

BeFriending Creation

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2006 Gathering speaker's reason for hope: *'God is hanging in there with us'*

by Louis Cox

BRAVO!—*She's speaking to our condition.*"

That's the feeling that swept through QEW supporters and other Earth-Friends as Dr. Sallie McFague, a Christian theologian, spoke about the troubled human-Earth relationship at the 2006 FGC Gathering.

Some ecologically concerned Friends may be wary of theology in general because of historic doctrines that seemed to portray humans as alien residents, temporarily residing on Earth while anticipating an after-life of communion with a disembodied deity—implying that the fate of the earth itself is of relatively little importance.

But Dr. McFague, author of the popular 1993 book that explores her metaphor of the universe as the *body of God*, maintained that such other-worldly doctrines do not jibe with her understanding of the Christian faith, which is based on *incarnation*. The spirit who in the biblical account became flesh has always been involved in the travails of Creation, she said. Properly understood, the Gospel is the story of God's continuing to labor with and through humanity to redeem all of Creation, in order to make the primordial dream of God's blessed community a reality on Earth.



SALLIE McFAGUE, left, chats with FGC General Secretary Bruce Birchard and QEW General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt after the renowned eco-theologian's plenary talk at the 2006 FGC Gathering.

McFague's presentation validated QEW's efforts over the past 18 years—reflecting a growing conviction that the global ecological crisis is at its core a *spiritual* issue. As one strand in a worldwide spiritual ecology movement, QEW supports those who hear the call for *spiritual transformation* as a condition for outward reconciliation and healing of the earth and its community of life.

Some "liberal" Friends, however, may refer to their transformations as a "changes of heart" or, in more secular terms, as a "paradigm shifts." Few seem interested in explicitly *theological* reflections about the spiritual basis for Earthcare. Perhaps it is because they find their "experiential" faith translates easily into everyday

ethical principles, without requiring any "God talk."

But Dr. McFague showed how her approach to eco-theology—drawing on a variety of metaphors for the divine—can be useful, not only for engaging more "conservative" Friends in discussions about Earthcare, but also for motivating all people of faith to begin putting their beliefs into *action*. Recognizing that all descriptions of the transcendent divine are really *metaphors*, we can avoid the error of thinking we are talking about something "out there" and unconnected to our lives.

Unless we recognize the divine as both transcendent *and* immanent in Creation, we may be unable to understand that the commandments of scripture or the testimonies of Quakerism apply to the *whole of earthly life*, not just to human affairs. We may follow all the rules that apply to "good" people but fail to recognize a host of *sins of omission* that result from our ignorance of belonging to the web of Creation.

The eco-feminism reflected in much of McFague's thinking sometimes is misrepresented as a protest against male power and masculine images of God. But it is more of a recognition that every

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>> **McFague**, from page 1

being has inherent rights and dignity because the divine animates and sanctifies all of Creation.

MCFAGUE said the Bible's message of hope is a powerful tool in confronting the specter of global climate change. She said Al Gore's recent movie on global warming, *An Inconvenient Truth*, gives an accurate account of the most serious crisis facing the world today, and it's time for Friends to get busy and act. She said each day brings more evidence that Earth's climate is nearing the tipping point of irreversible, catastrophic changes.

"Why can't humanity see the warning signs, such as polar bears who are starving because the Arctic ice sheets they use for hunting are melting away? Are these not proof that a 'Great Unraveling' is under way?" Friends, who have a tradition of both seeing and acting, can lead the way in the "Great Turning" that is urgently needed, she said.

The first step is to *ask God's help* in turning around, she said. This might be rephrased for non-theists as *asking how we fit into the total ecological unity of the planet*, recognizing that relationships were imbedded in life from the beginning of Creation. This is very different from the doctrine of industrialism, which operates in terms of arbitrary separations and dualities, McFague said.

Ecological unity means that the community and the individual exist for one another. The health of the whole cannot be sustained apart from the health of the parts. This has implications for sustainable global economics, in which peace, social justice and ecological sustainability belong together. This contrasts with the assumption

of industrial society that we have the right to all we can legally acquire, McFague said.

In working for peace, we must look beyond the cessation of war. True peace is possible only when everyone has been provided with the basics of existence and all ecosystems are allowed to thrive. Because the divine is incarnate in Creation, the love we show toward all beings is an act of love toward God.

The health and well-being of all creatures and parts of creation is what salvation is all about—it is God's place and our place, the one and only place.

—Sallie McFague, 1993
The Body of God

Even more important, as we are drawn instinctively to create a different kind of world, we must realize that in some sense *it already exists* as a seed that God has dreamed and sowed in our hearts. That dream, that promise, is what allows us—as it has allowed the saints of all ages—to face the future with hope and optimism—knowing that *God is hanging in there with us*.

