



QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a network of North American Friends (Quakers) and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies.

Doreen Hosking

Building a New Tomorrow

Mankind is capable of wonderful things. We have only to look at some of the great medieval cathedrals or listen to a Beethoven Symphony to know that this is true.

Right now, however, humanity is in a terrible mess of its own making. Our future is looking truly precarious. I believe we need to take our present consumer society to bits, brick by brick. Then we must agree on what we really need to allow us to flourish on a healthy planet, throw in all the bits we don't have and then build it all back together in a way that works for all Earth's inhabitants and for Nature itself.

To do that we need a change of attitude, a different way of visualising ourselves as part of Nature, and an awareness of our responsibility to future generations. Fear of the future has crept into our bones, and it is very difficult to believe that we as individuals can make a difference. But this is our task, it is one we are here to accomplish, and we must learn to do it with love and compassion for all mankind, and with gratitude for what Nature offers us.

Joanna Macy, a Buddhist philosopher of ecology says, "we are at a pivotal moment in history with the possibility to unravel or to create a life-sustaining human society."



BEFRIENDING CREATION

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Image Above: Friends touch the cushion moss on Dorson's Rock in Old Chatham, New York. Photo by Ted Bongiovanni

Sowing Seeds of Change



Solar panels for CSC-Asbl in Uvira, DRC

Dear Friends,

As we witness the ongoing ecological crisis and navigate a complex political landscape, the call to Earthcare feels more urgent than ever. We see the impacts of climate change manifesting as catastrophic fires, storms, droughts, crop failures, and floods. While structural change at the highest levels is crucial, we also recognize the power of local action, of communities taking root and tending to our Earth in their own unique ways.

It is in this spirit that Quaker Earthcare Witness champions grassroots initiatives through our Mini-Grants Program. These grants are seeds of hope. The fruits of these projects remind us that we can cultivate change from the ground up.

Our mini-grants support a beautiful diversity of projects, each one a testament to the creativity and commitment of those answering the call to Earthcare. We are working to represent all our mini-grant recipients on our QuakerEarth Action map, a vibrant tapestry of these local efforts, demonstrating the collective power of our community. Each mini-grant is a point of light on that map, a place where Friends are actively embodying Earthcare. Addressing climate change is a yearly meeting-wide witness, a call to action for every Friend, every household, and every meeting. By supporting these grants, you are not only funding individual projects, you are contributing to a larger movement, a network of resilience and hope.

In a time when federal environmental policies may be wavering, these community-led initiatives become even more vital. They are tangible ways to live out our values, to build sustainable solutions, and to strengthen our communities from within. This is why we ask for your generous support of our Mini-Grants Program. Your contribution will directly empower Friends to continue this essential work.

Please consider deepening your commitment to Earthcare with a donation to Quaker Earthcare Witness's Mini-Grants Program.

Donate at QuakerEarthcare.org/Mini-Grants2025
or send a check to
1968 S Coast Hwy #1040 Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Thank you,

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Our Vision & 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.

BeFriending Creation

We publish *BeFriending Creation* to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, news of our actions, and encourage 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. The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Please share our work widely and broadly, always attributing it to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Donate at QuakerEarthcare.org.

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I have children and grandchildren, so I am not interested in having society collapse. I want to create a future where we can live in communities where each person has a purpose. I want, as Ghandi said, to have enough for our needs but not enough for our greed. I would like equality and justice for all, a healthy diet, peace, education for all the world's children, acceptance for who we are and to see that Nature is flourishing.

"How can we do that given the present situation and timing?" I hear you ask.

Firstly, we will do it because we must. We have done difficult things before, things we thought were impossible. We have abolished slavery, brought in votes for women, dealt with the hole in the ozone layer and so much more. (Perhaps some of them were not done well, but they were done.)

We will do it when enough of us stand up and tell our governments and the financial organisations that only care about profit that we have had enough, and we insist that they act. To do this, each one of us needs to talk to everyone we know about the situation we are in. We need to talk and act as if there is already change happening for the better, because there is. We need to stop reading and listening to the doom-sayers, take all our courage in both hands and act. Of course, do all the things that we as individuals can do easily like eating less meat or buying an electric car or giving up flying but there is so much more we can do.

