



# BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

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## *Bill McKibben delivers alarming and encouraging news about global warming to QEW supporters*

by Louis Cox

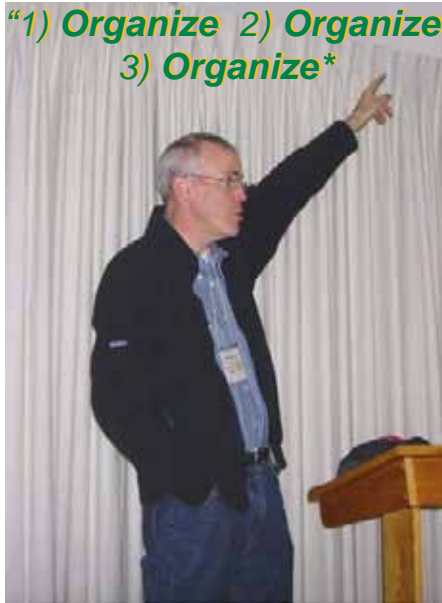
**VERMONT AUTHOR** and global warming activist Bill McKibben is both alarmed and encouraged by recent climate news. In a keynote address to 80 Friends at the 2007 QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering in Burlington, Vt., in October, he led off with the bad news:

**It's later than we think.** The Great Warming *tsunami* is cascading at us faster than scientists anticipated even five years ago. One of countless signs: By September 2007, the Arctic Sea ice pack had shrunk by more than a *million square kilometers*, beating by 27 percent the record for summer sea ice melting set in 2005. Open sea absorbs more heat, so there is likely to be less refreezing next year....

**Global warming is the greatest moral challenge in human history.** Climatologists' sense of what's going to happen in coming decades is growing more dire. NASA's Dr. James Hansen, a leading spokesperson for world scientific consensus, says there is now a plausible chance of *20-foot* rise in sea levels in this century. That would flood hundreds of coastal cities and millions of acres productive land around the world—a human and environmental tragedy of incredible proportions. According to Hansen and others, we now have *no more than 10 years* to turn this planetary emergency around.

**Bill's plan for climate action:**

**"1) Organize 2) Organize  
3) Organize"**



**\*then change out those light bulbs.\***

**3. Our leadership is AWOL.** Climate politics hasn't changed over the nearly 20 years since McKibben wrote *The End of Nature*, the first work on global warming aimed at the general public. While at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, U.S. President George H.W. Bush gave lip service to halting global warming, but he added that "the American way of life is not open to negotiation." Meanwhile, the current White House occupant has been a complete disaster on this by actually promoting a policy of *increased* energy consumption. Over the past two decades, the U.S. also squandered a crucial opportunity to nudge

China into a different trajectory of industrial development. If instead we had helped put China on a "soft energy" path, we might be seeing a Chinese coal-fired generating plant coming on line every month instead of at the current rate of *one per week*.

**We are facing grim choices.**

Because of the delayed effect of greenhouse gases already released into the atmosphere, we're not going to stop global warming. At this point we can only think in terms of avoiding its worst effects. *The choice is now between a pretty tough century ahead and a catastrophic one.*

**Our inaction seems to be due to some kind of spiritual malady.**

Cheap fossil fuels have made us rich, but they have also robbed our lives of meaning. We are the first people in human history who, because of access to credit-card solutions to nearly everything, no longer have any need of our neighbors. In 1966 most people reported they were "very happy" with their lives. Since then our material standard of living has almost tripled, but our personal-satisfaction index has plummeted. Something about an affluence level above \$10,000 per capita creates dissatisfaction. Over the last half century, the biggest part of the U.S. economy has been funneled into suburbia. Now peo-

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>> **Climate action**, from page 1

ple run into each other less. Families are eating meals together less than half as often, and people have less than half as many friends as they did 50 years ago.

*And now for some good news:*

**The country is starting to wake up.** McKibben said public response to the 49-mile Climate Action Walk that he led on Labor Day weekend in 2006 gave him more hope than at any time since he had begun working on global warming. The walk culminated in a rally attended by more than 1,000 Vermonters, including a number of Republican and Democratic office candidates who signed on to a pledge to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 80 percent by 2050.

This success inspired him and others to organize a nationwide "Step it Up" climate-awareness campaign in early 2007. Hoping to inspire perhaps 100 events around the country, planners were amazed to learn they had ignited more than 1,400 climate action demonstrations and stunts, generating much more publicity than if the same number of people had held a rally in Washington, D.C.

**Answers to the global warming threat are becoming clearer.**

For example, Solar panels and wind turbines tied to the grid can cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions significantly. The point is, *we already have the technology to do this.* The scientists and economists have done their job well. It has now come down to politics and our responsibility as members of the body politic. Countries like Japan and Germany are showing they have the political will to begin recovery from their addiction to fossil fuels. They are making great strides in both reduc-

ing energy consumption and putting alternative technologies into place.

**A movement akin to the Civil Rights revolution is taking off.** By now most people are realizing that something is wrong, and that's a good sign. If we can energize only a small percent of that majority we can change the course of history. And we're beginning to see what kind of movement it will or can be.

