



# BeFriending Creation

A Publication of  
**QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS**

Affirming our essential unity with nature

Vol.31 Number 1 • Jan-Feb-March 2018

## ECO-JUSTICE Ecological Responsibility Linked with Social Justice

FLINT, MICHIGAN, an economically depressed area, lost control over decisions affecting the public. Penny-wise and pound-foolish decisions were made by the state to change the source of Flint's drinking water in 2014, resulting in serious contamination. Public complaints were ignored until outsiders exposed the situation. In March 2017, a federal judge approved a \$97 million dollar solution to the problem. Why did it take so long and how many other water systems are like Flint's? How are Flint's environmental concerns connected to race, economics, and politics and where else do we see this reality?

### Addressing Ecological Destruction, Climate Change, & Income Inequality

From the first Earth Day, Christian ethicists have been linking ecological responsibility with economic justice. Eco-Justice Ministries explains that "eco-justice holds together commitments for ecological sustainability and human justice."

The harsh truth is that Flint's story is just one of many examples that have led to a growing movement for eco-justice.

In 1982, residents of Afton in

Warren County, North Carolina, stopped dump trucks loaded with toxic PCB waste slated for delivery to a landfill in their community by lying down in the road for over six weeks.

The residents of Afton ultimately lost their fight, but their story began a national eco-justice movement and led to documentation of these injustices.

The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, held in 1991 in Washington, D.C., established seventeen Principles of Environmental Justice which remain relevant today. The first principle states, "Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction." (<ejnet.org/ej/principles.html >)

Indigenous communities and tribal nations have also organized around environmental issues, forming the Indigenous Environmental Network, which is "an alliance of Indigenous Peoples whose shared mission is to protect the sacredness of Earth Mother from contamination and exploitation by respecting and adhering to indigenous knowledge and natural law."

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Bangladesh is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. In the photo above, a woman stands where her house once was. Photo: Kadir van Lohuizen

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## BeFriending Creation

*BeFriending Creation*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Jan-Feb-March 2018. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. ISSN 1050-0332. Published quarterly.

We publish *BeFriending Creation* to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation. Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items.

Please share our work widely and broadly, always attributing it to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

**Interested in being a member of QEW? Membership** is open to all who demonstrate a commitment to support the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness and who support its work at the Monthly or Yearly Meeting levels, or through other Friends organizations. Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

### 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.

### Steering Committee Clerk:

Stan Becker, [sbecker@jhsph.edu](mailto:sbecker@jhsph.edu).

### General Secretary:

Shelley Tanenbaum, P.O. Box 6787, Albany, CA 94706 510-542-9606;

[shelley@quakerearthcare.org](mailto:shelley@quakerearthcare.org).

### BFC Editor:

Hayley Hathaway,  
144B Thomas Rd., Rindge, NH 03461  
[hayley@quakerearthcare.org](mailto:hayley@quakerearthcare.org).

**Website:** [www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)

**Twitter:** @quakerearthcare

### Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/QuakerEarthcare](http://www.facebook.com/QuakerEarthcare)

### Earthcare Calendar

**April 1, 2017.** Deadline for article submissions for April-May-June 2018 *BeFriending Creation*

## OUR WATERSHED MOMENT

DEAR READERS,

Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum said, **“We won’t save places we don’t love, we can’t love places we don’t know, and we don’t know places we haven’t learned.”** This *BeFriending Creation* highlights voices and projects showing the world how they love, know, and protect their homes. The theme of water in this issue serves as a common stream that unites these diverse initiatives and outlooks, much like a watershed.

“A watershed is the area covered in water’s journey from its origination in the hydrological cycle, to how it drains from the ridge and high points of a given geography, to an end point in a pond, lake, or ocean,” shares theologian Ched Myers in his introduction to a collection of essays by young “activists, educators, and practitioners,” entitled *Watershed Discipleship*.

Do you know what watershed you live in? What would you do to protect its health and the health of those that inhabit it? As Friends, what would it look like to root our transition movement, our faith, and our work for justice in our watersheds? Myers’ collection challenges us to become Watershed Disciples, “recognizing we live in a watershed moment of ecological crisis, learning to be disciples in our watersheds, and developing awareness of the ways our watersheds act as our rabbis (teachers), pointing us to God.”

