



# BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

Volume 22, Number 3 • May-June 2009

## Now, about that elephant in the room...

by Louis Cox

**O**VER the past 20 years Quaker Earthcare Witness has committed a fairly large portion of its energy and resources to raising awareness about the combined ecological impact of population and consumption. (Some might call it “Over-Popul-Umption.”)

Guided by two in-house demographers (Stan Becker and Roy Treadway) we have distributed thousands of pamphlets on population issues, family planning, adoption, sexuality, and immigration—as well as ones that promote simple but rich living based on mindful consumption.

Several years ago, Stan’s plenary talk on his life-long population/consumption concern was well received by Friends at an FGC Gathering. QEW also published *Population Is People, a Quaker Perspective*, distributed Stan’s *Population-Resources Simulation Exercise*, and sponsored countless interest groups, programs and discussions on population/consumption at Quaker gatherings and other events.

The *Quaker Eco-Bulletin* has dealt with population concerns. The “Men4Men” fund offers assistance to Quaker men who want to have vasectomies. By distributing Quaker Condoms, QEW is trying to directly reduce unwanted pregnancies. We have discussed, but not yet promoted, the idea that the marriage clearness process for Quaker couples should include counseling on planned family size.

The persistence of these interests within the Religious Society of Friends has been heartening, given that the topic of rapid population growth was considered “controversial” among Friends when QEW was getting started in the late 1980s.



**H**OWEVER, over the past several years even ecologically concerned Friends have allowed population/consumption concerns to be pushed onto the back burner, as human-induced climate change, peak oil, global economic meltdown, and other towering menaces have competed for our attention.

Yes, we have shaken our heads as world population has continued to soar—from 6.0 billion in 1999 to 6.7 billion in 2009, an increase of about 11 percent in just ten years—and as material consumption has overshoot by 23 percent what the planet can support on an extended basis.

But lately this topic seems to have been lumped together with other problems *that we assume we can't do anything about*, like death and taxes. Population/consumption has become the proverbial elephant in the room that we'd prefer not to get into arguments about. Ignoring it is getting harder, however, because it's a *rapidly growing* elephant.

One indication of the current state of semi-denial is the slower rate at which population-related books and pamphlets are being picked up at QEW literature displays or ordered through our publications catalog. It hasn't helped that in the public forum, pro-growth groups (aided and abetted by Bush administration policies) succeeded in framing family-planning and sex-education programs as “anti-life” and dismissing modest-consumption lifestyles as “anti-prosperity.”

**Elephant, next page >>**

>> **Elephant**, from page 1

while exaggerating the potential for technology to keep up with endlessly growing consumption.

Even well-meaning progressives have become enamored of “smart-growth” policies, “smart” cars, and “smart” resource-management strategies that promise to restore balance between supply and demand.

But we all must read and take to heart the grim truth printed on the back of cards attached to packages of Quaker Condoms:

**“Whatever your cause, it’s a lost cause unless human population is stabilized.”**

Virtually every social and ecological problem facing the world today is exacerbated by population pressures combined with the strivings of the impoverished majority to enjoy what the affluent minority already has. Increased consumer goods and services is generally offset by growth in the number of people to feed, clothe, house, and educate. Reductions in rates of pollution and greenhouse gases are being cancelled out by more cars, cows, and power plants.

**T**HE other side of the coin is that together we can, in fact, control population growth. Most of the strategies, keying on empowerment of women and economic justice, are covered in books and pamphlets available from QEW and other groups. We can also make effective use of Quaker process, which fosters cooperation through compassion, mutual respect, and open search for Truth.

Just as important in the long run is changing *some worldviews and attitudes* that shape many people’s preferences about family size. We need, for example, to cure ourselves of notions that the earth’s bounty is intended just for humans’ needs, that happiness and well-being require a North American standard of living, and that procreation is a totally private decision.

Jim Merkel, author of *Radical Simplicity*, reminds us that a truly healthy and sustainable planet requires that *80 percent* of the earth’s bioproductivity be reserved to meet the needs of other species. Right now humans are appropriating over half!

With simple arithmetic Jim brackets our range of options for the future: —All *6.7 billion* of us can start living like Somalis, with average *0.7-acre* ecological footprints, or —We can average one-child families and eliminate wasteful, unnecessary consumption—steadily and peacefully contracting our numbers to about *1 billion* over the next century, ending up with a sustainable average of *4-acre* ecological footprints.

Any path within that range entails daunting political, social, and economic obstacles. But the first step is seeing that the path we’re on now has no future. ❖

## Quaker Institute for the Future hosts summer research seminar

Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF) is inviting applications for its summer research seminar, July 6–10 at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif.

QIF’s mission is “to advance a global future of inclusion, social justice, and ecological integrity through participatory research and discernment.” See <[www.quakerinstitute.org](http://www.quakerinstitute.org)>.