But first we need a vision of that future we are aiming for. How would you like it to be? Can you picture it? What can you do to help bring that future into being?

Doreen Hosking is a retired scientist, a grandmother and an environmental activist. She believes we can build a better future if we all actively participate in its creation.

We must not
stumble upon
tomorrow.

We must build
it.

- Pope Francis



MAY ACTION HOUR

PROTECT OUR EARTH

SAVE THE IRA

Quaker Earthcare Witness is holding monthly action hours to protect the Inflation Reduction Act.

The IRA's clean energy tax credits are the backbone of America's transition to a more resilient, job-creating, and independent energy future. Rolling back the Energy Investment Tax Credit (48E) and the Production Tax Credit (45Y) would not only derail climate progress but also undercut American workers, raise electricity prices, and cede global leadership in clean energy to China.

Saving these provisions will protect:

- » Save millions of lives and protect biodiversity
- » Reduce emissions to 43-48% of 2005 levels by 2035
- » Protect hundreds of thousands of good paying jobs and billions in investments

Our next action hour is on May 21st, 1pm Eastern/10am Pacific. We will break down what's happening, call our representatives, target critical districts, and get empowered.

The stakes are massive, and a small, coordinated effort could protect the IRA and the future of clean energy in the U.S.

Learn more and Register at
[**Quakerearthcare.org/events**](https://quakerearthcare.org/events)

Sara Jolena Wolcott

If Quakers Were Witches

My grandmother loved moss. We would go on long walks together (well, I thought they were long, as an 9 year old), and look at the lichen on trees together with great delight. Upon a magnificent vista, a special clearing, or a Great Old Tree, she would raise both her hands to the natural world with delight, praise, and, I would now say, acknowledgement of the power and Presence before her. Upon hearing a bird in the forest, she her eyes would twinkle at me before she tilted her head, then whistle its song back to it. She knew all the birds songs. (Or at least I always thought she did). She was a great whistler: she had even been a whistler in a band when she was in college (I didn't even know that was a thing).

She always joked that it was University that had turned her into a Quaker: she understood the power of education. She had entered UC Berkeley, the first person from her family to attend such a prestigious school, ready to study Mandarin so she could become a Christian missionary to China. Then she took a class on biblical history, learned that the Bible was not entirely true, and had a major crisis of faith. Somewhere in there she met my grandfather, himself a budding conscientious objector, and happily became a Quaker. At some point, she and her young family moved to Los Gatos hills, where she taught second grade and lived next to Hidden Villa Farm and the great Josephine and Frank Duvenick. Together, along with several other strong women and their immensely capable husbands, they founded Palo Alto Friends Meeting and, subsequently, College Park Quarterly Meeting - and played a role in what would become Ben Lomond Quaker Center.

I have far, far more memories of our time in nature together than at Quaker Meeting. Thirty years later I can almost still smell the freshness of the soap she used to wash her hands after her many hours tending tulips and other blooms in her garden, which was always beautiful. It was she who first named my gifts for somatic healing (it turned out that all of her granddaughters had this gift). And she who, when the doctors said my grandfather had just six months to live, refused their prognosis. She turned to "alternative" healing therapies - from food to brain gym to magnets to changing narratives to massages to stress reduction to - well I don't really know for sure, but there were a lot of things, and whatever she did it worked, because he lived for at least 25 years longer than he was "supposed" to.

She had all these kinds of gifts: with healing, with food, with plants, with teaching, with music, with sensing patterns and building community and befriending strangers and cultivating powerful visions of the future.

I don't think she would have ever used the term "witchy" or "animist" to describe herself. She was raised to become a missionary, afterall, certainly would have labelled herself a Christian, could easily quote the psalms, and appreciated hymns. In her world, "Christian" did not ever equate "witchy" or anything remotely "pagan."

It's a dichotomy she inherited: not, I think, one that is inherent in the truth of a tradition that seeks to nurture the Inward Light. I sometimes wonder



what she would think about me offering these workshops and initiatives on, "If Quakers were Witches...."