This is a way to make sure that “unity with nature” is not an abstract construct, but an everyday action rooted in the places we care about most. Here are a few examples from our rich QEW network of what this looks like. Enjoy our new format of a quarterly, full-color print publication and please visit our website and Facebook page to engage in more content, contemplation, and action.

In peace and friendship,

Hayley Hathaway

Editor, *BeFriending Creation*, & QEW Publications Coordinator

## JOIN QEW IN CHICAGO

Whether you are looking to build stronger Earthcare connections or you are on our Steering Committee already, you are invited to attend **Quaker Earthcare Witness’ spring Steering Committee on April 19-22, 2018** at the Cenacle Retreat Center in Chicago. Our sessions are a great way to meet each other, inspire each other with our stories and projects, and worship together. There will be a mix of worship sharing, strategic planning, presentations, and business.

At Steering Committee meetings, we establish QEW’s goals for the following six months and build our community so that we can witness in the world for Earthcare.

Visit [quakerearthcare.org/upcoming](http://quakerearthcare.org/upcoming) for more info.



In Flint, Michigan, citizens protest their contaminated water.

### *Continued from front page*

The most impoverished and vulnerable people on the planet will bear the brunt of climate disruption. Countries that have historically emitted the least carbon are affected by climate change much more than countries that have emitted the most carbon.

Kumik, India, for example, has been a viable place of habitation for over 1000 years. The community is moving due to climate change because their glacier's retreat has severely limited the amount of fresh water from snowmelt. Bangladesh is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change because of its low elevation and frequency of devastating storms. Already, millions have moved from the coastal Bay of Bengal to higher ground in the city of Dhaka.

What can Friends do? Inaction is not necessarily wrong or evil, but it is a choice, and it does have consequences. Inaction is a choice for the status quo. Choosing to work for environmental health instead of against poverty, or vice versa, is a false choice. The way ahead is to choose both: Eco-justice!



Here are some ways to take action:

- Inform yourselves about any injustices in your area and beyond.
- Raise the issues with the appropriate authorities and insist on action.
- Support national efforts by environmental or faith-based organizations to address environmental injustices.
- Lobby the U.S. government to fulfill our commitments to help developing countries adapt to climate change.
- Contribute to QEW for Mini-grants and other programs addressing eco-justice.

Quaker Earthcare Witness has grants available of up to \$500 each to support projects consistent with QEW values, like eco-justice. Past projects include supporting the Kenya Munyu Youth Group. The goals of this project were to involve

**Traditional Quaker testimonies highlight both the connections among the concerns highlighted here and the imperative to act:**

We value equality. Yet we see economic disparities increasing dramatically, with people of color experiencing the brunt of both income inequality and environmental damage, like in Flint.

We value integrity. Yet Gross Domestic Product is a false measure of prosperity, and truth is being sacrificed in advertising, mass media, public discourse, and politics.

We value simplicity. Yet our “growth economy” requires ever-increasing consumption, debt, and intrusion on the natural world to sustain itself.

We value community. Yet we are deeply divided by racism; the number of people facing economic insecurity and confined to prisons grows; and God’s community of life is diminished.

We value peace. Yet the devastation caused by our economic system’s exploitation of both people and planet is a direct cause of violence.

a Youth Group in agriculture; they developed a nursery to plant trees and plants that silkworms feed on and initiating a project to produce silk.