The seminar offers a unique blend of research time and group reflection in a setting of excellent resources. Activities include daily meeting for worship, individual study, and collaborative discernment.

Each day there will be presentations by participants on their focus of research for the week. These sessions will be clerked to allow for reflective time and to facilitate comments from the group. Afternoons are free for participants to use the school’s library and Internet access to pursue their research.

Contact Shelly Tanenbaum at 510/525-8964, or <[sheltan@pacbell.net](mailto:sheltan@pacbell.net)>. ❖

**Hey, Quaker congregations!  
There’s still time to apply for  
your 2009 QEW Mini-grant!**

**GREAT NEWS!** The deadline for this year’s Quaker Earthcare Witness Mini-grant program has been extended to **July 1, 2009**.

This year QEW has budgeted matching grants of up to \$250 each for **ten Quaker meetings or churches who need this kind of boost to move ahead with energy saving retrofits, renewable energy, ecological education, or other greening projects.**

**Applications received by May 1, 2009, the original deadline, will be processed first. Should there be funds remaining, any later applications will be considered.**

**Please go to <[www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)> for more information and a downloadable application form. There is also an application form on page 11 of this newsletter that you can use.**

**You may also e-mail me at the address below:**

—Ruth Hamilton, clerk  
QEW Mini-grant Committee  
<[Ruth@ArtsCanHeal.com](mailto:Ruth@ArtsCanHeal.com)>  
919/943-8834

## Sabbath economics/right relationship—Can we practice it?

**Hollister Knowlton**  
**QEW Steering Committee Clerk**

**S**INCE January, a series of experiences has exposed me to new ideas that are causing awakenings in me. I told my worship group recently that I am being “radicalized.”

In light of Louis's lead article in this issue of BFC, about paying more attention to the issue of population/consumption, and as a follow-up of sorts to my last column, I want to share with you a little about one of those awakenings—*sabbath economics*.

Those of you who know the Hebrew Bible will recall the concepts of Sabbath Year and Jubilee Year in Leviticus 25: 1–55. Just as we rest on the Sabbath (the seventh day), every seventh year—or Sabbath Year—was to be a complete rest for the *land*. Then, every 50th year (the one following 7 x 7 years) was to be a Jubilee Year, for which elaborate instructions were given for making things fair and right. It was supposed to be a year in which everyone returned to their family and their ancestral lands; slaves were to be freed; debts were to be forgiven. Apparently the Israelites never managed to achieve it, but as a model it is still powerful.

Viv Hawkins, a Friend in my Chestnut Hill, Pa., worship group, has become deeply involved with the impoverished women of India, particularly those in self-help groups—women benefiting from micro-enterprise loans from Right Sharing of World Resources. Perhaps as a part of that work, Viv has been mentioning Jubilee Year for a while now, and in February she began to lead us in a study of sabbath economics.

This came just as I was helping coordinate an evening in Philadelphia with Geoff Garver and Peter G. Brown on the promotional tour for their new book, *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy*. It also coincided with the announcement of David Korten's newest book, *Agenda for a New Economy*, and, of course, all the talk about the collapse and the bailouts of banks and auto companies and AIG, etc.

We have been using the book, *Sabbath Economics: Household Practices*, by Matthew Colwell.\* It has been a gentle and eye- and heart-opening process. The book's preface points out that, “...we live in an economic system that is dependent upon consumerism and an unjust distribution of resources.” While many of us see “the high cost of unbridled consumption

...what we may not be as clear about...is that our own participation in this economy amounts to an addiction.”

Just as with any other addiction, the preface author, Rick Kidd, believes it is rooted in our neurological systems. (That's what makes it so hard to stop.) It's sustained by faulty thinking and by our tendency to look for escape when things get difficult, rather than confront the life we have been “gifted.”

We could be said to be victims of a “powerful, predatory culture that is carefully engineered and socially managed to prey on our desires and anxieties and to promote consumerism.”

The sense is that emerging from this addiction to our consumer culture is spiritual work. This easy-to-read little book recommends a “Seven-fold Household Economics Covenant.” As the author takes readers through seven aspects of their economic lives (surplus capital; negative

capital/debt; giving; environment and green living; consumption and simple living; solidarity; and work and sabbath), it is his hope that they will make some commitment to change in each of the areas.

**T**HE process has affected me quite deeply. This week I moved my checking and savings accounts from a large Philadelphia bank to a small local bank that makes loans only within my “neighborhood” of about five adjoining ZIP codes. I've also made a commitment to focus my charitable giving (just as QEW's Bill and Alice Howenstine told us that they do) on groups with whom I have a relationship (my Quaker Meeting, QEW, Friends Committee on National Legislation, etc.). I also plan to share more of my “surplus capital” with community development projects close to home. Everyone in our group has committed to calculating his/her carbon footprint (I gave out QEW's Household Carbon Calculator) and, once we have a base line, to reducing that footprint by 20 percent as a start.

