

## A lesson from Suquamish "reality therapy": *Just who in the world do we think we are?*

by Louis Cox

**I**N the previous two issues of *BeFriending Creation* I have focused on, "Where are we?" (about cultivating a sense of place) and "What time is it?" (about living in harmony with the unfolding universe and the rhythms and cycles of nature).

The next topic, "Who are we?" completes a trinity of interwoven, fundamental questions about the health of our spiritual relationship to the earth.

Interestingly, these are quite similar to questions that a mental health worker may ask when trying to assess whether a client is basically "in touch with reality": "Do you know where you are?", "Do you know what day this is?", and so forth.

This parallel raises a disturbing thought: *The ecological health of this planet is increasingly a function of the mental health of its human inhabitants.* Today the earth is being ravaged in part because many people are simply out of touch with the ecological realities on which their very survival depends. And being a threat to oneself and others is a mark of insanity, is it not?

The chain of thought continues.... One ecological response to the question of "Who are we?" is the so-called "Chief Seattle" quote in the QEW basic tri-fold:

*...We did not create the web of life; we are but a strand in it. What we do to the web we do to ourselves....*

We know these words are not very close to what the Suquamish elder actually said in his impassioned speech on care of the land before signing a treaty with the U.S. government in 1854. In fact, I find the "official" version of that speech to be even more to the point of this discussion: Seattle seemed to be asking the whites, *Just who do you think you are? Why do you want our land when you don't seem capable of properly inhabiting any place on the earth? You fancy that you are separate from the land, so your spirit never really has a home.*

Seattle also dismissed language in the treaty referring to his people as "brothers," since it was obvious that the whites considered them, at best, ignorant children. He signed the treaty because he was resigned to the fact that the invading Anglo culture was in ascendancy, and his was in decline. Nevertheless, he concluded his

speech with this warning: *Some day your glory too will fade, and your nation will be humbled as ours has been. Then you will realize, perhaps, that we are all brothers and sisters after all.*

In other words, only when we lose (or willingly let go of) a false identity based on power and separation, can we regain our *humanity* (from same root as "humility") and recover our spiritual connection to the earth (i.e., "humus," also from the same root).

Without abandoning tribal distinctions and identities, we need to find the underlying unity that is the basis for

true friendship. That

can be a long process, however, with many potential pitfalls, as we find in the inability of many early Friends to see the moral contradiction in their ownership of slaves.

We are called to continually widen the circle of kinship, to ultimately transform ourselves into "Friends of All Creation Together." Such a "FACT" would demonstrate our basic sanity and health by showing that we have discovered who we really are. ❖



Chief Seattle

## Earth Day web links for communities of faith

### Earth Day Network

Learn more about climate change solutions! Register your event with Earth Day and receive resources and support for your activities. <<http://www.earthday.net>>

### Interfaith Power & Light

A program working nationally to mobilize religious communities to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation. IPL is working to establish Interfaith Power & Light programs in every state. Interfaith dialogues on Climate Change Solutions will take place in communities across the country this Earth Day. To find an IPL program in your state, go to: <<http://www.theregenerationproject.org/ipl/index.html>>

### Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)

The Take Action section of their site lists ways individuals, schools and synagogues can address global warming including a How-To Manual for Greening Local Synagogues, Schools and Offices. There are also Action Alerts on the site. <[http://www.coejl.org/action/ss\\_globalw.php](http://www.coejl.org/action/ss_globalw.php)>

### Interfaith Climate Change Network

A resource for communities of faith interested in global climate change with climate change statements, resources and links. <<http://protectingcreation.org/>>

### UU Ministry for the Earth

Resource for Unitarian Universalists on environmental issues, particularly global warming. This page has extensive resources on becoming a green sanctuary. <<http://uuministryforearth.org/index.shtml>>

### Interfaith Works

A non-profit organization that partners with religious organizations to do good works by integrating environmental stewardship with community outreach. IW works with congregations to help connect



their faith, their community and the environment. <<http://www.interfaithworks.org/>>

### National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE)

An alliance of independent faith groups: the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches U.S.A., the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, and the Evangelical Environmental Network, who have come together using both common biblical beliefs and their own traditions to offer religious resources for the protection of the Earth. <<http://www.nrpe.org/>>

### Evangelical Environment Network

EEN's page on climate change/global warming lists a briefing for religious leaders, climate change as a Christian challenge, and fact sheets on environmental issues. <<http://www.creationcare.org/resources/climate/>>

### National Council of Churches of Christ—Earth Day Sunday Page

Each year, the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Working Group focuses on a particular environmental theme and highlights a number of ways individuals and congregations can celebrate and protect God's creation. <<http://www.ncccojustice.org/Earth%20Day%20Index2.htm>>

(QEW is also listed on the Earth Day website resources page.)