1) It will have to be broad, including not only the Step it Up eco-activists, but members of Con-

gress, sorority sisters, evangelical congregations, chambers of commerce, and folks from many other walks of life. 2) It must be about justice, of all kinds. The energy we're wasting is needed to pull people

out of poverty. We need to tackle unemployment by creating green jobs, for example, installing solar systems and weatherizing homes. 3) It must involve a positive vision of what the world looks like on the other end of this crisis. We need to be working for a more peaceful world than the one we inhabit at the moment. McKibben's new book, *Deep Economy*, talks a lot about this.

**A growing number of determined folks are taking back their communities.** Local farmers' markets are the fastest growing sector of the economy. Someone recently did a study of social interaction in supermarkets versus farmers' markets. In the latter there were ten times the number of interpersonal conversations per visit. Through these modest but manifold beginnings, a new world is beginning to form. And it will form much faster when we do the political work to make sure that prices for food and energy reflect their true cost.

**6. We have realistic models.**

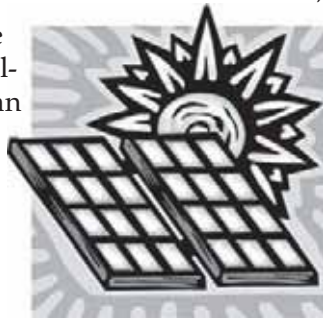
The average western European uses less than one-half the fuel that the average North American uses. You don't hear Europeans complaining about "high" taxes, because they know they are getting a bargain in terms of efficient mass transit and healthy communities. So preventing the disaster of global warming does not have to involve a radical, revolutionary change, only a slightly different way of looking at the world. That's the long-term vision. In the sort term, however, we have to work for emergency political action, especially getting Congress to put caps on carbon emissions.

**A broad faith-based environmental movement taking shape.**

The brave stand that a national group of evangelical Christians recently took on global warming is shaking one pillar of political power. It makes a big difference when the incredible radicalness of the Gospels becomes real to the 80 percent of people who claim to be religious. They are no longer getting bogged down in debates about parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub>. They are heeding the commandment to love God and their neighbors as themselves. They realize that their "neighbors" include the 400 million Asians and Africans who will have to leave their homes if the polar ice caps slide into sea. No reform movement in this society has ever succeeded without being grounded in such moral principles.

**There's no guarantee we'll succeed, but we're going to try.**

Given the magnitude of the problem and the shortness of time, our only hope is to make changes in Washington and then move on to the international community. What three things can *we* do? *Organize, organize, organize.* Then think about putting in that new compact fluorescent light bulb. ❖



## New Steering Committee clerk devotes life to Earthcare

**HOLLISTER KNOWLTON**, a member of Chestnut Hill (Pa.) Friends Meeting and a long-time member of the Quaker Earthcare Witness Steering Committee, was named clerk at the October 2007 Annual Meeting.

She has also served for many years with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Earthcare Working Group, visiting Meetings and Quaker gatherings to speak and give workshops on such issues as climate change, ecologi-



cal footprints, sustainability and the UN World Summit. She is a trained facilitator in the "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream" symposium developed by the Pachamama Alliance.

Since retiring from work with the William Penn Foundation in 2003, she has been devoting herself full time to working among Quakers on Earthcare/ecological sustainability and transforming the human-Earth relationship.

In 2002 Hollister was one of four Quaker delegates to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. In 2004-05 she participated in a two-week workcamp at *Finca La Bella*, Costa Rica, a 122-acre Quaker-funded project for landless farmers and experiment in social justice and sustainability. In 2005 she traveled to the sustainable community of Gaviotas, Colombia, in conjunction with the work of ZERI (Zero Emissions Research Initiative), a program that is creating practices of sustainability based on principles of nature. ❖

### Returning from Annual Meeting, Hollister reflects on becoming clerk

**AS I BEGIN** these reflections, I am aboard Amtrak's "Vermont-er" train, returning home from the QEW Annual Meetings in Vermont. It will take more than 12 hours to reach Philadelphia's 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station, where I will catch the commuter train to Chestnut Hill and walk across the street to my little row house.

The scenery outside my window is a breathtaking array of orange, red, yellow, and green foliage; rushing brooks; farms with rustic barns, cows, horses, sheep; small villages with white churches and graceful, modest homes with clapboard siding.

It has been a rich weekend, filled with the people and memories of our 20 years of living out a deep concern for God's creation and for mending our human-Earth relationship. One speaker lifted up the urgent need to "organize, organize, organize" in response to the human-induced climate change that is putting life as we know it at peril. Others offered options for alternative life styles that enable us to

live more gently on the planet. We saw a modular system for urban green building and heard about someone's "handmade life" that lifts up the power of making things by hand. Another speaker showed how he is able to live richly on \$5,000 per year (the average per-capita world income). We learned that we would need to shrink our ecological footprints to 1 acre each in order for the world's current population of 6.6 billion to live within the earth's carrying capacity while preserving enough habitat that wild species can regenerate. We glimpsed through all this what "an Earth-restored" might look like.

We have been nurtured by Ruah Swennerfelt's extraordinary gift for event organization (including three and a half days of speakers and meetings, a bike trip out onto the causeway in Lake Champlain, a morning canoeing the Winoski River, as well as meals and overnight stays for Friends whose transport schedules brought them early and/or required staying over an extra day).

We held several Friends in the Light this weekend—those who were not able to be with us for reasons of age or illness. I especially want to mention our outgoing presiding clerk, Barbara Williamson, who was hospitalized just days before the meeting and is recovering as I write. Barbara had prepared, in-advance, readings for each of our business sessions. As alternate clerk, stepping into the role of clerk in her absence, I was deeply grateful to read aloud Barbara's warm and sometimes folksy words at the opening of each session.

