Earthcare for Children

A Curriculum for First Day School, Sunday School & After School Programs

Developed by Quaker Earthcare Witness
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Preface

Members of Palo Alto Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have long witnessed to ecological concerns. At their prompting, Pacific Yearly Meeting, a regional gathering of unprogrammed Friends meetings, invited Marshall Massey to speak to its 1985 annual sessions in California. His address, In Defense of the Peaceable Kingdom, is reprinted in EarthLight: Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age. Friends who heard Marshall speak in 1985 united in asserting a religious basis for environmentalism, and a Committee on Unity with Nature was formed.

Sandra Farley and Diana Egly were drawn to create an Earthcare curriculum for use in First Day School (Quaker religious education for school-aged children) at Palo Alto Meeting. Several First Day School teachers led the children through rough drafts of the lessons before 200 copies were published by Palo Alto Friends Meeting in 1987.

By 1990, that edition had sold out. Rather than reprint it, the authors felt the need to revise, expand, and illustrate the lessons to include more on issues they found most urgent and about which they could communicate effectively with children. Friends Committee on Unity with Nature [FCUN] agreed to publish the expanded curriculum.

By 2006, Quaker Earthcare Witness [QEW, formerly FCUN] had sold out of its 1998 edition, and again the authors wished to refocus a few of the chapters to reflect the current situation. At least 10% of the activities were new and many others updated.

In 2011, publication was transferred to Quaker Press of FGC for a third edition with the Resources section updated by the authors.

In 2017, Quaker Earthcare Witness received a grant from Obadiah Brown’s Benevolent Fund to update the curriculum and transform it into a web-friendly document that would be easy to share and download. This new format allows us to adapt the curriculum as we receive feedback. Please send us your comments and suggestions at <info@quakerearthcare.org> and come back to <quakerearthcare.org/children> for more updates and resources.
About the Authors

Sandra Moon Farley [MS in Special Education] is a retired teacher of English as a Second Language to adults. She now tells stories and runs a small urban farm CSA. Sandy has served on the board of Western Friend and EarthLight. She helped edit Earthcare for Friends and EarthLight: Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age. She has been recording clerk of her monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings.

Diana Gail Egly [BS in Psychology and Mathematics] is a writer in scientific fields, especially cognitive science. Diana has also designed knitwear and wearable art. She is active in Quaker lobbying and has served on committees of Palo Alto Friends Meeting.

Thomas Baxter Farley [MA in Theatre Arts] is an actor and storyteller performing and recording with his partner, Sandy, as Spontaneous Combustion. Tom has owned and managed children’s bookstores. His stories, articles, and book reviews have appeared in Western Friend and Friends Journal. Tom has served as clerk of the Children’s Program, Unity with Nature, and Ministry and Oversight committees of Pacific Yearly Meeting.

About Quaker Earthcare Witness

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a network of Friends (Quakers) in North America and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world from a spiritual perspective, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies. While QEW supports reforms in laws, technology, education, and institutions, its primary calling is to facilitate transformation of humans’ attitudes, values, identity, and worldview that underlie much of the environmental destruction going on in the world today. You can be part of QEW’s work by giving of your time, talents, and financial support, becoming a QEW contact for your Meeting, starting an Earthcare group in your meeting, reading and sharing BeFriending Creation and other QEW literature, and leading Earthcare activities in your Meeting.

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.
Introduction

Friends’ Testimony

For over 350 years, Quakers have affirmed that there is that of God in everyone. From the experience of living this premise, have come witness to and testimonies on Equality, Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Unity, Stewardship, and Community. Now many Friends and others have expanded this premise to consider that there is that of God in everything, that the entire universe is a manifestation of God’s love and grace.

