

BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

Volume 17, Number 6 • November-December 2004

Annual Meeting sharpens tools for QEW outreach

By Louis Cox

AT the October 2004 Quaker Earthcare Witness Annual Meeting in Burlington, N.J., Friends agreed on specific steps to begin carrying their prophetic witness on Earthcare to the entire Religious Society of Friends. This effort, spearheaded by Sally Boswell, interim clerk of the Outreach Committee, is designed to put into action QEW's new Vision & Witness statement, adopted by the Steering Committee Meeting in May 2003.

At times the discussion involved deep sharing on how different Friends understood the spiritual basis of this calling.

Specific steps in launching QEW's expanded outreach ministry will include:

1. Assembling a library of minutes passed by Meetings and Yearly Meetings and other Quaker groups related to Earthcare.
2. Developing a report format for assessing the "Earthcare status" of each Yearly Meeting and its constituent Meetings.
3. Drawing up a list of potential visitors and Yearly Meetings needing representation.
4. Developing a visitation format, including "talking points" and basic information about QEW's history, structure, and activities.



A GUIDED TOUR through the New Jersey Pinelands followed the QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering in Burlington, N.J. On another outing, Friends visited the John Woolman Memorial in nearby Mount Holly, N.J.

5. Producing a short video and traveling displays about QEW's mission and work.

Someone might ask, hasn't this already been done? Yes, some of the information and pieces of the process are already in place, as the result of QEW's previous outreach work. But now that outreach has been elevated to an organizational priority, this will have a profound effect on the entire organizational structure. Even future QEW publications will be focused largely on supporting the outreach ministry.

In discussing the idea of tightening the organization's focus, one person drew on the metaphor of a bellows that can fan the embers of latent Quaker concern for the earth into spirit-led action.

As Friends explored the implications of the new outreach pro-

posal in small groups, some expressed concern about the tone or style in which of visitation may be carried out. Many agreed that QEW has deepened and broadened its approach to ecological issues in a way that more Friends now are able to relate to. But some Friends were not comfortable with the idea of sending out environmental "experts" to "educate" others. Since a message of guilt and despair is often counterproductive, it would be more effective to call like-minded

Friends together, listen attentively to one another, and let go of agendas and preconceptions in seeking guidance of the Holy Spirit.

OTHERS questioned whether urgently needed changes in human behavior and institutions can be achieved by a conventional Quaker committee process. The only thing that can break through the "massive inertia" among Quakers today, they suggested, is a renewed commitment to what early Friends called "Gospel order." QEW's outreach ministry could fit this model by identifying and nurturing Friends everywhere who are called to heal God's creation. Quakers are small in number, so they must compare their small contribution to the tiny drop

Outreach, next page >>

>> **Outreach**, from page 1

of "culture" that is capable of turning a vat of milk into yogurt. (In this analogy, it is assumed that the milk is *sufficiently warm* to allow this transformation, one person wryly pointed out.)

Although many Friends were concerned about the environmental impacts of travel to carry out an expanded visitation ministry, others stressed the need for personal contact, in the tradition of John Woolman, where the Spirit is freer to work. As one person put it, "People won't care about how much you know until they know how much you care."

IN other business at the Annual Meeting, Friends approved provisional changes in the size and composition of the Executive Committee to allow it to function more effectively. Renamed the "Continuing Counsel," the group will confer electronically and face-to-face as needed to address urgent issues that come up between regular Steering Committee meetings.

The Quaker Eco-Witness for National Legislation (QNL) project, previously semiautonomous, was officially "folded into" QEW. As a result, there will be only a single fund-raising process to support QNL and QEW programs. Friends also changed QEW's fiscal year to begin November 1, which allows more accurate financial reports at each October Annual Meeting.

New officers for 2004-2005 are Barbara Williamson, clerk; Susannah McCandless, alternate clerk; Richard Grossman, recording clerk; and Sarah Pavlovic, treasurer. Friends also filled several Steering Committee slots, bringing membership up to 17 at-large members and 20 Yearly Meeting representatives.

Incoming clerk thinks globally, acts locally

QEW'S new Steering Committee clerk, Barbara Williamson of Richmond, Va., says she is looking forward to helping QEW carry its vision and witness to more Yearly Meetings, while helping Monthly Meetings strengthen their commitment to healing Creation.

Barbara is on the Unity with Nature Committee of Baltimore Yearly Meeting and serves on the Peace and Social Concerns committee of her Monthly Meeting. She is also active in several community environmental programs.

In addition, her paid work as director of the Richmond Area Better Housing Coalition has an environmental component: ensuring that all new or rehabilitated housing units meet national Energy Star standards.

Her activism started with her interest in birding: "When I joined the Audubon Society, I picked up on how seriously things were going wrong."