I recommend this exercise to all of you as we struggle with the transition from our unsustainable, perpetual-growth economy to one that is steady-state, just, and in right relationship with all Creation. ❖

\* Available from Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries <[www.bcm-net.org](http://www.bcm-net.org)>. It, and its companion (first) volume by Ched Myers, entitled *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, are described as “Guidebooks for those grappling with radical ... faith, the capitalist economy, and their own life practices.”



Hollister Knowlton

# Awakening to a sustainable future

Carolyn Wilbur Treadway  
Bloomington-Normal (Ill.)  
Friends Meeting

**A**WAKENING can be painful, and staying awake and mindful of reality can be very difficult. I have awakened to the fact that our beloved planet, as we have known it, is in great peril. We humans are steadily destroying Earth's ability to support the exquisite, complex community of life that has co-evolved over millions of years.

Many impacts of global climate change and peak oil are already quite visible. Wars are being fought, at least in part, over oil, water, and other diminishing resources. Continued rapid population growth stresses all ecosystems and social structures. We may even be witnessing early stages of the unraveling of industrial society, which depends on cheap resources, ever-increasing consumption, and perpetual growth. Currently, we are overshooting Earth's carrying capacity by more than 30 percent.

Each of us is already profoundly affected by these changes, and much more dramatic changes are likely as we face a future we can neither imagine nor comprehend. The ways we adjust our perceptions, assumptions, and expectations will greatly influence whether the world transitions, through careful planning, into a life-sustaining ecology and society, or disintegrates into chaos.

*Once awakened, there is no turning back, no chance of returning to not-seeing and not-knowing. At least for me, it becomes imperative to learn more and to find ways to act on my profound concerns.*

My ecological awakening forced me to delve into fundamentals of life itself: *"How shall we live?" "How shall we prepare for what is to come?" "Who are we called to be?" "What are we called to do?" "How can we foster the creation of a sustainable world?"*

Propelled by these queries, I sought companions with whom to seek answers. In fall 2007, I joined an intensive training in deep ecology called "Seeds for the Future II," led by Joanna Macy, creator of *The Work That Reconnects*, <[www.joannamacy.net](http://www.joannamacy.net)>. I was one of 60 people from four continents who came together for 30 days in a crucible of experiential learning, envisioning our future and finding guidance on how to live.

We gathered at Westwind, a beautiful Oregon wilderness camp and nature preserve where mountains, a



great river, and a mighty ocean meet. To reach the camp we crossed a tidal river on a small raft, leaving behind the frenzy of the "civilized" world. Quickly we learned to live in harmony with nature and natural rhythms, as if we had known them forever. Throughout our time we were nourished and renewed by the land, sea, river, and many wild creatures.

We began our training with ever deepening gratitude for life and Spirit. Then, in sorrow and reverence, we reflected on what is happening to our world—our matrix of life and the source of all we cherish. We honored the pain that inevitably arose. Spontaneously we created rituals to help us through the pain, such as mourning the loss of indigenous peoples across the world. We learned and shared, talked and listened, grieved and raged, and drummed and danced. We thought deeply, laughed freely, ate bountifully, worked hard, played, and rested. We felt supported by each other.

As we pondered our responses to the worsening condition of the world, we began to transform our pain and fear into new ideas and visions—seeds to carry into the future. Great energy for this arose. We learned the importance of our myriad holding actions to help preserve life on Earth, as well as analysis of the root causes of current crises and creation of new structures for a sustainable society. We learned to "see with new eyes," expanding our individual worldviews to encompass profound realization of our mutual belonging to the living body of Earth. We were called home to community with each other and all beings, held together by Spirit.

Connections between us deepened as 60 individuals sought to become one community. During a mini-

**Awakening**, next page >>

>> **Awakening**, from page 4

drama about war, “*me/mine*” conflicted with “*we/ours*,” and suddenly a name for all of us together came forth: “*We*.” This name and group identity stayed with us for our remaining time together. At times there were frictions among us, but our growing sense of “*we*” became important in our process of seeking resolution of conflict.

**B**EYOND particular ideas or practices, what had the most impact on me was the *experience* of living in a community based on treating each other with respect and love. It opened a new vision for me of how all of us will need to learn to live if we are to create larger sustainable communities. Sharing in deep community seemed to call forth our reverence, respect, kindness, caring, love, attention, deep listening, generosity, gratitude, courage, wisdom, openness, trust, hope, joy, creativity, celebration, and many other qualities that will be needed in the future.

In addition to addressing how to live, Seeds for the Future II also taught us about waking up and helping others wake up to what is happening to our world. This is so hard; already we struggle enough within our daily lives. Thinking of all the things that threaten our comfortable lifestyles and our children’s future can be very scary. So we go on with business as usual, as if each tomorrow will be very much like today. Besides, if everyone else is living and thinking this way, why should we be any different?