### Resources on Global Warming

#### Pew Ctr. on Global Climate Change

A think tank for climate change research with good basic information on global climate change and policy updates on global warming. <<http://www.pewclimate.org/>>

#### Stop Global Warming

An online campaign to educate people about the effects of global warming and mobilize community members to take action. <<http://www.stopglobalwarming.org/default.asp>>

#### Greenpeace International

Detailed information on cost savings of electricity through usage of energy saving devices. <<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/climate-change>>

#### Climate Ark-Climate Change

Portal has climate change links to sites dealing with aspects of climate change through policy and programs. There are some international links. <<http://www.climateark.org/links/Advocacy/>>

#### Climate Solutions

A site geared for the Northwest. But solutions section is applicable no matter where you live <<http://www.climatesolutions.org/>>

#### Energy Star

A government backed program that educates individuals and businesses about preserving the environment through efficient energy usage. <[http://energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=about\\_ab\\_index](http://energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=about_ab_index)>

Energy Star page for congregations on using energy efficiently and links of interest. <[http://energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small\\_business\\_sb\\_congregations](http://energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business_sb_congregations)>

## Meetings and churches can help to build sustainable communities

*"... dwell in the love of God, for that will unite you together, and make you kind and gentle toward one another, and to seek one another's good and welfare."*

—George Fox

**G**EORGE Fox when he called for Gospel Order was calling for a framework for all of society to be a God-centered community. What he hoped for was a society held together by the shared experience of God's love, a form of blessed community. Friends often see the Testimony of Community limited to our monthly meeting/church and those in our local communities that are the victims of social injustice. Friend's organizations, such as the American Friends Service Committee, help us to see beyond our immediate communities.

As members of Quaker Earthcare Witness, we are following our leadings to be responsible for the larger community of creation. We are the spiritual descendents of the people who were first given responsibility for caring for the earth. It seems appropriate that we should be engaged in helping our meeting/church communities see that the social injustices Friends have traditionally worked against are in almost every instance related to a concern for the environment.

Health issues, mercury contamination of the air and water, and ozone depletion are related to the continued use of coal-fired power plants. Urban sprawl reduces the amount of open land and increases the amount of fossil

fuels used. The attachment to "things" results in using more than one's fair share of the earth's resources. Extremes of wealth and poverty, conflict over access to natural resources, racial and national divisiveness are all related to QEW's concern for the earth. It is our responsibility to help other Friends recognize the interrelatedness.



Every church/meeting, no matter how small, can work toward local sustainable communities that can be the first step in creating a more sustainable world. There are

probably churches/meetings that are already at work on pieces of this endeavor. Sustainable community development requires:

- ❖ Increasing community human capital.
- ❖ Strengthening local government
- ❖ Enhancing values, creativity, diversity, health care, availability of shelter and employment, education, culture, and social support systems.
- ❖ Eliminating hunger, discrimination, barriers to community life, and fear from crime.
- ❖ Strengthening economic capital by maximizing the use of existing resources.
- ❖ Improving physical infrastructures.
- ❖ Minimizing the consumption of essential natural capital.

Creating sustainable communities will not be an easy job. It will require significant changes in local government, tax laws, transportation systems, and changes in individual attitudes and values. It will require individuals, corporations

and governments to fully use the personal and corporate capacities that they possess to create new legal and economic systems.

**T**HE KEY to a sustainable future will not be making ourselves more competitive but in becoming more perceptive of what we have, what we need and what the long-term consequences will be for the short-term decisions we make. Sustainable communities will not "sustain" our current life styles but will dramatically improve them.

Meetings/churches will not be able to create sustainable communities alone but, with our help, will be called to go out into the world "to seek one another's good and welfare." ❖

### *Keeping energy use down in the kitchen*

**AS 2006 BEGINS**, I am sure that my QEW friends have seen many articles on global warming and many new and varied sources of evidence for the phenomenon, such as changes of life patterns in our cold-loving pikas, the white-tailed, alpine ptarmigan, the American pipit, and maybe even the devastating Hurricane Katrina (See the evidence in the December 2005 issue of *National Wildlife* (Vol. 44, No. 1).

While some of these changes are beyond individual human control, each of us can undertake energy efficiency (and reduce costs) in the kitchen: plan efficiency, keep it clean, put a lid on the pot or pan, let dishes air-dry, swap out incandescent bulbs, buy local-grown food, eat less meat, and unplug your gadgets.

—Robert L. Wixom  
Columbia (Mo.) Friends Mtg.  
QEW Sustainability  
Faith & Practice Committee



## *The call to wholeness in a broken world*

by Betsy Cazden

**I** RECENTLY read an article by British scientist James Lovelock\*, who argues that the planet is “past the point of no return,” that global warming has proceeded so far that it is irreversible and will increase exponentially. (See it online at <[www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)>.)

Lovelock predicts that by 2100 most of the planet will be uninhabitable and that most of the humans will be dead. He says there’s no point in trying to reduce global warming; we should just focus on how to survive in a post-warmed world, knowing that even survival is unlikely.

I was shocked. I have been aware of climate change, in a general way, and I have taken the usual small steps to reduce my energy usage. Until I saw this article, I had no idea the situation was this critical.

