



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness
Affirming our essential unity with nature

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Why climate change is a spiritual challenge

A letter to Friends

—Brian Drayton

Weare (N.H.) Friends Meeting

Dear Friends,

I give thanks to God for the way in which Friends are awakening to concern for the earth and for right use of resources, even if we recognize that much remains to do in response to the gathering force of climate change. We see and understand, too, that many other aspects of social justice and peace are linked now to the causes, and possible responses, to climate change. We all can mourn or rage against these things, but why is it we cannot as a people make some clear witness? ...In the midst of this great and confusing crisis, we have an opportunity to fully engage in social action, while also moving together towards more abundant life in the Spirit, which, if we find it, will be our greatest gift to our brothers and sisters in this world.

What is a spiritual challenge? A spiritual challenge is one which requires us to grow. Because it is hard to integrate with our prior spiritual beliefs and habits, it demands some definite change in the way we act on and interpret the world and our condition, and it may require us to seek and use spiritual, intellectual, community, or physical resources to guide and feed the growth required. If we engage with such a challenge whole-heartedly, we will know that we have met it, for the time being, by the reward of peace or a sense of inward reconciliation, by a sense of clarified understanding. We may experience removal of some fear and sense of insufficiency. We may receive a renewed understanding of and faithfulness to our most essential spiritual commitments.

Why is climate change a spiritual challenge?

As an ecologist, I track the science that is pouring in from every continent.... My grandchildren will see humans struggling in an impoverished world. There is grief, and alarm, at the loss of much that is beautiful and valuable in itself, and at the consequent increase



of suffering that will accrue to our ever-more-numerous human family. At this point, even if dramatic measures are taken in the next five years, we will only be able to somewhat soften the blows that are coming.

Beyond the invitation to anger and despair that the science news brings daily, I have found myself losing other illusions that have been sources of hope...

- ❖ I find it increasingly unlikely that the *major social structures*, such as government and other political agencies, will respond in time to prevent protracted climate disruption.
- ❖ Some of my hope has been wedded to the idea of *progress* and *reform*. God's will is peace and justice, abundance, *agape*, and creation—but I no longer see how this translates to “progress” as Americans and optimists have usually meant it.
- ❖ Finally, I have placed stock in *knowing*, being able to comprehend not only my personal dilemmas, but also the trends in which I am embedded. And I must admit that the hope that I have in knowing really reflects my deep desire to have control over my life, for my well-being and that of those I love.

At such a time, indeed, we are challenged to bring our grief and our need before the Living God. Many Friends have experienced surprising grace when driven to such an extremity, seeing that many of their

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props and resources were unreliable. As George Fox put it, *“When all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do....”*

True hope can be discovered when false hopes are removed

It may be that our calling as a people is to ... testify first and foremost to the Spirit from which we learn love, and the grace of a thankful heart. *Then indeed we can speak both power and love to our frightened, angry, disoriented time.* The speaking will come with power as it comes from a life empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us, and as we open to true concerns, our work will bring consolation, as love carries us past fear, even in calamitous times.

True concerns invoke an inward response

...We may not have gotten clear, each of us in our own hearts, about what the roots of our urge for action may be, ... seeing how a particular person, issue, place, or need is for us an essential and unavoidable next stage of our spiritual life. We may see that something is cause for alarm or regret or outrage, but it may remain an outward threat only, until by the action of the Spirit some link of service and necessity is forged. Until that gap is closed, my activism will not reach to my core, nor be fed from the divine life. *I may be under preparation, but I am not yet sent!*

A spiritual concern makes particular demands, on each of us, even if we feel the concern to be widely shared. In fact, for each of us, the shared concern is really unique, because it confronts each of us with the limits, uncertainties, and temptations that are ours alone; and however supported by our F(f)riends, the inward response to the challenge must take the form of inward change in each individual.

True resources support spiritual growth

Friends figured out long ago that if we are really to take seriously the realization that “Christ has come to teach his people himself,” *...we must remain teachable and inwardly available.* Early on, we discovered or were led into practices that can enable us to grow spiritually, within our communities, whether under the challenges of our daily lives, or under more unusual ones.... These are simple but not easy:

1. Watchfulness. Wait, wait, and wait again, for understanding, for an opening path, and for power to follow it. But this can be done in a hardened, hasty, individualistic mindset. If we are to live the Gospel life that we are called to with integrity, our waiting must also probe this central question: *Can I*

feel how this leading, at its base, is one more out-flowing of God’s love? Can I see, at least dimly, how that love sharpens and corrects my view of the people and things I am called towards? If we wait to feel that, before we speak (in meeting or outside it) or act, the resulting integration with our love for the Light will be rewarded in unexpected ways.