Would she have recognized herself in the people who gathered together at Ben Lomond Quaker Center in 2024 when we offered our first workshop on this theme? I hope she would have stayed long enough to sit in the red-wood circle with us, around the fire, under the full moon, in silence. How powerful that night was. For me, one of the most powerful parts of the workshop was how potent were our Meetings for Worship. "Covered meeting" doesn't quite describe it, because it was upswelling, come from within and moving out, not just from above. It was more like the silence was pregnant. Pregnant with what? Dare I say Love?

My grandmother also never discussed indigenous peoples. Or rather, only in a vague way: indigenous peoples were "wise", and I had the sense of her admiration of them for their closeness to nature, but they were also far away. Maybe as far away as China.

For me, two generations later, I can't imagine loving this beautiful, generous

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land without asking questions about who was here before I was; about the original caretakers of this land - who they were, what they did, why they are not here now, and where are they now? It would take me a long time (in retrospect) to learn how to answer those questions, but the more I do the more I am able to sink into the earth-human connection that is my birthright as a daughter of Earth. I have put much of my own professional energy into tracing the histories of climate change into the Doctrine of Discovery, and working on what it means to both understand and untangle from those histories. I don't know if I have any right to be part of the bigger conversations about "rematriation" without doing that work. As my friends at Land Justice Futures (where I am the only Quaker on their theological council) say, you can't get to the cool stuff about Mother Law without also engaging in #complicitnomore.

Can any earth-loving spiritual/religious practice do its work without also engaging in some form of decolonization? Not if it wants to go deep. Not if it wants to engage with the Peace

that is in these lands and waters and which is possible to find within and between all beings.

And as we get closer to Spirit, I find that many, many people, including Quakers, are feeling the calls and nudges of Earth. This movement is not about Quakerism.

But Quakers are amongst those being, well, Quaked. Brought to the possibility of greater life and even, perhaps, Peace. It is possible. I have experienced this possibility directly, myself, at the recent Rematriation Symposium, held by women of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. There is a Peace that is here in this place.

I actually think many of us settler folks tend to miss it.

I include many of my witchy and animist friends and co-creators of rituals in that statement. I've been on a decolonial road for many years, and am only just beginning to feel this deeper Presence.

But I recognize it. I recognize it because I come from a tradition that sat and sometimes still sits under trees.

eldering, and Hayley Hathaway, who was a student of mine, is younger than I am, and is, as many of you who have seen her work at QEW know, quite a talented elder herself. They both said that that workshop was the first such workshop. There would be others. The next one, they agreed, would be on the East Coast.

I was surprised.

But they were right.

It will be at Woolman Hill, in the Berkshire mountains, amongst the eastern woodlands, in early May. Right around Beltane, for those of you who remember what such things are.

It will be shortly after the first 100 days of Shock and Awe.

A time when many birds will be singing.

Peering into what is possible this May, I can almost hear my Grandmother, Margaret Crogan Wolcott, whistling back to them.

You, and your grandmothers, and your grandmother's grandmothers, are welcome.

Even if you don't know if you or your children will be able to have grandchildren. Still, we will gather, for Life keeps calling us forth: a people to be gathered.

Sara Jolena Wolcott, M.Div, lives alongside the River that Runs Both Ways, aka the Hudson River in what is now New York. She founded Sequoia Samanvaya and offers regular online teachings, in person retreats, and 1-1 work. Much of her work is concerned with re-originating and remembering the story of climate change into the doctrine of discovery. She also hosts the ReMembering and ReEnchanting podcast. She is a "scattered Berry" member of Strawberry Creek Meeting, who helped to raise her, along with a herd of horses.



Photo by Kathy Barnhart

Because my grandmother knew that singing me bird-songs was as important as hymns.

Because she saw and named my gifts and we laughed together.

And its really not about what names we put on the Mystery anyways.

And yet here we are.

At the beginning of the 2024 If Quakers Were Witches... workshop at Ben Lomond, I sat between my two elders: Elaine Emily, who is well known for her



01

In their garden, I learned
to splay the roots against their will,
ideally with wet fingers but with a knife if
they did not want to leave.

This would stop the entire plant from
bursting forth like a champagne cork, they said,
when the ground freezes over
and only these roots could tether her.

Ring the nursery soil to force her into the dry earth.
I looked again into my hands holding
a knife, half of her, and half a handful
of glassy hairs held tightly within themselves,
having looked too deeply for home.