*This text is adapted from QEW’s newest pamphlet of the same name, available on QEW’s website for download.*

# The Small Water Cycle & Global Warming

By Christopher Haines

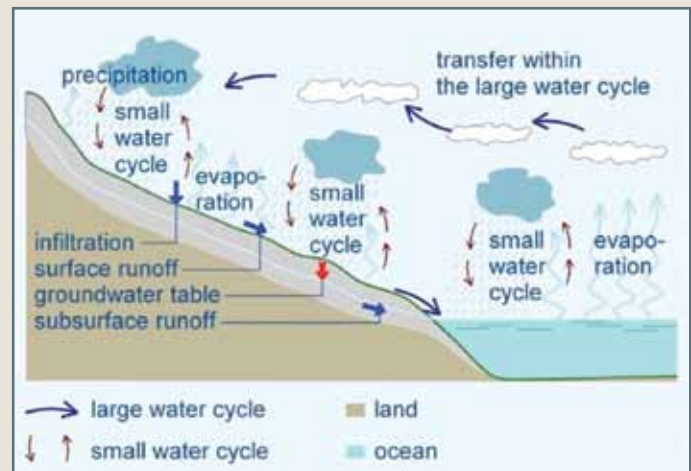
WHEN JIMMY CARTER ASKED scientist Charles Keeling for advice in 1978 on what the government should do about climate change, Keeling said that the problem was far too complicated for people to understand, so focus on greenhouse emissions. Since then, reducing greenhouse emissions has been the principal focus for those interested in reducing their environmental impact. While greenhouse emissions must be reduced, new science is showing us that expanding our focus to restoring natural ecosystems could ameliorate the effects of rising greenhouse gases on global temperature increases.

While greenhouse emissions do increase the planet's energy load, that energy does not need to cause temperature rise (sensible heat). When solar energy falls on moist surfaces or living plants, it produces evaporation or evapotranspiration (latent heat), increasing humidity, not temperature.

It is this hydrologic cooling that forests and other living plants create that prompted David Ellison and 22 other researchers to state, "Forests and trees must be recognized as prime regulators within the water, energy and carbon cycles...." They call for a "reversal of paradigms, from a carbon-centric (greenhouse) model to one that treats the hydrologic and climate-cooling effects of trees and forests as the first order of priority."

The earth's rotation creates a lateral circulation of moisture known as the "large water cycle." Evaporation from the oceans accounts for 86% of the atmospheric moisture, but 26% of that falls onto the land. Therefore, the land contributes 14% of the evaporation but receives nearly twice that much back as rain or snow. Thus, the world's rivers run to the sea, yet the sea level did not rise as it is rising now.

A "small water cycle," a vertical generator of mild, local weather, operates within each watershed. The critical term here is vertical. Small water cycles need to recycle water within the watershed in order to maintain the local ecology, as moist environments attract more moisture and dry environments repel it. Humans violate



A helpful diagram with one error: two small water cycles would not exist in one watershed. Figure: *Water For the Recovery of the Climate - A New Water Paradigm* by M. Kravčík, J. Pokorný, J. Kohutiar, M. Kováč and E. Tóth.

this law of nature by draining away "waste-water." Each turn in the affected water cycle slightly decreases the amount of water that cycles within it.

But unnatural drainage is not the only problem. Soil naturally holds water in relation to the amount of organic matter it contains. An increase of one percent of carbon in soil will increase the water-holding capacity by 20,000 gallons per acre. As industrial agriculture, with tillage and chemicals, degrades the soil we inherited to "dirt," water drains from the land, no longer able to hold it. Studies have documented whole countries drying out over decades due to this man-made manipulation. Besides holding-capacity, soil health also has dramatic impacts on percolation rates, determining how much rainwater soaks into the ground, affecting flooding and how quickly it runs off, causing erosion.

Desertification shifts rain patterns, decreasing rainfall on lower elevations and increasing it in higher elevations. This breaks the small water cycle and allows the more violent large water cycle to predominate, leading to more severe storms with flooding and associated damage, but blinds residents to the fact that their country is undergoing desertification.

The human settlements that date back to the dawn of the agricultural era, such as those in the Middle East, northern Africa, India, and China, are now largely deserts due to deforestation, agriculture and urbanization. Despite the evidence, we have not rethought our impact on climate systems. These common practices decrease evapotranspiration, which causes increased temperatures (sensible heat) and increased temperature divergence. Human actions have created deserts, but we must look beyond greenhouse emissions to a systemic understanding of biological systems to begin the healing.

