“For me, God is creative, responsive love, binding together all that exists in the universe, manifest to us in the experiences which can bind us, all parts of creation, together in a blessed community.”
Bruce Birchard, “This is my Quaker Faith”

As members of a religious society that has been evolving for 350 years, we believe the time has come for us to develop a testimony on living in unity with nature. Friends, like other faith groups, are entering an era of conscious empathy with the unity and diversity of life on Earth. We are beginning to view every form of life as an expression of universal love. We are glad to welcome this new era as a time of expanded faith and action.

We see now that our well being depends on the well being of Earth as a living community. How does such an insight fit with our exploitation of that same community? How does the quest for unity with nature fit with our habitual attempt to dominate nature itself? Has the time come to turn the focus of human attention away from unnecessary consumption of natural resources toward living simply with our Earthly neighbors in the biblical spirit of loving them as we love ourselves?

We would not be here without the help of other forms of life—the plants that give us oxygen and nourishment, the microbes that digest our food, the fungi and bacteria that break down our waste, and the myriad species contributing to the functioning and wonder of the paradise in which we live, including those we have never seen or don’t know exist. Instead of being born to dominate the Earth, we now see ourselves born to a partnership with the plants and animals that sustain us. Our understanding is incomplete, cultural habits are hard to change; but that does not mean we should not strive to bring in the new era. We can only proceed from where we are revising our efforts in light of our growing experience. The coming era can be an era of new challenge and fulfillment. Human understanding of life processes is expanding rapidly. Faith is not diminished but is nourished by that larger understanding. Living in unity with nature means living simply and lovingly with the blessed Earth community in light of continuing revelation. In witness of that revelation, we will do all we can to be worthy of the life spirit wherever and in whatever form we find it expressed.

From now on, every day offers us opportunities for living out our renewed faith. Are we ready to act lovingly toward all parts of Creation, as we would have others act toward us? Can we reach out to that of God in every one, every creature, and everything? Will we recognize the divine presence in all its myriad forms, seeing our daily lives as a series of sacred encounters? Living in unity with nature is a challenge that invites us to become responsible members of the larger natural community which embraces and supports human society. Starting with ourselves as aspects of nature, some of the ways we might express our wonderment, love, and respect include:

1. Caring for our bodies by striving to eat a healthy diet, be physically active, get adequate rest, and avoid substances we believe to be harmful to us
2. Caring for our loved ones, our home communities, and those parts of our local bioregions within reach of our influence—that is, thinking globally and acting not only locally but personally, familially, communally, and regionally
3. Sharing our resources with those in need at home and abroad
4. Reducing our demand for energy and consumable goods reusing what goods we can, and recycling what we cannot reuse
5. Finding simple joy and fulfillment in being alive instead of in consuming goods and resources
6. Trying not to support industries that pollute air, water, or soil
7. Working on behalf of all parts of creation to achieve equality, justice, and freedom from prejudice, and
8. Seeking peaceful means of keeping the human population with Earth’s carrying capacity
Taking actions such as these, we bear witness to our spiritual faith, and express the creative, responsive love at the core of our existence. That central theme gives us a sense of well-being, revealing daily life to be a series of sacred encounters with the universal spirit, and unity with nature to be at the heart of an Earth community that is truly blessed.