02

Those that knew,
knew no things
were just green things
amongst other green things.
They saw blessings uncurl
and spoke them aloud
as friends in passing.

Those that did not know
knew the names of far-away ones,
not waving at doorsteps.
They walked on land
like faceless streets
and gawked into their cabinets
like gardens.

Poems by Lee Stark

Fall Gathering

Each Fall, QEW gathers to worship together, learn from each other, share in fellowship, and do business together. Our Gatherings inspire, equip, and challenge us to deepen our prophetic voice and collective action for a thriving, just, and regenerative world.

All are welcome to join and explore future leadings of QEW. We will be gathering at Powell House in Old Chatham, New York October 16th to 19th, 2025.

[Learn more at QuakerEarthcare.org/Events](https://QuakerEarthcare.org/Events)



Ruah Swennerfelt

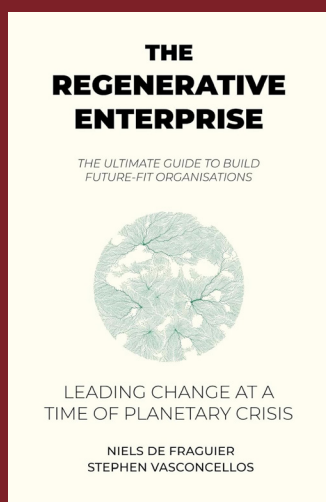
Book Review

The Regenerative Enterprise: The Ultimate Guide to Building Future-Fit Organisations

By Niels De Fraguier and Stephen Vasconcellos. 426 pages.
Self published, 2023. Paperback \$23.74. ebook \$9.99

In a world in which change is both ever-present and accelerating, the qualities of innovation and adaptability are critical to health. It is this idea that Charles Darwin intended to convey in this often-misconstrued statement attributed to him: "In the struggle for survival, the fittest win out at the expense of their rivals." What Darwin actually meant is that the most "fit" is the one that fits best, i.e., the one that is most adaptable to a changing environment.

-- John Fullerton



This is a fascinating book that draws on permaculture, and because of that, nature serves as an example for designing organizations and businesses. The book is divided into three sections: Embarking on a Regenerative Journey; Embracing a Systemic Mindset; and Putting Regenerative Thinking into Practice. In the conclusion, the reader is provided actionable steps to take and stories of change.

The authors explore how economists, systems thinkers, and pioneering changemakers are catalyzing a new economy that works in harmony with nature. They pave the way for businesses and organizations to move from a sustainable to a regenerative mindset, supporting life on our planet.

The examples of life on the planet from the beginning and indigenous values are explored. I appreciated the redundancy of looking at nature first when sharing an idea for change. The pathways to this new paradigm of regenerative businesses are: Do less harm, mitigating risk; Do no harm, incremental changes; Do more good, net positive; and Do more good, life-affirming.

I consider myself well read and well informed, and I earned a certificate in Permaculture Design. But page after page brought about "aha's" because of the way the authors wove ecology and organizational structures was exquisite.



Quakers Today Podcast

Quakers, Nature, and Indigenous Wisdom

Quakers Today features writers, musicians, and thinkers seeking wisdom and understanding in a rapidly changing world.

In this episode, co-hosts Peterson Toscano and Sweet Mische explore the deep connections between Quaker spirituality, nature, and Indigenous wisdom.

- » Gail Melix (also known as Greenwater,) a member of Sandwich Meeting in Massachusetts and a member of the Herring Pond Wampanoag tribe, shares how she found healing through daily woodland walks.
- » Paula Palmer, a Quaker researcher and activist, delves into the historical trauma inflicted by Quaker-run Indigenous boarding schools.
- » The episode also features a book review by Ruah Swennerfelt of *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

**Listen wherever you
find your podcasts or
visit QuakersToday.org**



Climate Action Committee of the Radnor Quaker Meeting

Building a New Foundation for Spirit-Led Ecojustice Action

The Role of Emergent Values in Prophetic Witness

As Quakers, we're called to notice how prophetic witness influences our lives. What is prophetic witness? It's the idea that the spirit may inspire us to recognize an injustice, or to seek what is good, just, true or somehow right, before the world completely or clearly perceives it.