This understanding of our relationship with God is expressed as a testimony on Earthcare or Unity with Nature. The right sharing of the world’s resources is an ecological concern as well as a social one. This responsibility was recognized as early as the seventeenth century by Quaker leaders such as William Penn, who wrote in Some Fruits of Solitude in 1692:

“It would go a great way to caution and direct people in their Use of the World, that they were better studied and known in the Creation of it. For how could Man[kind] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the Great Creator stare them in the Face, in all and every Part thereof?” – William Penn

Our Purpose

It is easy to inspire wonder and awe. Sharing the Earth with all of creation is a cause for joyous celebration. Many fine children’s books and teacher resources explore this theme from secular and/or religious perspectives. However, few spiritually based materials take children much farther than the discovery and celebration level. We believe children can respond positively to many of the environmental issues our society now faces. But our presentation of these issues must not be one more round of “isn’t it terrible what human beings have done to the world!” Let us build on the joy and wonder, not replace it with fear and despair.

We have planned and revised this course of study to help our children begin to walk gently over God’s Earth and teach others to do likewise. We want to instill a sense of kinship with all life recognizing the interrelatedness of all Earth processes. We believe our children will come to see conservation practices as a joy and sacred responsibility, not merely a practical nicety. We hope they will not view our future as simply a struggle of “Greens” vs. “Polluting Industry.” Peacemaking and cooperation are our tools. We expect our children to learn that, though problems exist, there are also solutions, some yet to be discovered, and that we can participate in those solutions.
The Role of This Curriculum

At the outset we were clear we would not be our children’s only source of earthcare education. Many schools have strong programs in this field. There are excellent presentations on US public television. Children get similar messages from youth programs such as Camp Fire, Scouting, and 4-H. Our children need reassurance that their faith community considers earthcare part of its core values. What we offer here is not only a reinforcement of the environmental education our children are receiving, but a rooting of that concern in our relationship to God and all of creation. A public school teacher could use, or adapt, most of the activities, but might not be able to ask the same queries, read the scriptural passages, or invite the children to sing many of the songs.

Our Lesson Format

Our intention is to provide you with a series of activities on a particular theme from which you may choose, based on your group. Each of the chapters is laid out following this format as if it were one long lesson. But each chapter has enough material on one theme in it for at least two of the 45-minute to 60-minute sessions we usually have in our First Day School. When we tested these lessons, some of our volunteer teachers were frustrated by this excess of material. They wanted to do it all at once. Select activities which are appropriate for the age of your children and the size of the group.

1. **Purpose:** Statements to guide the lesson
2. **Proposed Agenda**
3. **Opening:** [10–20 minutes]
   - Silent Worship
   - Songs [select two or three]
   - Scripture Reading & Discussion
4. **Large Group Activity or Lesson**
5. **Options for Small Group Activities:** [30–60 minutes]
   - Craft or art activity
   - Activity that involves movement
   - Snack related to the theme
   - Visit to the Special Plot or other continuing project
   - Books, stories, and other resources
6. **Closing:** [5–15 minutes]
   - Repeat a song from the opening, present accomplishments from the groups, participate in a symbolic activity.
   - Closing Worship
7. **Optional Take-Home Exercise:** Pencil and paper work or discussion ideas to be shared with the family. One or more choices are offered at the end of each chapter. Some Take Home Pages require more reading and writing skills than others.

Ideas for multi-week activities, special events, and field trips are also suggested along the way.
Small and Large Groups

The main activities are usually done in the small groups, by which we mean ten or fewer children with one or more adult leaders. The large group for the opening and closing events could be from two to five small groups, combined.

If your whole program is a small group such as a Camp Fire club, children of a small Quaker Meeting, or home schooling, you may want to incorporate the closing within the regular session, or search out others to join you for the opening and closing activities or for sharing the children’s discoveries.

It is important to bring everyone back together at the end of each lesson for closure. Having a good ending is satisfying. Closure makes more of a difference to children than many adults often recognize. We know there may be lessons where the process or participants’ excitement for some activity may cut into time for your planned closing, but try not to let rushed or abbreviated closings become a routine experience.

Take-Home Exercises

Each chapter ends with one or more pages you can duplicate and send home with the children. Usually, the first page expects less advanced reading and/or writing than the second. Having something in hand can encourage family conversations about what happened in First Day School. Take-home pages may also help parents reinforce the lessons or learn along with their children.

