



# BeFriending Creation

A Publication of  
**QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS**

Affirming our essential unity with nature

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## PRAYING ON SEEDS Solidarity for Puerto Rican Sovereignty

By Marian Dalke

**SUNDAY MORNING's** soft light casts through deep wooden windows. The light shifts and picks up the soft cotton of milkweed seeds, sailing over the heads of those gathered for Quaker Meeting for Worship at Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. Grace Gonglewski shares a message about "praying on seeds," as she casts more milkweed seeds about her, stirring magic among those present.

Grace's message connects with me as an urban farmer. "Praying on seeds" is very familiar to me. Every early March, I press each seed's small, tiny shape into damp soil, anticipating a future harvest, a shared meal, a gift passed to a neighbor.

I've been working as the Urban Garden Manager at Norris Square Neighborhood Project (NSNP) since March 2015. NSNP has an incredible history and legacy, and I am grateful to continue to steward six garden spaces started by Grupo Motivos, a grassroots group of Puerto Rican women. Gathering together since the 1980s, Grupo Motivos cultivated and curated over 12 cultural gardens from



Raíces de Cambio (Roots of Change) Youth Garden crew with harvest, Fall 2017

vacant, abandoned lots throughout the Norris Square community in West Kensington, Philadelphia. Responding to the trauma of a drug raid that took over 60 community members to prison, Grupo Motivos sought to create sites of healing and unity, and opportunities for elders, youth, and visitors alike to celebrate Puerto Rican heritage and culture.

Many of the crops we grow in NSNP's gardens are saved and propagated from Grupo Motivos' original plants. Tropical plants, such as orange and avocado trees, hibiscus, lemongrass, oregano brujo, and hoja de bruja, are each carefully tended to keep them flourishing year round. And when it is fall again, it will be time to gather seeds. Those tiny seeds from spring will have since germinated, flowered, and fruited, and then will bear seeds of their own. Squishy tomato seeds in red, yellow, and purple need to ferment before drying and sprouting.

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## BeFriending Creation

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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.

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### Earthcare Calendar

**June 1, 2017.** Deadline for article submissions for July-August-Sept. 2018 *BeFriending Creation*

## OUR MESSAGE TO YOU

### DEAR READERS,

We often travel by train while doing outreach for Quaker Earthcare Witness, both to enjoy the spectacular beauty of the living world at a slower pace and also to cut back on our carbon footprint. If you travel almost anywhere, but especially in the Midwest and prairie states, you will see farmland and rolling hills interspersed with tall, majestic twirling windmills. **Feeling a deep connection with our land combined with the promise of renewable energy gives us hope.** There are so many options for transforming our world into one that is life-affirming, regenerative, creative, and nurturing. Yet we are losing precious time, currently stalled or moving backwards at the national level in the United States.


Still, many states and local communities continue to move forward, despite national roadblocks. Many households are waking up to the challenge and finding ways to live in harmony with our living world. **Our Quaker Earthcare Witness network has been advocating for living in right relationship with each other and our planet for over 30 years.** While it has been frustratingly slow, we are starting to make important inroads both within the Society of Friends and beyond in our collaborations with other change-makers.

This year, we have several exciting projects in addition to our ongoing sharing of resources via our website, social media, and publications. We encourage you to share our resources widely, participate in projects as you are led, and make a donation. In the works so far this year, we are:

- Promoting our recently updated **Earthcare for Children curriculum** available on our website for your First Day Children's Program
- Working closely with a **QEW-initiated coalition of people of African descent**, collaborating and sharing resources on water rights and availability, leading up to a forum at the United Nations this July
- Joining NGOs from all over the world calling for regenerative solutions to the climate crises we are facing as part of the **Global Climate Action Summit** in San Francisco this September
- Providing **mini-grants for hands-on Earthcare projects** initiated by Friends' Meetings and organizations worldwide
- Creating and hosting the **Earthcare Center at the Friends General Conference Gathering for over 1000 Friends** from across the country
- Sharing stories of Earthcare witness and action through our quarterly publication, **BeFriending Creation**.