Prophetic witness points to an unrealized ideal. It is an act of faithfulness, of fidelity to the work of spirit within the stream of our lives. We have come to recognize prophetic witness at work through Quaker role models: George Fox, Margaret Fell, William Penn, Mary Dyer, Benjamin Lay, Anthony Benezet, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Bayard Rustin...to name a few.

Those who give voice to prophetic witness channel the work of the spirit within the world. They are not perfect. We do not see them as saints, or as more than human. As Quakers, we can all hope to see ourselves joyfully carrying forward their tradition of courageous openness to continuing revelation.

We say courageous because prophetic witness calls us to move against the grain. So, we encounter disturbances

to our individual, internal sense of peace—between active Quakers and the outside world; and within Quaker communities.

Quakers, of course, seek peace. Yet our commitment to nonviolence does not insulate us from conflict and pain in spiritual work. On the contrary, our openness to spirit may infuse our lives with turmoil. Lives that speak—lives of integrity, lives synchronized with the energy of spiritual revelation—are tumultuous adventures. Prophetic witness that begins as a “still, small, voice” can become an unsettling roar.

The Quaker process is hard work, as we struggle to form consensus. All the while, our struggle involves deep listening, deep discernment, and summoning the integrity to walk our talk.

In the Spirit of SPICES, Can a Set of Emergent Values Focus Ecojustice Work?

How could we reduce the greenhouse gases emitted from our home Meeting and its membership? We arrived at spiritual unity about the goal's importance. Yet when proposals involved significant financial investments, our

united resolve evaporated like moisture in the increasingly hot Pennsylvania summer. New questions arose. Would heat pumps keep us warm in the winter? Perhaps a roof replacement posed a more pressing need for our available capital?

Often, our level of commitment is revealed within the crucible of action-oriented decisions. Can we say we believe in racial equity if we are unwilling in this moment to relinquish privileges that thwart that equity? Can we say we believe in nonviolence as long as we benefit from state-sanctioned violence against desperate people in the name of protection of our homes or borders? Can we say we want peaceful, Earth-friendly food systems if we decline to adopt animal-free diets? Can we say we wouldn't impose suffering on other sentient beings as long as we're willing to have them subjugated or slaughtered? Quaker committee projects spotlight the real-life challenges that prophetic witness confronts in the world, and test our resolve to transcend our own resistance to change.

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Our Climate Action Committee examined Quaker values in the context of planetary crisis. The SPICES testimonies, which many Quakers consider a summary of our core values, are: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship. How might we draw on and build out these values to support Quakers' prophetic witness in ecojustice? For example, if stewardship of our old, beautiful meetinghouse weighs against global ecojustice priorities, how would we update this guidepost to facilitate climate action?

If ecological integrity means integrating the Quaker life with Earth's systems and communities, that is because we are led to make it so. Paul Buckley (author of the Pendle Hill pamphlet *Quaker Testimony: What We Witness to the World* and many other Quaker publications), observes:

What is essential is that the source—the origin—is not our reason or our tradition or our personal preferences. So, for example, if I engage in peace work because it makes me look good to people I admire, it isn't a testimony. It may well be good work, valuable work, important work, but it isn't a testimony. Second, you must testify to a testimony. In other words, it has to be public behavior...

This invokes the “integrated life”—one in which our daily decisions mesh with our set of values.

A testimony calls us to act outside our personal comfort zones. Further, it calls us to take up the hard work of challenging the comfort zones of others. We apply this understanding to our commitment to break away from practices and conveniences that cost the Earth, and that artificially separate us from the plight of a long unheeded, neglected planet—all its systems, all its living communities.

Here is our emergent set of values—building on SPICES, guided by responses from within our Meeting, from ecojustice-minded members of Philadelphia-area Meetings, and, we hope, from the readers of *BeFriending Creation*. **(EMERGE values on next page)**

We seek an Earth restored from its depleted, destabilized state. From the unnatural wildfires. Degradation of waterways. Dangerous weather extremes. The bleak reality that so many habitats and their living communities are dying—and not of natural causes.