Snack

There is a suggested snack, related to the theme of each chapter. Refreshments may not be part of your pattern. You may choose to omit them. We found that food has such a direct tie-in to the natural world that it truly enhances the lessons. Whenever possible, we urge you to model selecting snacks which are organic, local and/or fair trade, and in season. More information is available at: http://www.organic-food-for-everyone.com/fairtrade-food.html

Pre-school

The exercises are of varying levels and adjustment to your particular level will be needed. Our experience is that older children can adapt to the lessons for the younger ones more easily than the opposite.

Extension

Both teachers and children may know other activities that fit in with our chapters or suggest the development of new chapters. You can extend the program with additional field trips and environmental action projects.
Records

We kept an attendance chart where the children stuck wildlife stickers after their names in the column for each day they were present. This proved to be a pleasant motivator of consistent attendance and a reference for the teacher as to which children might need a review and which others could furnish one.

You may want to record how things are going so you remember the winning activities in future years and revise the ones that need adapting to your situation.

Teachers

We recommend team-teaching so that you can take turns presenting activities and cover for each other in case of absence. Palo Alto Friends Meeting currently runs a multi-stranded program with teams committing to one Sunday a month through the year. At one session a month this curriculum could be used for two years running.

We recommend having several teachers taking turns with each small group, so no one has to give up attending meeting for worship for an extended period. This does cause some lack of continuity for the children, but not all children can come every week either. Using the evaluations helps. Most of our teachers were not parents of children in the program. We see this as an advantage because it builds bonds among children and adults within the meeting. This contributes to our sense of community. We have included a sample letter to use for parent information and teacher recruitment.

Orientation Meeting:

Getting the teachers and parents together for a meeting before the program begins can be most rewarding. It heightens awareness of your work and gives people a chance to see what will be happening, to ask questions, to volunteer for special projects, etc. The agenda for the parent and teacher orientation meeting could include the following:

» Present the dates and times for the program.
» Arrange for field trips and permission slips.
» Commit parents to support attendance.
» Look at the format and scope of the program, reinforcing long-range goals.

You might also do a small group activity from one chapter with the adults. They may discover an interest in having adult religious education sessions weekly or monthly to consider their responses to the issues raised in this curriculum.
Congratulations! You have agreed to teach First Day School. Everyone appreciates your willingness to serve. You may have heard that volunteer teachers are overworked and sometimes suffer “burnout.” What is not so widely talked about is the spiritual enrichment teachers receive. Here’s how to get the most from your turn as a religious educator.

» Prepare in heart and mind. Read the lesson and related materials and consider how they relate to your faith and life. As you come to class, try to reduce distraction and focus on the core message of the lesson and its spiritual base. Be open to answering that of God in the children and in yourself.

» Make other preparations. Copy the handouts, and gather any equipment and materials a day or two ahead. Arrange early to set up. Check with other teachers for things to do together. Post an agenda for older children to read as they come in, possibly including choices of activities. Such preparations make it easier for you to go with the children to Meeting for Worship before class, if that is your pattern, or free you to greet each of the children as they arrive.

» Encourage and praise positive participation. Most children know basic rules for classroom behavior, even if they can’t always follow them. Saying, “Ben and Julia are at the table, Mary is coming so we can start,” focuses on positive behavior. Compliment children for being kind and tolerant, for helping each other. Focus on group goals that make use of cooperation and consensus building. Downplay competition. Try not to let the children interrupt each other, or you. Do not accept disruptive behavior, but try not to spend much group time dealing with it. That steals time from everyone. A child who is at times restless, disruptive, or negative may respond to more appreciation when doing well. Try not to label children by their behaviors. That can limit your expectations of them and their own self-perception. Help develop friendships among classmates so all want to come every week to do things with those friends.