We are working to build a stronger network of caring and concerned Friends. The time is now. **Please consider making a mid-year donation to help our work.** You can give online at <[quakerearthcare.org/donate](http://quakerearthcare.org/donate)> or use the enclosed envelope and mail to Quaker Earthcare Witness at P.O. Box 6787 in Albany, CA 94706. We can't continue this good work without you!

In Friendship,

  
Shelley Tanenbaum  
General Secretary

  
Hayley Hathaway  
Publications Coordinator





A Norris Square Neighborhood Project youth saves seed from cilantro plants.

**Continued from front page**

Beans with tiger eyes and scarlet runners and peppers in dozens of varieties tangle and twine together in the field. Tomatoes climb skyward up the grapevine and beans twirl around the arching sunflowers. Each plant contains dozens of seeds; each seed contains multitudes, future generations that will reach down into the soil and sprout forth. This brings me infinite hope and possibility to feed myself, my family, my community of people, butterflies, cats, chickens, and honeybees.

And so, last year in the weeks after the devastation of Hurricane María in the Caribbean, a friend and organizer with the group Soil Generation reached out to say, “we are going to Puerto Rico and we need seeds.” A gardener in Las Parcelas, our community garden, also shared with me that her mom was going to Puerto Rico and wanted to take seeds. “We need organic sugar and honey to feed the bees and keep them alive until the native flora comes back.” As many people were focused on immediate emergency response, waiting to hear from family members, there were those

already planning and preparing for the island’s food sovereignty.

So crippled and confined by its colonial status to the U.S., Puerto Rico is chained by a fiscal debt crisis of over 73 billion dollars. The Jones Act prohibits the delivery of aid from other countries to the island. Although Puerto Rico imports 80 percent of its food, it is home to a burgeoning local food movement aiming to source food from its fertile soil. With its fierce and consistent liberation movements, Puerto Rico asks for seeds, a source of autonomy and sovereignty.

What an honor, what an excitement, what a calling—yes, seeds!



Bag of seeds en route to Puerto Rico with the mother of a NSNP gardener.

Many of the seeds I’ve been keeping come from Puerto Rican neighbors who have taught me how to plant gandules, ajíces, and calabaza from seeds they brought from Puerto Rico, seeds that have been pressed in envelopes, in bottles and luggage, in hands trusting that the flavors and sustenance of their homeland could be cultivated in the urban north, seeds they have been growing in these gardens created as a refuge for Puerto Ricans coming to the mainland. Raised in North Philadelphia lots for the past four decades, these generations of seeds are now returning, making the journey homeward to bring nourishment to the people of Puerto Rico.

Norris Square Neighborhood Project sent a shipment of seeds with a gardener’s mother in the fall, packed and sorted by Raíces de Cambio (Roots of Change) High School Youth Gardeners. Another shipment of *alcolado* (an herbal healing remedy), prepared by Raíces de Cambio youth, accompanied seeds from Grace and her husband’s garden. Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting First Day School students decorated the bags of seeds. These were brought to Puerto Rico with a delegation of gardeners, educators, and birth workers from Urban Creators and Wholistic Art on Thanksgiving Day. This is a small token of faith, yet still significant. May we continue to pray on seeds, cultivating a solidarity of food sovereignty.

*Marian Dalke is a Quaker, community herbalist, gardener, seed keeper with roots in the Shenandoah Valley and a home in Philadelphia.*

**For more resources, visit <[quakerearthcare.org/befriendingcreation](http://quakerearthcare.org/befriendingcreation)>**



“Rain Forest Roots” by Kathy Barnhart of Strawberry Creek Meeting in California

**THOUGH, AS A SPECIES,** we may have journeyed through immense reaches of time and space, we remain close to our origins, to Eden, and to wilderness. They are within us and right beneath our feet.