IN RESPONSE to a comment from the audience about "conservative" Christians who seem indifferent to environmental problems, McFague noted that some 50 major evangelical leaders recently signed a strong environmental statement, so this issue is not the sole domain of "liberals." What matters most is whether someone has a solid foundation for his or her convictions, which is where some fluency in the language of theology seems to pay dividends for the evangelicals.

When asked what steps we can take to have smaller ecological

footprints and live more sustainably, McFague mentioned carbon-emission offsets and just simpler living. We can shift to diets that have lower environmental costs, she said, mentioning Michael Pollen's book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, as a real eye-opener on this subject. And some of us no doubt could benefit from a kind of "ecotherapy," modeled perhaps on 12-step programs, to help overcome our addiction to consumption.

Each of us can take on some kind of social role in assisting the Great Turning. It's a question of finding a niche in which to contribute and getting good at it, she said.

How we make, spend, and invest money also has a big impact on the state of the world. That is why some

economists are making a religious issue out of equitable allocation of world resources. There are alternative economic systems, such as those of Scandinavia and Canada, that seem healthier for communities and the planet, she said.

We can't meet the ecological challenges ahead with token efforts, she said. When the U.S. was drawn into World War II, the country underwent rapid and massive mobilization for war production. "*What will it take for people now to see that the well-being of the planet is just as important?*"

In the end, what we do has a lot to do with *who we think we are*, which comes back to eco-theology, McFague said. In order to defend Creation, we need to know that, spiritually and biologically, we are an integral part of it. ❖

Dr. McFague currently serves as "Distinguished Theologian in Residence" at Vancouver (B.C.) School of Theology. Her most recent book is, *Life Abundant—Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*.

Guiding principles are helpful in our striving for simplicity

by Barbara Williamson
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

FRRIENDS PRACTICE simplicity in their choices of homes and cars, the amount of money budgeted for donations, and manner of dress. How often do we consider the *spiritual* meaning of Simplicity, particularly in relationship to Creation?

As a new Friend, I usually thought of Simplicity in terms of the slogan "Live simply so that others may simply live."

I probably first started seriously considering Simplicity in broader terms after reading *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices* by Michael Brower and Warren Leon. It was then that I began to think more critically about the way I lived.

I found ways to live with a greater consideration for Creation—making changes to use less electricity, reducing (even further) the amount of garbage my household generated, being more conscientious about recycling, giving up my SUV, reducing the number of gadgets I used (or owned), combining errands to reduce the amount of stop-and-go driving I was doing, changing my cleaning products, balancing the requirements of urban living with environmentally sound principles, and eating less meat. And the list seems to continue to grow.

I knew that Simplicity didn't necessarily mean "easier" but was a way to make a personal statement about the impact that my lifestyle had on the environment

and the lives of others. For example, I was acknowledging that by buying from companies that clear-cut the rain forests of South America I was partly responsible for the droughts in Africa.



But simplicity is more than the things we own or the choices we make in our spending patterns. I have come to see *striving for simplicity as searching for the kingdom of God*. This search can have guiding principles, such as:

- ◆ Make purchases after considering how the manufacture of certain products impacts the environment, communities, etc.
- ◆ Make purchases on the basis of necessity and functionality. (How many outfits and pairs of shoes does one person really need?)
- ◆ Reduce the amount of "stuff" you have. Give with a happy heart.—Some of your "stuff" could be used by others.
- ◆ Refuse to be seduced by marketing propaganda for the newest gadgetry.
- ◆ Learn to enjoy without having to own. You don't have to own every book you read or every movie you see.
- ◆ Develop a deeper appreciation for Creation.—Spend more time outside in parks, gardens, and open spaces.
- ◆ Refuse to use those products that breed the oppression of others.
- ◆ Be aware of anything—an object, hobby, job, status—that gets in the way of seeking the kingdom of God.

(This is not an exhaustive list—what would you add?)

Living lives filled with God's spirit frees us from the illusion that the accumulation of "stuff" will help us to find wholeness. Simplicity is moderation, sufficiency, and temperance. It denotes the careful conservation of the earth's riches, comprehensive recycling, minimal harm to open spaces, material efficiency, the elimination of waste, and product durability.

