Letters to Share, May - June 2014

“What canst thou say” about spirit-led efforts on behalf of Earth, about your own stirrings toward care for the planet, in relation to the vision and thoughtful action of Quaker Earthcare Witness as a whole? We’d like to hear from you. Send your letters to Katherine at katherine@quakerearthcare.org, and share your thoughts and leadings with Friends and caring others throughout North America.

February 24, 2014

Dear Editor,

When I read wishful thinking like [that offered in the review of The God Species, Jan-Feb 2014], I always wonder exactly who is the “we” that will solve all these problems for the whole world, and who is the “us” that will feed eight billion. I am convinced that the only real solutions will be small and local. The idea that humanity is cohesive enough for “us” to solve this problem in one way for the whole world strikes me as flagrant hubris. Remember the story of the Tower of Babel?

I’m certain that high-tech projects like nuclear power plants, hybrid GMOs, and high urban densities of more than a few hundred people are not a bridge to the future.

Is methadone really a good way to extricate oneself from addiction? I doubt it.

Rather than investing lots of money, time, and fossil fuel energy in these wishful bridges, I predict more of us would be better off in the longer term if we invested instead, just once, in truly sustainable steady-state alternatives such as permaculture, composting privies, eco-villages surrounded by greenbelt, passive solar homes, etc. After all, if we invest in the suggested bridges of nuclear power, smart growth, GMOs, etc., we will just have to invest all over again in what’s actually sustainable. Muriel Strand, P.E.

April 21, 2014

Dear Editor,

I have some comments about the 2014 March-April issue of Befriending Creation. The first is about Clerk Taylor’s column. I certainly applaud his concern to be consistent. However, there appears to be a big inconsistency in his second paragraph referring to, “The FCUN working group.” It has been about 10 years since our organization changed its name from Friends Committee On Unity With Nature to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Also, it is not clear to me what “introductory statement” Clerk Taylor is referring to. It does not seem to relate to the Vision and Witness statement on page two. I might also suggest that “using the term contemplative action” is just the world’s latest buzz word and not a particularly Friendly term. Further, your readers would have been better served if Clerk Taylor had written out the five statements of purpose instead of Charles Schade’s. Finally, there’s the “CCC.” If I hadn’t been on the Steering Committee before, I would not know what it means. After all, Friends strive to be inclusive.

My second comment is a concern about the fact that a page and a half of the issue was devoted to promoting Right Sharing and their blatant request for donations. Perhaps their boldness will serve as a model for Quaker Earthcare Witness.

I remain a faithful supporter of the good work that QEW is doing.

Alice M. Wald

Walhalla, SC
QEW’s Response:

From Roy: Friend Alice is right to remind us of the use of acronyms that can seen as exclusionary and lead to many misunderstandings. The original article had started as an in-house report from the Clerk to the Steering Committee. Although it had gone through an editorial process it was still too much an “in-house” document. Let me try to translate terms used in the article.

The current FCUN, Friends Centering on Unity with Nature, is a working group that took on the task of discerning the original statements of purpose, adopted and made part of the Articles of Incorporation in 1990, as to their relevance to the organization today. They were re-adopted by Quaker Earthcare Witness by the Steering Committee last June during our meeting in Boulder, CO. As they now appear in our In Practice:

**The Purpose of QEW**

1. To search and to help others to search for that life which affirms the unity of all creation.

2. To apply and to help others to apply Friends’ practice to live in deep communion with all life spirit.

3. To be guided by and to help others to be guided by the light within us to participate in the healing of the earth.

4. To provide resources, networking, and support to yearly and monthly meetings of the Religious Society of Friends, and to others of whatever persuasion; to help them in their search for effective ways to achieve the above objectives.

5. To provide a reflective and energetic forum that will strengthen and deepen that spiritual unity with nature which values the integrity, diversity, and continuity of life on earth.

The term “contemplative action” comes from a tri-fold that was produced last year and sent to all members of the QEW family as part of our fundraiser appeal. A lot of work went into that document and we as an organization are still in the process of discerning how it will inform our work. I can assure Friend Alice that it is not just the world’s and one that can has great meaning for Friends as they look to take their faith into effective action in the world.

From Katherine: Your point about the Right Sharing article is well-taken, Alice. I wanted to lift up this good work in case it resonated with QEW Friends, leaving the idea of our responses to these needs between each of us and spirit. I know many QEW Friends and supporters are involved in a number of issues and support a variety of efforts, so it was with the hope of furthering Friends’ work and collaborating with other organizations that I included the Right Sharing story.