Scripture tells us God formed us “of dust from the ground” (Genesis 2:7); created us “from dust, then from a drop of seed” (Koran, Surah XXII.5). Our progenitor, Adam, is adama—soil, or clay. We Homo sapiens are capable of wisdom, perhaps, but are most assuredly Homo (from humus, of soil or earth).

Astrophysicists inform us that the very elements of our being are stardust, exploded matter of ancient stars. Agronomists note that all life receives its nourishment from rocks ground slowly down to dust by ice and water and spread by the winds of time.

No less than ourselves, the soil that supports us is alive. A handful of good soil contains more living creatures than the grand total of human beings who have ever lived on the earth. We have names for and understand the functions of perhaps 5 percent of these mostly invisible creatures—no matter whether they live in a Costa Rican cloud forest or an Ohio backyard.

The most numerous of these creatures are bacteria. Take a pinch of pristine forest soil: you hold about a billion of them, of perhaps one million distinct species, communicating and evolving so swiftly that they outwit our antibiotic strategies. They invented recycling, photosynthesis, and genetic engineering. As Stephen Jay Gould admits, they “rule the earth.”

Your same pinch of soil may also

# The Heaven Under our Feet

By Tom Small

contain thousands of wispy root hairs and several miles of mycorrhizae, networks of microscopic fungus threads interdependent with the roots of plants, drawing polysaccharide energy from them and in turn enabling them to absorb phosphorus, nitrogen, other nutrients, and water. All terrestrial ecosystems depend on this underground “web that holds it all together” (Gary Snyder). Without mycorrhizae, which extend a plant’s root system by 1000 percent or more, most plants could not have emerged from the water, to thrive on “dry land.” Either by themselves or combined with algae as lichens, fungi are indispensable to the creation of soil and evolution of life. We are equally dependent on the lowly roundworm, which endlessly ingests, turns over, and fertilizes virtually every crumb of soil on earth. Tiny nematode worms account for four out of every five animals on earth. In a square meter of soil, there may be as many as 10 million of them. In that same space, we might find a billion protozoa, hundreds of thousands of springtails and mites, and thousands of arthropods—insects with jointed legs—some of them so tiny that 20 or 30 might dance within the period at the end of this sentence.

In soil ecology, the process culminates in humus, the relatively stable end-product of countless ingestions, decompositions, and excretions of organic plant and animal material by fungi, bacteria, protozoa, earthworms, nematodes, and arthropods. Wendell Berry marvels over the formation of organic humus as “the chief work of the world.” Often characterized as the life-force of the soil, humus stores and slowly releases carbon and nutrients, holds up to 90 percent

of its own weight of water, circulates oxygen, suppresses disease, resists erosion, and enables formation of good soil structure, ideal habitat for the very creatures who cooperated to form it, thus creating the conditions for their own survival—and ours. With a modicum of science and a little imagination, we can view our own bodies as habitat, designed and organized over countless millennia as shelter, reservoirs, and food sources, by the microbes that colonize us and, in return, keep us alive. We are inheritors and beneficiaries—along with soil, sunflowers, beetles, and dolphins—of 3.5 billion years of microbial exploration and discovery.

## The lost intelligence we seek to recover, the secret to restoration of the lost garden, is still alive and breathing.

The disheartening part of this long, miraculous story is that in the last few centuries we have been busily destroying the very body of the soil and our own bodies with our chemical fertilizers, our pesticides, our deep tilling, our monocultures, our failure to return plant residues to the soil, and the anthropogenic warming of the planet—a warming which breaks down humus and releases carbon dioxide in a prime example of positive feedback. Not very long ago in our brief history as a species, we lost the wisdom of our ancestors—still preserved among some indigenous peoples—the cultural memory of how to live in harmony with the ground of our being.

Fortunately, the lost intelligence we seek to recover, the secret to restoration of the lost garden, is

still alive and breathing. Accessible within minutes, it persists in small patches of earth, harboring an astonishing remnant of wilderness and its self-regulating intelligence, enough to serve as basis for regeneration.