Simplicity is the corrective to the cardinal vice of our age: the excessive taking from and wasting of God's creation. Simplicity is an expression of love and an instrument for justice and sustainability; it enables all life to thrive together by protecting and sharing Creation. ◆

Living Simply for the Earth

WE CHANGE THE NATURAL world, rearranging its materials, its species and landscapes, to meet our needs.... But we exploit the ecosphere not only for what we need but also for what we want. As our numbers grow, so do our needs. And as our desires increase, so does our exploitation of the ecosphere. Our economic system now manufactures not only the products to satisfy our desires, it also manufactures desires for its products. Paradoxical as it sounds, our economic system no longer operates to satisfy human craving and deliver contentment, but rather, it operates to multiply cravings and discontentment. Only unhappy and discontented people consume more than they need.

—Mark A. Burch, 1995
in *Simplicity: Notes, Stories, and Exercises for Developing Unimaginable Wealth*

Climate change workshop shares epistle at FGC Gathering worship

TWENTY Friends came together during the 2006 Friends General Conference (FGC) Climate Change Workshop presented by Karen Street of the Berkeley (Calif.) Friends Meeting. Our reasons for being there differed. Many were quite aware of the issues. Many were not.

We had a wide diversity of people in our group, including students, educators, social workers, computer specialists and some with strong physics backgrounds. We all shared to varying degrees concern for future generations and the degradation of our climate, but our reasons ranged from spiritual to fear.

Karen shared her vision and extensive knowledge with us, based on her years of spirit-impelled intense study and encouraged significant sharing and questioning as we grappled with the issues.

We did not immediately accept it all. There were questions and challenges as we worked towards a common understanding. We came to accept the urgency involved in this issue. We learned of dangerous changes that have already taken place, and of the scientific consensus about future ecological impacts if we do not significantly modify our relationship to this world that has been entrusted to our stewardship.

We have found that there is no time to lose in this common endeavor to prevent great suffering and displacement. There are radical changes that need to be made to our behaviors *very soon* if we are to

avoid calamitous environmental changes in the next century. The task before us all is, to put it mildly, daunting.



An Inconvenient Truth

THE NEW FILM of Al Gore's presentation on global climate change, "An Inconvenient Truth," is helping to inform the public about this urgent issue, and to stimulate conversations. Eco-Justice Ministries has prepared a free discussion guide to help church groups talk about the film. Go to <http://www.eco-justice.org/TruthGuide.asp>.

A DVD of Gore's film will be released in the fall of 2006, and the Regeneration Project, working with state Interfaith Power & Light groups, is including free copies in the "Spotlight on Global Warming" kits they are distributing to thousands of religious groups. For more information or to sign up, go to: www.theregenerationproject.org/inconvenient.htm or call 415/561-4891

The idea was presented and the group agreed that something needed to be done immediately. A small group of the Climate Change Workshop attendees volunteered to compose an epistle to present our collective concern to the FGC Gathering and Friends at large. The epistle was accepted with the approval and gratitude of the other workshop attendees, and it was presented by the entire group to the closing meeting on July 7. The presentation was visibly moving to many among us and we heard from listeners that it was well received. We are calling upon Friends, with a sense of great urgency, to act individually, within your Meetings, and globally to reverse the current trends in global warming.

Since leaving the Gathering, our group has created a listserv to communicate, expand and continue our efforts. We have expanded one of our members' web site to contain information on this issue. We have developed a poster for Meetings who want to take on the challenge of quarterly threshing sessions.

We have rewritten our epistle in a general manner more suited to groups of faith in general. The topic of global warming is complex. So is the matter of choosing where to begin and how to proceed.

We seek spiritual guidance in choosing our actions and words so that others may understand our concern and join us in our efforts to slow, and ultimately reverse, the warming of our global climate.

—Submitted by Eric Wolff
Community Friends Meeting
Cincinnati, Ohio

(See Epistle, next page >>)

Epistle on Global Warming*

THE EARTH IS GROWING HOTTER as a result of choices we have made. The signs are all around us in rising yearly average temperatures, melting glaciers, expanding deserts, increasing rates of extinctions, and weather extremes. There is unity within the scientific community that this is serious, that it is caused by human activity, and that the consequences of a failure to address global warming will be catastrophic.

We have a small window of opportunity.

Over the course of the next nine years, if humanity fails to significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions, the result is likely to be a sea level rise of 10 to 13 feet per century until the level stabilizes at 80 feet above today's level. Loss of productivity in ecosystems and crops worldwide will also occur, resulting in mass starvation.

We appeal to Friends to make this concern a priority in our families, communities, and meetings, and to commit ourselves to learn more about this urgent planetary crisis, so that each of us may discern further actions that will be required of us.

Some actions that we can recommend at this time include:

- ◆ Reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent in the coming year by cutting driving, flying, and residential energy use. Walk and bicycle more, use mass transit and fluorescent light bulbs.