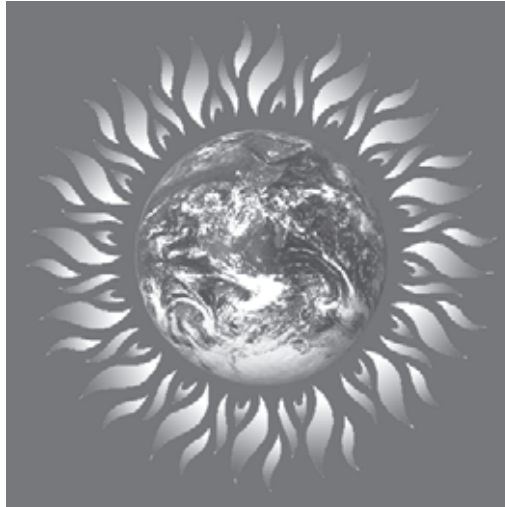
Since mid-January other scientists have responded, in essence, “Well, all our models have a lot of guesswork, so we think that Lovelock’s scenario isn’t inevitable if humans make big changes right now.” The only debate (outside of the See-No-Problem Bush Administration) seems to be whether the changes are irreversible and irremediable, or whether there is a brief window in which human effort could prevent catastrophe.

As a firm believer in original sin (or at least Murphy’s Law), I

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*\*[Lovelock is best known for the “Gaia Hypothesis” that he and American Lynn Margulis developed to account for the self-regulating properties that the earth has manifested over eons. But this dynamic process operates only for the benefit of the planet as a whole, not to help particular species.—ed.]*

do not find this comforting. It seems unlikely that individuals, governments, and businesses can make the right drastic changes quickly. More likely, climate change and the resulting disruption to human life and infrastruc-



ture systems will lead to increased deaths from natural disasters, hunger, water shortages, heat (and cold), and disease, reducing the human population and its activities to a level that the earth can support. Change may happen by intention, or by events overtaking us, but, as Lovelock says, one way or another, the planet’s ecosystem will move toward a more sustainable condition.

One of the hardest aspects of being human is being aware of things that—like death itself—we cannot control. The second hardest is intentionally moving out of our comfort zone to change things that we can change, but that require letting go of “how we’ve always done things.”

Lovelock says he wants to issue a wake-up call. But why would a person want to be awake and aware of an inevitable, though slow-motion, disaster? Why not just retreat to TV “entertainment,” junk food, and all the other ways

humans have to put our minds to sleep and dull the pain?

Just after Christmas my family rented a condo in the White Mountains to celebrate my mother’s 80th birthday and enjoy some cross-country skiing. Or so we hoped. Thursday it poured rain all day. Friday and Saturday we found some slightly mushy skiing, but only by driving to areas above 2,000 feet. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists website, the average temperature in New Hampshire has risen more than 4 degrees F since 1975, explaining why many ski areas in the southern region and lower elevations have closed. My ski boots are wearing out, and I had planned to replace them. Should I bother?

The temperature in the northeast United States is predicted to rise another 4 to 9 degrees F, more than the temperature change since the glaciers receded. The zone in which sugar maple trees thrive is already migrating north, causing poor maple syrup production and, probably, last fall’s uninspiring foliage.

It’s not just New Hampshire. Now that I’m watching, I see the news reports: The Arctic Ocean is breaking up and sea levels are rising, causing severe distress and dislocation for Inuit communities in coastal Alaska. Robins—and mosquitoes, potentially bearing “tropical” diseases—are showing up even in the Arctic. Polar bears are endangered. The snow-covered Alps are melting. Sea levels may rise up to ten feet over the next 100 years.

This feels like a huge, sad version of the children’s book *Goodnight Moon*. Goodbye cross-

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## &gt;&gt;Wholeness

country skiing out the back door. Goodbye brilliant golden foliage. Goodbye maple syrup. Goodbye yellow daffodils poking hopefully through the snow. Goodbye islands in Penobscot Bay. Goodbye Cape Cod beaches. Goodbye polar bears. Goodbye coastal cities, libraries, and universities—lost like Atlantis, buried like Pompeii.

What if Lovelock is even half-right? What would I do differently? What would *we* do differently? What would we do as Quakers, as members of a broader community? What if we, or our children or grandchildren, all become like Katrina refugees—infrastructure gone, power supplies gone, hospitals gone, and no safety net of unaffected humans to bail us out? What if the babbling laughing babies in my Meeting and yours can expect, as adults, to experience only more and more hardship and dislocation? Should we be working to develop potentially self-sufficient enclaves, in the north and well away from the coast, and move libraries and other cultural items to them? Is it worth writing history books if there will be no humans to read them, no one to remember us?

My daughter knows how to live in the wild, make fires with no matches, trap animals, and treat wilderness injuries. I told her, half-joking, that I'm relying on her to take care of me when I'm 95, somewhere in northern Canada or Alaska. But in the meantime, daily life goes on, as the other half of my brain worries about potentially useless questions, like whether my retirement funds will last.