Ruah and Louis will leave soon for their six-month, 1400-mile, Peace for Earth Walk [See page 9]. I have been reading a copy of their study guide, which lifts up "John Woolman's Witness for Living in Right Relationship with *All of Creation*" They are distributing this little gem of a booklet to Meetings and churches along their route. Let us all hold Louis and Ruah in our hearts as they walk on Earth's (and our) behalf. ❖

## Quakers do want to get involved and make a difference!

by Barbara Williamson  
Outgoing QEW Steering  
Committee Clerk

As clerk of the QEW Steering Committee, I have had the opportunity to meet Quakers from all across the country. Often they have asked me, "What can we and our Meetings do about the environmental crisis?"

I'm glad that the question is being asked, because it tells me that Quakers do want to get involved, and they do want to make a difference. But I'm concerned when the question is asked at a basic level—in terms of how to even get started. It suggests to me that many Quakers are unsure how environmental problems—and harmful climate change in particular—connect with Quaker testimonies.

In many other areas, Quakers do know what to do. We understand how urgent situations and needs are intimately connected with "service."

- ◆ When disaster hits, we know what to do. When Hurricane Katrina plowed into the Gulf Coast two years ago, we sent money, and Quaker work groups went to the Gulf Coast to help meetings, churches and individuals rebuild.
- ◆ When a beloved Friend dies, we know what to do. Casseroles are delivered, and memorial services are held. Community support is there for the long-term help of family members.
- ◆ In the face of global poverty, we know what to do. We support the American Friends Service Committee and Right Sharing of World Resources.



- ◆ *What can we do?* is a question that comes up in relation to disasters, death and poverty, but it is a question mostly of details and timing. We presume that Meetings can and should do something, and we're looking for help on the specifics.
- ◆ But when it comes to the global environmental crisis, the question seems far more basic. Many Meetings seem to be starting from scratch. It is not about which tools to use, or which programs to support, but simply about where to begin.

As I listen to the discussions about global warming in many other sectors of society, I don't hear the question "*What can we do?*" being raised in the same way that it is in Quaker Meetings.

- ◆ At colleges and universities, researchers are contributing their expertise to the pool of knowledge in many fields. Professors are engaging students in learning and reflecting about a multitude of philosophical, scientific, political, and economic issues. Administrators and student groups work together to reduce climate impact on campus. They know what to do, based on their core missions of research, education, and campus life.
- ◆ In legislative bodies, politicians are holding hearings, drafting and debating legislation, proposing incentives, meeting with lobbyists and constituents, and staking out campaign positions. They know what to do with political processes and institutions, even as they fight long and hard about specific policy positions.

- ◆ In the business world, visionary companies are discovering exciting options for new products and services, and threatened industries are fighting to preserve their niches. Advertisers don't need encouragement as they look for ways to put a "green" label on almost everything. They know what to do to maintain their customer base and win new customers.

In education, politics, and business, the threat of climate change connects with the core purposes of those institutions. Of course there are ways that academics, legislators, and business leaders can be involved! In those social sectors, I don't hear leaders asking start-from-scratch questions about what can be done.

How, then, does global warming connect with the essential testimonies of Quakerism? That is a legitimate question and an important concern.

If—as is often the case—the crisis of climate change is discussed primarily as a debate about scientific evidence, or about technological solutions, or about complex economic strategies, then those topics are a stretch for most Meetings. That's not how we understand our mission, and that's not where we have our expertise.

But if we see global warming as a moral and ethical issue that deals with the relationships among human communities, future generations, and the whole of Creation, then we're getting into religious territory. If we see climate change as a symptom of a flawed understanding about the meaning of life, then we're addressing an area where we can speak with moral authority. If Earth's deep

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distress is at heart a *human* problem and not a technological one, then Quakers should have a decent sense of how to talk about it.

In the three years that I have been clerk of the QEW Steering Committee, I have seen a change among Monthly Meetings. More and more Quakers are discerning how the great environmental issues of our time are intimately connected with what Quakers are called to do and be. And the questions about *what can we do?* is being asked in a different way.

QEW has grown stronger and more focused in the past three years. It has been my pleasure and privilege to be part of QEW and to work closely with members of the Steering Committee while this growth was taking place.

I urge everyone to continue supporting the work of QEW and to attend the Annual Meetings each Columbus Day weekend in October. Also, please encourage your Yearly Meeting to become part of QEW if it hasn't done so already. All Yearly Meetings that are a part of QEW can have two representatives on the Steering Committee. If your Yearly Meeting needs a QEW representative, take the opportunity to work with this outstanding group of Quakers.

As my term as clerk comes to an end, I will continue to be a member of the Steering Committee and you will see me in the pages of *BeFriending Creation*. I hope I will still have the opportunity to visit Yearly Meetings.

Y'all be good now! ♦



*Barbara's series of articles on greening our homes will continue in the next issue of BeFriending Creation.*

## 'Signs of Hope' at Quaker Ecology Action Network (QEAN) meeting

WE ARE PLEASED to report that our "Signs of Hope" special interest group at Canadian Yearly Meeting in 2007 was well received, with at least 30 persons present.