- ◆ When we have cut our own use of fossil fuel, labor with others to help them do the same.
- ◆ Labor with our legislators and if that doesn't work, replace them.

We urge Friends as individuals and as Meetings to engage in the conversation and stay with it.



Meetings should institute quarterly threshing sessions to discern how we are led corporately to act.

Some of the changes that concern us deeply we can not escape. But others we can if we act

responsibly now and into the future. The consequences of not acting are unthinkable for us, our children, and our grandchildren.

Friends, we urge you to attend to our call. For the love of everything you hold most dear, please take up this concern now and carry it back to your Meeting.

*Shared with Friends at the concluding Meeting for Worship, 2006 Friends General Conference Gathering, Tacoma, Washington, July 7, 2006

Many references are available on this topic such as

<www.climatecrisis.org>
<www.pathsoflight.us/musing>
and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, found at
<www.unep.ch/ipcc/>

This document can be found on
<www.LeavesofGrass.org>.

More exciting titles for the QEW video lending library

GRANTS from the Quaker Missions Stamp Project and the Yarnall Fund of Chestnut Hill (Pa.) Friends Meeting have allowed QEW to purchase 13 more Earth-care-related DVDs for its video lending library. These include:

David Suzuki's *Sacred Balance*
"We all know where home is—it's with our family, with memory and hope. But our family is far larger than we realize. ...The important thing is that if we can see and feel the web we're part of, we can change the way we act toward it." Two discs, four parts, about 55-minutes each.



The Ecological Footprint —Accounting for a Small Planet
"We can choose to live on a depleted planet or we can choose to live on a rich, biologically diverse, more stable planet," proposes Dr. Mathis Wackernagel, co-creator of the Ecological Footprint. He suggests that by tracking ecological assets, we can make more informed choices." 30 min.

When is Enough, Enough? The Appetite for Oil
"A small Cree band in Alberta battles major oil companies for their land, which lies on top of one of the world's richest oil tar sands deposits." 44 min.

Blue Vinyl
"With humor, chutzah, and a piece of vinyl siding in hand, two award-winning filmmakers travel to America's vinyl manufacturing capital and beyond in search of the [toxic] truth about vinyl." 97 min.

The full list can be seen on the QEW website. To order, contact QEW office.

Marshall Massey calls Baltimore YM Friends to make the Testimony on Creation a reality

by Barbara Williamson
Richmond (Va.) Friends Meeting

MARSHALL MASSEY completed his pilgrimage from Omaha, Neb., to Baltimore Yearly Meeting sessions at Harrisonburg, Va. in time to deliver his plenary talk on unity with all Creation. [See background article in the July-August 2006 *BeFriending Creation*.]

During the week Marshall also led morning Bible study and a three-day workshop on "Witness."

Marshall reminded the more than 350 Friends who attended the plenary session that past Quakers provided the basis for retail reform, women's suffrage, abolition, and changes to the care and treatment of the mentally ill. Marshall believes that we can move toward a Creation Testimony by developing the following new skills:

- ❖ Factual discernment between facts and speculations.
- ❖ Solid awareness of consensual and dissenting voices.
- ❖ Recognition of new and informed courses of action.
- ❖ Differentiation between honest and dishonest opinions.
- ❖ Speaking and working with those from different spiritual and religious traditions.
- ❖ Moral discernment of principles to recognize that which God is calling us toward.
- ❖ Integrity to recognize inconvenient facts (and truths).
- ❖ Ability to speak to the condition of others.
- ❖ Ability to tap into strength greater than our own.

Marshall called us to put ourselves on the line for the earth—and reach out to others. Friends can make a difference by involving Friends and non-Friends in:

- ❖ Electing officials who will have a concern for the environment.
- ❖ Team-lobbying elected officials.
- ❖ Creating alternative communities that reduce dependence on oil.
- ❖ Creating support systems for those whose lives have been destroyed by global warming (for example, feeding people made homeless by rising sea levels and desertification).
- ❖ Developing pilot projects that demonstrate new ways of living.
- ❖ Creating mass transit systems.
- ❖ Redoing our yards to create habitat for animals.
- ❖ Creating open-space habitats for animals.



As Americans we honor the individual, work in isolation, and are cut off from our communities and families. We are far from the communities of the early Christians. Like early Quakers we need to continue to work within communities. The term "Solitary Quaker" is an oxymoron. We cannot save the environment by acting alone.

Marshall believes we are called to dream *big dreams* and *pursue* them. We must have *courage* to invest in our dreams. A new testimony for the earth is needed. There is no longer time to dream about a new testimony, we must make that dream a reality. We must recognize "that of God in all Creation" as a Friends Testimony on Creation.