*Christopher Haines is QEW's Yearly Meeting Representative to New England Yearly Meeting.*

# Rising Together

## Community Health Mapping in South Florida

By Beverly G. Ward

MANY COMMUNITIES in South Florida experience “sunny day” flooding during periods of very high or “king” tides. During a new or full moon, when the sun and the moon are aligned with Earth in their orbits, the gravitational pull on the oceans is at its strongest, producing the king tides. Three or four times a year, when the moon is at its perigee, these tides may cause coastal flooding. This is becoming a common occurrence.

In September last year, I joined a team of local representatives from non-profits, church groups, and city agencies to collect king-tide data and work with residents of Shorecrest, a diverse neighborhood in northeast Miami, Florida. In the area we worked, 19 to 32 percent of residents live below the federal poverty level. Fifty-four percent are White, 39 percent are Black or African-American, and 30 percent are Hispanic or Latino. While

roughly one-half of housing units in the area are owner-occupied, many of the rental apartments and condominiums are concentrated in Shorecrest’s southeastern corner where flooding occurs predictably with the king tides, creating parking and health and safety challenges.

Our work was based on the Rising Together model to increase climate resilience in low-income communities of color in coastal Florida and beyond to respond to the impacts of climate change. Rising Together is founded on the principles of organizational capacity building within an existing partnering organization led by low-income residents in the community.

The original project design included training residents to collect flooding data. However, due to Hurricane Irma and in consideration of the needs of Shorecrest residents, representatives from partnering organizations and local university



Beverly Ward collects tidewater samples. Photo: John Heimburg

students were trained to collect flood data including salinity and water depth. Our group also conducted a neighborhood survey to understand and communicate the public health risks associated with floodwaters and king tides. The survey was available in English, Creole, and Spanish, as were the Shorecrest Climate and Health Fact Sheets.

This model is important because it provides the affected communities with tools, techniques, and other resources to collect data, tell their stories about the impacts of climate change, and develop effective transition solutions for the people involved. It was developed under an Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Small Project Grant awarded to the Green Sanctuary Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Boca Raton. Thanks to joint efforts in the Florida Interfaith Climate Action Network and the Florida Council of Churches, our Southeastern Yearly Meeting partnered with the Unitarian Universalists to do this work. We continue to explore other partnerships to “rise together” in other communities such as the Tampa-St. Petersburg and Broward County areas.

*Beverly G. Ward is Southeastern Yearly Meeting’s Field Secretary for Earthcare.*



Nancy Metayer (New Florida Majority) with Friends John Heimburg, Beverly Ward, and Jan Booher. Photo: John Scott, NIH-National Library of Medicine Community Health Mapping Initiative, and Kurt Menke, Birds Eye View GIS

# Water for the African Diaspora

By Pamela Boyce Simms & Beverly G. Ward

THE AFRICAN DIASPORA EARTHCARE COALITION, organized by the QEW United Nations Working Group, is focusing on the theme of “water” this year as part of the inauguration of the United Nations’ International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development. The Coalition will host a special “side-event” during the U.N. High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that will take place in New York, July 9 - 18 2018.

The theme of water builds upon the Coalition’s 2017 efforts to educate, advocate, and create solidarity networks supporting the retention of agricultural land and food sovereignty for people of the African Diaspora. The threats of drought, famine, and other anthropogenic and climatic events are inextricably linked to water.

Members of our Coalition have formed a special Water Circle to collect data and frame the concerns from a global perspective. The Circle has taken into consideration U.N. Sustainable Development Goal 6, Clean Water and Sanitation: “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” We seek to expand its inquiries to include understanding the myriad impacts of climate disruption on achieving this goal, particularly as related to people of African descent. This is consistent with the U.N. statement: “There is sufficient fresh water on the planet to achieve [Goal 6]. But water related challenges, including limited access to safe water and sanitation, increasing pressure on water resources and ecosystems, and an exacerbated risk of droughts and floods, remain high on the global agenda.”