- 2. Prompt obedience.** Friends from the beginning recognized that the outward fruits of the inward life are cultivated by our accepting the Light we’re given, and acting on it in the smallest matters. *We must be wary of the temptation to postpone action until something “really worth our effort” comes along.* If we wait deeply enough, we will find that our anxiety about impact will be lifted from us, because we can see that the fundamental message is the love of God as we can embody it, and this is at work in many lives and many places. “To those who have, more shall be given.”
- 3. Suffering or growth pangs.** Taking the step that is given to us, and not outrunning our Guide, we will find that our inward process, now incarnated in our action, has outward consequences. These may range from self-doubts and questioning, to puzzlement or ridicule within our community, from inconvenience and complications in our outward affairs to much more serious threats or pains. *We need to listen to questions, to stay teachable, to recognize that it is possible we may be wrong....* Our friends can help us sort through it all, and that may be part of the nourishment that comes: but each of us bears our own cuts and bruises, and the healing in the end comes from within.
- 4. Proclamation and thanksgiving.** What a gift it is, when someone tells us how their concern arose; how they learned about it, and prepared for it; what it took to feel how it was love at work; what journey they were taken on (however humble)! We need that witness more than any other, because it kindles the life in us, and gives us the hope that comes from truth enacted. *We need to help each other give thanks for any step forward upon this way.* We need to help each other practice telling the story—the whole story, from inside out and outside in. If you act on a true concern, in love, you have changed the world in at least two ways: you have done your task, but you also had to be changed to be best able to do it—just as William Penn wrote about the First Publishers, *“They were changed men in those days, before they went about to change others.”* ❖

New 'Quakers in Transition' website puts Friends in solidarity with international movement

Steve Chase

Putney (Vt.) Friends Meeting

We yearn for community that is intimately dependent on the earth, on our neighbors, and our own self-reliance to provide our basic needs, and allows us to see the consequences of our use of creation.

—From a Young Adult Friends gathering at Mount Toby (Mass.) Friends Meeting in 2011

THIS YEARNING IS NOT NEW. Back in the mid-1600s, the early Quaker Movement in England felt called by the Spirit of God to transform their world. Rejecting the imperial values of their day—which worshiped power, profits, prestige, and plundering above all—the Quaker Movement put forth an alternative vision of Beloved Community that was simple, just, peaceful, and sustainable. This vision was anchored in what George Fox described as Judaism's and Christianity's three great loves: 1) loving God with all one's heart, soul, and strength; 2) loving our neighbors as ourselves; and 3) loving God's good Earth by acting in "unity with Creation."

Today, Quakers are still called—along with millions of other people around the globe—to foster a more spiritually fulfilling, socially just, and ecologically sustainable human presence on our planet. The urgency of this spiritual vocation is even growing stronger now as the world faces the unprecedented chal-

lenges of peak oil, climate change, and an increasingly dysfunctional global economy—concerns that groups like Quaker Earthcare Witness have been raising for over 20 years.

More and more of us are now awake and listening, and we want to do something positive and creative about all of this with our neighbors. We are increasingly focused on aiding a rapid and responsible transition from oil dependency to local resilience in our own communities—in solidarity with communities all around the world. This is leading more of us to become active participants in the global Transition movement where we live, work, or worship.

At the 2011 New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions, NEYM's Earthcare Ministries Committee put forward an invitation for all Friends to join the global Transition Movement and engage with their neighbors in positive local efforts to:

- ❖ Dramatically reduce our overall energy use.
- ❖ Shift from unsafe and declining fossil fuel resources to safe and renewable energy sources.
- ❖ Enhance the heart and soul of what we love most about our communities—even as we face the end of the age of cheap and abundant oil.
- ❖ Relocalize our economies so our communities can increase the number of green-collar jobs and be better able to produce the vital goods and services we need to survive and thrive in the years ahead.

If you are a Friend who supports this agenda, go to <http://quakersintransition.wordpress.com>, a website offering resources, blog posts, and networking tools designed to help equip Quakers to join, organize, or develop local Transition Town initiatives.

HAPPILY, WE ARE NOT ALONE. Thousands of communities in countries all across the planet have started formal or informal local Transition efforts. Hundreds of these local transition initiatives have also begun connecting in larger national and international <http://transitionus.org/welcome-transition-us>; <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> networks to learn from each other and inspire more experimentation and innovation. For a look at several of these networked transition communities in the United Kingdom and beyond, check out the 50-minute online video, "In Transition 1.0," at <http://quakersintransition.wordpress.com/> ❖

For questions and comments, contact: Steve Chase <schase@antioch.edu> or Ruah Swennerfelt <ruahswennerfelt@gmail.com>

Some of the qualities of Transition

Joyful—It works because it's fun and adds to life.

Viral—It spreads rapidly and to unexpected places.

Open source—People shape and enact Transition, democratically and freely.

Self-organizing—It's not centrally controlled. People make it their own.

Hopeful and constructive—It's not about campaigning *against* things, but working *for* a world that has embraced its limitations.

Iterative—It learns from its successes and failures.

Clarifying—It offers a clear explanation, based on the best available science, of where humanity finds itself.

Sensitive to place and scale—It looks different wherever it goes.

Historic—It tries to create a sense of being an opportunity to do something extraordinary.