The BYM Unity with Nature Committee has been given a challenge and a boost. Hopefully, those people present at Marshall's speech will take his message home and become more involved in caring for Creation in their Monthly Meetings. This should result in more activity at the Monthly Meeting level but also at the Yearly Meeting level. In turn, QEW should see increased involvement from BYM representatives.

During his week at BYM's annual session, Marshall shared his belief that Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) has strayed from its origins as Friends Committee on Unity with Nature. He seems not entirely comfortable with the changes he sees in QEW. It is common for organizations to change as time passes; to continue to be of value, organizations are rarely static. It is also difficult to remain truly connected to an organization and what it is doing when you are no longer an active member of that organization.

READING my notes from his speech, it seems to me that QEW is involved in working on many of his suggestions. We are attempting to include all Quaker traditions in QEW; we are working to ensure that there will be a Friends Testimony of Creation and that all Monthly Meetings are involved in caring for Creation; we are sponsoring a project that we hope someday will demonstrate agricultural sustainability, and individual QEW members are involved in a number of the tasks and skills that Marshall referred to in his speech. Marshall and all past FCUN activists are welcome to be part of QEW. ❖

A busy, public year for NYC's F.U.N. group

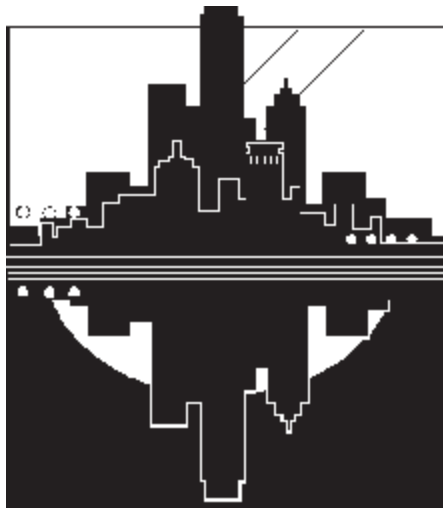
Report to 15th Street Monthly Meeting for Business, Feb. 2006

THIS PAST YEAR has provided our committee with many opportunities for understanding and grappling with energy needs in this country and the world. We understand that our dependence on fossil fuels has led to greater instability and war. It is imperative that we as a country develop sustainable energy sources if we are to create a more peaceful world and preserve the natural beauty of this earth. We need to wean ourselves from fossil fuels and nuclear energy.

Adding greatly to our efforts in this direction has been our partnership with the Neighborhood Energy Network (NEN). Together we have co-sponsored three well-attended talks: "Urban Clean Energy Trends," by Clint Wilder, a technology and business journalist; "The Colder Side of Global Warming," by meteorologist Thomas Wismuller; and "The Beginning of the End of Cheap Oil," by physicist and wind pioneer Alfred Cavallo. NEN lined up speakers and we helped publicize them.

Recently we have had the first of two panel discussions providing a spiritual perspective on energy. There was also an "Interfaith Panel on Faith-Based Energy Politics," put together by NEN, on January 18th. It was a beautiful sight to see representatives of four religious faiths speaking with one voice on the subject of the environment. Each brought out the particular beliefs their Earthcare rested on.

On February 23, in the Meeting House, the second panel, "The Cross and the Windmill," offered an ecumenical perspective on environmental concerns. One participant, Mary Coelho, was the



founder of our local F.U.N. group.

On a smaller scale, we continue to publicize how all of us can sign up for wind and low-impact hydro energy through Con Ed Solutions and Community Energy. I urge everyone who pays for their own heating and electricity to do this. There should be pamphlets in the pocket in the F.U.N. section of the bulletin board if you are interested.

We have also begun selling compact fluorescent light bulbs during coffee hour at wholesale prices. As you may know, these bulbs screw into regular light sockets, last for years, and require less electricity. These in particular cast a pleasant, warm light.

New attender Angela Manno has given two presentations to our meetings this year: a short video about her artwork on planetary consciousness and most recently the video, *Indian Point: Imagining the Unimaginable*, about this nuclear plant's troubling proximity (40 miles from Times Square) and efforts by groups such as the Riverkeepers to close it down.

Last April we co-sponsored a film, *The Next Industrial Revolution*, and panel discussion as part of the Arts Committee's film series, and

in March a talk by the Rev. Michael Dowd on the Great Story. Generally this has been a busy year for us and in the end much more public than we usually care to be!

Study Group Proposal: Finding our Role in Earthcare

How do we find our place in the overall effort to create a more sustainable society? Do we look outside for agendas and goals? Or do we open ourselves to a new relationship with nature that can energize and lead us? This study group will be part experiential, part recollection and remembering, part worship-sharing, and part discussion. It is assumed that many participants will already be engaged in some form of Earthcare, so there will be a big emphasis on sharing.