In our own bodies, remnants of the most ancient life forms are virtually immortal: bacteria, mitochondria, and other tiny organisms, subsumed by our cells and our selves. Each of us is an ecosystem, a community of life, akin to that handful of soil with its billions of living creatures. Like the soil, our very bodies carry the memory and recapitulation of everything that ever was.

Every species and every community of species is a unique form of cosmic memory, held, repaired, reproduced, and continually transformed by genes and enzymes inherited from the most ancient forms of life and shared out among all creatures—microbes, grasses, elephants, rattlesnakes.

Our body remembers; it knows what to do when we do not. The soil has its own intelligence; it remembers how to recover when we abuse and degrade it. Indigenous communities retain ancient wisdom, enough to provide for recovering from centuries of repression and for living more fully according to their “original instructions.” Communities of scientists—ethnobotanists, ecologists, biochemists, even quantum physicists—are helping us remember and regenerate what we have forgotten: the ancient wisdom and practice of living in harmony with the earth.

Can we be silent long enough to hear and respond to voices that call to us from deep within our

own bodies? Can we attune our ears to the harmonies of the land, drowned out as they often are by dissonances and cacophony of our techno-civilization?

Let us hope that if we keep our ears to the ground, we may yet hear what Lynn Margulis calls “earth’s sentient symphony” and Lewis

Grow as much as possible of your own food. Support the local farmers and indigenous peoples who seek to recover—and improve—ancestral wisdom and practice. Learn the flowers and grasses that evolved in this place where you live. Bring them back, and the creatures that co-evolved with them will be

## Can we be silent long enough to hear and respond to voices that call to us from deep within our own bodies?

Thomas “the music of this sphere.” By harmonizing with the music of the soil and by cooperating with its intelligence, we may yet become wiser and restore our bodies, and our souls. Eden, the unfallen world, endures and is continually renewed in the very dust of the native soil we repeatedly seek to shake from our restless feet. Stop. Take a stand wherever you are.

Practice mindfulness, and do no harm: preserve as much as possible of what remains. Then, seek to restore. Begin with your yard and garden. Continue with the grounds of the school, the meeting, the church, a garden in the park, a vacant lot, an abandoned field, your neighborhood.

fostered and revived—yourself as well. The spirit and the memory of earth will be manifest. In this faith, in this work of hearts and hands, the world is “all alive” and “every particle of dust breathes forth its joy” (William Blake, *Europe*, 1794).

### FURTHER READING:

David R. Montgomery, *Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life*. W. W. Norton, 2017.

James B. Nardi, *Life in the Soil: A Guide for Naturalists and Gardeners*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007.

Kristin Ohlson, *The Soil Will Save Us*. Rodale, 2014.

Tom Small, *Kalamazoo Friends Meeting, is a member of the QEW Publications Committee and co-author of Using Native Plants to Restore Community*.



“Mossy Log” by Kathy Barnhart

# Friends Gather in Chicago

Forty Friends from across the U.S. met in April in Chicago for Quaker Earthcare Witness’ Steering Committee Meeting.



Photos from top: Andrea Beane, Barb Adams, and Kristin Becker are Yearly Meeting Representatives. Brad Stocker and Os Cresson say hello. Marjorie Isaacs practices a fun monologue on earthcare.

Do you want to connect your Meeting with environmental concerns? Want to spend more time with us? Email <[info@quakerearthcare.org](mailto:info@quakerearthcare.org)>.



# Congress, Climate, & the Desktop Lobbyist

By Bob Schultz

**THE U.S. CONGRESS MAY BE** one of the most foot-dragging institutions on the planet with respect to addressing climate disruption, yet we can find some hope in the emergence of the House Climate Solutions Caucus, a bipartisan group of U.S. Representatives that meets regularly to advance climate solutions. In this “Noah’s Ark Caucus,” would-be members must apply to join alongside a colleague of the “other party.” The Caucus has grown in two years from just two south Florida members to 74 legislators, half Republicans, half Democrats.

I find hope, too, as voters are becoming both economically and morally concerned about the effects of climate disruption, and the electorate is adding more climate-conscious young people every day.