» Listen to the children respond to issues. Ask questions that have many good answers. “How could this affect our lives?” “Why are Friends concerned about this?” “What if Jesus (or John Woolman) were looking at this problem?” You may be surprised by the depth of children’s responses. Encourage them to question you. Teachers have reported experiencing deep revelations while trying to put religious concepts into terms children can grasp. Try to keep open to admitting you don’t have complete answers for every question.

» You are not alone! If you are leading a group out of sight of other adults, you should have a partner or assistant. Then, if your group is larger than usual, or if you have a child who needs individual attention, you can send for a parent, a First Day School Committee member, or another adult to help you.

» You can create a spiritually enriching atmosphere for your group. You set the tone. Consider allowing yourself time to worship or reflect after your class. Share your learning-through-teaching discoveries with others. The joys of working with children should not be kept secret.
Dear Friends:

During the next _____ months, the children in First Day School will be using the program, Earthcare for Children, developed by QEW, Quaker Earthcare Witness. This exciting religious education curriculum has many activities for children ages five to twelve. Parents are advised that parts of the lessons may carry forward from session to session, so regular attendance is important.

We will experience the Earth as our home, see how we share our home with God’s creatures, and learn how we can behave in caring ways for our world. The children will receive Take-Home Pages for completion and discussion with the family. Please use these activities as an opening for sharing your family’s values and concerns.

The most important outcome of the program may be the personal relationships between children and adults strongly concerned for the environment. Therefore, we are asking for volunteers, even people with no teaching experience, to share their love of God and the Earth. If you can do half of the days, we’ll match you up with someone to share the responsibility.

Please call or e-mail _______________________________ at _________________ or ________________.

Parents and teachers are invited to an orientation session on ____________________, at ____________________.

A field trip is planned on ________________, to visit ________________________.

We plan to leave at ______________, and return at ________________.

We will need some extra adults (drivers). If you can go with us, please call or e-mail ___ ______________________________ at ________________ or ____________________.

Thank you.
# Sources for Suggested Songs

Page or song numbers are given with an extra column to note other sources you find.

**Sources:**
- **CF** Camp Fire Music Makers, Camp Fire, Inc., Kansas City, MO
- **WiS** Worship in Song, Friends General Conference, Quaker Press, 1996
- **HfF** A Hymnal for Friends, Friends General Conference, Quaker Press, 1955
- **SotS** Songs of the Spirit, Friends General Conference, Quaker Press, 1978
- **UMH** United Methodist Hymnal, United Methodist Church, 1989
- **RuS** Rise up Singing, Sing Out Publications, 1988 [see also Rise Again Songbook, 2015]

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Musicians Who Record on Earthcare Themes

» Peter and Mary Alice Amidon, <www.amidonmusic.com>

» Banana Slug String Band, Steve Van Zant & friends, River Song, We All Live Downstream, CDs, DVDs, books – <www.bananaslugstringband.com>

» Tom Chapin, This Pretty Planet, Mother Earth, and other recordings and books – <www.tomchapin.com>

» Earth Mama, Joyce Rouse [Quaker songwriter] Grass Roots!, Love Large, and other Earth-Friendly recordings – <www.earthmama.org>

» Leela and Ellie Grace, <www.leelaandelliegrace.com>


» Sarah Pirtle, <sarahpirtle.com/recordings.htm> and A Pocket Full of Wonder <sarahpirtle.com/docs/Pocketful_of_Wonder.pdf>

» Raffi, <www.raffinews.com>

Internet Sites

» Religious Society of Friends <quaker.org>
» Quaker Earthcare Witness [QEW] <quakerearthcare.org>
» Quaker United Nations Office Resource <quakersandclimatechange.com>

