Our Work This Year

Quaker Earthcare Witness connects Friends who strive to live in kinship with the natural world and who support environmental justice.

We are dedicated to a spiritual transformation within the Society of Friends by continually seeking the Light in all our endeavors and depending on the testimonies and Friends' process in our work.

Our spiritual connection with the natural world has led us to recognize the urgency of the critical issues of our time, including climate change, biodiversity, ocean and soil depletion, and overpopulation, and to act on these concerns through the lens of environmental justice.

We provide inspiration and resources to Friends throughout North America by freely distributing information in our newsletter, BeFriending Creation, and on our website, QuakerEarthcare.org, as well as through popular social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This year can be described in one word: unprecedented. The confluence of crises has spurred many of us to action while we are simultaneously reeling from the depths of sorrow.

For over 33 years, QEW has been alerting the Society of Friends (and beyond) to the multiple ecological crises we are facing, and most of these crises have worsened during that time. In 2020, extreme weather was rampant—fires, floods, hurricanes. We also faced a global pandemic, in part a result of ecological encroachment on wildlife habitat. At the same time, many of us participated in a racial justice uprising in the United States that rose up from centuries of oppression and terror in communities of color. And we experienced extreme challenges to US democracy.

We are grateful for the support of our thriving network of Friends engaging alongside us.

QEW’s 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.
“If the world is to be healed through human efforts, it will be by ordinary people, people whose love for this life is even greater than their fear.”
– JOANNA MACY

**Learning and Growing in 2020**

We are a supportive community for Friends, inspiring and empowering action while also providing a place for reflection and solace. The Quaker Earthcare Witness network is responding to the challenges brought forward by 2020 in multiple ways.

QEW has faced the challenges of the pandemic by pivoting to connect with Friends electronically. We:

- held both of our Steering Committee meetings in 2020 on Zoom (new for us),
- hosted six worship sharing session via Zoom, attracting many Friends new to QEW,
- made twenty presentations to monthly and yearly meetings,
- hosted four presentations during the FGC virtual Gathering, and
- sponsored a UN side event on food and water in the African Diaspora.

We have responded to the racial justice uprising by re-evaluating our aspirations and reviewing our current practices.

- We will prioritize anti-racism work in our Steering Committee meetings.
- We will continue to lift up stories in our publications on environmental justice.
- We will continue to join coalitions like the Poor People’s Campaign, to advocate for racial justice and to support the Green New Deal.
- We will take time to reflect on our role as an organization and as individuals to dismantle racism.

We have responded to the ecological crises that we are facing by increasing our connections in the Society of Friends.

- Our newsletter is going to 25% more households and groups than last year.
- We have launched QEW Presents! as a way to increase our presence in Meetings and Churches, with nine QEW Friends available to do virtual workshops and talks.
- Our new website and logo are being designed to be more accessible and engaging.
Publications and Communications

We produced four print and electronic issues of *Befriending Creation*, a 12-page newsletter designed to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness by stimulating discussions and actions; sharing insights, practical ideas, and news of our network’s work across the US and Canada; and encouraging a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation among Friends.

Highlights this year included:


**April-June 2020**: Pandemic (*In Uncertain Times, What I am Learning, How Will I Share My Check?*, *Mutual Aid and Local Food Sufficiency*), Eco-spirituality (*Love in the Wilderness, If I Were a Poet*), Climate and Conflict (*Endless War, Endless Environmental Harm*), Population (*Population is Personal*), Land Restoration (*Quakers Caring for God’s Creation*), Youth Empowerment (*Youth Activists’ Earth Day Demands*).

**July-September 2020**: Environmental Justice (*A Toxic Factory Will Create a Toxic Future, Sharing Love and Knowledge in the time of Covid 19, Anti-Racism*), Pandemic (*Connected Crisis: Covid 19 and Climate Change, Pacific Yearly Meeting’s Mutual Aid Experiment*), Eco-spirituality (*I am a Tree, Plowing the Prairie*).

In collaboration with Friends Journal, we produced a [QuakerSpeak video](https://www.youtube.com) that has had 5000 views (release date was in November 2019). Four QEW Friends, Shelley Tanenbaum (General Secretary), Hayley Hathaway (Communications Coordinator), Barbara Adams (representative from Baltimore Yearly Meeting) and Beverly Ward (Field Secretary for Earthcare, Southeastern Yearly Meeting) are featured. They describe their passion for Earthcare, the urgency of global climate change and environmental justice, and QEW’s work.

Our [website and social media presence](https://www.quakerearthcare.org) are useful resources for sharing material and we continue to see an increase in traffic. Each week, we distribute a graphic on Facebook and Instagram and we regularly post articles of interest.
Quaker Activism and Education

We offered programs during the virtual Friends General Conference annual gathering, including hosting four presentations, showcasing what Friends are doing regarding Earthcare. We offered presentations on Climate Despair and Empowerment, Regenerative Agriculture, Visioning the Climate Future, and Youth Activism. We also sponsored three worship sharing sessions leading up to the Gathering and three sessions in the fall.