The group will explore the process involved in connecting with our immediate natural world, or bioregion, and the Universe (in the spirituality of the New Origin Story coming from science). The two facilitators are members of the New York Friends in Unity with Nature and will speak to the powerful support and energy generated by this committee for over 10 years. Finally, we will discuss how the Earthcare groups we form can both celebrate and protect our bit of sacred space on this beautiful planet we call home.

Facilitators will be Janet Soderberg of 15th St. Meeting and Tom Goodridge of Morningside Meeting.

—submitted by Janet Soderberg

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the New York Friends in Unity with Nature committee's current and coming activities, go to www.FUNQuakers.org ❖.

Gathering interest group looks at climate change from science and faith perspectives

KAREN STREET of Berkeley (Calif.) Friends Meeting began an interest group on climate change at the 2006 FGC Gathering in Tacoma, Wash., with a graph showing that carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, is at its highest level in 450,000 years. But even as heat records continue to be broken, temperatures still lag behind what is possible with this level of CO₂, according to research into previously warm periods in the earth's history, she said.

A one-meter rise in sea levels from melting polar ice caps will displace tens of millions of people. Global warming is also being linked to droughts in Africa, disturbances in Indian monsoons, floods in Europe, water shortages in China, extinctions of amphibians in Central America, and poleward migrations of animals, plants, and insects. Greenhouse gases are having disproportionate effects on weather events, as seen in recent monster hurricanes and deadly heat waves. There is concern the Gulf Stream could be disrupted, drastically chilling North America and Europe, she said.

As bad as this news is, average global temperature is expected to have increased 2 degrees Celsius by 2015, and sea levels are projected to rise 3 to 4 meters in the coming century, Karen said. At 2.5 degrees Celsius above historic averages, ecosystem productivity is likely to drop significantly.

Only by immediately reducing CO₂ emissions to 2005 levels or lower can we avert global disaster, Karen said. This must be followed by a more drastic program of cutting CO₂ emissions to 60 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. This will require major technological



KAREN STREET uses a drawing of a centipede to illustrate the many-faceted challenge of getting the world to act effectively on global climate change.

retooling, as well as millions of people learning to live well with lower energy consumption.

She compared this multifaceted challenge ahead to the legs of a centipede: It takes only 20 out of the 100 legs to get the centipede moving—comparable to an initial 10 percent reduction in greenhouse gases. "We must educate ourselves and others. We must learn how to communicate about what comes up for us emotionally and spiritually when we consider the magnitude of this threat. We must also become skilled at lobbying and in building enough political power to remove those in office who don't understand," she said.

CARL MAGRUDER of Grass Valley (Calif.) Friends Meeting, followed with a different but complementary approach to climate change, from the perspective of what he called the "Gospel of the Earth."

"Who is feeling exuberance, delight, and awe over what we see unfolding?" Carl asked. Responding to his own question, he said, "I feel that profoundly. Karen Street makes it clear that failure to curb global warming is an option for

us." Many people are pinning their hopes on a technological solution, a modern *deus ex machina*, he noted. But outward changes must be accompanied by equally profound *inward* changes. "We must embark on a spiritual journey that takes us through the depths of despair. But we will also need a container for the despair we encounter, a community to help us bear the burden, and a faith to help move it forward." He suggested that the Religious Society of Friends has the potential to play that role.

"We are being called to a mystical communion with Creation, but first we must shed the pride and sophistication that shield us from the horror of our personal complicity in its destruction. We must acknowledge that as European and North Americans we are among the most culpable people in the history of mankind." Carl said.

"We feel despair precisely because of the stirring of compassion in our hearts. But if love is the First Motion, then ethics is the Second Motion. As encapsulated in our *Faith & Practice*, Quakerism is a *lived* faith grounded in a symbiotic relationship with all of Creation. We can't think our way into a paradigm shift. We must *live* our way into it, and way will open, as it did for early Friends. The Truth to be revealed through this ordeal will astound us. This is a matter of faith, not intellect," Carl said.

"While the thermometer is telling us that we have to embark on what promises to be an exciting adventure, we don't have the luxury of knowing our destination

Interest group, next page >>

QEW Center taps new energies at West Coast site

THE EARTHCARE CENTER was especially busy at this year's FGC Gathering in Tacoma, Wash. This was due in part to an influx of West Coast Friends who were new to the Gathering. We also sensed that more Friends are coming around to the QEW perspective—that the looming global ecological crisis is at heart a *spiritual* issue for which the Quaker faith has relevant answers.