Currently she serves in the Virginia chapter of the Sierra Club and chairs the chapter's "Restore the Core" initiative, which promotes livable cities, with the indirect goal of relieving



NEW CLERK of the QEW Steering Committee, Barbara Williamson, right, of Richmond, Va., cuts up with new Steering Committee member Jada Jackson of Willingboro, N.J., during a break between October Annual Meeting sessions.

development pressure on sensitive wildlife habitats.

She is also active in the "Partnership for Smart Growth" of the Richmond metropolitan area. As an alternative to the pervasive developers' viewpoint, the partnership hopes to put enough pressure on governments to make them consider sustainable growth policies, she said.

The "Watts Up?" theme of the Annual Gathering was developed through six informative energy-related workshops. (Look for reports in future issues of the newsletter.) There was also a lively panel discussion, in which four Friends shared experiences that helped them appreciate energy as one of the four basic elements.

The Publications Committee and Population Concerns interest group unveiled a new QEW flyer on adoption. The Sustainability Support and Action group worked on the final draft of a remake of the QEW sustainable energy flyer.

General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt announced that the Steering Committee will meet again North Park University in Chicago in May 2005, and the 2005 Annual Meeting & Gathering will be at the Indiana Dunes on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Friends minuted their appreciation for outgoing clerk Kim Carlyle and several Steering Committee members who were rotating off as their terms expired. Friends also expressed support for the eco-village vision promoted by the Hogan family at their Greenfire Farm near Athens, Ohio. ♦

FCNL energy lobbyist pursues Quaker ideals and practical results

NED STOWE, whose work with Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), includes lobbying on energy issues, told the QEW Annual Meeting that he is “exploring, networking, and feeling his way forward” to find the best way to be a bridge between Quakers and Congress on this issue.

The natural environment has been a part of FCNL’s goals for many years, but thanks to the events of September 11, 2001 and the persistence of QEW’s Quaker Eco-Witness for National Legislation (QNL) project, the country’s oil dependence has become a priority be-



NED STOWE, center, FCNL energy lobbyist, chats with Ed Dreby and Kim Carlyle of QEW’s Quaker Eco-Witness for National Legislation (QNL) project before his address to the QEW Annual Meeting in Burlington, N.J.

cause it is increasingly seen as a factor in deadly conflict, injustice, and environmental degradation.

Noting that FCNL is valued on Capitol Hill as a source of reliable information and objective analyses—far out of proportion to any political clout the nation’s

Quakers may have—Ned said it is essential for FCNL to devote staff resources to quality research and to development of working relationships with key players in the legislative process.

In addition to having the unique perspective that Friends bring to environmental and other issues, an effective lobbyist needs to be in touch with current developments and to discern whether positions that might be taken by FCNL are likely to have a positive influence on the course of events.

Overconsumption of oil and other nonrenewable resources not only calls for changes in lifestyles, but prompts the question of what needs to be done on a systemic level—which is where legislation comes in. Although Congress continues to ignore the demand side of oil dependence, FCNL believes that Washington, D.C. is beginning to emerge from its isolation and awaken to realities that many

Energy, page 10 >>

New Steering Committee member promotes sustainable farming

TRACEY McCOWEN, a new at-large member of the QEW Steering Committee, works as a bioethics consultant in Canada. “Bioethics is about how to incorporate new technology in thoughtful and careful ways, with respect to the integrity of nature and on ecosystems in general,” she says.

She is a member of the Quaker International Affairs Group, which is focusing on the use of patents in trade regulation and their effect on indigenous cultures.

Tracey became involved in the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness and of the Environmental Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting several years ago while working on a master’s degree in bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania.

While an undergraduate in biology at a Midwest college that specializes in sustainable agriculture, she was greatly influenced by the writings of Sir Albert Howard, “the father of modern organic farming,” who revolutionized subsistence farming in India in the 1940s.

After returning to Canada in 2002, she saw an opportunity to apply some of what she had learned to her family’s 350-acre farm near Toronto. Although the farm has followed a conventional energy- and chemical-intensive path for three generations, the



Tracey McCowen

family has been open to some of her suggestions, and she even “stole” a corner of one field to set up an experimental minimum-tillage plot.

The idea behind modern minimum-tillage systems is to maintain soil fertility with the least energy use possible, she says. She is ap-

plying for a research grant to continue and expand her experimental work, which she believes can help farmers in developing nations.

A member of Young Street (Ont.) Friends Mtg., Tracey attends Orangeville Worship Group. ♦

Gardening in the dead of winter

by Alicia Adams
Mimbres, N.M.
Berkeley (Calif.) Friends Mtg.

TODAY while I was accessing the website of Quaker Earthcare Witness, I had a visitor. A sparrow perched on the window frame and stared at me intently through the glass. The window was open a crack. When I spoke to him he seemed to listen, cocking his head this way and that and moving higher to get a better view. He was



shortly joined in the bush outside by a raucous handful of his fellows. They chatted it up a bit, hopping energetically on adjacent twigs. Sparrow lives are so intense, lived at a pace we'd find unsustainable. In a flutter of feathers they darted off to their next adventure. I noticed that it was a beautiful sunny day, far too fine to be sitting before my computer—whatever my noble intentions. I shut it down and called QEW to join and to order their literature. Life speaking to life: friendly, like the sparrow community. Afterward I went outside to take stock of my last year's efforts to add permanent plants to our southwest New Mexico home site.