**A**ND where is God in all this? What word of hope and—dare I say it?—joy could communities of faith summon and proclaim to this emerging world? "I told

you so," doesn't help much. "I love you and God loves you, no matter what" rings rather hollow. How can human society bear the overwhelming grief of one, two, many Hurricane Katrinas, of whole coastal regions disappearing under the waves, of eco-systems shutting down? Can we bear to watch our planet (or at least our species) dying, as in a very slow-motion plane crash, knowing the truth but lacking power to avoid it? How would one do hospice for an entire planet, even as all the hospice workers are themselves dying off?

Robert Frost wrote,

*"Some say the world  
will end in fire, some  
say in ice. . . ."*

I used to think about Frost's fire, when all-out nuclear war seemed more likely and we didn't know as much about how the entire ecosystem might swing madly away from the conditions for human habitability.

Now I don't know. I assume that the Noah story must capture a lingering memory of a time when the waters rose so high that every known place was flooded and many people died. But God promised—or so we are told—that it would never happen again. The rainbow is supposed to be the token of that promise. But like a wedding ring, a token cannot guarantee the promise it proclaims. Stuff happens.

In the Gospels, the community that followed Jesus heard and repeated that we should not try to predict the time and manner of the end times. (That community, unlike many of us, anticipated the end time as one of joy, when the risen Lord would return in glory.) The long-term results of our choices are, in any case, not within

our control, nor within our capacity to know or anticipate with certainty.

On the other hand, we are taught to be spiritually prepared for the surprising future. And we are to be alert, listening each day for the voice of the Spirit calling us to wholeness, calling us to actions and ways of being—today, each day—that will redeem a broken world. ♦

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**"...We've got to stop thinking of global warming as a liberal thing, or a conservative thing. It's a human thing. It's also an animal thing, a plant thing, an anything-that-lives thing..."**

**—A Vermont farmer, in a February 17, 2006, radio interview, expressing his concern that a string of unusually mild winters in New England may be ruining the region's maple syrup industry.**

## Letter to the editor

**I HAVE PURCHASED** 100 teak trees at the environmentally supported American Tropical Tree farms in Costa Rica. This project lets buyers purchase teak and other valuable native jungle trees but not the land. This purchase is supposed to bring commercial tree harvests of between \$7,000 to \$20,000 per tree at commercial value maturity. Thus we save the ecosystem for birds and mammals, curb global warming, and provide forestry jobs for Costa Rican citizens. Rare birds and mammals like the jaguar and a rare species of deer returned to the 13,000 acre forests.

—Paul S. Riley  
Frankford (Pa.) Monthly Meeting

### Steering Committee to meet again in Chicago April 27–30, 2006

THE QEW Steering Committee this year will again hold its spring meeting, April 27 to 30 at The Cenacle Retreat & Conference Center in Chicago. This has become our regular spring site. We will continue to vary the locations of our annual meeting (this fall at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico) to be more available to Friends across North America.

The spring meeting has a strong focus on committee work and has less educational programming than the fall Annual Meeting. The committees welcome all to join them. (These are Outreach, Spiritual Nurturance, Publications, Finance, Quaker Earthcare Witness for National Legislation, Sustainability: Faith and Action, and Finca la Bella oversight). Some of the plenary work will focus on plans for the summer programs and annual meeting, and our new focus on increased outreach.

In place of workshops there are wonderful opportunities for heartfelt discussions about our concerns for the earth during meals, late nights, and between committee work. We will have early morning bird walks in a near-by park, so bring your binoculars. (If you don't have binoculars, there are always plenty to share.) We will have some programming for one evening, which is still being planned.

All are encouraged to join us. The registration forms are available on our website <[www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)> or call the Quaker Earthcare Witness office (802/658-0308) and we'll mail them to you. Registration forms are due by **March 27**.

## Narrow Ridge offers Vision Quest opportunities in 2006

VISION QUEST is a guided experience for persons seeking clarity about life directions, including three days and nights of solitary fasting in a mountain wilderness.

Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Center in rural Grainger County, Tenn., is offering two Vision Quest (VQ) opportunities during 2006. [The application deadline for the first VQ, June 3–June 11, has passed; those interested in the second VQ, tentatively set for October 7–October 15, should apply no later than June 15.]

Participants will experience several days of preparation and training, a time of fasting alone on Log Mountain near Narrow Ridge Center, and several days of processing, including a sweat lodge ceremony. Past participants have reported significant increases in clarity about life directions, decisions, and purpose, in addition to finding the experience profoundly restorative in terms of feelings of health and well-being. Vision Quests have been part of the rites of passage of many different cultures since time immemorial. Pictures of last year's VQ are available at the Narrow Ridge website, <[www.narrowridge.org](http://www.narrowridge.org)>.

Principle leader for the June VQ will be Bill Nickle, founder of Narrow Ridge who has led VQs annually for seven years. Bill will be assisted by a team who have experienced at least one VQ and who are active in programs sponsored by Narrow Ridge.