A focus on 'Sustainable Societies, Responsive Citizens'

Lindsey Fielder Cook
Köln (Germany) Quaker Meeting

SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES don't just happen; they depend on the participation of Civil Society. —This message was a main point of a UN-sponsored conference that I attended September 3–5 in Bonn, Germany, on behalf of Quaker Earthcare Witness.

[Every year the UN's Department of Public Information (DPI) hosts a free, three-day conference for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). No governments are present, and no UN business is transacted as UN staff and NGOs from around the world share information on a selected topic.]

Workshops and roundtable discussions on topics such as: "Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles and Livelihoods"; "The Green Economy and Poverty Eradication"; "The Role of Civil Society in a Fast Changing World"; and "Sustainable Development Governance Issues from Local to Global" were conducted by UN experts and people from the NGO, civil society, government, private sector and academic worlds.

This is the second conference in Bonn that I have attended as an observer for QEW. The first, a meeting of government delegates held in preparation for higher-level climate negotiations later in the year, was frustrating but coherent. This time I found the discussion so diffuse that I question whether there was any coherent output.

One source of incoherence was that preparation for a 2012 World Summit in Rio de Janeiro (called RIO+20), 20 years after the original Earth Summit, was piggy-backed onto the regular DPI/NGO meeting. This was a chance for NGOs to add their voices in shaping the RIO+20 agenda.

The main message of this DPI/NGO conference can be summed up in three sentences:

- ❖ **Our levels of consumption and pollution are destroying the planet's current natural processes, threatening our and other species' future survival.**
- ❖ **Our current economic practices do not uphold social justice and environmental health.**
- ❖ **A radical shift is needed.**

Participants stressed the need for political change, for cognitive narratives to challenge mainstream concepts of growth and consumerism, and for norms and values such as "beyond growth," "climate justice," and

"lifestyle changes." These systematic changes were seen as impossible without the contribution of Civil Society.

The conference highlighted the connections between *Sustainable Development*, the *Green Economy*, and *Civil Society*.

Sustainable Development is neither an economic theory nor a political ideology. It is a concept susceptible to many levels of interpretation, which can make discussion difficult. There was a call for those of us promoting sustainable development to gain "economic literacy" in order to engage with decision makers whose analysis is too often limited to considering their countries' GDP.

A *Green Economy** is also just a concept, and there were many calls that this not be a whitewashing for "more of the same but with renewable energy." People stressed the urgency of upholding social justice and environmental health when promoting a Green Economy.

Civil Society, has an essential and powerful role, through volunteering and grassroots organizations, in bringing the change that is needed. This is where we work.

Some memorable words were spoken. Indian activist Vandana Shiva said, "*Poverty is getting worse. free trade is more about corporate freedom rather than civic freedom... Our world is not for sale... Recognise the rights of Mother Earth... Take responsibility for the consequences of our actions.*" Achim Steiner, director of UNEP, said, "*There is a disconnect between the economy and ecology... We must become economically literate and seize the debate... The challenge of RIO is to connect the dots—the environment, development, social justice, jobs, etc.—and fight the disconnect.*"

A draft Declaration was brought to the conference, and the text was reworked intensively throughout the weekend. On the last afternoon we were given around an hour to study and comment on the new draft. I found the experience rushed. I am concerned that the Declaration is too long as to be really effective. The full Declaration can be accessed at: <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ngoconference/resources/final>.

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* See *The Green Economy: A Critique*, by Mary Gilbert and David Millar in the July-August issue of *Quaker Eco-Bulletin*.



QEW prepares for COP-17 climate talks in Durban

Judy Lumb, with Mary Gilbert

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), COP-17, begins November 28th in Durban, South Africa. I plan to be there, along with Moses Musonga of Kenya, also representing QEW. We will join official country negotiators from all over the world; tens of thousands of representatives of NGOs like QEW; indigenous people and other stakeholders; and corporations.

The climate-change negotiation is a very complex international, multilateral process that includes the setting of goals for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; technology development and transfer for monitoring and reporting of GHG; mechanisms to help countries adapt to the effects of climate change; and funding for all of these activities.

There are 195 parties to the Framework Convention (194 countries and Palestine), and 192 of them

have ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Notably, the U.S. is one of the hold-outs.

The first phase of the Protocol expires in 2012, and COP-17 is the last chance to renew it. One virtue of the Protocol is that it a legally binding agreement. A big defect in the Protocol is that it covers only 23 percent of global GHG because the three biggest polluters are not included. The U.S never ratified it, and China and India are classified as developing countries not obligated to curtail GHG emissions.

The ultimate goal in Durban is a legally binding second commitment period that includes the U.S., China, and India. In discussion about a second phase, Japan, Canada, and Australia have already announced that they will not participate. The European Union is willing to continue if other countries do. A second commitment period is essential for the process to continue.