From the house, the February landscape appears sun-seared, dry, and, with my love of plants, desolate. This appearance of deadness, after my intense effort to plant and keep alive many landscaping plants last year, discourages me. I know that this is partially because I've lived for years on the northern coast of California. There, winter rains bring the green season. However, in the late 60s I lived in Tucson and greatly enjoyed the variety of plants and animals of the Sonoran Desert. When Dan's and my doctor diagnosed us with

toxic mold colonization and advised us to live in a dry area, one low on environmental mold, I thought I'd be able to make the adjustment. This area is very different than the Sonoran Desert I loved: It is human-destroyed.

We didn't realize this when we chose our home. It's located adjacent to a small river, the Mimbres, that runs above ground year-round—which is a rarity in today's Southwest. The river valley is greener than the adjacent rocky hills. Our home is surrounded by apple trees with old plantings of berries and grape vines. It seemed to be an ideal compromise between our desire to be more self-sustaining and our need for a dry environment. There was even an area that the previous owners said had been a garden. It was Dan's and my dream to grow food on our river bottom land. Dan's focus would be the yearly vegetable garden and poultry; mine the planting of fruit and nut trees, bushes and vines. Last winter we lived for dreams of spring, pouring through gardening catalogues. Our dreams sustained us, last winter.

It was a hard season, both spring and summer, for gardening efforts. The summer monsoons

were very late and when they came, unusually sparse. We found out the hard way that this soil has very little organic material and is almost water-impenetrable. Dan's gardening efforts fed the bugs and gophers before we got a chance at the stunted produce.

This valley was first settled by the Mimbrenño Indians, famous for their pottery. When their dry farming failed, due to a long drought, they moved on. Spanish settlers attempted to dry-farm beans and corn but soon turned to raising cattle. Today ranchers are still running cattle both in the valley and on the land surrounding it. Centuries of overgrazing have destroyed most of the native growth and lost the area its pockets of topsoil.

Our land's restoration would have to begin with the basics, we discovered: with regeneration of the soil. Would we have the energy and time to restore the land so that it could provide us with a good portion of our food? Dan and I made the decision to begin, as our human-scale effort at restitution for Earth's abuse here by our species, but we can't know if our efforts will result in food production.

We faced this squarely late last summer. The end of the late summer rains brought drought: Weed-green growth dried beautifully, at first, and then, when no more moisture fell, the earth cracked and plants appeared to shrivel and die. My plants, so tenderly nur-

next page >>

>>from page 4

tured, took on the appearance of dead sticks. As winter approached I became profoundly discouraged. Winter is a dry season here, now. Old timers here tell stories of fall and spring floods and of being snowbound in winter; now we're lucky to get an occasional small sprinkling of rain or snow in these seasons. The climate has changed drastically in the last half century.

My winter discouragement was out of proportion with the possible loss of my plants. It was fed by my dismay at humanity's continued course of Earth destruction. Endless wars; destruction of forests; pollution of the air, water and soil: Was there no *good* news to be had? Dan and I read volumes of reports on the state of the world, both human and natural. In spite of our intention to focus on the positive efforts that so many are making, we found the overwhelming sense of current news to be negative. Our small efforts to mitigate human damage where we live seemed futile when contrasted with ongoing large scale damages.

Additionally, Dan and I have been deeply experiencing one of the most insidious and largely unacknowledged results of our culture's destructive mindset and lifestyle. We have both become chemically sensitive as a result of chemical poisoning. Last summer I nearly died from exposure to common environmental chemicals: fragrance, auto exhaust, and pesticides. Such chemicals cause life-threatening neurohormonal dysfunction in those, like me, whose chemical injuries have resulted in extreme chemical sensitivity. Since then I've not been able to attend any human gathering or to have visitors who were not, for their own sakes, chemically clean. Dan shops for us, minimizing his exposure as much as possible by mail

ordering supplies. He pays a price every time he goes to the closest town, Silver City. He gets migraine headaches and experiences extreme fatigue when he is exposed to exhaust and fragrance chemicals.

This winter has been a hard one for us in many ways: hard on our hopes of community, locally and worldwide; hard on our sense that we can make a difference, that we can turn around the destruction of life on our beloved world; hard on our dreams of gardening in an effort to support life, including ourselves.



TODAY, in the midst of all these discouragements, I began to take stock of what we do have. I walked from plant to plant, noticing that some of the plants I'd thought long dead had buds; some had even retained a few leaves. I began to water each of last year's plantings. Dragging hoses, walking from one plant to another on our two-acre property, I breathed deeply of brisk, fresh air. The sky was blue and cloudless with brilliant sunshine. The dry grass reminded me that last year, for at least part of the year, varied types of sparse grass grew on its own, without my care. We

refrained from mowing the grass to give it a chance to reseed itself. All around me was evidence that life was not giving up: It was in stunted form, perhaps, but given half a chance it could make a comeback.