We may take encouragement not just from the growing numbers in the Caucus, but also from its achievements. It is forging bipartisan relationships, bringing peer pressure to bear on legislators of both parties to speak out for climate action, and laying the foundation for legislative actions.

To promote both the growth and the constructive accomplishments of the Caucus, the Friends Committee on National Legislation led the Call to Conscience on Climate Campaign, working with the Citizens Climate Lobby, Interfaith Power & Light, and other organizations and individuals. For citizens, this initiative opens a practical way to act on climate (mere lamentations get us nowhere!), to lobby against the climate deniers, and to express our faith by appealing to the conscience and spiritual impulses in our legislators on Capitol Hill.

My role in helping to grow the Caucus started with

an email exchange with my Member of Congress’ environment staffer, then an “ask” to Representative Ann Kuster (D-NH-02), during a telephone town hall, to join the Caucus. When she said yes, the next step was to find her a Republican colleague. Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO-06) became her Republican counterpart, a good match since the two knew and respected each other from their service on the Veterans Affairs Committee.

After that very satisfying accomplishment, it occurred to me that in the laptop on my desk, in my holiday greetings folder, were dozens of names and email addresses of family members and friends, many of whom, I suspected (correctly!), might be willing, if asked, to encourage their Representatives to join the Caucus. Since last year at this time, I’ve corresponded with around 50 friends and family members in about 40 Congressional districts. As an 82-year-old retired academic, I have friends, relations, former students and colleagues

living in a number of Congressional districts across the country. With invaluable guidance from FCNL’s Emily Wirzba, I’ve carried this effort forward entirely from my desktop computer, when I have time, and in the comfort of my study at home.

If you feel the call to join this campaign yourself, you can visit <[www.fcnl.org/updates/who-is-in-the-bipartisan-climate-solutions-caucus-772](http://www.fcnl.org/updates/who-is-in-the-bipartisan-climate-solutions-caucus-772)>, and to see a sample copy of my invitation to join me in desktop lobbying, please contact me. I’ll also send you tips to how to make these efforts more effective.

*Bob Schultz, a member of Hanover (NH) Friends Meeting, can be reached at <[robtcschultz@gmail.com](mailto:robtcschultz@gmail.com)>.*

**I’ve corresponded with around 50 friends and family members in about 40 Congressional districts.**



# BEFRIENDING FEAR OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Photo: Quattro Vageena

## *Friends Community of Practice Rekindles the Fire of Fox*

By Pamela Boyce Simms

**WE ARE STANDING** at the threshold of a potential evolutionary leap in spiritual consciousness. In our lifetimes, a tipping point of the planetary population will have an unprecedented opportunity to let go of outworn ways of living that no longer serve us and our planet. We can help birth an emergent, more compassionate and environmentally resilient future. Yet fear stands between many of us and that eventuality.

Quaker Pathways Forward – Rekindling the Fire of Fox, a Friends’ community of practice, emerged from the recognition that evolutionary leaps in consciousness don’t happen by osmosis or external actions alone. Quakers from Bellingham, Washington to Tampa, Florida and from Ontario, Canada to Belize have therefore come together to hone our inner vision, and re-center ourselves in the fire of early Friends who took the mystery out of mysticism and lived their lives as transparent conduits for the Light.

Among our intents are to: 1) dissolve debilitating fears including fear of ecological destruction, 2) learn to experience still-point consciousness (the realm of light) on an ongoing sustained basis in our everyday lives, and 3) bring exponentially enhanced clarity into our meetings and activism.

Two (f)Friends, Howard Hawhee of Austin (TX) Friends, South Central Yearly Meeting, and Christopher Sammond of Poplar Ridge Friends, New York Yearly Meeting, share their community of practice stories on the following pages.

For information on how to participate in the Quaker Pathways Forward – Rekindling the Fire of Fox community of practice, send me an email at <pbs9@georgetown.edu>. You can also read more in New York Yearly Meeting’s Spark newsletter.