We noted the change in attitude of society at large and governments of all sizes and in some areas of the commercial world. We are not needed as much now to be advocates of interest in this concern. We are called to seek and offer perspectives for change.

Participants included Tracey McCowen (CYM representative to Quaker Earthcare Witness), Anne Mitchell (Quaker Institute for the Future), Bill Currey (speaking on aspects of the nuclear/uranium debate in Canada), and Vince Zelazny and Don Alexander, representatives from Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC).

Hollister Knowlton of Quaker Earthcare Witness (who lives in the U.S.) had arranged an excellent QEW display and gave an interest group on Gaviotas, Colombia.

QEAN continues to search for an ecology role within Canadian Yearly Meeting. We heard a report on our work within CYM, with references to recommendations around ecology concerns in the Yearly Meeting. We will continue our networking and enter into dialogue with CFSC, which is examining its place in the environmental witness (see *Quaker Concern*, spring issue 2007, with the title, "Mending Creation."

We are appreciative of the CYM Program Committee's efforts to make the Yearly Meeting sessions as environmentally friendly as possible. We note the excellent website that QEW is maintaining and the development of the QEAN site in CYM. We encourage QEAN members to continue their witness, contributions to discussion, and publication.

We concluded with a short DVD on the Earth Charter and a time of worship.

—Arnold Ranneris, clerk

### *New Steering Committee member brings economics perspective to peace, justice, and Earthcare work*

DAVID CISCEL, Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting & Association's new representative to QEW, says he began to see the conflict between industrial society and the idea of "an earth restored" when he led an environmental concerns seminar at the University of Pittsburgh in the early 1970s.

A member of the Memphis (Tenn.) Friends Meeting, David later got a spiritual perspective on ecology and economics through SAYMA's Ecological Concerns Network. Later he got involved



David Ciscel

with the Friends Testimony on Economics (FTE) project, offering his long experience as a professor of economics. FTE leader Ed Dreby invited David to join Quaker Earth-care Witness. He is now active in the QEW Sustain-

ability: Faith & Action interest group, and he will be the next QEW treasurer next spring.

Since his recent retirement, he has been busy with hobbies, carpentry, and social activism. He and his wife have four adult children and three grandchildren.

# UN adopts Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

by Mary Gilbert

Friends Meeting at Cambridge

**G**REAT NEWS! The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has been adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. On September 13, 2007, the world's only representative body endorsed, by an overwhelming majority, the principle that *those sometimes referred to as First People have the same rights as everyone else on the planet.*

This is a victory we can heartily cheer. At the UN, the Indigenous Peoples' voice speaks for their cause as inseparable from the nurturing land where they live and as a spiritual matter. *Their victory is a victory for all of us and for the planet we love.*

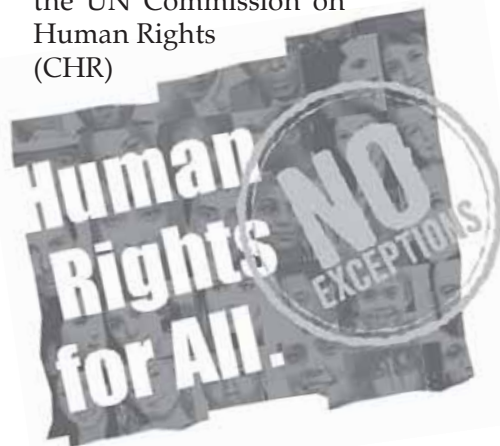
The Declaration is not a treaty, and violations cannot be brought to any court. It is an "aspirational human rights instrument" that will be held up as an agreed goal for all countries. Like the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, *it will be referred to, and over time will increase in influence.*

Although the Declaration gives Indigenous Peoples no rights beyond what are internationally recognized, it has faced formidable opposition—particularly from extractive industries, including water mining, and from agri-businesses, which want to turn indigenous peoples' small farms and forests into huge one-crop plantations and bio-fuel crops.

Indigenous peoples are scattered around the globe, are usually very poor, and live in remote areas. Through the UN, over the last 20 years they have made contact with each other and clarified their common ground. The process still was "lengthy and frustrating," due

both to differences among the Peoples' own cultures and differences in the laws, customs, etc. of the dominant societies of the countries where they live.

Drafting the Declaration took 20 years of hard work, after which came a series of bureaucratic hurdles. It had to be approved by the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR)



and the UN Third Committee before it could come to the General Assembly. And there was opposition at every step, including a procedural loophole that a bloc of nations used to try to prevent it from coming to a vote.

The Indigenous Peoples Caucus got to work, lobbying strongly all spring and summer. One month to the day before the Declaration was to be considered, four governments submitted a "Non-Paper" to the General Assembly, requesting specific, disastrous, changes to the Draft. References to "free, prior and informed consent" were deleted, and language was added to establish the primacy of other laws and priorities over Indigenous decisions.

On September 1, 2007, word went out that an agreement had been reached over an amended version of the Declaration. *No Indigenous representatives had participated in the amending.*

The Caucus undertook an urgent consultation with Indigenous Peoples' delegations to determine whether they could live with the amendments. They emphasized that "the States that are bound in this agreement will represent a clear majority of the UN members and it will guarantee adoption..." Although some Indigenous groups felt that to go along with this was tantamount to submitting once again to colonial rule, in the end they were able to support the amended Declaration.