But crucial information sometimes stirs us, providing a wake-up call we can no longer ignore. This may lead us to become more informed—and more concerned. The more concerned we become, the less others, even our loved ones, may want to hear about it. They may reveal their own fear and denial by dismissing us as “negative” or “crazy.” While we can no longer avoid seeing what is happening, countless others seem oblivious. How lonely and isolating this can be! We may retreat into despair or become exhausted from our own efforts, even within the small niche we select as our own cause.

To continue our awakening, learning, and action, we must deepen our spirits to sustain us over the long haul, by grounding ourselves in Spirit and following its guidance from within. As Quakers we develop our connection to Spirit through silence, prayer, meditation, meeting for worship, meetings for clearness, devotional reading, and immersion in nature. Deepening these practices will be increasingly important so that

we can hold fast to the Eternal during the changes to come. The more we become spiritually rooted, the more others will turn to us because of our grounding, moral vision, compassion, insights, courage, and leadership.

Our Quaker testimonies on simplicity, integrity, equality, community, peace, justice, service, and love can serve as antidotes to the highly individualistic values that prevail today and are using up the resources of our planet.

We can also draw from old wisdom to help us in new times. Indigenous peoples across our planet have revered the natural world and have known how to live in harmony with it. Their ancient teachings and practices can guide us in learning how to live in “right relationship” with all of God’s creation.

The environmental and social changes necessary to create a sustainable world will require shifts in our perceptions about Earth and about ourselves. Only when we come to see ourselves as tiny parts of our

**We learned to “see with new eyes,” expanding our individual world-views to encompass profound realization of our mutual belonging to the living body of Earth.**

interconnected biosphere will we understand why we are entitled to only a tiny portion of its resources. We need to challenge the paradigm of constant growth and the treadmill of endless con-

sumption that it generates. We need to turn our emphasis on “*me/mine*” into “*we/ours*,” using less and promoting more equality for all.

We cannot do this alone. Building community is essential. Start small and close to home. Gather others who share our concerns and want to make similar changes. Learn together, support each other, develop synergistic co-creation. Join an exciting new grassroots movement and model for transformation: “Transition Towns,” <[www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)>.

Even small actions will in themselves engender hope. Start by changing our light bulbs to compact fluorescents, then advocate changing laws to conserve energy. Every new idea and structure we create brings us closer to our vision of a sustainable world.

Will our efforts make a difference, in time? Are we being midwives to the birthing of a sustainable society, or hospice workers for a dying planet? The uncertainty of the outcome can lead to despair or invite passionate commitment. The choice is up to us. *Now* is our time, because anything we do—or do not do—may tip the balance.

What could be more important or more meaningful or more joyful than to offer our most creative gifts in service of a healthy, peaceful world for all species on our beloved Earth? Let us offer our gifts as generously as possible. Our world urgently needs them. ❖

## DEAR (MELTING) WORLD,

ON OCTOBER 24 we will stand together as one planet and call for a fair global climate treaty that meets the latest science and gets us back to safety. This movement has just begun, and it needs *your* help.

**Here's the plan:** We're asking you, and people in every country on Earth, to *organize an action in your community on October 24*. There are no limits here—imagine bike rides, rallies, concerts, hikes, festivals, tree plantings, protests, *and more*. Imagine your action linking up with thousands of others around the globe. Imagine the world waking up. It's up to regular people all over the world. That's *you*.

**So go to <[www.350.org](http://www.350.org)> and register an event in your community for October 24.**

Then enlist your friends and co-workers; local environmental groups and human rights campaigns; church or synagogue or mosque or temple; bike riders, local farmers, and young people.

With your help, there will be an event at every iconic place on Earth—from America's Great Lakes to Australia's Great Barrier Reef—and also in places that matter to you in your daily life: a beach or park or village green or town hall.

There are two reasons **October 24** is so crucial:

**1. The science of climate change** is getting darker by the day. The Arctic is melting away with astonishing speed, decades ahead of schedule. Everything on the planet seems to be melting or burning, flooding or parching.

NASA's James Hansen and a team of other scientists recently published a series of papers showing we need to quickly cut back the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere from its current 387 parts per million to *350 ppm or less* if we wish to "maintain a planet similar to that on which civilization developed" and avert the worst effects of climate change.

**2. The political opportunity** to influence our governments has never been greater. The world's leaders will meet in Copenhagen this December to craft a new global treaty on cutting global carbon emissions.

If that meeting were held now, it would produce a treaty that would be woefully inadequate. In fact, it would lock us into a future where we'd *never* get back to 350 ppm—where the sea level rise would accelerate—where rainfall patterns would shift and deserts would grow—where first the poorest people, and then all of us, and then all who come after us, would find the only planet that we have, damaged and degraded.