During and after the VQ, participants will stay at Strawbale Lodge on the grounds of Narrow Ridge, an eco-friendly facility constructed of sustainable building

materials and utilizing solar power, composting toilets, and an on-demand water heater. Vegetarian and organic food is provided in a supportive group living and learning environment.

Individuals and couples are invited to apply. Cost is \$400 per person or \$720 per couple. Need-based scholarship assistance may be available. Previous camping experience is not required. Partici-

pants must submit a statement of personal intent explaining her/his interest in experiencing a VQ. Persons accepted must file a medical statement certifying they are in sufficiently

good health and be willing to sign a liability waiver accepting the inherent safety risks of a VQ. Participants should prepare for the VQ over the weeks preceding the experience by following a suggested regime of reading, journaling, short-term fasting, spending time alone in reflection, and walking.

To begin application and registration, send name, address, phone and e-mail along with a \$50 deposit to Narrow Ridge Center, 1936 Liberty Hill Road, Washburn TN 37888. For more information, contact Larry Osborne [of West Knoxville Friends Meeting] at 865/475-3195 or 865/414-5711 or by e-mail at <[losborne@cn.edu](mailto:losborne@cn.edu)>.

Narrow Ridge is a nonprofit educational organization committed to land conservation, sustainable living, building community, and fostering spiritual growth. Narrow Ridge is non-sectarian and welcomes seekers from diverse faith traditions. ❖





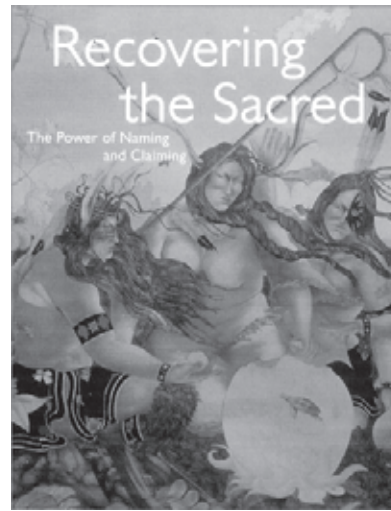
## Recovering the Sacred— The Power of Naming and Claiming

Winona  
LaDuke

South End Press, 2003  
ISBN 089608-712-3 pbk.

**TWO-TIME** Green Party Vice Presidential candidate Winona LaDuke wrote *Recovering the Sacred—The Power of Naming and Claiming* as a beginning step in the process that communities often need to heal themselves from past trauma and injustice. When the power of words is used to name the history, only then can a people claim the present as real and true.

LaDuke's book takes a fascinating, close look at some of the various ways that sacred spaces, artifacts, genetic materials, crops and resources have been destroyed, stolen or patented for sale. By recounting the historical facts of each situation, a healing process can begin to grow.



LaDuke writes her book as if she were carefully watering a line of ancient seeds of truth, tending them with great respect and some sadness, hoping a new generation of the people are nourished with sacred connection.

Among the many important histories remembered are forced resettlements, loss of land for mining rights, the tragedy of Wounded Knee, loss of incredibly nutritious varieties of indigenous crops, and the question of who owns the rights to the genetic information contained in those crops and in the Native Americans themselves.

I believe that *Recovering the Sacred* is an important book for Quakers to read. As witnesses to truth, you will find this a very personal historical work, and at the same time an accounting of various ways that you personally may be benefiting today from the terrible actions of others across Turtle Island, across time. This book is, in many ways, LaDuke's prayer that we all recover the sacred. The first step is telling the stories.

—Jim Vyhnač

So. Starksboro (Vt.) Friends Mtg.

## First Church of the Higher Elevations

by Peter Anderson  
(Intermountain Yearly Meeting)  
Ghost Ranch Press, 2005  
ISBN 09760729-4-7



ANDERSON recounts vividly a number of extended hikes and camping trips into wild, mountainous areas of Colorado and Utah. He is also a Quaker who is committed to serious exploration of the interior "wilderness" of the soul. In the process he has found himself part of a long tradition of seekers and explorers for whom the inward and outward journeys have turned out to be inseparable:

His description of the methodical ascent of a mountain echos the classic stages of centering prayer. Even the crouching position that he assumes while clinging to a slope—not unlike genuflection—fosters humility, which is a condition for entering the depths of worship.

It is surely no coincidence that mountains have played significant roles in the lives of many religious

figures. Think of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, of George Fox on Pendle Hill. Where direct access to mountains is limited, devotional practices are often based on the symbolism of mountains: Prayer is likened to climbing an inward summit. A labyrinth is a kind of two-dimensional mountain.

We in QEW work to preserve the integrity of God's creation not just to maintain biological functions that benefit us and natural beauties that inspire us. This book explains why we are also called to protect wild places—the dwelling place of the Spirit, where flow the springs of living water that we depend on for life and hope.

Early Quakers learned that it is possible to worship without being in human-built "steeple houses," but it may be impossible to maintain a vital spiritual life without continued access to Anderson's "church of the higher elevations." ♦

## Practicing ecological mindfulness

Sol Riou

Tacoma (Wash.) Friends Mtg.