The stakes are very high for developing countries because *if this UNFCCC process fails, if there is no second commitment period, climate-change issues will be addressed through the non-binding mode of agreement first put forward as the Copenhagen Accord at COP15, leaving the larger, richer countries free to continue business as usual.*

The UNFCCC process gives each country an equal voice, and decisions are made by unity, where all countries agree. At the end of last year's COP-16, Bolivia objected to the final negotiated agreement on a realistic, long-range basis. Several countries stated their support for the Bolivian position. Then many other countries spoke, mostly under the theme, *"Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good."* That agreement had been constructed through a transparent, inclusive process, with all countries involved. No one got everything they wanted, but all got some of what they wanted. One by one, those countries that supported the Bolivian position retracted and said they would support the agreement, but Bolivia never retracted. When President Espinoza gavelled the agreement, it was against UN procedures.

I live in Belize, a small developing country that will lose one-third of her land area to rising seas by the end of this century if the global temperature increase is not kept under 2°C. In preparing for Durban, Belize:

- ❖ Insists that there should be a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol.
- ❖ Advocates for strong mitigation targets to limit global warming to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

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My own summary

This conference was full of concerned people, full of questions, and full of many ideas. I did not come away with a coherent path to follow. I came away aware that the term "green economy" should not be used lightly. I came away wishing that we had a more concrete definition of sustainable development to challenge the abuses of capitalism. I left with a list that I find helpful:

- ❖ We must focus less on symptoms, more on root causes.
- ❖ A consumerist- and growth-focused system is a social construction that can and must change. We need:
 - o A fundamental reinvention of our economic structures and institutions.
 - o A parallel shift in values and culture.
 - o A decrease in materialism.
- ❖ Poor countries must not simply copy Western consumerism. We have a responsibility to create a better model.

From my Quaker perspective I add that these seismic shifts also need a seismic *spiritual* shift. We cannot change our consumerist ways through blame, guilt, or fear. What makes us want to live sustainably for the next generation, to uphold social equality and environmental health alongside this pervasive drive for money? To last, our desire to act has to originate from within, from a place that cherishes these gifts from God. We humans tend to protect what we cherish. ❖

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- ❖ Advocates for reduction of global GHG concentrations to 350 ppm.
- ❖ Insists on the establishment of the Green Climate Fund under the mandate of the COP, with new, predictable, and adequate financing to meet the needs of developing countries.
- ❖ Hopes that the new mechanisms established in Cancun can be operationalized in Durban, i.e., through the Technology Mechanism and the Green Climate Fund, and that the Adaptation Committee can be established.

Although developing countries like Belize have contributed very little to the GHG emissions that are causing global climate change, they are the ones suffering the most. The developing countries, led by Bolivia, made the argument last year at COP-16 that the developed countries owe an ecological debt to the developing countries. Funds transferred from developed countries to developing countries to help them adapt to the effects of climate change are not charity, but down payments on that ecological debt.

One of the big issues raised at COP-16 was that, although US\$30 million had been pledged at COP-15 in Copenhagen to help developing countries adapt to the effects of climate change, only a small proportion of that money had materialized. Most of the money spent on climate change had been for mitigation, the reduction of GHG emissions, with very little on adaptation, which would help the most impacted countries. At COP-16, a “fast track” mechanism was established to facilitate transfer of US\$30 billion from developed to developing countries before the end of 2012 and long-range funding of \$100 billion through 2020.

The Belize position does not mention Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), a controversial mechanism. The idea sounds good, that credit or payment would be made to countries for protecting forests to maintain that sink for GHG and reduce the total emissions. One problem came in the execution, when loopholes allowed rich people and major corporations to benefit while usurping land and resources from indigenous and other rural people. For example, if an old-growth rainforest that had been used sustainably by indigenous people for millennia was cleared and a tree farm planted in its place, that project qualified for REDD funding.

The first solution was to modify REDD to REDD+ by establishing a land use, land-use change, and forestry mechanism to determine eligibility for funding. But there are still loopholes, so criteria are being developed to ensure that REDD+ effectively promotes social and environmental benefits.

Also, as a market trading mechanism, REDD has real potential for becoming a “carbon casino” that precipitates a financial disaster parallel to the bank failures that have been so devastating in the U.S.

One of the notable aspects of COP-16 was the role of women in leadership and the quality of leadership they provided. The two top leadership positions were held by Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, and President of COP-16, Patricia Espinosa, Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The biggest problem with the negotiations at the 2009 COP-15 in Copenhagen had been that work on the “Copenhagen Accord” was carried out in secret, with only a few parties involved. Last year at COP-16, every time Espinosa began a session she repeated that the process would be open, inclusive, and transparent. She was true to her word.

COP-17 host country South Africa has also appointed a woman as President-Designate. She is Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, South Africa’s Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, who held two inclusive and transparent consultations during the Panama formal negotiations, one with governments and one with Civil Society, to discuss the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

In the press release from the Panama negotiations, Figueres noted that countries have different positions in regard to the future of Kyoto, *“but many technical issues related to this have already been brought to conclusion and there is a strong desire from all sides to see a final political decision made. ... The sum total of current national pledges to reduce global emissions falls 40 percent short of keeping below 2°C and that gap will have to be filled in the future.”*

What Can Friends Do?

The ideal would be for the U.S. to sign on to the second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol. President Bill Clinton signed the original Kyoto Protocol, but the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the agreement because China and India, classified as developing countries, were not required to curtail emissions, and because some Senators feared that actions required might negatively affect U.S. business interests.