*Please join us and register your local event today!*

—Bill McKibben, author and activist



## Faith & the Common Good has green programs and resources

**FAITH AND THE COMMON GOOD** is an interfaith organization with a vision for Canada and the world to live interfaith/interculturally and to dialog and take action on issues of Creation care and eco-justice in a spirit of the common good. Its central program, called Greening Sacred Spaces, is designed to help people of faith make their places of worship and private homes more energy efficient and generally people- and planet-friendly.

Greening Sacred Spaces is both a spiritual- and a values-based educational program and a guide to help faith communities make sustainable, energy-efficient changes to their churches, gurdwaras, mosques, synagogues, temples, and other "sacred" places, including their homes.

Faith and the Common Good has a national office and local groups in some cities, including Calgary, where I am a member. Its current focus, Renewing the Sacred Balance, is about living life with sacred awareness and an ethic of respect, balance, and harmony. This focus is divided into two parts:

**1] The Green Rule Poster, handbook and study guide.** The poster is itself inspiring, in that it is of a tree where the leaves have a brief quotes from the different faiths with an environmental "golden rule" from their scriptures.

**2] The Greening Sacred Spaces Program resource kit,** consisting of workshops, guide-books, a poster, music and videos. The videos are all on a beautiful DVD that can be ordered from the website, <[www.faith-commongood.net](http://www.faith-commongood.net)>, for \$15 or borrowed from QEW. The DVD is divided into sections and so is flexible to the needs of the presentation. The five sections are:

- “Reason to Green” ~14 minutes.
- “Living Green” ~14 minutes.
- “Greening Sacred Spaces” ~18 minutes.
- “Conducting an Energy Audit” ~8 minutes.
- A short version of the above ~5 minutes.

I briefly checked some U.S.-based interfaith websites that David Miller (of the “qewdiscussion” and “QEAN e-mail groups) provided a month or so ago. The most interesting interfaith/environmental group I looked at was the “Renewal Project,” which has film showings and a \$20 DVD [*also available from QEW*] that I haven't seen. I would love to hear from any who have. See <[www.renewalproject.net](http://www.renewalproject.net)>

—Kitty Dunn  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

## UN going for the 'gold' (LEED certified, that is)

**Ruah Swennerfelt, QEW General Secretary**

**T**HE United Nations is taking a bold and courageous step as it tries to lead the world toward ecological sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

It's going to "green up its own act," in a big way.

Mary Gilbert, Jack Bradin, and I first learned about this initiative while we were attending an orientation session for representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at the UN headquarters in New York City. Werner Schmidt, a UN public information officer, told our group that the 60-year-old UN building was due to undergo major renovation.

First, they will create a temporary building for the General Assembly and other large bodies to use for meetings. They will rent office space all over the area. Then they will gut the old building to remove hazardous materials, such as asbestos, and dangerous interior structures. At the end of the renovations they will apply for Gold certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. Design initiatives being considered include:

- ❖ Wind- and solar-generated electricity.
- ❖ Anaerobic waste management.
- ❖ State-of-art super-efficient space conditioning.
- ❖ Graywater recycling.
- ❖ Construction waste management and use of recycled materials.

Engineers are projecting a 44-percent reduction in energy use, a 30-percent reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and a 40-percent reduction in water use.

I was so impressed that I'm going to work harder to urge that the U.S. pay all its arrears payments to support this and all the other good work at the UN!

Mary, Jack, and I are QEW's official "badge holders," appointed to attend DPI/NGO meetings and report back to QEW. QEW has been associated with the DPI for a little over a year now. This gives us access to other NGOs and helps facilitate networking. The DPI's mission is "to help fulfill the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating information on the organization's activities and concerns to the public" (*United Nations Today*, 2008).

That means that we have the responsibility to report to *BeFriending Creation* readers what we learn about QEW-related issues at the UN.

It was a wonderful, informative, and stimulating program. As you can imagine, the UN is a huge organization with many activities and layers of structure. Mary and Jack are veteran UN attendees, while I had visited only a couple of times many years ago.

Non-governmental organizations are a very important part of what the UN calls "Civil Society." We are able to share concerns or share different emphases that may differ from what our governmental representatives may bring to the General Assembly. At times Civil Society has exerted some influence that has swayed the UN. It's exciting to be a part of this.

I thoroughly enjoyed walking through the maze of halls, listening to many different languages and seeing such diversity among the people. Mary easily guided me from the chamber where we were meeting to various other rooms. I felt totally lost and was grateful for her knowledge and guidance. Mary, Jack, and I enjoyed sitting together and commenting on all the speakers and programs. It was

good to have the camaraderie.