The Water Circle will host a webinar on March 21 to introduce ourselves and the work, and provide

## United Nations’ Facts on Water

“Globally, water scarcity already affects four out of every 10 people. A lack of water and poor water quality increases the risk of diarrhoea, which kills approximately 2.2 million people every year, as well as trachoma, an eye infection that can lead to blindness, and many other illnesses.” (WHO)

“With the existing climate change scenario, by 2030, water scarcity in some arid and semi-arid places will displace between 24 million and 700 million people.” (UNCCD)

SOURCE: [www.unwater.org/water-facts/climate-change/](http://www.unwater.org/water-facts/climate-change/)



case examples of water issues and potential solutions from Africa, the Caribbean, and the U.S. and to build energy for World Water Day on March 22.

We have launched an online fundraising campaign through Crowdrise to fund this work. Our goal is to raise enough money to bring together leaders from the African diaspora who are working in their communities on issues of water and food sovereignty to the gathering in July in New York City to learn together, share resources, and strengthen our network. Please visit <[quakerearthcare.org/crowdrise](http://quakerearthcare.org/crowdrise)> to make a donation.

To get involved with the Coalition contact Pamela Boyce Simms at [pbs9@georgetown.edu](mailto:pbs9@georgetown.edu) and to join the webinar contact Beverly G. Ward at [fsearthcare@seymquakers.org](mailto:fsearthcare@seymquakers.org).

*Pamela Boyce Simms is an evolutionary culture designer who convenes the Mid-Atlantic Transition Hub. She currently works with international Quaker, Buddhist, and African Diaspora Earthcare networks. Beverly G. Ward is a member of Tampa Meeting and Southeastern Yearly Meeting’s Field Secretary for Earthcare.*



# Toronto Meeting Hosts ClimateFast Initiative

By Lyn Adamson

TORONTO MONTHLY MEETING'S Peace and Social Action Committee has supported the work of ClimateFast, a Canadian climate action group, since its inception in 2012. For the first three years, ClimateFast focused on federal climate action with periods of fasting, a vigil on Parliament Hill, and a pledge campaign aimed at getting our Members of Parliament to commit to a three-point climate action plan: 1) end fossil fuel subsidies, 2) put a price on carbon, and 3) support the development of renewable energy. It was an uphill climb due to an unsupportive conservative government at the time. So, we successfully engaged the opposition parties: the Liberals, NDP, and the one Green member. The majority of members of all these parties signed the pledge, and the actions became part of their platforms in the 2015 election. Now the current Liberal government is moving ahead with the initiatives.

In 2015, we learned that Toronto's municipal government was developing a climate action plan, TransformTO, thanks to the dedicated leadership of several progressive councilors. Since cities emit approximately 70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, we strategized that action in Canada's largest city could make a difference. We held a series of film screenings across the city, including Leonardo di Caprio's *Before the Flood* and two films by local filmmakers to develop a base of citizens ready to press their councilors for support for TransformTO. Two thousand people signed a petition to the Mayor and Councilors. Although we no

longer fast, we kept our name to represent that we need action on climate—fast!

TransformTO is moving forward. We are now in our second year of funding, with \$2.5 million dollars in the 2018 budget, and we plan to make this plan a centerpiece for public support in the upcoming municipal elections. Toronto's plan is aimed at reducing emissions by 80 percent by 2050. It's going to take big changes to get there! The city's plan focuses on retrofitting building and new green building standards; electrifying the transportation grid and promoting active transportation; and composting organic waste (as these materials produce methane in landfills). ClimateFast is also focusing on food, tree planting, and other ways of drawing down carbon, which we see as essential to achieving a livable climate in our lifetimes.

Support from our Quaker Meeting has been invaluable: use of space for our meetings and for the film series, and support with the petition and letter-writing campaigns. Two of us from the Peace and Social Action Committee continue to be active with the group and others join when they can. As a Meeting acting alone, we would not have gotten this far. By opening up our group to others, we've formed a committed climate-action community within our city that really is making a difference.