*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.*

We are standing at the threshold of a potential evolutionary leap in spiritual consciousness.



# Our Generation's "Lamb's War"

By Christopher Sammond

**DURING THE OBAMA** administration, our nation changed many of the structures of our society. Health care was made available to all. We agreed to structures limiting the worst excesses of the financial "industry." We created institutional changes which made discriminating against people of color, LGBTQ persons, and women more difficult. We committed to a framework of energy use hoping to avoid making the planet uninhabitable to humans, not to mention a wealth of other species. While we changed the structures, we did not really change the culture. In fact, shortly after Obama's first election, forces on the Right quite intentionally worked towards a cultural shift in the opposite direction, actively denigrating empathy, and lifting up and celebrating selfishness as a cultural virtue, as expounded by Ayn Rand. This effort at shifting the culture gave birth to the Tea Party movement, and here we are today, with most of the structural shifts of the Obama years negated, and then some.

As I have held questions about how to respond to the divisiveness, the fearmongering, the racism, and the tsunami of lies and half-truths characterizing our nation's political life at this time, I have been clearly and deeply called to go deep, and to join the many, many people of faith who are seeking to bring about the necessary shift in culture, a shift in spiritual consciousness, which is necessary if we are to survive as a species. And, like my Quaker forebears, I know that work to begin within myself.

Friends of the first 150 years or so understood themselves to be fighting what they called the "Lamb's War." They were playing the ultimate "long game" of seeking to bring the entire planet to the experience of the Inward Christ, the Seed, the Light, that all might be guided by that Life and Light which guided them. And, their first effort in that "long game" was indisputably to let that Light of Christ work upon their own souls and consciousness, showing them where they were out of alignment with that Light. They sought to be, and were, transformed, and then went on to lead transformed lives. The current battle against fearmongering, xenophobia, racism, sexism, the active and intentional undermining of truth, and the denial of the perilous juncture we have come to as a planet, is our generation of Friends' Lamb's War. That spiritual warfare has as its goal not simply an exchange of the players in the political landscape. It demands of us a change of heart inwardly, and a change of consciousness, a shift in culture, outwardly.

One of the ways I am being faithful to that call has been to participate in the Quaker Pathways Forward – Rekindling the Fire of Fox community of practice (I much prefer the original title "21st Century Quaker Revival," for I see that is what is needed in Friends, and what the world needs from us.) In that program, led by Pamela Boyce Simms, Quakers across the continent have been working toward a shift in consciousness, in what energy we hold our body/mind/spirit moment to moment. We are

using techniques from Pamela's diverse toolbox, borrowing from neuroscience and contemplative traditions.

It has been transformative, and syncs well with my Quaker practice. My wife Barbara says she is living with a different person, and has signed up to be part of the second cohort of 30 or more.

In the early 1800s, enslaving another person was thought by the vast majority of Americans to be right and good. People from Africa were deemed not fully human, which made it conscionable to enslave them. Those who disagreed with this cultural norm were considered deviants. A change of consciousness was needed. In the early 1900s, women were considered too feeble minded to make intelligent political judgements without the guidance of their husbands. The idea of women voting seemed utterly absurd and against God and (literally) mankind. A change in consciousness was necessary.

In the early 2000s, the earth is still seen as a "resource" to be exploited and extracted from, and humans see themselves as outside of the rest of creation. The shift to where we know ourselves to be a part of the intricate web of creation, and its nurture and preservation our call from God, is the shift in consciousness before us. This is our Lamb's War. We may not realize its fruition in our lifetimes, but the call is before us, loud and clear.

*Christopher Sammond is a member of Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting.*

# Don Beldur: Mr. Fear

By Howard Hawhee

**I'VE BEEN TRYING** to connect with my fear. We are invited in the Quaker Pathways Forward – Rekindling the Fire of Fox community of practice to personify, get to know, converse with, and even befriend our deep underlying fear.