I did suggest to the UN staff that they consider purchasing carbon offsets for future DPI/NGO meetings, and this was met with enthusiasm. I will be working with them to help make this possible. It was exciting to see how one person can have an effect.

**W**E had a few opportunities to meet representatives from NGOs from around the globe, though most were from the USA. I was impressed with all the good work that is being done! In our distressing times it is good to see that life is not all bad. Two NGO representatives met with the whole group via teleconference. We could see one of them speaking from Bahrain about women's rights and development, and the other speaking from Mexico about working with youth to help better their lives and their communities.

I do think that we need to consider teleconferencing for future meetings of QEW and other Friends organizations if we are truly concerned about our carbon footprints.

I walked away feeling very hopeful for the future of the world. Maybe I'm naïve, but there are many good people doing many good things and if we focus more on those good things maybe they will eventually displace what is harmful. Let's hope so. ❖



**QEW representatives at UN: Jack Bradin, Ruah Swennerfelt, and Mary Gilbert**

## 2009—red carpet, green carpet at UNEP

Mary Gilbert

QEW representative to the United Nations

**I**N February I got to walk on a red carpet. It was rolled out for President Kibaki of Kenya, who opened the meetings of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and an Environmental Ministers' Forum, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi.

Two days later, when UNEP awarded a major prize for work that will help people directly at low cost, the winners came in on a very different carpet. It was handmade of recycled green plastic, with irregular segments of about five by eight feet stitched together to be long enough to descend the stairs and enter the big hall. I walked on this one too.

To me these carpets represent two choices for UNEP: *working on a large scale through the established power system, or working directly with the poor on smaller, local projects.*

UNEP is trying to play it both ways, but the big players definitely have an edge. UNEP's Executive Director Achim Steiner isn't "...targeting the current powers for overthrow... It's not a discussion about a 'New Economic Order.'... (Our approach must be) based in the current market economy... (This is) not ideological; we are just trying to bring the best analytical and empirical evidence to create a better debate." Since money is needed, *now*, UNEP works a lot with the corporate world.

Steiner also said, "Markets need regulatory systems. I want to learn which ones work."

"*Green is the New Big Deal*," proclaimed a banner above the speakers. UNEP's Green Economy Initiative is promoting "...the enormous social and environmental benefits from combating climate change and re-investing in natural infrastructure" so that we can "... move from mining the planet to managing and re-investing in it" <<http://www.unep.org/>>. Type "*Green Economy Initiative*" in the Search box.

I found UNEP's focus on market solutions disturbing, although things would definitely improve if the corporate powers-that-be made decisions in a more informed context.

### Two challenges

UNEP is tearing out its organizational hair over two challenges: assembling information and getting it out there.

UNEP was founded in 1972. Its charter is specific about purposes and reflects the environmental understandings of that time. Since then new issues have led to new international treaties, many outside the scope of UNEP's charter, each with its own secretariat, research programs, etc. Additionally, UNEP has established new internal programs in response to new perceptions.

This history has led to unbelievable duplication, and *there is no system in place to coordinate and share information*. A person in a small country applying for assistance may face more than 600 complex ways to apply. The system really needs simplification and streamlining!

To inform the "better debate" that Steiner wants, the information must get to the right people. "Lots of studies could serve as guides," he says, but "how do you reach the decision-makers?"

For corporations Steiner sees opportunity in the current financial crisis. The old way of making a bundle of money has collapsed; things will improve if businesses realize that it's to their advantage to rebuild with environmental sustainability in mind. Unfortunately this is not a corrective to the profit motive, but it does have some chance of success. And it's better than rebuilding without enlightenment.

Governments' role is also critical, establishing laws, subsidies, and taxes that can shape business trends. (A problem: When governments change, ministers and other staff disappear. You have to educate a new crop.)

One concept that UNEP wants to get into the "debate" is *ecosystem service values*, putting monetary value on clean freshwater, natural carbon sinks, etc. UNEP is trying to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through the (controversial) REDD program. (That stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation.) See <<http://www.undp.org/mdtf/UN-REDD/overview.shtml>>.

On the green carpet side, there is talk about how  
**UNEP, next page >>**





## Reducing our carbon footprint at the 2009 FGC Gathering—and beyond

*A carbon footprint calculator is now on the Gathering website*

**A**FTER several years of attempting to green the Friends General Conference Gathering, a challenge by Shane Claiborne, radical Christian and non-Friend, has led to an integrated effort at making attendees conscious of their carbon footprint and strongly nudging them to find ways to reduce it.

Shane, who will be our plenary speaker Monday night, gave one condition for accepting the Evening Program Committee's invitation to address us on his heart's passion, the poor. He asked that we offset the carbon emitted by his travel to Blacksburg, Virginia (a van from Philadelphia). Someone on the committee suggested that we offset *all* speaker travel, and we immediately agreed.