Environmental Resource Sites

Al Gore [Our Choice & Inconvenient Truth] <algore.com>
All About Birds [Cornell Univ.] <allaboutbirds.org>
Alternatives for Simple Living <simpleliving.org>
Alt National Park Service <facebook.com/AltUSNationalParkService>
Ampersand Press [food chain games] <ampersandpress.com>
AZA – Assn. of Zoos and Aquariums <aza.org/conservation-education>
Bat Conservation International <batcon.org>
California Academy of Science <calacademy.org>
Camp Fire USA <campfire.org>
Canopy [a local urban tree planting group] <canopy.org>
Center for Climate and Energy Solutions <c2es.org>
Children & Nature Network (C&NN) <childrenandnature.org>
Climate Resilience Toolkit <toolkit.climate.gov>
Climate Stewards [UK] <climatetestewards.org>
Climate Change Resource Center <fs.usda.gov/ccrc/>
Cloudman Discovery Notebook Instructions <cloudman.com/instructions.htm>
Collective Roots [community garden project] <collectiveroots.org>
Community Supported Agriculture <localharvest.org/csa/>
Confessions of an EarthQuaker <theearthquaker.blogspot.com>
Do Something <dosomething.org/us>
Earth Charter Initiative <earthcharterc.org>
Earth Day Network <earthday.org>
Earth Echo <worldwatermonitoringday.org>
Earth Hour [official US site] <worldwildlife.org/pages/earth-hour>
Earth Ministry <earthministry.org>
Earthcare Connections [Canada] <earthcare.ca>
EarthLight <earthlight.org>
Earthwatch Institute <earthwatch.org>
Ecological Footprint Quiz [has access fee] <myfootprint.org>
EnviroLink Network <envirolink.org>
Environmental Storytelling <franstallings.com>
EPA website [as it was on 1/19/2017] <19january2017snapshot.epa.gov>
Forest Service – USDA [kids pages] <.fs.fed.us/kids/>
Friends Energy Project <quaker.org/fep/>
Goldman Environmental Prize <goldmanprize.org>
Good Planet Foundation [France] <goodplanet.org/fr/>
Ground Water Adventurers <groundwateradventurers.org>
Heifer International <heifer.org/readtofeed/index>
Hidden Villa [founded by Quakers]  <hiddenvilla.org>
Indigenous Environmental Network  <ienearth.org>
Institute for Earth Education  <eartheducation.org>
Interfaith Power and Light  <interfaithpowerandlight.org>
Kids For The Bay [environmental ed/action]  <kidsforthebay.org/>
Living on Earth [public radio program]  <loe.org>
Monteverde Costa Rica Nonprofit Organizations  <monteverde.org>
National Environmental Education Foundation  <neefusa.org>
National Geographic Education Guide  <nationalgeographic.org/education>
North American Assn. for Environmental Ed.  <naaee.org>
Oxfam America  <oxfamamerica.org>
Project Green Leaf [local agro-food system]  <greenleaf.uncg.edu>
Quaker Institute for the Future  <quakerinstitute.org>
Seeds of Change [organic seed sources]  <eedsofchange.com>
Sierra Club  <sierraclub.org/about>
Stand [formerly Forest Ethics]  <stand.earth>
Tar Creek Oklahoma [local clean-up project]  <leadagencyredirect.weebly.com>
Ulistac Natural Area [free play field trips]  <ulistac.org>
UNEP - UN Environment  <unep.org>
Union of Concerned Scientists  <ucsaction.org>
Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth  <uuministryforearth.org>
Video Project [environmental media]  <store.videoproject.com>
Visible Earth [NASA photos & images]  <visibleearth.nasa.gov>
Where is Earth’s water located? [USGS]  <water.usgs.gov/edu/earthwherewater.html>
World Stewardship Institute  <ecostewards.org>
LESSON EVALUATION FOR TEACHERS

Date ___________________________  Teachers ________________________

Material from Chapter ________________________________________________

How did you open the session? What was good about your beginning? When we teach this lesson again, what would you add or change?

Did you divide into smaller groups or work as a whole group for the middle section? Which activities did you choose? What went well? When we do these or similar activities again, what would you add or change?

How did you close the session? What did you like about it? When we teach this lesson again, what would you add or change?

Any other comments, advice, suggestions for future users of this chapter?

File your evaluation with the folks in charge of the children’s program so it can be reviewed by future teachers.