*Lyn Adamson is a member of Toronto Monthly Meeting who wants to connect with you about local climate action plans. Email Lyn at [lyn@climatefast.ca](mailto:lyn@climatefast.ca) and visit [climatefast.ca/carbonfreeTO](http://climatefast.ca/carbonfreeTO).*



# Book Review The New Green Activist Bible?

By Catherine de Neergaard

In *DRAWDOWN: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*, Paul Hawken and his team of scientists have identified the 100 most effective actions to reduce the amount of carbon in the atmosphere.

They define “drawdown” as “... that point in time when the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere begins to decline on a year-to-year basis.”

This book gives me hope. If the top 80 solutions were to be done optimally, we could achieve drawdown: draw carbon down out of the atmosphere, and begin the reversal by 2050.

Given the stalemate in Washington over responding to the increasingly severe climate disaster, this book’s research suggests many ways that we as individuals, families, communities, counties, and states can take action now to save the Earth’s many ecologies and many species, including our own.

National positive action is difficult right now, but there is so much we can do to take the next steps toward a balanced home planet.

Here are the top ten things we can do in order of effectiveness in the most plausible scenario. You may find some of them surprising.

1. Phase out and properly dispose of harmful HFCs (refrigerants used in refrigeration and air conditioning)
2. Increase onshore wind energy with turbines
3. Reduce food waste
4. Eat a plant-rich diet
5. Protect and restore tropical forests
6. Educate girls and women
7. Secure women’s right to voluntary, high-quality family planning
8. Create more solar farms
9. Increase silviopasture (mixing trees, bushes, and grasses together in a natural pasture)
10. Support rooftop solar

Find more information about these and other solutions in the book or website, <[drawdown.org](http://drawdown.org)>

*Catherine de Neergaard is a member of Strawberry Creek Meeting in Berkeley, California.*

# Shopping

By Pamela Haines

I like to shop at times  
finding treasures at a thrift store  
mingling with neighbors at a farmers’ market  
fingering crafts from worlds away  
But mostly I don’t.

In my mouth it has the taste of failure  
failure of imagination  
that I cannot come up with something  
to meet the need myself  
failure of skill  
that I could not keep the old one working  
failure of strength  
that I cannot be content with what I have  
failure of integrity  
knowing I already have more than my share.

When the world is turned upside down  
all the advertising and excess shaken out  
when we deal in real needs and real wealth  
value all who do the work on this green earth  
maybe then this bitter taste  
will wash from my mouth  
and I will be happy  
to shop.

*Pamela Haines is a member of the Friends Economic Integrity Project and the Eco-Justice Collaborative of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.*



# Engaging in Earthcare at Yearly Meetings

DO YOU KNOW who is your Yearly Meeting representative to Quaker Earthcare Witness?

Our 31 Yearly Meeting Representatives serve as liaisons between QEW and their Yearly Meetings, sharing information about what is on the hearts and minds of Quakers from their region with QEW's national network. They bring back resources and insights from QEW to their Yearly Meeting through outreach opportunities, like workshops and tabling at Yearly Meeting gatherings. Email shelley@quakerearthcare.org to get connected.

At QEW, we are also always looking for Monthly Meeting Representatives. If that's of interest to you, please send Shelley an email.

In 2017, the Quaker Earthcare Witness Outreach Committee compiled the efforts of the Yearly Meeting Representatives. We learned that:

- Duluth-Superior Friends Meeting has been actively involved in the sulfide mining issue in Minnesota;
- Monthly Meetings in New York Yearly Meeting are typically very active locally on a multitude of Earthcare, energy, and climate change issues;
- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Eco-Justice Collaborative is working on 100% renewable energy for 100% of the meetings;
- Southeastern Yearly Meeting has hired a Field Secretary for Earthcare.
- At North Columbus Friends Meeting, the Peace and Social Action Committee developed the YouTube video, "Can We Plan Ahead?"
- Wrote and produced a skit about climate change for the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting.
- The theme of Iowa Conservative's last yearly meeting was "Building Bridges." The Gathering included a panel with indigenous women who had been at Standing Rock.



## *Introducing* The QEW SHAWL PROJECT

Here's how it works:  
You and Mary Jo Klingel  
Pick out the yarn and  
decide on the design.  
Mary Jo knits your shawl.  
You write a donation check to  
Quaker Earthcare Witness.