The final version is very close to the original and includes *none* of the language introduced by the four governments' "Non-Paper"! (I checked this personally.) The General Assembly vote was 143 nations in favor, 4 opposed, and 11 abstentions. *The four opposed were the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.*

**B**ENEFICIAL use of this non-Treaty has already begun. Only days after the Declaration was adopted the New Zealand Human Rights Council issued a statement of their intention to use the Declaration, in spite of the vote against it by the government of New Zealand.

A week later an agency of the Australian state of Victoria announced, "Australia's refusal to support the Declaration does not preclude it from having relevance domestically.... The Declaration will prove an invaluable resource in understanding how the rights of indigenous people can be best served" (*Dr. Helen Szoke, chief executive of the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission*).

Citizens of two of the four opposing nations have spoken up, and people from the United States and Canada will not be unheard from. Keep your ears open... and be ready to speak up too. ♦

## QEW elders Alice & Bill Howenstine receive 2007 Peace & Justice Award

WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS—Environmentalists and Quaker peace activists Alice and Bill Howenstine were the co-recipients of the 2007 Peace & Justice Award presented December 14th at the Woodstock Diversity Day festival.

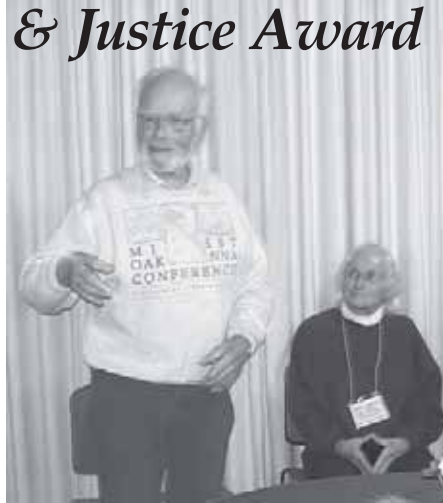
"The Howenstines are regarded by many as the godparents of the environmental movement in McHenry County," said Diversity Day Executive Director Patrick Murfin. "Individually and working together as a team, they have helped shape a mature conservation movement. They have also been models of Quaker peacemaking, not only locally, but nationally and internationally."

The couple met at a camp operated by a Cleveland, Ohio, settlement house in 1942. Alice was a camper and Bill was on staff. They have been involved with camps and outdoor youth programming ever since.

Bill attended the University of Arizona and worked with the student Social Action Group, which sponsored community-building projects among Hispanics, Native Americans, African-American soldiers at a nearby segregated Army post, and the Japanese-Americans interred by the U.S. government during World War II.

After their marriage in 1951, they became co-directors of the Cleveland Heights School Camp, where their first child was born. Bill went on to earn his Ph.D. and the couple continued to work and teach at the camp for ten years.

In 1961, Bill took a teaching position at what is now Northern Illinois University (NEIU). He continued there for 35 years in a variety of positions, including eight years as Dean of Students and Vice-President for Student Ser-



**BILL and ALICE reminisce about the 1987 beginnings of FCUN/QEW during QEW's 20th Anniversary gathering in Burlington, Vt., in October.**

vices. In the 1970s Alice earned a master's degree in Geography and Environmental studies at the school while raising three children.

All during these years they remained committed to social justice. In 1964 they took their whole family and students from the University to work in a small Mexican village in the state of Tlaxcala, as part of an AFSC community service program. The next year Bill took a leave of absence from NEIU, and the family spent 13 months with an AFSC project in Lima, Peru.

In 1968–69 Alice and Bill co-directed a Field Study Center for the Union of Experimenting Colleges and Universities in the mountains of eastern Kentucky.

In 1970 the family moved to McHenry County, Ill., and began operating Pioneer Tree Farm, while Bill returned to teaching. From the beginning they saw their farm as a place that urban students could use as a laboratory for exploring the natural environment and the ramifications of urban sprawl.

In the 1970s Alice operated a small summer camp on the farm,

for which scholarships were given to inner-city children from Chicago in order to have economic and racial diversity.

Both became involved in the work of the McHenry County Defenders, where Alice has been a specialist in recycling and reuse of resources. Bill helped found what is now the Land Conservancy of McHenry County and has served on the board of directors for two agencies that serve diverse, often underprivileged, camper populations.

The Howenstines have remained committed to their Quaker faith. In 1971, with two other families they formed what is now the Upper Fox Valley Friends Meeting.

In 1987 they helped organize Friends Committee on Unity with Nature (later renamed Quaker Earthcare Witness). The core group had been in the Howenstines' workshop on "Friends and the Environment" at that year's FGC Gathering. All were led to explore corporately the spiritual basis of their ecological concerns and how to act on those concerns in a Quaker context.

After traveling to Costa Rica in 1991, Bill and Alice started a QEW project to buy land for landless farmers. This evolved into the *Finca La Bella* (Beautiful Farm) project, which has included work camps and farmer-exchange programs. With two sons and a grandson, Alice and Bill went to a work camp at *Finca La Bella*, and two *Finca* members came to their family farm for a year to work with Christmas trees.

"Their resumes, while impressive on their own, do not begin to describe the inspiration which Alice and Bill have provided to a vast network of people in McHenry County and across the globe. They have touched many more lives than even they suspect," Murfin said. ♦

## 2007 Annual Meeting & Gathering: *Practical tools and shared visualizing of an Earth restored*

by Louis Cox

**F**ASCINATING and informative speakers and events packed the agenda of the recent 2007 QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering. There was not, however space to cover all of them this time, but the plan is to catch up with them in future issues.