I remembered a personage from early Spanish literature with a Basque name, Don Beldur (Sir Fear or Mr. Fear) and began to think of my fear as Don Beldur. I'm able to see his vague form sitting before me in the dark.

Last Sunday, a couple of hours before Meeting for Worship, some Friends were in a small group for worship sharing. A Friend who I very much admire for her spirituality and activism (especially around climate change) talked about how she was having trouble finding that of God in the President and how it was probably fear that was impeding her from doing this.

I then decided to talk about something I usually keep to myself, about how I have felt for most of my life that North American society is based on imperialism and genocide, and that whoever is president is by definition our War-Criminal-in-Chief, so that although at one time or another the progression of destruction might have a prettier face on it, it's pretty much the same from one leader to the next. Therefore, I really don't have any

more fear with this president as the figurehead than I've had at any other time.

The breakthrough for me came a couple of hours later when that same Friend came up to me and said something along the lines of, "I have come to the same realization that you have about our society, but only recently. And I wonder how you have kept it together all these years emotionally and with sanity." I said that, well, first off, this was just my country, the country where I live, and here we are. We are where we are; it is just what we have to deal with, and that I have no illusion about being in a fundamentally different situation had I been born and raised in a different country.

I did remark, though, that a kind of dread has come over me for the past few years. I wake up in the morning with this sense of an impending "something." I told her that this dread seems to have settled on the environmental catastrophe both current and impending. This fear is newer and overtook me more suddenly when I was older.

The Friend also apologized for disturbing me with this questioning, but I told her that she had made me realize that I really am very

OK sharing about this, this source of deep dread over the fate of our species and our planet, and this sense of accepting what our society really is, that I have come to be at peace with, without accepting it or giving up on changing it.

I've somehow gotten to where I can dialog with the older fear that was perhaps the awareness of living in a society predicated on destruction and subordination. I now see the way to personify and dialog with my newer fear of planetary ecological destruction.

We spoke in our last community of practice discussion about each of us bringing our own uniqueness and exploring our unique fear in the group. I realized that this is what we are doing in our monthly community of practice group, in Sunday's worship sharing, and that this is what the Friend and I were doing last Sunday.

I have always known in my head, but perhaps am beginning to be able to feel with the rest of myself, that a community is possible around a cheerful, resolute, realistic response to impending global destruction and that we can build the emotional and spiritual basis for that among ourselves.

*Howard Hawhee is a member of Austin (TX) Friends Meeting.*

**A community is possible around a cheerful, resolute, realistic response to impending global destruction.**

*Continued from page 12*

contacts. We reached out specifically to local faith communities and garden clubs. Both the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and NOFA-NJ publicized *Sustainable* on their online calendars. When we asked people how they had heard about the program, we found that every publicity effort had paid off.

We had 66 people that day, and I wish I could convey the enthusiasm in the room. The film, the food, the speaker—they loved it all. Farmers met people who care about where their food comes from, activists found new connections, and people went away with new ideas about food consumption and the environment, solutions they could implement, and the sense that they didn't have to do it alone.



This could not have happened without the commitment of a core climate change group and the support of our Quaker Meeting. But we also had the help of friends who don't attend our Meeting, people who helped us make useful contacts, made food, and brought their friends and family. Using local expertise, in this case our wonderful speaker, took the program to another level. And we focused on solutions.

What's next? Maybe a workshop on resilience planning or a program on sustainable investing. With each event, we reach a different audience, because, as we are learning, there's more than one way to start the climate change conversation.

*Ruth Darlington is a member of Medford Friends Meeting and a QEW Yearly Meeting Representative for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.*

## How to Organize a Movie Night

1. Select your film(s).
2. Contact the production company for a screening license.
3. Secure a venue if your own Meeting or organization space isn't suitable.
4. Line up your speaker.
5. Start all public outreach six weeks ahead and keep at it.
6. Decide if you will make your own food or bring in a vendor.
7. Assemble a resource list/handouts.
8. Make a registration sheet to gather contact information.
9. Print a program and assign tasks for the day of the event.
10. Listen to your audience to figure out what's next.

