FOUR YEARS AGO, the Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) Earthcare Committee (EcC) brought forth a Minute on Climate Change that was approved the 14th day of the fourth month, 2014, which reads in part:

“We, the Friends of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, bring this minute forward at a time when climate change is undeniable. The realities and impacts have become obvious as levels of CO2 continue to rise past 400 ppm and are causing widespread global disruptions. As Friends from the SEYM region, we personally face catastrophic environmental damage from sea level rise, salt-water intrusion and pollution of our aquifers, rivers, lakes, and springs.

"We as a religious community are called to respond now. We recognize we may feel overwhelmed and fear that humankind may not be equal to the task ahead. Many of us have used denial to protect us from what we see is coming. We understand with compassion that this is our attempt to protect ourselves from feelings of helplessness and hopelessness."

"We need to remind ourselves that hope can be found in our Quaker faith and practices, in the unfailing presence of the Light, in our testimonies that guide us and clarify behaviors asked of us. We value the process of discerning leadings to give us the joy and determination to carry on. We find in our history that many Friends have found the resolve to bring attention and intention to the daunting work they faced, as we can."

After the approval, the SEYM clerk appealed to the attending Friends to act to move the minute from one of good thought, feeling, and spirit into good actions. Before leaving, the EcC gathered and suggested a number of minutes to begin the process for the establishment of the Field Secretary for Earthcare. To everyone’s delight, before we rose that day, spirit moved some initial funding into SEYM treasury through donations that were put into a special accounting line of the SEYM coffers.

The process was lengthy and arduous, as Friends are wont to do. The documents went through many
iterations, reviews, and threshing sessions among Friends within the bioregion of SEYM. Toward the end, the Yearly Meeting approved a set of interlocking minutes for the position, including one for an Anchor Committee to work with the person. The search for additional funding was concurrent to the threshing of the document. Individual and Monthly Meetings contributed to the funding of the position as they were led. The number of hours SEYM could offer was directly dependent on the amount of money raised to support the position. Once there were sufficient funds to offer at least a part-time job, the search committee initiated the process. After a thorough search, the committee brought forward the name that it would ask the Yearly Meeting to approve.

Beverly Ward thus was accepted into the new position and has been working at warp speed since, and she hit the ground already running. She is now connected with QEW through the UN Working Group and she has made connections with Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). Beverly has been working with regional interfaith organizations and she made her first visit to a Friends Monthly Meeting when she came to Miami.

Beverly Ward is a special soul who has a deep understanding of Earth and spirit and she is working very hard to bring the messages of Earthcare to others without and within Friends' world. Beverly’s resume is far too extensive to recount here but is available on QEW’s website. Suffice it to say she is very well suited for the work to which she has been led.

Beverly spoke to the Miami Friends Meeting about her vision for the FSE position and the connections she has made with other faith and secular groups. She spoke about water issues, Standing Rock, and the Sabal Trail Pipeline as well as other important current issues.

Beverly’s joy, enthusiasm, and optimism that radiates from her inner light give us hope in the face of huge obstacles and new challenges. Beverly is a hugger of trees and people, and embraces all of that spiritual leading that carries the heart through rough times. We thanked her for making Miami Friends Meeting the first of the monthly meetings she will visit and we look forward to working very closely with her on the Great Work.

SEYM has broken new ground with the new position of Field Secretary for Earthcare. The first day of the tenth month of this year finalized the hiring of Beverly Ward for this part-time position. If anyone is interested in more details about the process, please reach out to the Field Secretary who will provide the resources to help.

Friends, the Great Work is before us and we are all called to this ministry. Beverly Ward, the Field Secretary for Earthcare, and Quaker Earthcare Witness are some of the ways that we witness for the care of Earth. Please join us in whatever way you are led.

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Quaker Earthcare Witness
P.O. Box 6787
Albany, CA 94706