ONE day as I was driving my familiar route home from work, my eye fell upon a small maple tree in my neighbor's yard. And as has become my practice, I spoke aloud, "Thank you, tree, thank you for your graceful branches that I enjoy and for your oxygen that I breathe." These words opened my heart to the joy of being alive in the moment. Also in this moment I realized that the earth and her many children have been loving me every second of the 53 years that I have been alive. I went on to send gratitude to the many teachers who have given me my current practice of meditating on my environment throughout my day.

Being fortunate enough to grow up in the woods, I developed a spiritual connection to the divine mystery within nature from early childhood, without understanding it as such. Digging clay in creek beds and climbing high up into an oak tree was my refuge from the injustice and ignorance of those controlling my world.

I remember one day as an angry and depressed adolescent, I sought comfort for myself by taking a walk alone. With confusion and self-pity clouding my mind, I asked God why I had been given such an afflicted soul. My eyes then caught sight of a small maple tree that had grown bent and spindly seeking out a ray of sunshine through the dense canopy of the forest floor. Sitting there witnessing this misshapen tree, I understood that the law of nature does not guarantee anyone a charmed life, but only a life. Our challenge



is to live out our life as best we can. Just because the little maple does not have enough sunlight to grow broad and straight like the mighty oak tree standing beside it doesn't mean that it is imperfect, only that it has had to struggle to survive. Humans who are bent by life's hardships are also loved no less by God than those who by chance have had a head start.

My challenge as an adult now is how do I keep a spiritual focus in the industrialized and technological culture that I live in? I find it hard to see through the concrete and metal of the city to my Mother's fertile skin.

Exploiting, controlling, or at a minimum, protecting myself from her, has been brainwashed into me by the ignorance of our modern culture. Estranged from my loving Mother, I have become estranged from myself, forgetting that my every step is supported by her solid surface, my every breath comes from her vegetation, and my every pleasure is from the sacrifice of her natural resources.

As an avid gardener, I have always been awed by Mother Earth's magical power to grow food and flowers from the tiny seeds that I sow into her flesh. However, when I was still unaware I sought to control her, weeding and sowing slug bait along with dahlia bulbs. I had been misled by our culture to believe that I could construct an environment more nurturing than

the Creator's own sacred home.

Our culture also has a way of mis-educating us to see Mother Earth as a source of danger that threatens human survival, instead of as the source of all of our physical and spiritual needs. But having never truly forgotten her love, I have always kept an eye out, seeking others of like mind who could show me a path back into her arms.

Luckily, I happened upon Native American and environmental teachers who have reunited me with my loving Mother. Daily now I find the divine in the air that fills my lungs, the sunlight that illuminates dust particles, and the many plants and animals that cross my path as I go about my day. These simple things bring me great joy.

ON the next page you will find some of the queries that comprise the basis of my Ecological Mindfulness practice, which helps me to stay conscious of Mother Earth's ever-tangible love. These

*The challenge of my adult life now is, how do I keep a spiritual focus in the industrialized and technological culture that I live in?*

meditations help lift my spirits in two ways: 1) They shift my focus from noticing what I lack—that new car, a

dry pair of shoes, a pain-free neck, etc.—to feeling truly blessed with what I have—food in my belly, the ability to see, a friend to talk to, etc. I can be filled with gratitude for what I have in each moment. 2) They also bring into my consciousness that Mother Earth and I are one; that my breath-in is her breath-out; that the cells in my body are burning minerals of her body; and that my intelligence, which seems so uniquely human, evolved from her

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## &gt;&gt; Mindfulness

animals, which along with her plants evolved from rock of her molten core. Remembering this, I feel nurtured; I needn't feel at war with her elements and natural processes. I am safely held by her.

**P**LEASE keep in mind that these meditations are not to be used to chastise yourself or to criticize the lifestyle that you are presently living. We are all a product of the place and time into which we are born. And through developing a loving relationship with our Mother, we can begin to behave differently. These meditations have helped me to live out my spiritual goal of "Live simply so that others (which, for me includes all of God's creation) may simply live." I hope that they can bring you as much joy and fulfillment as they have brought to me.

When you use the following queries to meditate, choose carefully. Be mindful of thoughts and feelings that are triggered in you as you savor it throughout your day, if you encounter guilt or anger then this is not the one for you to use at this time. Choose another and go back, if and when you can, to the meditation that brought up the negative emotions. The right meditation will connect you more deeply to your environment and the love from the earth that is available to you every minute of every day.

These queries are most useful if they touch the passion that you have for life in yourself and all your relations. Think of them as road stops along your spiritual journey towards a greater fuller love of all that is beneath and in the sky; and with this in mind carefully choose one that speaks to your next step in connecting to that of God in you.

Enjoy...