Our one-acre hard-packed former corral is an example of life's ability to heal. The first summer we lived here nothing grew on this land. Four horses had eaten and pounded the life out of it. Last summer, while we were debating what type of green manure we might be able to grow here, nature solved our puzzle. Wild amaranth formed dense thickets over much of the former corral; in some areas it grew higher than our heads. We read that wild amaranth is a "transitional plant" that begins the natural process of reclaiming damaged land. The green manures we'd considered would require hand watering; the amaranth did fine even in the drought. We decided to leave the beginning stages of this land's healing to nature. What new surprises will life present to us this spring?

Given a chance, given a clean environment and careful managing of our diets and toxic exposures, Dan and I are also healing. Can the breach between our species and other life forms on this planet be healed? If so, humans will need to be open to change. Perhaps in a year or two—or ten—if we can form healthy communities, if the efforts of people like us bear fruit, there will be a shift in human-kind's consciousness.

Will we grow wise and revere what we cannot create: life, in all its diversity, its heart-stopping beauty, its awesome tenacity? Given a chance, maybe life will grow us up to be its caretakers instead of its despoilers. Maybe, just maybe, life's spring will come bursting through the hard-pack of our hearts. ❖

Overcoming separation by revisioning the sacred

Mother Earth: Revisioning the Sacred, by Mary R. Hopkins

Produced by Wide Iris Inc., 2003 <www.motherearthvideo.com>

Reviewed by Judy Lumb, Atlanta (Ga.) Friends Meeting

MOTHER Earth: *Revisioning the Sacred* is a fascinating video by Mary R. Hopkins, a Quaker from Kennett Square, Pa. Through the myths represented by art images throughout history, she shows how Western civilization has become separated from the earth.

"A review of art history and the work of modern woman artists can tell us how, in our human history, we once felt at one with the earth, how we lost this connection and the effect this loss has had on our present day lives and environment. ... *Remember: Those that control the image and the myth, control the society.*"

She begins with ancient art objects, the first known human creations—comforting maternal figures presumed to be sacred goddess images of Mother Earth. She points out that for thousands of years we lived *in* the earth, in caves.

"In those paleolithic times, people looked around and knew that females create new life and, of course, they could see that Earth creates all life, and so, Earth becomes the sacred Great Mother."

These smooth, rounded ancient goddess sculptures are small enough to fit in one's hand. She shows eight similar images that were found in caves across Europe dated over a period of 15,000 years.

"Notice how women's great life-giving powers are celebrated: the belly where new life is created, the huge breasts which provide perfect nourishment for new human life and the fat on the hips and thighs indicating not only bountiful food supplies, but a resource when food is scarce. ...

Holding the little figure of the Great Mother in their hands may have comforted our ancestors ... Today a major function of religion is to comfort us in a strange and alien world, another reason to interpret these artifacts as religious symbols."



The separation between the earth and heaven in artifacts from the eastern Mediterranean shows "the decline in Goddess worship and the rise of patriarchy. The art is moving away from the rounded abstractions of the cave figures. ... There are references made to these little female figures in the Old Testament ... 'teraphim', divinities of the earth, [in contrast to] 'seraphim', divinities of heaven. ... leaders of Israelite warriors before the beginning of battle to 'first destroy the teraphim.' (2 Kings 23:1-25) ... Three hundred years of witch burning were the culmination of this threat to the establish-

ment by women who were in touch with and could use Earth energy."

Finishing on an encouraging note, the last part of this video presents the work of several modern women artists. In an installation and performance piece, Anjal Soler has built temples to garlic, corn, pepper and celery. In *Mystery of Generations* Judith Anderson shows Mother, infant and the green man, suggesting that both women and men once walked the earth with reverence.

Hopkins concludes, "When we can once again revere Earth as sacred, recognize our unity with all of nature, honor Her seasons and live in Her rhythms, we may find ourselves in balance once again. The male god of law and order, tempered by the unconditional love, nurture and creativity of the female goddess, may return us to a bountiful, beautiful and peaceful world in which we all may fully realize that of the Divine within ourselves and each other."

WHEN I first saw Mary Hopkins's slide shows 20 years ago at the Women's Center at Friends General Conference, they were truly consciousness-raising and empowering for me. Finally I found something that validated my connection to nature as a religious experience. This latest video incorporates all the power of those original images with modern video technology. I take seriously her reminder that our images and myths control our society and recommend this work to the readers of *BeFriending Creation*. ♦

Canadian Yearly Meeting endorses the principles of the Earth Charter

CANADIAN Yearly Meeting in session from August 14 to 21 2004 in Windsor, Nova Scotia, agreed to endorse the principles of the Earth Charter. CYM will write to all Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups in Canada, encouraging these groups to consider the principles of the Earth Charter in light of their own faith and Quaker testimonies.