What could be better? You get a shawl,  
Mary Jo gets to knit  
And QEW gets the financial benefit.  
For more information,  
mjklngelftlq@comcast.net.

Some QEW representatives also led activities on Earthcare or climate change:

Make a donation to support QEW today. Send a check with the information below or give online at <[quakerearthcare.org/donate](http://quakerearthcare.org/donate)>.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

I want to contribute \$25 \_\_\_; \$100 \_\_\_; \$200 \_\_\_; Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ My check/cheque is enclosed. Payable to QEW, P.O. Box 6787, Albany, CA, 94706

\_\_\_ I'd prefer to pay by my credit card: MC \_\_\_; Visa \_\_\_; Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I would like to give monthly. Please charge my credit card \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each month.

# OUR COMMUNITY SPEAKS

## *News from Friends*

### RICHMOND FIRST FRIENDS INSTALL SOLAR PANELS ON MEETINGHOUSE

“We’ll be saving money, certainly, but what we will do with that hasn’t been determined yet. Our biggest goal with this project is that we’ll inspire others to follow our lead, even if it’s on the individual level,” says Lincoln Blake, co-clerk of the meeting in Indiana.

### JOIN QUAKER INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE IN ITHACA, NY THIS JULY

Quaker Institute for the Future’s Summer Research Seminar is held yearly to encourage spirit-led research using Quaker methods of discernment and reflection. The Seminar can be thought of as a “meeting for worship for the conduct of research.” As individuals share their research projects in a Quaker process of collective inquiry and collaborative discernment, participants provide insight and suggestions for moving forward with the projects. Most of the work discussed is focused on environment, economics, and justice.

Do you have a project you would like to bring to this year’s seminar for valuable feedback? Would you like to provide Friendly research support for these valuable projects?

Join us this year in Ithaca, NY, July 9-14, co-sponsored by QIF and Ithaca Monthly Meeting. Friendly hospitality will be provided. For more details, visit [quakerinstitute.org](http://quakerinstitute.org).

### RAPID CITY FRIENDS ASK YOUR MEETING TO SEND A LETTER TO CONGRESS

Rapid City Friends, an unaffiliated worship group in Rapid City, South Dakota, in conjunction with the local chapter of Citizens’ Climate Lobby, has taken action as a community:

“We have approved a letter from our meeting asking for consideration of endorsing Congressional action to address climate change. Because Friends value the divine light within all people, we add our voice in support of all those facing the greatest burdens of climate change: including indigenous people, children, elderly, coastal communities, and those around the world living in deprivation. We are writing to your meeting to ask you to also consider signing a letter.”

To learn more and read the draft letter, visit [quakerearthcare.org](http://quakerearthcare.org)

### FRIEND ALAN BURNS “THINKS GLOBAL GREEN” ON WEBSITE

Visit QEW’s website to read Alan Burns’ thoughtful reflection on his faithful path toward creating a website that he updates regularly with climate news from around the world, [thinkglobalgreen.org](http://thinkglobalgreen.org).

Burns shares, “It has been an almost daily task of researching events globally with my efforts to educate young people across the world of the threats facing future generations from global warming.” He is a member of Charlotte Friends Meeting.



Does your Meetinghouse have solar panels?  
Share with us at  
[Facebook.com/quakerearthcare](https://www.facebook.com/quakerearthcare)

## *Continued from back page*

policy based on utterly unprecedented legal theories.” Granting a writ of mandamus is highly unusual and requesting the writ delayed the scheduled February trial.

A hearing was held on the question of granting the writ of mandamus at the Ninth Circuit Court in San Francisco on December 11, 2017. About 50 of us observers were ushered into the ornate courtroom along with 18 of the youth plaintiffs and their families, Dr. Hansen, and the media. One of those plaintiffs is Nathan Baring, a young Friend from Fairbanks, Alaska. Nathan is a seasoned environmental activist, despite turning 18 recently. Several hundred supporters greeted the youths and their families on the courthouse steps.