>> UNEP, from page 8

to improve and strengthen relationships with Indigenous Peoples, build in more dialogue with Civil Society, and strengthen rural economies. Some UNEP projects incorporate these principles, but they weren't featured at any of the sessions I attended.

### A major gain and a small victory

Barack Obama is definitely the new U.S. President. The U.S. led the way to setting up a binding international agreement on mercury. (Cheers rang out from Civil Society!) This will affect the coal industry, as mercury is a coal plant emission. The process will take time; a treaty is not expected until 2012.

I also had a small victory of my own. My hope in going to the UNEP meetings was to get language into the record speaking of the environment in a holistic way. A sentence in the Women's Major Group statement, which goes into the record, reads,

*"We, the Women's Group, see the need for a worldwide change of values, acknowledging our understanding that humans are interdependent with a healthy environment, and that we are only borrowing this earth from our grandchildren.*

The words in italics are mine. ❖

When the FGC Evening Program Committee brought the proposal to the Gathering Planning Committee, a spirited discussion ensued for over an hour. What emerged from this was the idea that offsetting speaker travel was simply a first step, and that all attendees would be encouraged to go further, offsetting their Gathering travel, as well as finding ways to reduce their families' overall carbon footprints.

And we quickly agreed that by "offset" we did not mean buying "indulgences" from tree-planting nonprofits, but *by reducing our own footprints in tangible, measurable ways.*

I and my wife, Geeta McGahey, were charged with taking the idea from the Planning Committee to the QEW Annual Meeting last fall, where it was brought before the Sustainability: Faith & Action working group. To implement the idea for the 2009 Gathering, S:F&A formed a subcommittee, which I agreed to clerk. A small group of us brainstormed, then quickly tried to limit our efforts to something achievable, focusing on the next Gathering as one event for heightening our awareness of the impacts of traveling and living in community for a week.

With the active encouragement of Gathering Coordinator Traci Hjedt-Sullivan, a carbon calculator was created and made available on the Gathering website <<http://www.fgcquaker.org/gathering/this-year/carbon-reduction>>. This has largely been the work of George Owen at Pendle Hill, with feedback from members of the Sustainability Subcommittee.

The carbon calculator requires a download and invites a serious effort to tackle almost all lifestyle areas (though registrants are given the option of answering only as much as they feel comfortable). The carbon calculator is prominently featured among options on the FGC Gathering home page, and flagged in an alert in the paper brochure.

At the Gathering itself, the committee will work with volunteers to create a graph of CO<sub>2</sub> reductions. We trust that a large number of attendees will make the effort to download and fill out the form, and that the graph for offsetting speaker travel will be dwarfed by the graph for overall attendees' reductions.

From the experience of being on the 2009 Gathering Committee team, I sense that this will become an integral part of future Gatherings, as Friends strive to become a sustainable fraction of the human impact on the biosphere. We have already received requests to share with other Friends' groups the instrument we have created.

—Bob McGahey  
Celo (N.C.) Friends Meeting

## Walk With Earth update: 'Oaxaca is a leader in living in harmony with the earth'

**ROLENE WALKER** of San Francisco Friends Meeting is roughly a third of the way along her two-year *Walk With Earth* from San Diego, Calif., to Santiago, Chile. The purpose of her journey is to honor exceptionally beautiful places in God's creation and to support those who are working to save them.

In an earlier update, our intrepid pilgrim was organizing the second of two exciting grassroots ecological education conferences in southern Mexico. She posted this report on her website, <[www.WalkWithEarth.org](http://www.WalkWithEarth.org)>:



**ROLENE WALKER**, left, and university student **Renata Austin** at an environmental conference in Oaxaca, Mexico, in March 2009.

**WALK WITH EARTH** co-sponsored a four-day conference called "Appropriate Technology for Good Living" in Oaxaca, in cooperation with the *Universidad de la Tierra* (Earth University), March 19–22.

It was the first of its kind, and we had a slow start on registration. Thursday we had hoped for 40 people for site visits to places doing good work, but 140 showed up! We had several hundred come to speeches in the evenings. I spoke about what steps we need to take for a sustainable future, how unique our Earth is, and why I think Oaxaca is more advanced than anywhere in Mexico or the U.S. The speech I gave has been posted on my website.

On Saturday and Sunday we had more than 3,000 people at the street fair. We had a bio-diesel truck, two parabolic solar cookers, high-efficiency wood burning stoves, rain catchment systems, organic food, furniture from recycled materials, and a rammed-earth house. There were bicycle-powered electric generators for liquifiers, TVs, and water pumps. The porta-potties were "dry toilets," which separate urine from excrement for use as fertilizer and compost, eliminating the need for water treatment systems. The items for sale were priced reasonably for Mexico.

Workshops included alternative medicine, Tai Chi,

legislative and judicial action to ban genetically modified corn, and community actions and activism. I did a workshop on Joanna Macy's exercises from her book, *Coming Back to Life, Practices to Reconnect Our Lives*, including the Council of All Beings.