Since then the issue has not been brought again before the Senate. Considering the current political climate, it may not be realistic to lobby President Obama openly to support signing onto the second commitment. The best strategy may be to join with the Occupy movement to change the political climate. The Transition movement also provides hope for the future. If these movements succeed in redirecting the U.S., an early order of business should be to revisit U.S. participation in the global UNFCCC process. ❖

Shelley Tanenbaum is new Steering Committee clerk

QEW IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the rise of Shelley Tanenbaum to the role of Steering Committee clerk for the next three years. She has been on the Steering Committee since attending her first QEW Annual Meeting in Bellingham, Wash., in 2009. For the past three years she has served on the QEW UN Support Working Group. At the 2011 FGC Gathering she helped to staff the Earthcare Center.

“I have a special interest in Quaker process and as clerk will enjoy overseeing decision-making in accordance with our Friends traditions. Friends have a special gift to the world as we apply what many see as ancient ways of discernment to our very modern need to make decisions and take action amidst environmental and economic crises.”

Shelley also has served as clerk for Strawberry Creek (Calif.) Friends Meeting, in addition to clerking her Meeting’s Peace, Earthcare & Social Witness Committee for several years. She has been part of her Meeting’s Ecoberries affinity group, which is going



strong after more than 10 years. She was quite involved in developing her Meeting’s Earthcare Testimony and seeing it through the Quaker process that led to approval in April 2010. In the past she served on Pacific Yearly Meeting’s Friends in Unity

with Nature committee and has led interest groups on Earthcare at Pacific YM. She co-wrote two *Quaker Eco-Bulletins*—on air quality and energy options.

For the past three years Shelly has been clerk of Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF) and has helped coordinate QIF summer research seminars.

“My other work is as an environmental scientist doing research on air quality, especially ozone and particulates. I have a master’s degree from the UC Berkeley Energy & Resources Group. I have also worked in the non-profit world on disarmament.” ❖

Exciting ideas developed by committees and working groups

WHEN FRIENDS COME TOGETHER in worship, synergy flows, and creativity unfolds. Such was the case this October 20–23 during QEW’s annual gathering in Chicago, when new ideas were brought forward and plans for the coming year were hatched by committees and working groups:

- A young adult Friends Earthcare workshop will be sponsored by the Outreach committee in collaboration with Pendle Hill. We are just beginning plans for this, with a likely date of spring 2012.
- Education and lobbying has already begun on the next Farm Bill, coordinated by our FCNL Support Working Group in collaboration with FCNL. The next lobby day will be held November 3, with other activities planned into the new year.
- The *parceleros* of Finca la Bella in Costa Rica are working on transitioning from group ownership to possibly individual ownership with some kind of agreement on future land use. Our Finca la Bella Committee will continue contacts with the current *parceleros* and their governing board. We are sponsoring a Christmas 2011 visit to the area.
- Our Earthcare Center at the 2012 FGC Gathering, July 1–6 in Kingston, R.I., will highlight QEW’s 25th anniversary, and we will continue the theme of food, agriculture, and biodiversity. The center will offer a full week of speakers, films, and discussion. New England YM has offered to provide displays

showcasing New England ecology and projects.

- We will have the opportunity for reflection and planning for the future at both the June Steering Committee in Cambridge, Mass., and the October Annual Meeting in Chicago.

We will be continuing the following projects that have proven successful and worthwhile:

- Mini-grants have been given to several Monthly Meetings and groups. Proposals for next year’s grants are due in May.
- This fall, under the care of the UN Support Working Group, Mary Gilbert and Lindsey Cook will attend a Quaker United Nations Office meeting in Geneva. Judy Lumb and Moses Musonga will attend the UN COP-17 climate change conference.
- Young adult scholarships and discounts will be available to attend our June and October meetings.
- QEW Friends are exploring our spiritual connection with the natural world via our ad-hoc Friends in Unity with Nature Committee.
- A forum on topics as they arise is open to Friends via the No-Name Working Group, with regular Meetings for Worship conference calls.

Welcome, all new Steering Committee and committee members. I’m at <sheltan@pacbell.net> if you have questions or needs.

—Shelley Tanenbaum
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

Green burial can reduce our impact on Earth

Richard Grossman, M.D.

QEW Steering Committee Mentoring Clerk

"...for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." —Genesis 3:19

THIS HAS BEEN a sad spring for me, first with the death of a friend, then of my only sibling, my sister Clara. Both these people chose cremation for disposal of their remains. I want to explore the way I hope to be buried; it is an alternative to either cremation or traditional interment.

Different societies have various ways to honor their dead. The Egyptians perfected a method of preserving a person's body that was effective—but could only work in an arid climate. Egyptian mummification was incredibly intricate, so only pharaohs were preserved in perpetuity. In the days of epidemics it was important for an infected body to be rendered harmless after death. Cremation and burial have been the mainstays in the western world.