## Join Us Visit the Earthcare Center at the Friends General Conference Gathering



**JOIN QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS** at the Friends General Conference 2018 Gathering in Toledo, OH, July 1 - 7. We'll host the Earthcare Center, a dynamic meeting space where Friends will present on topics related to environmental concerns and Friends' witness. Visit our website for the schedule of speakers and events.

Clair and Paul Tinkerhess, co-clerks of the Gathering, write, "Early Friends greeted one another by asking, 'How does the truth prosper among you?' The Gathering offers a time and place for us to seek and share examples of the many ways truth prospers in our lives and communities. It is our hope that this week will be a joyful time for our beloved community, and that it will be a time of challenge, insight and growth for each of us. May we return home with a deepened sense of our own personal integrity and a renewed clarity of purpose for inspired engagement in the world."

Quaker Earthcare Witness

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# BUILDING A COMMUNITY FOR CHANGE

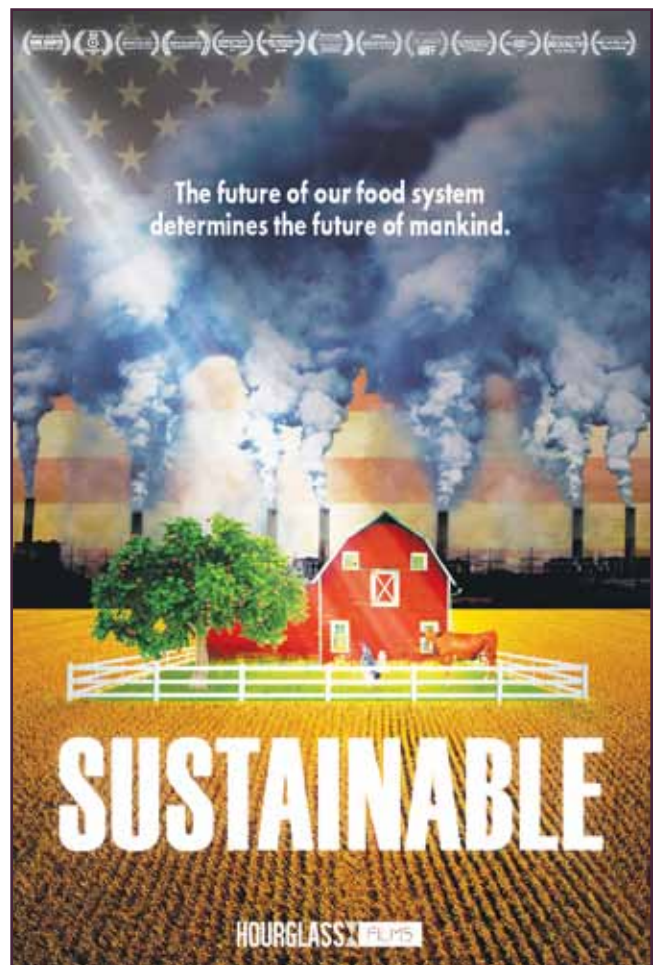
By Ruth Darlington

**WHAT DO YOU DO** when you are led to reach out about climate change, but you don't know who else in your community cares about it? Last September, Medford Meeting in New Jersey co-hosted an all-day climate change film festival with the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, a local environmental powerhouse. More than 65 people attended, and we met many people who were grateful for the chance to meet and talk about climate change.

We wanted to build on those new relationships, so this March we held a public screening of the documentary *Sustainable*, about the future of food and reversing climate change through sustainable agriculture. We built on our winning festival combination of good films, food, and free admission, adding a wonderful speaker, Adrian Hyde, from the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA-NJ), and this time we offered a free organic meal prepared by the Meeting's climate change group.

Publicity was crucial, and we used multiple approaches, including posters in local businesses, notices to our quarterly and yearly meetings, the print media expertise of one of our members, and emails to our film festival

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Promotional poster for the documentary *Sustainable*. What kinds of events does your Quaker community host in support of Earthcare?