Just as the SPICES guide Quaker attitudes and engagement, the acronym EMERGE, we believe, can serve as a touchstone as we commit to live in right relationship with our Earth, its finite components, and its intricate web of life. The acronym EMERGE signifies a transformation from our current state to a new way of living as we take each letter and progress from Empathy, Mindfulness, and Ecological Integrity, to Right Action, Growth, and finally, Endurance.



As the Struggle Goes On, Can Continuing Revelation Guide Spiritual EMERGEance?

We're asking ourselves: Are we prioritizing energy-use reduction and groundskeeping in harmony with nature? Are we promoting respect for untamed life in and around our township, county, and region? Can we promote efforts to reduce car dependency in our community? Could animal-free offerings be the default in our food-sharing plans? How can we contribute to other Quaker climate and ecojustice working groups? How can we help climate refugees?

As a basis for this work, we imagine a humanity that understands community, the web of life, our connection to all beings and to spirit as indispensable joys! Committed to this possible future, we envision our EMERGE—from a human-driven crisis into a deeply committed love for our planet, its systems, and all its precious living, evolving communities.

EMERGE, we hope, offers a basis for deep and serious discussions, as the traditional Quaker SPICES testimonies do. Like SPICES, EMERGE is not an end in itself; it is a touchstone. It guides inquiry in our own hearts, in each other, and together. It offers some ideas as to how we might become essential workers on the planet. One and all.

While this is submitted by members of the Climate Action Committee of Radnor Quaker Meeting—David Castro, Burt Dallas, Lee Hall, Steve Olshevski, and Wayne Roberts—we envision EMERGE as something that has no named authorship, something that belongs to all who wish to support this work. Special thanks to LouAnne McDonald and Craig Long, whose words are woven into parts of this piece.

This work continues on our
dedicated website:
[EmergeValues.org](https://emergevalues.org)

EMERGE VALUES CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

EMERGE

- » **Empathy.** The aspect of love that lets us feel... together. Marcus Rediker, author of *The Fearless Benjamin Lay*, shows us how this now-famous abolitionist Quaker's "one and all" commitment to mutual aid included sentient beings as our whole community. Spirit, all-encompassing! David Lester, illustrator of *Prophet Against Slavery*, adds: "He didn't ride horses but walked instead, because he didn't want to use animals as some sort of beasts of burden." This same, deep respect for all life experiences, says Lester, propelled Lay's "outrage to go to Quaker meetings and point out who was a slave owner...when most people of European descent considered slavery natural."
- » **Mindfulness.** Donald W. McCormick, a member of Grass Valley Friends Meeting in Nevada City, California, has explored Quaker mindfulness in the act of listening for spiritual messages in Quaker Meeting for Worship. In a parallel way, we listen for messages from our Earth and the living communities it supports. We feel the impact of what we do, or refrain from doing—across systems, across time, across communities, throughout the web of life. Within mindfulness is a relentless sensitivity to the effects of unmindful privilege—around us, and around the world. Those with the least resources, and those who cannot easily move, are the most impacted by climate chaos and biodiversity loss.
- » **Ecological Integrity.** Ecology—the study of living beings as interconnected with their environments—comes from the Greek *oikos*: house or habitat. In empathy with all Earth's communities—our housemates—we commit to listen and learn. We ask: Is the Quaker testimony of stewardship optimal for attaining right relationship with the natural world? The untamed communities are their own true stewards. The acknowledgements we make to them must be made with sorrow and humility. Attending to messages from spirit, we're striving to perceive not only the wrongness of humanity's impact at this moment, but the possibility of who we could be.
- » **Right Action.** This involves questioning the benefits we get in an economy based on extraction of resources from Earth. Discerning right action involves following the Quaker testimony of simplicity, as we strive to live within our ethical means on a finite planet. To simplify our lives, and support each other's efforts to do so. Right action considers vulnerable people, and present and future generations of all living beings. We acknowledge that what Earth produces are not the fair spoils of the privileged. Nor are they humanity's resources alone.
- » **Growth.** Growth is a popular term in economic circles, but our focus is spiritual growth. Consider the evolving perception of Gus Speth, who has served as Administrator of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Speth once thought the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. Speth later said:

But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation, and we scientists don't know how to do that.