Missing for now are stories about **Jim Merkel**, sustainable living consultant and author of *Radical Simplicity*, who lives comfortably and ecologically on \$5,000 a year; **Bill Coperthwaite**, director of the Yurt Foundation and author of *A Handmade Life*, who eschews telephones and computers; Steering Committee member **Roy Taylor**, a green architect from Atlanta; **Gwen Noyes** and **Art Klipfel**, Quaker architects from Cambridge, Mass., and authorities on co-housing and other kinds of Earth-friendly and people-friendly urban development; and **Pete & Karen Sutherland**, collectors and performers of earthy folk music from New England.

For now I am paraphrasing (at right) the moving and insightful Bible Reflection that QEW supporter **Maggie Edmundson**, a Quaker pastor from Maine, delivered one morning. I decided to include this for two reasons: 1) Many Friends said afterward that they thought her talk would make an excellent QEW booklet, similar to our *Caring for Creation, the Biblical Basis for Earthcare*, that was based on Lisa L. Gould's Bible half-hour talks at New England Yearly Meeting. 2) I had not found the space in previous issues to do justice to many of the fine Bible Reflections from previous Annual Meetings.



**LEFT:** General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt gets ready to serve up QEW's 20th birthday cake. **ABOVE:** Roy Taylor, a green buildings architect and QEW Steering Committee member, explains principles of green building design.

### What the Bible tells us about the spiritual relationship between humans and the earth

*Notes from a Bible Reflection by Quaker pastor  
Maggie Edmundson at the QEW Annual Meeting*

**A LOT OF PEOPLE**, including many Quakers, feel alienated from the Bible because of the destructive way that it has been misused throughout history. But if we throw out the whole Bible, we also lose all that which is transcendent, beautiful, and full of eternal truths. It's also hard to engage people whose lives are Bible-centered if we don't know what it says.

The Hebrew Bible and New Testament contain stories with many layers of meaning that can stay with us and become part of our inner landscape. We can identify three strands or themes in these stories that suggest what God wills for us—*liberation, homecoming, and acceptance*. Distortion occurs when one of these strands is elevated above the others.

Stories in the Bible also seek to explain the guiding force in the universe. There is a problem, however, with the common interpretation that humans are special and separate from the rest of Creation.

Often overlooked are the parts of the Creation story in which humans are created from the earth and are supposed to be caretakers of the Garden and to treat other species as fellow creatures.

The God of the Bible also speaks in two voices. Seldom heard today is the feminine voice, *Sophia* (Wisdom) that indicates God is intimately involved in the ongoing work of Creation and regards humans as co-creators. Could it be that Sophia is like the material laws of the universe, worthy of our awe and wonder?

The book of Job extolls the fierce beauty of the natural world. It gives a sense of a world that is carefully created and sustained by a divine architect, and that God blesses and loves humans along with the rest of Creation.

On the other hand, the Gospel of John, while authoritative on a number of matters, does not give

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>> *Bible reflection, from Page 8*

much insight into the human-Earth relationship. It is interested in Creation only as a source of light for humans, not the other species. It offers no suggestion that God delights in Creation and in humans as co-creators. The world is all for human benefit, with a strong implication that the spiritual is superior to the material, that our true home is heaven, away from Earth.

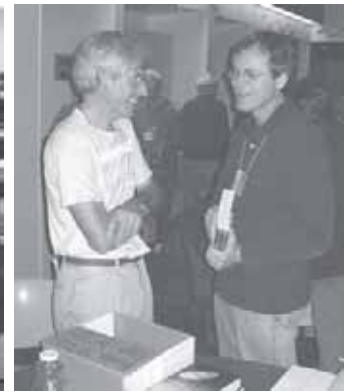
But if we look at the way Jesus lived and what he preached, there was never a hint that he was offering his followers an escape route from earthly life.

So why has modern Bible interpretation tended to be focused on one strand and not the whole? Why do so many people of faith regard themselves as aliens rather than *Earthlings*? In fact, we have the ability to understand the natural world because we are *part* of it.

The Bible contains many passages that are windows into the natural world. But to see them in this way we need to study that other sacred "text," the "Book of Nature." Taken together, the two bring into focus the mysterious and wonderful truth that there is that of God in everything.

Among the many metaphors for God (a fortress, a strong foundation, a heavenly king, etc.), one that is appropriate to this lesson is the image of God as *soil*, in which our roots are able to grow and develop. This suggests a more intimate, organic relationship.

We need more people to feel deeply grounded in that way, people who know and trust their connection with Spirit, who can hear the cry of anguish of nature and feel the horror of pollution. Then we'll start to listen to other voices than ones that have been entrenched in popular understanding. Then we can begin to play a respectful, caring role in Creation. ♦



**LEFT:** Mealtimes were occasions of lively discussion of programs and ecology issues. The center staff served delicious fare that included many locally grown foods. **RIGHT:** Jim Merkel (L) chats with Steering Committee member Steve McConnell after Jim's plenary talk on being "Radically Simple."

