighbors, and hundreds of high school students, conducted civil disobedience day after day, week after week, and finally shut down the mine.

After 15 years of dogged determination the Puerto Rican government finally passed a law forbidding open-pit mining on the island. Sr. Gonzalez founded Casa Pueblo, now Puerto Rico's

**It is not a matter of technology,
it is a matter of the heart.**

preeminent environmental organization, as an educational and environmental self-help organization. An early project was to convert the open-pit mine to a thriving, healthy forest. Sustainable forestry, sustainable agriculture and solar energy combine together to unlock and preserve the amazing fertility and abundance of the Adjuntas region.

Casa Pueblo is like a beating heart in the center of Puerto Rico. Its volunteer staff are beloved by the community. It is truly inspiring to see the enthusiasm of young people,

who not only come to learn, but also give tours of their living laboratory and workshops on a wide range of subjects: sustainable forestry, agriculture, water purification, solar water heating, and photovoltaics.

With the help of private foundations, Casa Pueblo is now ready for a larger, more visible project: a microgrid to supply solar power to vital local businesses on the main town plaza. In this way, Adjuntas will not shut down after the next hurricane. Microgrids that can disconnect from the grid are key to Puerto Rico's resilience and to its renewable energy future.

The utility's current plan calls for the old, failing grid to be replaced by eight microgrids, each of which could function independently in the event of an emergency. Casa Pueblo is once again leading the way to a sustainable, secure future, one which nourishes the community. As Alexis Gonzalez says, "It is not a matter of technology, it is a matter of the heart."

Liz Robinson, a member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting currently directs the Philadelphia Solar Energy Association. Visit <casapueblo.org>.

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It's very striking: the idea that we had something, but now we don't. In Lake Titicaca, we used to have fish for meals, but nowadays, eating fish in Bolivia is only for the rich because the lake has been polluted. Now the children who live near the lake cannot enjoy the fish that I used to enjoy when I was a child. It is heartbreaking that they can't enjoy the landscape I enjoyed as a child...

I've also been seeing how there is less and less water for Bolivian families, especially in the highlands near the mountains. Right now, my family is only able to get water three times a week.

Around the year 2000, I heard and saw news on television and in the newspaper about the city of Cochabamba where women were killed by the Bolivian and US military because the women were asking for the basic human right to have water for their families. In that city, many families didn't have water at home, and the former president invited foreign companies to come to Bolivia. They bottled the water and tried to sell it back to Bolivian families. This became the War of Water.

What happened in 2000 made me think about myself as a Quaker. I felt that it was an injustice that these women had to die because they wanted to have water. Since then I've been holding this in the Light, trying to do my best and to encourage young people as a teacher.

In 2016, we started an organization called Friends International Bilingual Center. We have been working with elementary-school and high-school kids and Young Adult Friends. In November that year, we ran out of water in La Paz. It happened suddenly—nobody noticed that the reservoir was drying up and suddenly we had no water at home.

There was a group of kids attending the same Friends church, and half of the kids had parents who did not have enough money to buy a bottle of water. It has been very hard for kids to see their classmates, neighbors, and peers not able to have water. As a response, they came up with very interesting projects. They went to the main plaza and talked about the importance of protecting water and that adults should be conscious about how much water they use. That was the first step. Later they came up with a project to build biosand water filters. It's an ecological filter that can provide enough clean water for two or three families.

As Quakers, we felt we needed to take some action based on what we were seeing. We especially believe in the Light in our hearts and the love that God gave us. From that perspective, whatever is happening around us is also a part of our own lives.



Photo: Emma Condori, Barb Adams (Richmond, VA Friends and Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Representative to QEW), and Hayley Hathaway (QEW) met at Baltimore Yearly Meeting's annual sessions in July 2019.

Climate change doesn't just mean we don't have water, but that the seasons have been changing. Many families lost their loved ones, houses, and animals in the flooding or during the drought this past year. We

face extreme seasons every year now. Because of that, the children decided to work on the biosand water filters.

Right now, we want to raise our prophetic Quaker Youth voice from South American so that our voice can be heard across the world. We don't want to say that this is just happening in Bolivia, we want Quakers to stand up and say what is happening to the world—I know that

in this nation, and in other nations, some people don't want to see what is happening, or they lose hope thinking that things are going to be impossible to change. But as Quakers, we have that light of Christ in us and that love that God gave us. With the favor that God gave us, we can do something to make a difference now, here. We don't have to wait until next year or the next 10 years.

You can support the Friends International Bilingual Center and their biosand water filter project by visiting www.centrobilingueinternacionalamigos.org/give. Each biosand filter costs about \$50. Emma also invites Friends to visit the Friends Center to volunteer.

Quaker Earthcare Witness

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“We Had Something, Now We Don’t.” Bolivian Friends Face the Climate Crisis

By Emma Condori Mamani

Emma is a lifelong Quaker from La Paz, Bolivia. She visited the United States this summer to share about climate change in her country and her efforts to organize youth around access to water as the Executive Director of the Friends International Bilingual Center. Here she shares her testimony.



La Paz, Bolivia with Andes in the background. Photo: Cliff Hellis/Flickr

My name is Emma Condori. I am from Bolivia. I was born near Lake Titicaca. Most of my childhood was very beautiful because I was raised in community life in one of the indigenous communities we have in Bolivia, called Aymara. One thing I really appreciated in my childhood was nature, because in Bolivia, most of the people live in the countryside—we depend on nature for food and clothes.

As a child, my mom and I would walk, going from my home to the mountains as we took care of the animals, and she would teach me about all of nature, like the water in Lake Titicaca, the flowers we could see on the road, about the sky—how the sky was beautiful.

I’ve seen how climate change has affected my community...the river I used to have next to my house started to get low when I was finishing high school. Nowadays there is no more water at all. There are many rivers near my community that are dry right now.

As time passes, climate change is showing up again and again in different ways. Every year I can see the difference. The snow covered mountains were the most beautiful white every morning when I woke up during my childhood—but as I grew up, by the time I was attending university, the mountains were getting more and more gray, and now there is almost no snow.

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