In addition, CYM will develop a process for contacting the Canadian Government, asking our Government to consider the principles of the Earth Charter when developing policy. Finally, CYM agreed to inform the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) of its decision and ask QUNO to use its contacts to bring the principles of the Earth Charter to the attention of the United Nations.

The Minute to endorse the Earth Charter was introduced on the floor of CYM by Wolfville (Nova Scotia) Monthly Meeting. It was supported by CYM's own committee, the Quaker Ecological Action Network (QEAN).

Wolfville Monthly Meeting stated, "We have come to believe, with many other Friends, that human treatment of the Earth is effectively the enslavement of Nature to human goals, and that this issue is as important to Quakers as the issue of slavery was to Quakers in John Woolman's time. The testimonies we value, lasting world peace, and social justice, cannot be attained without an ecologically sustainable economy. The way in which humans treat the Earth and its resources must change rapidly and soon."

The subsequent Minute approved by CYM is:

"Carol Bradley, on behalf of

Wolfville Monthly Meeting, asked Canadian Yearly Meeting to endorse the Earth Charter. Her presentation is appended. Friends felt

that although this document is not perfect, it is a document that deserves our support because it arises from many

groups which have deep concern for the protection of God's earth. We agree to endorse the principles of the Earth Charter, recognizing that this will require us to make changes and sacrifices in the way we live. We ask Friends in Canada to begin a discernment process with respect to this document and with how we might begin to implement these principles in our lives and our Meetings. We ask Quaker Ecological Action Network to help our clerks develop a process for follow-up with Monthly Meetings, the Government of Canada, First Nations associations and the United Nations."



The Earth Charter was first introduced to CYM by QEAN at CYM in session in 2001. Several Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups had discussed the Earth Charter in their Meetings during this three-year period.

During the discussion at CYM on the Earth Charter, two other environmental initiatives were suggested: an environmental audit of CYM and a research paper on the disposal of electronic equipment.

Keith Helmuth delivered the Sunderland P. Gardiner Lecture at CYM. His lecture was entitled "From Arrowhead to Hard Axe: In Search of Ecological Guidance." Keith focused his remarks on the human/Earth relationship—what is it and how can this relationship be mutually enhancing? He pondered whether effective actions can be taken the next 10 to 20 years. "We are primed for breakdown and blowout. The change of the kind and scale needed means collective action at the policy level." The lecture will be published and will be available shortly.

—Anne Mitchell
Toronto (Ont.) Friends Mtg.

New from Quaker Earthcare Witness!

Earthcare for Friends

A Study Guide for Individuals and Faith Communities



"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof..."
Psalms 24:1

Edited by Louis Cox, Ingrid Fabianson, Sandra Moon Farley, Ruah Svennerfelt
Quaker Earthcare Witness

Earthcare for Friends
offers 18 units of stimulating
adult learning materials

ISBN: 0-881083-10-1, 270 pp.
\$18.00 plus \$4.50 S & H

Order directly from
Quaker Earthcare Witness
173-B N. Prospect St.
Burlington VT 05401-1607
www.QuakerEarthcare.org

Also available from the FGC
Bookstore, Quaker Hill Bookstore,
and other Quaker bookstores.

In the Cathedral of Creation

"THE times that I feel closest to God are the times I spend in an old-growth forest."

I heard these words from a Baptist preacher in North Carolina several years ago. This feeling of awe and wonderment from being in the midst of unspoiled nature, among ancient and massive trees, has been expressed by many others in many other ways as a deep sense of spiritual unity with nature, with Creation, with the Creator.

Trees are an appropriate symbol for those of us concerned with ecological integrity. Readers of *BeFriending Creation* are well aware of the ecosystem services provide by trees including providing habitat, retaining moisture, preventing erosion, providing food, and sequestering carbon that would otherwise exist as climate-warming carbon dioxide.

My wife Susan and I have made our home in a forested mountain environment. I enrich my spirit each morning with a walk through the woods. Giving thanks to the Spirit for the scenic beauty, I often wonder how much more beautiful it once was—when it was a pristine wilderness, an old-growth forest. But that was when John Woolman was traveling in the ministry. Over the last century and a half, this land has been clear-cut several times for its timber. (For years, it was even used as a mountain pasture.) There are few trees here that are as old as I am. A conservation easement

by Kim Carlyle
QEW Steering Committee clerk



If only we could all look at the forest and see not a commodity or an obstacle to development, but the grandeur of the Creation

now insures this parcel will be spared from future logging or development, but if the ecosystem ever recovers to its original vigor it will occur well beyond my lifetime. While safe from chainsaws, the forest has fallen victim to other assaults of human origin.