*'Sadie' and 'John' on the road, spreading Woolman's message for the 21st century*

ON NOVEMBER 2, 2007, "John Woolman" (Louis Cox) and "Sadie Hinshaw" (Ruah Swennerfelt) set off on their six-month, 1,400-mile Peace for Earth Walk from Vancouver, B.C., to San Diego, Calif. They are slated to talk to some 50 Friends Meetings and churches about how Woolman's message of living in right relationship with *all* of Creation is relevant to the peace, justice, and Earthcare concerns of the 21st century.

While Louis and Ruah are on the road, Friends can follow their progress on their website <[www.peaceforearth.org](http://www.peaceforearth.org)>, through their blog/journal and video clips.

You can e-mail them at: <[ruah@peaceforearth.org](mailto:ruah@peaceforearth.org)> or <[louis@peaceforearth.org](mailto:louis@peaceforearth.org)>

As QEW Publications Coordinator, Louis is continuing to



publish *Be-Friending Creation* and update the QEW website, using a laptop computer. The office portion of Ruah's General Secretary work is being done

temporarily by another Earth-Friend (see Page 10).

You can contribute to the Peace for Earth Walk. Just send a check payable to Burlington Friends Meeting, 173 N. Prospect St., Burlington VT 05401, earmarked for the "Peace for Earth Walk."

*New 'Climate Clearinghouse' welcomes your ideas!*

WITH GROWING CONCERN about the global climate crisis, attendees at the recent QEW Annual Meeting decided to initiate a "Climate Clearinghouse." This information exchange, principally done through listserv, will share what Meetings (both Yearly and Monthly) and individual Quakers are doing in response. It will also communicate useful resources, such as conferences, reports, or outstanding books. Joe Morris (Pacific Yearly Meeting rep. to QEW) has volunteered to coordinate. Please e-mail him your news and ideas at <[dpj1942@earthlink.net](mailto:dpj1942@earthlink.net)>.

## Two books to creatively inspire the climate change movement

by Meredith Dowling

**I**F you are finding yourself daunted by the challenge of harmful climate change, here are two books to inspire you (and help you sleep at night...). Whether you are a budding revolutionary itching to organize and take to the streets or you just want some new ideas of practical ways to reduce your own carbon footprint, you have to get your hands on: 1) Bill McKibben's, *Fight Global Warming Now: The Handbook for Taking Action in Your Community* and 2) *The Live Earth Global Warming Survival Handbook: 77 Essential Skills to Stop Climate Change —or Live Through It*, by David de Rothschild, the official companion to the Live Earth concerts,

*Fight Global Warming Now* speaks to all levels of activists. For those new at raising a ruckus (including those with no prior experience whatsoever), this is an indispensable text. Consider it your new guide to committing your community to joining the movement to stop climate change. And even those of you who got started organizing during the early environmental movement or the Vietnam War era and know quite well the feeling of those plastic cuffs on your wrists, this book provides a much-needed update on the Internet-based organizing tools of today's tech-savvy activists.

I left reading McKibben's book believing that organizing a movement to curb the effects of climate change does not have to be seen as an onerous or overwhelming task. To the contrary, McKibben shows that diving into organizing for this movement can (and in fact should)

be creative and joyful and involve a lot of fun! He provides timely and specific advice for how to craft an action that is credible, quick, collaborative, meaningful, creative, lasting, appropriately tech-savvy, and catchy (for the media). Before you plan your next (or first) action, make sure to give this a read.

*The Live Earth Global Warming Survival Handbook* provides a lively and practical review of 67 things you can do in

your own life to help stop climate change. The changes suggested are all quite realistic, and are aimed at tweaking or redirecting our common habits and needs in order to cut their carbon cost.

The last 10 suggestions are somewhat frightening: They are billed as "survival strategies" to be used "if all else fails" and we reach total climate

meltdown. This section aptly points out the absurdity of our current misuse of natural resources; applying the first 67 tactics to reduce climate change seems far more reasonable than resorting to these bizarre alternatives.

The *Global Warming Survival Handbook* isn't so much something you have to sit down and read cover to cover, but rather something to pick up when you have five minutes to spare to digest a few of the recommendations. Each idea is only a page or two long and contains images,

graphs, and helpful tips. Something I particularly appreciated was that each recommendation includes a rating of its cost, time required, effort involved, and relative impact on carbon reduction. It is an easily accessible book and a much-

needed resource for those of us who may feel overwhelmed and need a place to start. ❖



### Temp to staff QEW office during Peace for Earth Walk

**MEREDITH DOWLING**, 23, will be staffing the QEW office in Vermont while Ruah Swennerfelt, QEW's General Secretary, is away on the Peace for Earth Walk, November 2007 through April 2008.

A 2006 environmental studies graduate of Oberlin College, Meredith worked for the past year as Oberlin's Assistant Sustainability Coordinator.

Last summer she did social psychology research for an environmental consulting firm.

Meredith was part of Atlanta Friends Meeting from early childhood and frequently attended FGC Gatherings.

She met Ruah in a nature workshop that Ruah led at the Gathering in 2004. Her interest in ecology goes back to a first grade teacher's demonstration of the difference between biodegradable and non-biodegradable materials.

"It was so amazing to see how something considered waste could turn into something beautiful and life-giving."