## Queries for ecological mindfulness

- ❖ Was I aware today that everything I used came from Mother Earth? How much of it did I reuse and recycle?
- ❖ Did I communicate to another person today my value of respecting all of God's creation?
- ❖ Did I thank the rain for its water that makes up most of my body?
- ❖ Did I thank a tree for providing me with my oxygen today?
- ❖ How much of my day did I spend noticing nature vs. noticing man-made objects?
- ❖ Did I feel the love that is available to me from my Mother Earth today? How did her love feel in my body?
- ❖ Did I notice the colors, textures, smells, or movements of Mother Earth and her children today?
- ❖ As I ate today, did I thank the plants and animals that gave up their lives to that I may live another day?
- ❖ In what ways today did I interfere with the natural balance of Mother Earth for my immediate pleasure?
- ❖ When and how today did I express my gratitude to Mother Earth for sustaining my life today and every day?
- ❖ Have I considered today the possibility of not owning a car? How would today have been different if I had not traveled by car?
- ❖ Did I keep in mind today that I am not the end result of the evolution of life on Mother Earth? Did meditating on this belief result in any new actions or thoughts for me today?
- ❖ Did I notice today any ecological feature or habitat being destroyed? How did this knowledge influence my actions and thoughts today?

*Awakening to Earth*

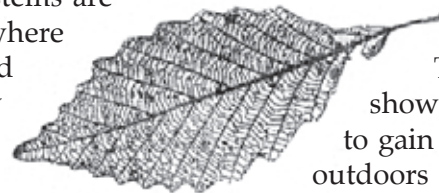
*Natural awareness as a spiritual practice*

by Bill Cahalan

ISBN 1881083-07-1, 24 pp., \$4.00 + \$1.50 S&H

**BILL CAHALAN** began leading weekend natural awareness retreats in the early 1980s as part of his practice as an ecopsychologist.

Today we are alarmed to learn that eco-systems are in decline everywhere on the planet, and we want to know how to stop these trends. Bill reminds us that first we must change ourselves, that we can be effective in our witness only when we become aware that *we are the Earth*.



Bill's suggestions for personal natural awareness practices help us become more aware of our civilized "armoring" and learn to be more attuned to Earth's own rhythms and processes.

This booklet shows not only how to gain more from outdoors experiences but also how to incorporate those lessons into our households and daily habits.

*Copies may be ordered directly from the QEW office.*

I AM WRITING to ask that you help spread the word about an interfaith sustainable event in Wisconsin, and hopefully give me contact information for people in Wisconsin known to have a spiritual connection with environmental concerns.

The event is "Sustainable Travel to Worship" in May and involves a friendly statewide competition between houses of faith in Wisconsin for the highest proportion of trips that involve car pooling, bicycling, walking or riding the bus (anything other than driving alone) during a weekend or day in May.

A discussion of the celebration is at [http://www.wicec.org/index.php?page=sus\\_worship](http://www.wicec.org/index.php?page=sus_worship). A local Friends group participated last year, and I am hoping that others will decide to join them in participating this year.

The idea is that driving motor vehicles causes more damage to the environment—in terms of global warming, air and water pollution, and habitat alteration—than any other consumer behavior. Traveling to worship via a sustainable mode lets us personalize concern for the environment while enjoying ourselves. Walking or bicycling in May can be a special joy. In some places ride sharing makes the most sense. Riding the bus is also sometimes an option. The celebration is in May because May is bicycle month, and many congregations choose to hold the celebration on the weekend immediately preceding or following Bike to Work Week. Honoring Earth Day can involve tuning up bicycles in anticipation of the celebration.

—Susan De Vos <[atwofus@tds.net](mailto:atwofus@tds.net)>  
Member of the Board  
Wisconsin Interfaith  
Climate & Energy Campaign  
<<http://www.wicec.org/>>  
608/873-3273

## A tribute to a QEW elder, Elizabeth G. Watson

*WHILE we were putting this issue together, we learned that Elizabeth Watson of Minneapolis, Minn., one of QEW's founders as well as a faithful supporter, had recently gone into Hospice care, due declining physical strength over the past several months.*

*We would like to use this occasion to ask the extended QEW "spiritual community" to hold Elizabeth and her family in the Light and share in a tribute to the many ways that she, as a Quaker theologian writer, has contributed to a vital Quaker witness for the earth.*

*Two of QEW's other founders, Bill and Alice Howenstine of McHenry County, Ill., recall serving with Elizabeth in the early days of the fledgling movement:*

**"ELIZABETH Watson** is widely known throughout the Religious Society of Friends for her lectures, workshops, and publications, both scholarly and inspirational. However, many Friends may be unaware of the impact she had on QEW (then known as Friends Committee on Unity in Nature) in its beginnings. After QEW was formed in 1987, Elizabeth served on the Steering Committee in 1988 and 1989, where she also worked with the Spiritual Nurturance and Publications committees.