QEW's presence was reinforced by theologian Sallie McFague's focus on spirituality and ecology during one of the plenary sessions. (See page 1.) In the question period, one Friend told how empowered she felt after taking the Ecological Footprint Quiz at the QEW Earthcare Center.

Week-long Earthcare-related workshops included one on climate change led by Karen Street of Berkeley Friends Meeting. Kristina Perry led an interest group at the Center titled, "Sabbath Economics and Earthcare."

Strong response to Ruah Swennerfelt's interest group on "Creating Sustainable Communities" showed that people are hungry for tools and information for participating directly in personal and planetary transformation.

Louis Cox led an interest group that explored the connections between permaculture principles and Quaker values.



ABOVE: Friends with better-than-average scores on the Ecological Footprint Quiz pose with their prizes, including Seventh Generation products and QEW books and posters.

ABOVE RIGHT: General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt leads a discussion following a video showing in the QEW Center.

RIGHT: New Earthcare-related videos bring many visitors to the Center and stimulate interest in QEW's work.

BELOW RIGHT: Carolyn and Roy Treadway lead an afternoon interest group on conserving personal and planetary resources and health by living more slowly and mindfully.

Karen Street, Carl Magruder, and Dee Rossman led a well-attended interest group on climate change (see previous page). Roy and Carolyn Treadway showed Friends how to simplify their lives with emphasis on slowing down their pace of activities.

Jim Rose's annual campus tree-identification walks have become so popular that this year tickets were issued to limit the number of participants.



QEW's sponsorship of early morning outdoor worship was again appreciated by many Friends, despite distractions from nearby foot traffic and various noises. (We look forward to having a better site at next year's Gathering in River Falls, Wis.) ❖

>> Interest group

ahead of time. But the paramount question is whether as Friends we will embark *corporately*—just as Jesus's friends responded in a body when he said, "*Lay down your nets and follow me,*" Carl said.

DEE ROSSMAN of Strawberry Creek (Calif.) Friends Meet-

ing asked Friends to consider in worship-sharing how to create an atmosphere for change in themselves and others, in response to what they have heard so far about global warming. Some Friends related the discussion to Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and Jared Diamond's book *Collapse*. Some saw the relevance of the Precautionary Principle, as well as

the Testimony of Simplicity.

Because of the speakers' stress on the need for a *community* response, plans were made to set up a listserv to facilitate further discussion and networking.

Those interested in the listserv or Karen's blog on climate and energy issues may contact her at <Karen_Street@sbaglobal.net>.

—Louis Cox

Earthcare is focus at Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

“SEEKING an Earth Restored: The Spiritual Path of Stewardship” was the theme of this year’s Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting at Earlham College in Richmond, Ind. One-hundred-eighty plus Friends were present for some or all of the five days in late July.

Worship-sharing sessions were held on four mornings, including an outdoor group that I led. The Thursday morning query invited us to share stories of inspiration or transformation in the natural world, and many in my group seemed enlivened by the personal stories offered and received.

On Saturday morning we were queried to tell about actions taken on behalf of right relationship with Earth. Although many told of meaningful lifestyle changes, most seemed frustrated with the knowledge that these are not enough to address the depth of our looming global ecological crisis. There were some ideas for corporate action and systemic change, but few seemed satisfied with their own or Friends’ collective efforts.

My workshop, “Embracing Earthcare as a Religious Calling,” drew 24 people, most of whom seemed enthusiastic in their questioning and dialoging. The workshop on forming Monthly Meeting Earthcare committees drew some actively involved teenagers, and several people from one Monthly Meeting said they were ready to form a new committee. Workshops on sacred gardening, music and nature, sustainability, creative responses to peak oil, and Earthcare in the Bible all reportedly were stimulating to a number of folks.

DORIS FERM of Bellingham (Wash.) Friends Meeting gave a plenary address on Thursday evening titled, “Stewardship and Beyond” (see <www.quaker.org/

<*ovym*> for the text). She shied away from the term *stewardship*, with its connotations of standing outside of or above the natural world, saying “We are part of the natural world, just like squirrels, trees, streams and rocks.... We all came from the same source; we are all made of star stuff.”

Doris turned extensively to the New Universe Story derived from the sciences, saying,

“As my mind grapples with the concepts of quantum physics.... I feel the excitement of it, and I feel at home in it... Out of that emptiness called the plenum, that realm of power, particles of matter and waves of energy are continually appearing and disappearing every second, everywhere. Creation is ongoing, not static, not finished... This mysterious creative energy that is the nature of all things is a form of love... the attraction of one thing for another. It is what keeps the galaxies in their paths, the planets rotating around the sun, is in the homing in of a hummingbird to a tubular red flower, and in the devotion of parents to their offspring...”