We launched QEW Presents!, featuring nine speakers who are available to virtually visit with yearly and monthly meetings and churches and offer talks on a wide variety of topics. Our General Secretary, Communications Coordinator, and members of our Steering Committee presented workshops and talks at yearly meetings including North Pacific Yearly Meeting, Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Southeastern Yearly Meeting, South Central Yearly Meeting, Illinois Yearly Meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting, and Alaska Friends Conference; we also presented workshops and talks at numerous monthly meetings including Durham NC, Charlotte NC, Live Oak CA, Chico CA, Humboldt CA, Birmingham AL, Atlanta GA, Bloomington IN, Buffalo NY, Memphis TN, and Camas Friends Church WA.

We joined coalitions for the youth-led global climate strike in April and the Poor People’s Campaign.

And we filled growing requests for resources from individuals and yearly and monthly meetings.

Enhanced Local Earthcare Projects

Each year, QEW offers mini-grants to Quaker meetings, churches, and other Quaker organizations to support hand-on projects that foster earthcare.

Examples include gardens, reforestation, clean and efficient water and energy systems, and community educational programs.

In 2020, we raised money through GoFundMe to crowdfund our mini grants program.

Supported Environmental Justice in the African Diaspora


This year's side event featured three dynamic speakers: Dr. Nancy Abwalaba Owano of Pawn University in Kenya, shared about water and sanitation issues (the situation is exacerbated by climate change and poor sanitation increases the possibility of diseases like covid-19); Elizabeth Wathuti, known as Liz Mazingira, founded the Green Generation Initiative in Kenya, which addresses issues like deforestation, pollution and environmental injustices through conservation; and Dr. Antoinette Jackson, chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of South Florida, presented on the connections between tourism, colonization, and racism.
Finances

This fiscal year, we increased our budget to more adequately pay our staff, in accordance with U.S. Department of Labor standards. We were delighted to have been successful is raising our budget.

Normally, in addition to staff time, most of our expenditures go directly to publication costs (printing, postage, editing), outreach (visits to monthly and yearly meetings, and events), and maintaining our network (Steering Committee meetings, conference calls, database maintenance). We spend about 10% of our budget on fundraising (15% of staff salaries plus the cost of the annual appeal). Nearly all of our income comes from monthly/yearly meeting donations and individual donations. However, this was not a "normal" year and some of our expenses were reduced resulting in a slight surplus. We will use those funds wisely in 2020-21.

We primarily raise money from individuals and from monthly meeting donations.

Charts below show our expenses and income distribution.

Steering Committee

Two Steering Committee meetings were held virtually during this time period: April 23-26 and October 8-11. With just about a month to plan, we rapidly converted our scheduled in-person spring meeting from a visit with Durham NC Friends to Zoom meetings. As a result, we nearly doubled our attendance plus many North Carolina Friends who had already been encouraged to attend these sessions were able to join us virtually. Some highlights included worship sharing and presentations by Carol Barta on Regenerative Agriculture and Jennie Ratcliffe on her book, Nothing Lowly in the Universe.

Our October Steering Committee meeting focused on anti-racism. Our worship sharing queries intertwined the themes of the racial justice uprising with environmental justice. Each committee and working group was asked to consider queries ahead of the session about racial justice and include their responses in reports. We included two evening training sessions. Friends came together from Nova Scotia to Alaska, from Florida to Mexico.

Our 50-member Steering Committee includes 30 representatives from 20 Yearly Meetings plus 20 at-large members. Most representatives and at-large steering committee members visit their own monthly and yearly meetings on behalf of QEW, distribute our resources, and/or provide workshops and interest groups.

Staff

We have a General Secretary, Shelley Tanenbaum, and a Communications Coordinator, Hayley Hathaway, plus a part-time bookkeeper consultant, Holly Wilder.
What’s Next? Looking Forward

How do we build a sustainable and life-enhancing future in these challenging times? QEW grew out of a strong leading among Friends that our future depends on a spiritual transformation in our relationships with each other and the natural world.

That potential to embrace a new way of relating to our environment and to each other is needed more than ever.

This year, we will reach out to Friends and beyond to:

» Broaden our connections and more widely distribute our resources with an updated website,
» Expand our reach with plans to connect with monthly and yearly meetings: we will be offering workshops and forums that encourage Friends to act boldly, grounded spiritually in care for our Earth,
» Produce our quarterly publication, BeFriending Creation,
» Work with partner organizations to promote environmental justice,
» Speak out publicly to support Friends actions on Earthcare
» Sponsor an international forum on water in the African diaspora, building on the success of our four previous forums in 2017-2020,
» Offer mini-grants for hands-on local Earthcare projects.

Thank you, Friends!

Join QEW

» Share your Earthcare ministry with us.
» Invite QEW to visit your meeting to talk about what individuals and meetings can do in these challenging times.
» Share BeFriending Creation.
» Make sure your yearly meeting has a representative to QEW.
» Start an Earthcare group at your meeting. Use Quaker Earthcare Witness materials in your First Day school.
» Share our literature, like pamphlets on key environmental issues, with your meeting or church, and at special events.
» Apply for a Mini-Grant to support a project.
» Donate, and encourage your meeting to join our network.

STAY IN TOUCH
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