Scientists tell us that the increased atmospheric moisture of our warming planet will contribute to climate instability, with a likelihood of increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

Although we're 500 miles from the coast, we were visited by Hurricane Ivan, who brought more water and wind than we've ever seen. The storm brought as much as 14 inches of rain to some areas of our mountains. With the ground still saturated from the prior week's drenching tropical storm, Ivan's powerful winds easily uprooted large trees.

Most of the casualties were anonymous creatures of the deep woods, but some were good friends with whom we had relationships. Two of these were large old apple trees—long neglected when we acquired the land—that we had pruned and nursed back to robust health. In turn they had provided us with bushels of fruit for apple sauce, cider, pies, and fresh eating. Their final gift, once they've been cut, split, and seasoned, will be to provide warmth during a future winter.

Two others, an 80-foot tulip poplar and a maple of similar height, had stood majestically on the bank of a small stream, a place for daily meditation. These friends often had been the subject of reflection on the blessedness of natural beauty. As Ivan's destructive force felled these old companions, they took the surrounding understory and several large neighbors with them. Sitting among the toppled bodies, root balls, rocks, and mud, we now meditate on impermanence.

With saws and loppers, we've spent the best part of two weeks cleaning up debris from our driveway, trails, and garden. One day we took a break from our cleanup to visit an old-growth forest.

Joyce Kilmer Wilderness Area is the closest large stand of uncut forest in the area, having escaped

next page >>

Illinois YM Environmental Concerns Committee organizes a 'great' after-sessions bicycle outing

MANY Friends take duct tape along on camping, canoeing, or hiking trips—to patch a tent tear, cover a canoe hole, or close a torn a pant leg. Now add to your list!

Twenty-three Friends joined in Illinois Yearly Meeting's first ever group bicycling outing on Friday afternoon after the IYM annual gathering July 29–August 1, 2004 at Clear Creek Meetinghouse, McNabb, Ill.

Nancy Halliday and Roy Treadway are to be thanked for their excellent planning and diligent safe-route exploring on behalf of the Environmental Concerns Committee. Nancy came up with the idea and incubated it to maturity. With the help of her excellent hand-drawn maps, no one got lost at the many intersections along the 26-mile route.

Riders with bicycles (and their many send-off boosters) gathered on the front lawn for directions, safety guidelines, and sun-protec-

tion creaming. Blessed with a cool, cloudy summer day, they were soon stretched out over one to two miles going northwest on Putnam County back roads. Noel Pavlovic was the fearless leader at the front of the parade as the group wheeled along through fields of tall corn and roadside Queen Anne's lace.

Emily Pavlovic and Martin Walsh showed us that Junior High Young Friends could keep up, whether on the straight, level sec-

tions or the mild hills near the Illinois River section.

I and my son David and Grayce and Neal Mesner drove two "sag" cars at the rear, carrying bicycle tools, a first aid kit, and gallons and gallons of water. We looked for tired stragglers to pick up, but found none.

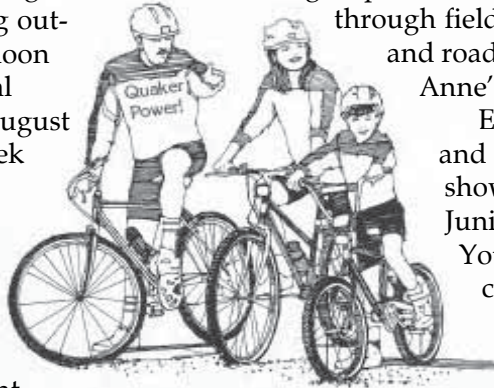
We did have three minor bicycle repairs en route, one of which was a bulging tire. Removal

of the tire to patch the inner tube was tried but didn't work. Our knowledgeable bicycle mechanic used three layers of duct tape around and around the tire. The now smooth tire carried our Friend the last 12 miles. Hurray for duct tape! Take some on every outing!

Our first stop, at mile 13, was Hennepin Wetland on the Illinois River near Highway 26. The river in that area is very wide, with many channels and many small grassy islands, which we observed from a 20-foot-high lookout with its telescopes. We were surrounded by brown-eyed susans, red clover, tall purple liatris, blue vervain, and morning glories. For this midway stop, and to everyone's surprise, I unloaded three cold watermelons from the wagon, which were completely consumed by the thirsty group. We spit the seeds in all four directions, so maybe a watermelon patch will appear there next year.

The general consensus was, "It was a great outing, beautiful countryside, wonderful fellowship," and "let's do it again."

—Bob Wixom
Columbia (Mo.) Friends Mtg.



>>from page 8

the loggers through happenstance and isolation. Never having seen an old-growth hardwood forest, we justified the three-hour trip as a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to a holy place—a tree-hugger's Mecca. And holy it is, this sanctuary for towering trees, this Cathedral of Creation, aptly named after the poet who wrote, "But only God can make a tree."

The Baptist preacher was right. Being among these awesome soaring hardwoods, many of which

stood tall before George Fox first picked up a Bible, is a spiritual awakening, a unity with God and with nature. How could anyone not feel humble among these honored creatures? How could anyone approach these awesome wonders with harmful intent?