What could "spiritual and cultural transformation" look like? Perhaps a deep shift in our idea of ourselves: the emergence of a humanity whose mindful living reintegrates us with our Earth. We could then free ourselves to define affluence by its true meaning: a flow. And the life-saving results could happen relatively quickly, for we'll be siding with the power of nature. Put us in, Coach.
- » **Endurance.** We return to Benjamin Lay for an illustration of passionate persistence—the courage to endure in the face of apparently impossible odds. The paradox of Lay's prophetic witness? While insisting on the immediate end to repressive hierarchies, Lay wasn't confined to short-term or even lifetime goals. Prophetic witness often points to an ethical promised land we won't live to see. Almost all major Quaker concerns share this character: racial justice, LGBTQI+ advocacy, economic justice, nonviolence, support for migrants, and ecojustice. Benjamin Lay valued an eternal principle, which says the time to speak out for a fairer future is now.

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I first learned about Imbolc when my husband and I were serving as Friends in Residence during Winter Term at Pendle Hill in 2010. I believe it was a British Friend there who introduced the idea of celebrating this day. Unlike at our home in Alaska, where early February is still winter, the early signs of Spring appeared right on schedule in Philadelphia. I was delighted to see snowdrops, those little flowers that pushed their way right through the snow on February 2nd. The Friend showed us how to gather reeds from the overgrown labyrinth on campus to make St. Brigid's crosses (see photo on back cover).

While we don't see flowers showing up in February in Interior Alaska, we do appreciate the increasing sunlight (the amount of daylight doubles from the beginning of January to the beginning of February) and we experience a sense of reawakening.

*Imbolc message by Charley Basham
Representative to Quaker Earthcare Witness
from Alaska Friends Conference*

[Read the full offering at QuakerEarthcare.org/Imbolc](https://QuakerEarthcare.org/Imbolc)

Beneath the monotone gray skies of February, before the Cardinal's first song or the muskrat emerges from its winter den, as I crunch along the snow-laden boardwalk of Siebenthaler Fen, there comes a moment when my nostrils suddenly flare with the pungent aroma of death. "Ahhh!" I exclaim – "The blooming of the skunk cabbage! The first hint of spring."

With its pointed and twisted monk's cowl of a flower (known as a spathe) nosing its way through the leaf litter, or even through snow or ice, this strange plant might seem an odd claimant to the honor of being the first harbinger spring. Undeterred by the ravages of winter, the skunk cabbage is thermogenic: it makes its own heat. The rising spathe can melt its way through inches of snow.

Thermogenesis is not its only trick, however. Within its hollow, tomb-like shell, the sturdy spathe shelters an even stranger squat, pale inflorescence (the spadix) covered with tiny flowers of both sexes. From the spadix emerges not just warmth but also the sour smell of rotting flesh. The skunk cabbage, you see, is a trickster. It lures unsuspecting blow flies, gnats or carrion beetles, who emerge in late winter and early spring to take advantage of the thawing food source of the winter's dead. However, like Mary Magdalene on Easter Morning, they enter the tomb to find it empty. Off they go to visit a neighboring spathe, there to spread the good news that winter is ending and new life is preparing to emerge.

*Ostara message by Allen McGrew
Representative to Quaker Earthcare Witness
from Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting*

[Read the full offering at QuakerEarthcare.org/Ostara](https://QuakerEarthcare.org/Ostara)



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Imbolc and Ostara: Seasonal Offerings

Members of our Spiritual Nurturance Committee have begun writing Seasonal Offerings; reflections to honor Earth's seasonal rhythms and reimagine Holidays in ways that deepen our sense of The Sacred. We've selected excerpts from our Imbolc and Ostara offerings, representing the crucial shift from winter's quiet promise to spring's energetic bloom. Imbolc, a time of purification and new beginnings, lays the groundwork for Ostara, the Spring Equinox, a moment of perfect balance and burgeoning life. We invite you to reflect with us on the interconnectedness of these seasons and the call to nurture the world around us.

Imbolc is the Celtic traditional celebration of the halfway point between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. The name comes from the Gaelic "oimelc," which means "in the belly of the mother," and it is associated with the lactation of ewes. It also connotes the seeds of spring beginning to stir in the belly of mother Earth.