She said we need to commit ourselves to radically changed lives, “spirit-filled lives that see every form of life as an expression of universal love.”

CARL MAGRUDER of Grass Valley (Calif.) Friends Meeting gave a Saturday night plenary talk titled, “The Gospel of the Earth.” Carl had met previously with the middle youth and with the teens, who turned out in numbers and seemed to resonate with him. He had attended several of our Yearly Meeting workshops and worship-

sharings to listen and get a sense of what we were thinking and feeling.

He opened with a song that included the line, “I must be the song I sing about.” He spoke of his frustration as he lives within an economic/cultural system that, despite his attempts to live frugally and “off the grid,” makes it impossible for him and the rest of

us to live more sustainably.

He emphasized that technology by itself will not save us. We Friends have something better than all the green technologies and better than all the stained glass and great artwork in the cathedrals. What we have is our Meeting communities with

our history of radical Quaker democratic process grounded in the Spirit, which has helped bring about some important societal changes. In ending, Carl said that out in the future somewhere “there is a great symphony waiting to be played. How I long to hear that music.”

At this annual session I didn’t see or hear the kinds of dismissal or grumblings I have sometimes picked up in response to “environmental” themes. A wide range of people seemed to be enthusiastic and even joyful despite topics such as the coming decline in global oil production.

Our new Earthcare subcommittee (under the care, as we start up, of Peace and Social Concerns) has six members, and we left with several ideas for action.

—Bill Cahalan
Community Friends Meeting
Cincinnati, Ohio



Carl Magruder

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BeFriending Creation

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We publish **BeFriending Creation** to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation. Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Submission deadlines are February 7, April 7, June 7, August 7, October 7, and December 7.

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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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Holding Earth in the Light A Quaker Retreat to Nurture Our Earthcare Witness

September 29–October 1, 2006

Sierra Friends Center, Nevada City, Calif.

Sponsored by Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting & Pacific Yearly Meeting's Unity with Nature Committee

- Does your Meeting have a clear Earthcare leading?
- A few, quiet Earthcare voices?
- Or a witness waiting to be heard?
- What does it mean for Quakers to hold Earth in the Light?



Join us for a gathering of Friends to bring the light of love and clarity of conviction to our actions on behalf of Earth.

- Share stories from your Meeting. Learn what other Meetings are doing.
- Hear Quaker writer Keith Helmuth discuss how to re-vision Friends' Testimonies to reflect concern for Earth.
- Consider how to turn concerns for Earth into active witness.
- Worship together to explore and deepen our leadings.
- Learn about sustainability projects at Sierra Friends Center.
- Walk lightly and reverently in the beauty of the Sierra Foothills.

Contact: James K. Hosley, 510/665-3170 or bluejkh@softcom.net.
For more information go to www.dimeagallon.org and www.woolman.org.

September-October 2006

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Rolene Walker begins her long 'Walk With Earth'

ROLENE WALKER, a member of San Francisco Friends Meeting and a QEW supporter, will soon begin a pilgrimage from San Diego, Calif., to Santiago, Chile, carrying a spiritual concern for the earth. Accompanied by three to seven high-school-age and adult Friends, she will roughly follow the Pan American Highway while seeking out places of great beauty and rich biological diversity—in other words, to walk *with* the earth, and not simply *over* it.

Traveling about 10 miles a day, the group will receive hospitality from schools and churches where they will be sharing stories and songs that emphasize the sacredness of the earth. A support vehicle will accompany them.

"I envision this as a walking-learning-teaching process, a peace community trying to model how people do live well together," Rolene reports on her website, <www.walkwithearth.org>.

"We will be studying the Quaker testimonies and queries from a new perspective: Is the query on simple living the same in the U.S. as in El Salvador? What would John Woolman say today about our lives and how



we are making it impossible for many other species to survive?"

Rolene believes young people today already know a lot about how distressed the earth is, but not enough has been done to teach them the joy of a spiritual relationship to the earth. "We need to wake up very soon to the sacred glory of life and nature and our social responsibility to preserve both or be destroyed.... The care of the earth is for us what slavery was for Quakers in John Woolman's time."

Rolene has spent a lot of time in Chile and has felt most spiritually

grounded while hiking in the mountains, so the leading that came to her many years ago was not a complete surprise. She did decide to wait until her retirement this year so that she could devote her full energy to the task.

The group is in need of various kinds of support, from help in arranging hospitality and translating teaching materials into Spanish to tax-deductible contributions. To get involved, contact Christine Bush, Walk With Earth Treasurer, 500 W. Middlefield Rd., #35, Mountain View CA 94043-3409, or through their website. ❖