## QEW Steering Committee opposes nuclear power subsidy, promotes energy efficiency

AT ITS 2007 ANNUAL MEETING in October, the QEW Steering Committee gave preliminary approval to a Minute from the Sustainability: Faith & Action interest group, arguing that nuclear power is not a solution to global warming and objecting to multi-billion-dollar loan guarantees for the nuclear industry, under legislation to be considered by Congress in the next few months. The Minute begins,

*Quaker Earthcare Witness cannot support nuclear energy as a part of the solution to the problem of harmful climate change. Based on everything that we know about the current state of nuclear technology and our understanding of its impact and risks for people and the earth; for moral, spiritual, and practical reasons, we are strongly opposed to current efforts to increase nuclear power. Specifically, we are opposed to the proposed loan guarantees in the U.S. Congress for funding new nuclear power plants....*

The rest of the Minute, which addresses the risks and economics of nuclear power, was referred to QEW's Continuing Counsel for final wording after the business session was not able to reach unity on the draft. Some Friends wanted certain statements in the Minute to be given more scrutiny to assure scientific soundness, while others said nuclear risks need to be assessed in the larger context of risks of alternate electric power options.



**QEW ANNUAL MEETING attendees write to Senators in support of strong legislation that would cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and raise vehicle gas-mileage standards.**

In a related activity, QEW supporters Bob and Nancy First of Northampton (Mass.) Friends

Meeting, organized a political "letter-writing party." Procrastination-prone Friends had no excuse not to share their Quaker perspective with Congressional representatives on pending legislation that would

cut greenhouse gas emissions enough to prevent further irreversible ecological damage. Some writers included their objections to proposed legislation that would give more than \$50 billion in loan guarantees to the nuclear fission industry to encourage construction of many new nuclear plants. ♦

### QEW mini-grants now available to Meetings

FRIENDS MEETINGS and churches now can apply for QEW mini-grants to further their environmental goals. Five QEW matching grants of up to \$200 are available for a wide variety of environmental projects, from educational programs to energy-conservation measures.

The deadline for applying is May 1, 2008. Funds will be available by July 1, 2008. The form is on [www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org).

Friends also can earmark contributions to the QEW Mini-Grant Fund.

For more information, contact the QEW office at 802/658-0308, or e-mail Ruth Hamilton at [Ruth@ArtsCanHeal.com](mailto:Ruth@ArtsCanHeal.com).

## 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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**Membership** 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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# BeFriending Creation

November–December 2007

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## Join QEW's 20th anniversary party —with a birthday contribution!

2007 SAW A RISE in the concern for Earth among Friends in vocal ministry and discussions. We were delighted to learn the Nobel Peace Prize had been awarded to Al Gore Jr. for his work to raise consciousness about global warming. But much more remains to be done. Rising sea levels are threatening coastal regions. Eleven of the past 12 years have been the



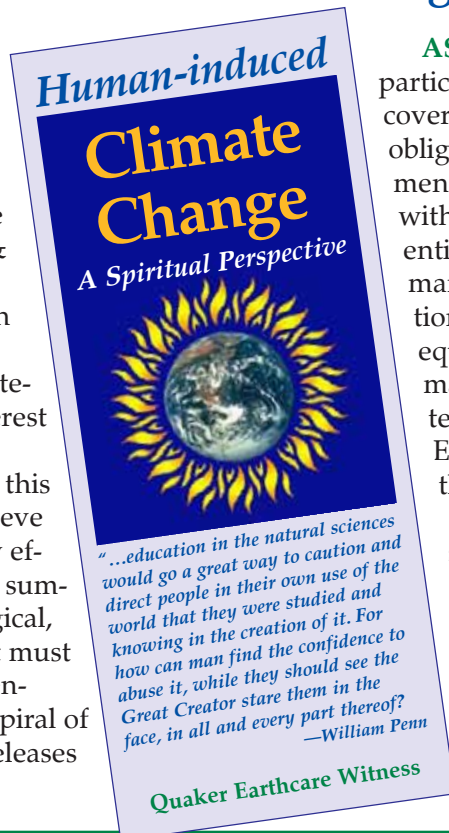
warmest on record. Crop production is declining. Species are going extinct at a faster rate. We need your help to continue integrating Earthcare with Friends' historic testimonies on peace, justice, and equality. Postage rates and other costs have risen, so we would greatly appreciate a special contribution to help us continue and broaden this vital ministry.

## New from QEW! Friends and the challenge of climate change

**HARMFUL CLIMATE CHANGE** is the topic of a new pamphlet that is being enclosed as a gift to QEW supporters in the annual appeal letter being mailed out this fall.

In creating the new quad-fold, the aim of the QEW Sustainability: Faith & Action interest group was to bring a spiritual perspective to a life-and-death issue that is often entangled in arcane scientific language and self-serving statements from politicians and special interest groups.

It was also important to include in this publication what QEW supporters believe is the truth about the causes and likely effects of harmful climate change and to summarize the kinds of lifestyle, technological, educational, and political changes that must be carried out before emissions of greenhouse gases become part of a vicious spiral of ecological system collapses and new releases of greenhouse gases.



**AS WE DISCERN** how to meet this particular global emergency, we are discovering that care of the earth is a sacred obligation. QEW's Vision & Witness statement calls us "to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God." To our traditional Quaker testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity and integrity we may now add *Earthcare*. Each of these testimonies is not a separate endeavor. Each requires the others; all call us to that which is eternal.

We are rising to a new understanding of who we are and what is our place in the community of life. It is time to take the matter of Earthcare into our hearts, with full awareness of its importance in our spiritual life. It is time to pray and discern together what each—and all—of us are called to do. ♦