But millions of their contemporaries fell as an invasive alien species of axe-murderers did approach them with such intent. And the assault continues, violently, having evolved technologically to become a chain-saw massacre; and more insidiously in the form of

fossil fuel-induced acid deposition, ozone, and climate change. And, on occasion, climate change becomes suddenly vicious.

Reflecting on the many ways that our species attacks our symbols of caring for Creation, I wonder how we might instill in humans the reverence for all life. If only we could all look at the forest and see not a commodity or an obstacle to development, but the grandeur of the Creation—a manifestation of God, to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right. ❖

>> **Energy**, from page 3

other countries—as well as many state and local governments—are already grappling with. With this hopeful prospect, FCNL plans to “hit the ground running” when the next Congress is seated, he said.

Lobbying efforts include meetings with staff and members of Congress to explore options in light of an extremely complex legislative process. For example, in reauthorization of transportation funding, FCNL will try to maintain support for “quality of life” features, such as bike trails. But in reaching final agreement on a budget, there is often a difference between what people say they want and what they do, because most bills are designed to sow benefits in as many congressional districts as possible, Ned explained.

The rational and moral persuasion that FCNL engages in may be fairly straightforward, but the political side is not, Ned said. The cost of reducing U.S. oil dependence is far less than maintaining the status quo or allowing oil consumption to increase, in terms of reduced costs of war and preparations for war, increased domestic jobs, and so forth. But getting legislators to agree on specific solutions is more difficult, he said.

For example, incremental increases in CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency) standards for vehicles, employed in the past, have stalled in Congress in recent years. Car makers have always preferred gas taxes, which oil companies generally oppose. Both would rather let the consumer decide whether to buy a fuel-efficient vehicle or not, Ned said.

On the other hand, a Department of Defense study suggests that the U.S. transportation system could be weaned from imported

oil in 15 years by an intensive effort to convert vehicles to hybrids and diesel power, rapid development of renewable fuels, and conversion of existing diesel engines to handle biofuels. Such steps would require incentives that may be opposed by powerful interests.

So what is FCNL’s niche in all this? “We’re in a unique position



of linking security, oil dependence, and environment. Nobody else is talking about whether gas prices could stay high for a

while to good effect. We can take far-out positions and ask questions that others won’t touch with a 10-foot pole. This can create ‘political space’ for others to shift position and not appear extreme,” he said.

“We can engage in pragmatic politics where necessary, using our support to move an issue along in the right direction. As in the case of current energy legislation, it’s sometimes difficult to decide whether to throw support to a particular piece of legislation. It may not be perfect, but is it better than nothing?”

“Obviously we need your help,” Ned concluded. “We need you to respond to our legislative action alerts. We need you to engage in FCNL’s policy-making and priority-setting process, which supports what your representatives do at our annual meeting.

“We also need your financial support. To make a difference we need a full-time staff person who is dedicated to energy issues, someone ready and able to propose language, to critique bills, to answer questions, to testify at hearings, and to work with grassroots organizations.

“We’ve seen other areas where we’ve been able to help with this kind of concerted effort; maybe we can do something here.” ♦

AFTER READING the July/August 2004 *BeFriending Creation* article called “Love the Land and Eat Better” by Mary Gilbert, I had some thoughts on her comment about having to go to the supermarket for much of our food in winter, spring and early summer.

I once heard the statement that “to grow your own food is the most radical thing one can do.” It is pretty radical and, really, not very hard—even in the times that are not the traditional gardening months.

One of the steps necessary is to rethink what traditional gardening months actually are! Eliot Coleman, author of *Four Season Harvest* (1999, Chelsea Green Publishers, White River Jct., Vt.), grows food year round in Maine, using cheap, low-tech, and simple techniques. It may just involve knowing what to plant and when to plant it. Some plants love frost, some love heat. It may involve planting things that store well and can be eaten in the winter. Butternut squashes grown in the summer can be stored and eaten through April. Potatoes can be grown and eaten in the summer and can also be stored all winter as well. The earliest perennials, asparagus, rhubarb, and mushrooms, come all by themselves.

We also need to rethink what “salad” is. Is it always tomatoes and cucumbers? Can it be grated carrots, parsnips, beets? Can it be kale or chicory?

Even less serious gardeners can plant year round. I call it planting smart: fewer trips to the store, knowing where your food comes from, and thinking and acting in “radical” ways.

Always thinking and growing,
—Susan Carlyle
Swananoa (N.C.) Friends Mtg.

Quaker Earthcare Witness Order Form

Name

Address

City/State/ZIP

Country

E-mail

Phone

Home Mtg

Yearly Mtg

Interests

Please check the appropriate boxes

- 1-year support for Quaker Earthcare Witness
(includes subscription to **BeFriending Creation**)
 \$500/US \$100/US \$50/US (avg) \$35/US Other \$ ___/US

Make checks payable to **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. Send with this form to
Quaker Earthcare Witness, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT. 05401-1607.

