A Call to Corporate Faithfulness in a Time of Climate Change

New England Friends

Epistle from the second New England Climate Spring

November 22, 2015

To Friends everywhere,

We are New England Friends gathered at Woolman Hill, in Deerfield, Massachusetts. We have been drawn to spend time in worship, discernment, and mutual encouragement in our response to climate change. We feel compelled in love to write to you of our time together.

It is clear to us that our precious earth is facing enormous destruction as a result of human over-consumption of fossil fuels and other resources, particularly in our own country and other highly developed nations. The consequences of the earth's systemic response are already exacerbating issues with which Friends are concerned, including peace, justice, equality, and right use of resources. Climate change now permeates our societies, our politics, and our moral condition. The poor and marginalized are and will be the most deeply affected by the climatic and ecosystem changes under way, and the social instability and conflict which is resulting.

God is calling us to respond as a community of faith. Climate change is not just one concern among many to be carried by only some among us. We all live on this planet and are contributing to its destruction. It is incumbent upon every Friend and every Friends Meeting to seek actively to discover how God is leading us to do our part to reverse this great crime. Recognizing that we, gathered here, are shaped and limited by our economic and social position, nevertheless the divine Witness challenges us, in compassion and in love for our brothers and sisters, and for the beautiful earth, to pray, wait, and act with a focus and fearlessness appropriate to the urgency of the times. Truth requires it of us.

Friends gathered here have been led to many kinds of witness, from direct actions of nonviolent resistance, political organizing, education, and personal lifestyle changes, to offering emotional, spiritual, and financial support that makes more visible actions possible. We feel clearly, in the Light, how each such faithful response, however large or small, supports and makes possible the others.

As in past times of crisis, the strength and love of our community life will make it possible for Friends to see what they are called to and carry it out, faithfully whatever the cost. We must take time to hold these questions in our hearts. We can engage with each other tenderly and hold each other lovingly accountable to move from fear into courage in response to this great crisis. This is the manner in which Friends have always responded to great moral challenges of their own time.

We have been drawn to name some specific ways in which our community can offer this support and nurture the witnesses arising among us.

- Meetings need to offer frequent opportunities to wrestle with this concern and to help each other to discern how we are individually and corporately led. Each of us brings unique and necessary gifts to the struggle. Therefore, it is important to build the habit of seeking out these motions in each other. We can encourage each other to speak of them and make them visible in our prayer and community activities regularly, such as our meetings for business, forums, and newsletters.

- Friends are feeling led under religious concern to travel among us, to provide prophetic ministry around these concerns and to help meetings prayerfully reflect on climate change. We ask Friends to open their doors to such visitors and provide opportunities for them to share their witness amongst us and with our surrounding communities. To encourage these leadings to travel, meetings
can provide minutes, elders, and financial support to such Friends.

- Growing numbers of Friends are led to engage in civil disobedience and other forms of prophetic witness against the destruction of the earth, such as voluntary carbon tax. When Friends act they are not alone. They act for the whole community. We can provide minutes of support and help with legal fees, fines, jail support, and support for the families of those carrying out such actions.

- Friends in countries such as the US, with high per-capita carbon emissions will only be able to make the major reductions in carbon footprint that are needed by working together to strengthen the ways we provide mutual support and nurture to each other. We can share food, vehicles, housing, technical knowledge, time, and joyful, carbon-free play and refreshment with each other.

It is hard to imagine the challenges coming. With God's help we are confident that we will be able to respond. Our traditions and community life offer rich resources for this work. Despite the gravity and uncertainty of the situation, we can attest that in these travails we see fresh opportunity to understand and live out God's will with joy.

In Love & Light we are your Friends,

Peter Blood-Patterson, Brian Drayton, Katherine Fisher, Will Taber, Helen Armstrong, Jay O'Hara, Karen Sargent, Jonathan Gorham, Darcy Drayton, Neil Blanchard, Emily Neumann, Alan Eccleston, Maurine Lanan, Rod Zwirner, Jay Smith, Alice Grendon, Samara Rosen, Frederick Martin, Pat Moyer, John Regan, Judy Hyde, Theo Talcott, Dunan Herman-Parks

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