Most bodies now are preserved with formaldehyde, which slows deterioration and also kills any possible contagious organism. This allows a funeral to be held safely several days after death. A disadvantage of traditional burial, however, is that it uses a lot of resources and space in a burial ground. Many cemeteries have two layers of burials to make sufficient room. Funeral homes tend to push expensive interments; the average cost in the U.S. is \$9,000. Fortunately funerals where I live, in La Plata County, Colo., tend to be less expensive.

Burial cost typically includes a casket and a burial vault. The former is usually wood and is decorative. The latter is concrete or metal and is designed to last forever—to protect the casket and body from deterioration. With modern burial techniques, when we "return to dust" our remains are isolated from surrounding earth. This is probably wise, since formaldehyde and other chemicals in embalming fluid are very toxic.

Direct cremation is a simpler process. The body is not preserved, but goes into the cremating oven shortly after death. Fire reduces the body to ashes and destroys any infectious agent.

Cremation is less expensive than burial. Another advantage is that the ashes can be buried in a small urn or safely spread over land or sea. Disadvantages include the amount of energy needed for the process, and the amount of greenhouse gas generated. Furthermore, mercury is released into the air if the deceased has silver amalgam dental fillings.

There are environmental disadvantages to both traditional burial and cremation. The former uses toxic chemicals, wood and metal, and takes up precious land area. Cremation requires valuable energy and spreads mercury and other pollutants. Both are expensive.

There is an appealing alternative. "Green burial" is uncommon but worth considering. It is less expensive and much better environmentally than either traditional burial or cremation.

Green burials use no embalming fluid. The body is placed in an eco-friendly coffin or wrapped in a burial shroud, and there is no burial vault. Coffins are made out of simple wood, woven basket material or even cardboard. The body and its coffin follow the Biblical injunction above, and being biodegrade, return nutrients to the soil.

Many green burials bypass the funeral industry with its professional mourners. The viewing and service are done at home. The body can be safely preserved with dry ice until buried, but no refrigeration is necessary if the body can be placed in the ground within 24 hours of death.

RECENTLY I SPOKE with Ryan Phelps, owner of the local Hood Mortuary. I was impressed by his knowledge and flexibility. Ryan told me that it is not necessary for a body to be buried in a cemetery. There are rules, however, about burial on private land, including subdivision regulations. In Colorado a form must be filed with the County Clerk and Recorder with the GPS coordinates of the grave.

Ryan also told me about another type of burial he has facilitated. A "frontier burial" is what cowboys have done for years. The person is put into the ground shortly after death, close to the place of death. His body is wrapped in a shroud or in placed a simple wood coffin. Of course, there is a lot of paperwork that must be done properly—and Hood is willing to help with that.

The human impact on Earth is huge. We can reduce it, however, in some important ways. One of them is to consider what happens to our bodies after death. Instead of being a detriment to the environment after we die, with a green burial we can give back what has nourished us during life. ❖



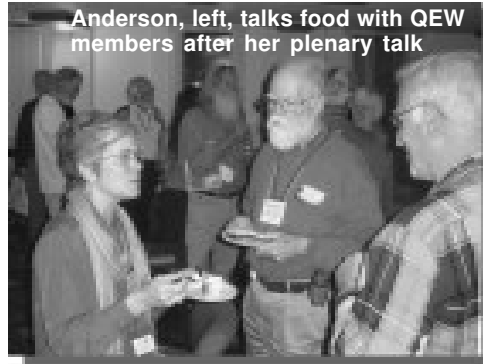
*This is Dick Grossman's last clerk's column. Look for future commentaries from **Shelley Tanenbaum**, QEW's new Steering Committee clerk.*

Annual Mtg. speaker links Occupy Wall Street movement to food

MOLLY ANDERSON, director of the Sustainable Food Systems Program at the College of the Atlantic, told QEW members in Chicago that population and consumption have grown exponentially in the last 30 years, *but “our wisdom to manage ourselves wisely did not grow exponentially. —That’s where Quakers and other people of faith come into the picture.”*

Speaking on “Food Security, Politics, Rights, and Sovereignty,” Anderson said that world food production generally kept up with population growth, but we’re now running into some absolute limits. Hunger and malnutrition are spreading in many countries, much of that due to distribution problems.

The global food crisis was exacerbated by the economic recession of 2008–2009. Many people in the world have to spend 60 to 70 percent of their incomes on food. Hunger also reflects the world’s reliance on



Anderson, left, talks food with QEW members after her plenary talk

petroleum, the price of which tends to correlate with food prices.

Despite all the money that has gone into agriculture research and development, the results have been distributed with tremendous inequity, Anderson said. Women and small holders represent 70 percent of the food producers in some countries, but wealthier farmers who have been

able to take advantage of technology have reaped most of the benefits.

There are serious public health consequences of today’s centralized, industrialized agriculture, including the rise in obesity and diet-related diseases.

A lot of this has to do with the way Big Food got its money and the way that money is used in our deregulated economic system, she said. There are many inequities in wages in the midst of great profits being made through speculation in food markets and diver-

Anderson, next page >>

Canadian YM adopts Minute on uranium and nuclear energy

BASED ON a variety of peace, environmental and health concerns, and with our testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Equality, Community, Integrity and Earth Stewardship in mind, we advocate and are called to work for a phase-out of (1) the use of nuclear fission-based energy, (2) the mining, refining and exporting of uranium, and (3) the exporting of fission-based nuclear power reactor technology and fissionable materials.