TOTAL \$

Canadians may contribute through Canadian Yearly Meeting for a tax receipt, starting at \$45/Can. Please send check to Canadian Yearly Meeting, 91-A Fourth Ave., Ottawa, ON K1S 2L1. CYM needs to know that the money is for QEW support. Forward this form to QEW to let us know that you have chosen to contribute through CYM.

Recycling does make a difference!

THERE'S A LOT MORE to recycling than extending landfill capacity. It's also about combating global climate change, conserving energy, and protecting freshwater resources:

- ✓ It takes 75,000 trees each week to produce the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*.
- ✓ If Americans recycled just one-tenth of their newspapers, this would save 25 million trees a year.
- ✓ The average American uses 580 pounds of paper each year. As a nation, we consume 850 million trees annually.
- ✓ Every year, Americans throw away enough office and writing paper to build a wall 12 feet high from New York to Los Angeles.
- ✓ Every ton of paper recycled saves 17 trees, 7,000 gallons of water, and keeps 60 pounds of pollutants out of the air.
- ✓ Recycling steel cans reduces energy use by 74 percent, air



pollution by 85 percent, solid waste by 95 percent, and water pollution by 76 percent.

- ✓ Every ton of steel recycled saves 2,500 pounds of iron ore, 1,400 pounds of coal, and 120 pounds of limestone.
- ✓ One pound of recycled steel saves enough energy to light a 60-watt light bulb for 24 hours.
- ✓ It takes 95 percent less energy to make aluminum by recycling it than it takes to produce it from its natural ore, bauxite.
- ✓ Throwing away a 12-ounce aluminum can wastes the same amount of energy as throwing away 6 ounces of gasoline—the same amount of energy it takes to power a computer or TV for three hours!
- ✓ Every glass bottle recycled saves enough energy to light a 100-watt bulb for four hours.

—Alice Howenstine

Upper Fox Valley (Ill.) Friends Mtg.

Source: Illinois Bureau of Energy & Recycling

BeFriending Creation

BeFriending Creation, Vol. 17, No. 6, November–December 2004. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness** (formerly Friends Committee on Unity with Nature). ISSN 1050-0332. Published bi-monthly.

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. Submission deadlines are February 7, April 7, June 7, August 7, October 7, and December 7.

Contents of **BeFriending Creation** copyright ©2004 Quaker Earthcare Witness, except as noted. Permission to reprint **newsletter** material must be requested in advance from the editor.

Membership in Quaker Earthcare is open to all who demonstrate 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: Barbara Williamson, 2710 E. Leigh St., Richmond, VA 23223, <barbaraawmson@juno.com>.

General Secretary: Ruah Swennerfelt, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401. 802/ 658-0308, <ruah@QuakerEarthcare.org>.

BFC Editor: Louis Cox, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401. 802/658-0308, <louis@QuakerEarthcare.org>.

Website: www.QuakerEarthcare.org

✓ QEW Annual Meeting sharpens outreach tools.	1
✓ Gardening in the dead of winter.	4
✓ Overcoming separation by reversioning the sacred.	6
✓ Canadian YM endorses the principles of the Earth Charter.	7
✓ Clerk's message: In the Cathedral of Creation.	8
✓ IYM organizes a "great" after-sessions bicycling outing.	9

Annual meeting Bible study: *All Creation waits for redemption*

GENE HILLMAN of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's staff led Friends in meditation on God's covenant with Creation during the Bible study portion of the QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering, October 7-11 in Burlington, N.J.

Gene said the concept of covenant was important to early Quakers, who felt they were living in a "Covenant of Light" and who often found confirmation in the Bible of truths they already knew inwardly from the Holy Spirit. Of the four Bible passages that Gene cited, one deals specifically with God's Creation: After the Great Flood, God made a covenant through Noah that included not only humanity but all of Creation. It also called to account those, human and animal, who break that covenant.

The "new covenant" of Jesus also promises redemption for all of Creation. George Fox preached a new covenant that leads humanity and the rest of Creation back to its original state of innocence and blessedness. Gene noted that Jesus's preaching, by

using so many images from nature, made evident God's love of Creation. The Apostle Paul wrote that "creation waits" and has been "groaning in labor pains" for its redemption through this new covenant.

Gene said the idea of "covenant" is still important to Quakers today, including those who describe their personal relationship with God as a covenant, as well as those who understand covenant as living in unity with divine order. He invited Friends to meditate on four Bible passages relating to divine covenants and to share any leadings they had. Several Friends commented on ecological issues in their own lives that this discussion of covenant had illuminated.



Gene Hillman

Gene Hillman is a member of Nottingham Monthly Meeting in Baltimore Yearly Meeting, currently sojourning with Middletown Monthly Meeting in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. He is employed by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In 1999, while serving on the General Board of Friends United Meeting, he was of use in that body approving a minute on the "Care of God's Creation."