I talked to Nathan a few weeks after the hearing to learn more about why he agreed to be part of this historic case. Nathan has been active on issues such as air quality since he was twelve. Especially in the winter, wood smoke in Fairbanks often leads to extremely unhealthy air quality, at times achieving worst in the world status. Nathan had attended and led rallies and lobbied legislators, but he was frustrated with a lack of results and the feeling that as a non-voting constituent, he didn’t have much of a voice.

Nathan joined the case when he was 15 “almost as a last resort.” He felt this was “a way for youth to have a say on a global problem—climate change.” Nathan is also frustrated by how short-sighted many of our policies and actions can be. He hopes that this case will compel the federal government to seriously consider long-term interests.

I asked Nathan if he felt any differently now than he did nearly three years ago when he joined the case. He explained, “One of the reasons I joined the case in 2015 was that I was still unable to vote. I had utilized essentially every avenue open to an activist, but the science kept getting starker as our government became more entrenched in their destructive collusion with the oil industry. The judicial path remained an option of last resort that I deemed necessary. I now just recently registered to vote, but my drive to give youth a more powerful seat at the table remains the same. Climate change is pressing, but it has gotten bogged down in politics. We need to take concrete steps to address climate change, and I am hoping that a court decision could compel governments to rise above politics and confront this problem. I believe our government system of checks and balances plays well into this lawsuit because a win for us would force Congress to take



Nathan Baring (right) and fellow plaintiff, Victoria Barrett, leaving the courthouse on December 11, 2017. Photo: Shelley Tanenbaum

tangible steps in confronting the climate crisis, and the court would provide the legal mandate to keep them on track.”

Before the San Francisco 9th Circuit hearing, Quaker Earthcare Witness signed on to an amicus brief, supporting the youth plaintiffs and the Our Children’s Trust case. We were one of 15 faith-based groups that contributed to the brief, citing “the moral foundations of government stewardship and action on climate.” In addition, seven other amicus briefs were filed. During our decision-making process, QEW Friends expressed great delight in being able to support Nathan and this case. Nathan commented, “I am extremely grateful to QEW because my actions are grounded in Quaker principles. It is uplifting to have a tangible Quaker organization having my back because it really cements my alignment with the Quaker community. I was supported by my family, my friends, my community, and now my faith.”

After delaying the trial for several months, the Federal 9th Circuit issued a decision on March 7 in favor of the youth. They will be heard! This landmark case has paved the way for future legal action. It has linked the Public Trust Doctrine with climate change. And, it has inspired similar legal action in other countries, including the Netherlands, India, and Pakistan. We will keep you up to date on the trial as it unfolds.

Nathan wants us to know that, “Youth can feel hopeless, with few opportunities to speak out and be heard—the legal option is an opportunity for youth to speak publicly and see results.”

*Shelley Tanenbaum is the Quaker Earthcare Witness General Secretary and a member of Strawberry Creek Meeting.*

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

Printed on 100%  
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# Let the Youth Be Heard

## Making the Courts Confront the Climate Crisis

By Shelley Tanenbaum

YOUNG PEOPLE, who are facing a disturbing future due to increasing climate catastrophes, can often feel like their voices are not heard. Lacking power, influence, and even the right to vote, some youth have turned to the courts. In 2015, 21 youth plaintiffs plus Dr. James Hansen sued the federal government, charging that the government, through its actions, both violated their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property and failed to protect the public trust. Due to their age, the youth assert that they are particularly at risk from the increasing ravages of climate disruption.

The case has slowly been moving through the legal system. The case was initiated by Our Children's Trust, a foundation based in Oregon. They passed a major hurdle when a Federal District Court judge in Oregon denied a motion to dismiss the case and a trial was set for February 5, 2018. However, in mid-2017, the Federal government requested a writ of mandamus, asking for the case to be dismissed because it is "improper" and "seeks wholesale changes in federal government

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Rallying in support of the Our Children's Trust case in Federal court at the 9th Circuit Court of the U.S. in San Francisco on Dec 11, 2017 Photo: Shelley Tanenbaum