"In 1990 Elizabeth gave an inspiring afternoon interest group lecture at the Gathering of Friends General Conference held at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., which was published a year later by QEW as *Healing Ourselves and Our Earth*. The booklet has been reprinted and is still available from QEW. Drawing on her favor-

ite passages from Walt Whitman's "green" poetic work *Leaves of Grass*, she outlined erroneous thought patterns and attitudes of our culture that are contributing to the destruction of the earth. In closing, she wrote eloquently,

*...how can we look our children and grandchildren in the eye unless we do all that we can do to give them a future? They need to know that we cared and that we tried."*

"At the 1996 QEW Annual

Meeting, held at Camp Algonquin in Illinois, Elizabeth gave the plenary lecture entitled, "Is Your God Too Small? What Concepts of the Divine are Promoting Preservation of the Earth?" At that meeting she spelled out our task: "We are here to build the community of God."

"Her presence, so often in com-

pany with her husband, George (a Quaker elder in his own right) brought a sense of support and assurance to our meetings, whether she was the featured speaker or not.

"Knowing how important family has been to Elizabeth throughout her life, perhaps the greatest tributes to her QEW work are the wonderful contributions being made by her granddaughter, Susannah McCandless. Susannah, at various times has been a Steering Committee member, assistant clerk, and the indispensable leader of the Ann Kriebel/San Luis Project.

"It is a joy to recognize and appreciate Elizabeth Watson's gifts to QEW!" ❖



**ELIZABETH WATSON** delivers the keynote address at the 1996 QEW Annual Meeting.

## Quaker Earthcare Witness Order Form

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### 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.

## BeFriending Creation

**BeFriending Creation**, Vol. 19, No. 2, March-April 2006. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**, 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.

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**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.

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

## Joanna Macy in Philadelphia May 20

# The Great Turning: Revolution for the sake of life on Earth

**ECO-PHILOSOPHER,** Buddhist and international activist Joanna Macy will speak to Friends at Arch Street Meeting, 4<sup>th</sup> and Arch Streets in Philadelphia, on Saturday, May 20, 2006, as part of a daylong program on ecological witness.

The event is sponsored by Pendle Hill, the Earth Care Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Quaker Earthcare Witness, and Philadelphia's Friends Center.

Macy will address "The Great Turning: Revolution for the Sake of Life on Earth" and then lead participants in a few of the exercises she has developed and uses in her teaching throughout the world to bring us back from the brink of environmental suicide to ecological sanity.



Joanna Macy

**THE GREAT Turning** is a name for the shift from the industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization. It is the essential adventure of our time, allowing us to discover new dimensions of courage, creativity and spiritual power. Learn more about the Great Turning at

[<www.joannamacy.net>](http://www.joannamacy.net).

After lunch (box lunches will be available), Friends are invited to stay for workshops focusing on our environmental witness in our daily lives, our building design and usage, putting green principles to work, etc.

Advance registration is required. Cost for the day is \$15 for the program, \$25 for the program and box lunch. Call 215/888-9627; email [<macy.may20@earthlink.net>](mailto:macy.may20@earthlink.net).



March-April 2006

✓ <i>Just who in the world do we think we are?</i>	1
✓ Earth Day web links for communities of faith.	2
✓ Meetings and churches can help build sustainable communities.	3
✓ The call to wholeness in a broken world.	4
✓ Meditations for practicing ecological mindfulness.	8
✓ The Great Turning: Revolution for the sake of life on Earth.	11

## N.H. water protection activists await decision on latest appeal

IN AUGUST 2004 a rural New Hampshire citizens group lost its appeal of a state permit for massive pumping of groundwater by an international bottled water company. At that point the tiny grassroots organization, led by Quaker Denise Hart, was stymied for lack of thousands of dollars it would normally cost to appeal to the next court level.

But right after Denise's story appeared in the Sept/Oct. 2004 *BeFriending Creation*, an attorney who specializes in appeal cases agreed to represent the group before the state supreme court on a *pro bono* basis. Also, with the help of a number of people in the national groundwater movement, they got a grant to cover court administrative costs. Their appeal was filed last September, and a decision is expected any time now, Denise said.

The group's case draws heavily on the doctrine that the state is obligated to keep the best interest of the public in mind in administering its groundwater.

The brief also notes that since the company intends to sell the water to other countries, its contracts would be subject to WTO treaties; thus the state would be unable to limit the amount of water taken out of the ground, even under drought conditions.

### *Is it better to drink bottled water—or clean up our drinking water sources?*

THE UNITED NATIONS estimates that if the world took *half* of what it currently spends on bottled water (\$100 billion annually) and invested it in water infrastructure and treatment, *everyone in the world could have access to clean drinking water.*

But bottled water is better, right? Actually...

- ◆ The U.S. EPA sets more stringent quality standards for tap water than the FDA does for bottled beverages, and roughly 40 percent of commercially bottled water is just tap water.
- ◆ 1.5 billion barrels of oil are consumed each year to produce the plastic for water bottles, enough to fuel 100,000 cars.
- ◆ According to the Container Recycling Institute, only 14% of plastic water bottles are recycled.
- ◆ A water bottle in a landfill or lying around as litter will take over 1,000 years to biodegrade.

Source: <http://www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/Bottled020606.cfm>