A phase-out of nuclear fission energy could feasibly occur in Canada over a period of fifteen to twenty years, and, internationally, over some twenty to thirty years.

During the phase-out period, no new nuclear reactors would be built, existing reactors would be shut down as they reach the end of their operational lifespans, energy conservation technologies would be employed in all energy sectors, and renewable energy sources would be encouraged to continue to expand. Reliable studies show that such a phase-out is compatible with a parallel phase-out of coal, and a reduced and more efficient use of oil and natural gas in the context of climate change concerns. (See references below.)

During the phase-out process, we affirm the right

of affected workers to a just and reasonable transition process during which they may be retrained for work that is more ecologically sound.

We do not oppose the use of nuclear science in the field of medicine, acknowledging that nuclear medicine does not require the use of nuclear fission reactors for electricity production, and that there is enough uranium already mined to provide the small amount of uranium needed in nuclear medicine for an estimated two hundred years.

We ask Canadian Friends Service Committee to work with other

Quaker, faith-based and secular organizations, both in Canada and internationally, toward the goal of a phase-out of nuclear fission-based energy and of greater accountability and honesty around the health, environmental and peace concerns related to nuclear fission.

We recognize that we must change our own lifestyles in accordance with these objectives. We shall continue to advocate for greater energy efficiency and a shift to renewable energy alternatives, and to encourage ecologically sound energy practices in our own lives.

—Adopted by Canadian YM, August 11, 2011



Elder Friends in a national Green Movement— Imagine the possibilities!

Dan Peerless,
Stony Run Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

BEGIN WITH the fact that decades of consumerist expansion could do nothing to tarnish the deep-seated Quaker value of living simply, which is now gaining wide-spread appeal once more. Add the creative potential of our aging U.S. population and you have the formula for **Gray Is Green** <<http://grayisgreen.org>> with its compelling call for all Americans to embrace practices that reduce the stresses we currently inflict on our Earth-home.

Gray Is Green was founded in 2008 by residents of a retirement community in Hamden, Conn., with a mission to engage older Americans in grassroots action as environmental elders, while delivering up-to-date ideas for everyday simplicity, sustainability, and action.

I have been with the organization since 2009, and I have noted that Quaker-affiliated retirement communities have been at the forefront of bringing Gray Is Green to its current stage of development. The Kendal Corporation's system of affiliated continuing-care retirement communities has been one of the most active and inspiring groups to work with. Beginning with the energy conservation efforts at Kendal at Hanover, New Hampshire, (shared with all members of Gray Is Green in a case study), the innovations and commitment of Kendal affiliates have made them leaders in sustainable senior living.

>>**Anderson**, from page 9

sion of food crops to ethanol production.

Rights-based approaches to food and development, based on accountability and empowerment, are part of the solution to the food crisis, Anderson said. The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights makes it clear that food is a right, not a privilege.

Related to food rights is all the work that is going on to develop food and agricultural standards, including clarifying the meanings of "organic" and "cruelty-free" livestock operations, and which practices are more sustainable, she said.

We also need to manage food production for resilience through decentralization and genetic diversity of crops. This is increasingly important now that we're past the peak of oil production. We also need to reestablish reserves in every community and create buffers so that disturbances don't radiate through the system, Anderson said. ❖

Now Kendal at Hanover is working towards becoming the first retirement community in the nation to achieve Green Seal certification for its food service. Moreover, David Jones from the Kendal Corporation and I have developed a joint session on engaging residents in active sustainability programs as part of the national LeadingAge conference in October 2011 in Washington, D.C. <www.leadingage.org>

Earlier this year, Gray Is Green was adopted by the Natural Resources Defense Council <www.nrdc.org>, creating a breakthrough partnership that provides our young organization with access to the most up-to-date information on sustainable living, as you will witness in the regular e-mail posts that come with free membership. Of equal importance is the access that Gray Is Green, as a project of NRDC, provides to the latest advocacy actions.

Currently, the Gray Is Green team is promoting the national **Clean Air Promise Campaign**, running through the end of 2011. The Promise Campaign is raising awareness and support for the U.S. EPA and the Clean Air Act. Elder Americans, along with their beloved grandchildren, are among those most at risk from poor air quality. And they are taking action: Many elder communities are hosting "Clean Air Sign-up Days" to make it easy for residents to learn more about the Promise at <www.cleanairpromise.org> and to sign on as supporters.

Kath Schomaker, who joined **Gray Is Green** in 2010 and is herself an ardent Gray-Green, was invited by a Friend acquaintance to attend part of the August 2011 New England Yearly Meeting in Smithfield, R.I., where she enjoyed a supportive reception leading to her late September visit to Riverwoods in New Hampshire. Later in August, Kath took the Gray Is Green message on the road to Pennsylvania and Ohio, including Foxdale Village in Pennsylvania and Kendal at Oberlin, Ohio. *"Everywhere I went people were inspired by our stories about organizing older adults in support of 21st century environmental issues,"* reflects Kath. *"Gray Is Green has its roots in Quaker-inspired institutions, and we hope to build upon this true conservation legacy as we reach out and engage contemporary American elders."*

Gray Is Green's success depends on our ability to reach American elders and build a movement that will demonstrate the passion they have for a clean and healthy future and the willingness to fight for it. The importance of Quaker support cannot be overstated. We want to help others catch on and catch up! Simply sign on at <<http://grayisgreen.org>> for our free relevant and timely e-mail newsletters. ❖

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I WAS A LITTLE SURPRISED

and disappointed to see a QEW clerk's column by Richard Grossman in the September-October 2011 *BeFriending Creation* that could be taken to mean that if we all just lived like Costa Ricans, humans could live sustainably on this planet.

I would have been happier if the article had pointed out that it is not possible for everyone to live in such a favorable climate, with minimal need for warm clothing and home heat, and with sufficient rain and warmth for good food production. (Okay, it is possible to build houses that are heated by passive solar, but this takes resources, too.—I expect a good bit more than the average Costa Rican home).

And "renewable" wind and hydro energy sources are limited and have serious impacts for some species that share this planet. So while Americans could indeed reduce our consumption and still live healthily and happily, it would not be enough for a sustainable popu-

lation on the planet.

I consider population a more pressing problem than consumption because it takes longer to make changes. We can reduce our consumption quickly, but it is not possible to make quick reductions in the world's population without measures I doubt anyone would welcome. So education regarding the importance and methods of family planning, and making sure every child is a wanted child, are critical.

I worry that people that are articulate about population as a problem feel that they need to show "balance" or perhaps apologize for their point of view.

In my mind, the balance of attention in our Quaker community is excessively on the consumption side, with a desire to sweep the population problem under the carpet, and people will grab at any argument that justifies that attitude.

—Beth Blattenberger
University Friends Meeting
Seattle, Wash.

BeFriending Creation

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We publish **BeFriending Creation** to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation. Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Submission deadlines are February 7, April 7, June 7, August 7, October 7, and December 7.

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Membership is open to all who demonstrate 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 Richard Grossman, <richard@population-matters.org>.

Gen. Secretary Anne Mitchell, 173-b N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401. 802/658-0308; e-mail: <Anne@QuakerEarthcare.org>.

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Website: <www.QuakerEarthcare.org>

Earthcare Calendar

December 7, 2011. Deadline for article submissions for Jan.-Feb. 2012 *BeFriending Creation*.

May, 2012. Deadline for applications for 2012 QEW Mini-grants.

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Raise awareness, get *Earthcare for Friends* for your Meeting

MANY FACETS and viewpoints have to be considered when approaching the global ecological crisis from a spiritual perspective.

There are many scientific facts and principles to sort out and complex moral issues to weigh. There are traditional spiritual values and teachings to integrate with cutting-edge discoveries in the life sciences and social sciences.

There are wonders and enigmas in Creation that are difficult to put into words. There are so many threats in every direction to the stability, order, and beauty of the planet we call Home and Mother that we can be paralyzed by despair.

Good news! QEW has just the resource we have been needing to feel confident about speaking out and taking positive steps for Earthcare in our homes, Meetings, and communities. *Earthcare for Friends, A Study Guide for Individuals and Faith Communities*, provides help in addressing all of these issues, under one gorgeous cover.

In 18 easy-to-follow units, this 250-page study guide compiles, organizes, and clearly explains virtually all of the insights and lessons about spirituality and ecology that Quaker Earthcare Witness members have acquired since its founding in 1987. Materials are arranged for easy adaptation by discussion groups and adult religious education classes. There are numerous resources for those whose appetites for deeper understanding have been whetted.



Earthcare for Friends has illuminating and thought-provoking articles on the whole gamut of ecological concerns—soil, air, water, eco-economics, eco-psychology, stewardship, climate change, energy, population, conservation, ecological footprints, simple living, etc. It has helpful questions and queries for reflection and discussion and sources of inspiration—songs, scripture, prayers, sample sermons, and responsive readings.

More good news! QEW is now releasing the rest of its inventory at the greatly reduced price of *only \$10*, including shipping and handling, to encourage all Friends carrying a spiritual concern for the health and wholeness of the Earth community who do not already own copies of *Earthcare for Friends* to order them for their home and Meeting libraries.

WE ALSO ARE cutting our prices on QEW booklets—Elizabeth Watson's *Healing Ourselves and the Earth*, Jack Phillips's *Walking Gently on the Earth*, and Bill Cahalan's *Natural Awareness as a Spiritual Practice*—from \$4 to \$2 to help get these crucial Earthcare resources out where they belong, into the hands of Quaker eco-activists. We also have Lisa Gould's book, *Caring for Creation, the Biblical Basis of Earthcare*, for only \$4.

Any of these publications can be ordered through the QEW website <www.quakerearthcare.org> or through the QEW office. See information on page 11.