Eduardo Torres, director of a community action organization that built the rammed-earth house, said he talked with his daughter about me, claiming Oaxaca is the leader in terms of living in harmony with the earth, and he was beginning to think it was true. Dr. Gustavo Estave, founder of the *Universidad de la Tierra*, and I are both pretty content with how it went. I suggested he do it again in two years, and he said every six months! More power to him. It's obvious that the *Oaxaqueños* are interested in the environment and how to live so that it can be preserved.

As of this writing Rolene is in Nicaragua. More next issue. Donations to *Walk With Earth* can be made with a check, or on-line with a credit card. Please go to <[www.walkwithearth.org](http://www.walkwithearth.org)>.

## Kathy Hyzy is keynote speaker for 2009 QEW Annual Meeting

**WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE** that Kathy Hyzy, the new editor of *Western Friend* (formerly *Friends Bulletin*), has agreed to be the keynote



**Kathy Hyzy**

speaker at the coming QEW Annual Meeting, October 8–12, at The Firs Conference Center in Bellingham, Wash.

Kathy describes herself as "a life-long granola girl" who spent her early years roaming the hardwood and white pine forests of south-west Michigan. She first laid eyes on Douglas fir when she was twelve, and it was love at first sight.

She has lived in many parts of the West, but has always called Portland, Oregon, home. After nearly a decade of working for environmental causes, Kathy recently became editor of *Western Friend*, a magazine by and about Friends in the West.

Kathy is a member of Multnomah Monthly Meeting in Portland and is an avid gardener, volunteer naturalist, hiker, writer, and "all-around advocate for knowing and loving the place you live."

For more information about the coming QEW Annual Meeting, go to <[www.quakerearthcare.org/MeetingsandEvents/QEWFallMeeting/index.htm](http://www.quakerearthcare.org/MeetingsandEvents/QEWFallMeeting/index.htm)>. ❖

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

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

## QEW Mini-grant Application

**Option 1:** Complete the following form and snail-mail it to QEW at 173-b N. Prospect St., Burlington VT 05401-1607, by **June 15, 2009**, to be sure we receive it in time to forward it to Mini-grant clerk Ruth Hamilton by the July 1 deadline. Also, call 802/658-0308 or e-mail us at <info@quakerearthcare.org> to let QEW General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt know you have snail-mailed the application.

**Option 2:** Download the grant application form from the QEW website, complete it on-screen, and then attach it to an e-mail that you send directly to Ruth Hamilton, <Ruth@ArtsCanHeal.com>, up to the **July 1, 2009** deadline.

### 1. Basic information:

Name of Quaker meeting/church: \_\_\_\_\_

Addr. \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ Contact name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

Treasurer of your meeting or church: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Attach a signed letter from your treasurer**, stating the **cost of your project** and that your Meeting or church **can match the QEW grant**, up to \$250, for the specified project. If you are awarded a Mini-grant, you are required to **send a report on the progress** of the project by **September 15, 2009**. Digital or printed photographs are appreciated.

**3. Attach a typed one-page description of your project**, stating **why it is necessary**, **who will be directly involved** in the implementation of the project, **how you will meet the grant match** (up to \$250), and **how your Meeting or church will benefit** from the environmental project. Please use at least 10-point typeface and no less than one-inch margins. ❖

## BeFriending Creation

**BeFriending Creation**, Vol. 22, No. 3, May-June 2009. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. ISSN 1050-0332. Published bi-monthly.

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

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### VISION AND WITNESS

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God. WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity. WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

**Steering Committee Clerk:** Hollister Knowlton, 34 W. Evergreen Ave., Philadelphia PA 19118-2823; 215/247-0718; *h.knowlton@comcast.net*.

**Gen. Secretary:** Ruah Swennerfelt, 173-b N. Prospect St., Burlington VT 05401. 802/658-0308; e-mail: *Ruab@QuakerEarthcare.org*.

**BFC Editor:** Louis Cox, 173-b N. Prospect St., Burlington VT 05401. 802/658-0308; e-mail: *Louis@QuakerEarthcare.org*.

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

**Quaker Earthcare Witness**  
173-B North. Prospect Street  
Burlington VT 05401-1607 USA

Printed on 100% post-consumer  
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## Quaker couple were among early boosters of Michele Obama's South Lawn organic garden

**BEFRIENDING CREATION** featured their very low ecological impact wedding some four years ago. Then we followed their trials and triumphs as they taught organic gardening during a stint with the Peace Corps in a poor rural community in Paraguay.

Now Quakers Justin Mog and Amanda Fuller of Madison, Wisc., Friends Meeting are back in the U.S., still on the cutting edge of the movement for a just and sustainable society. In a recent e-mail, while renewing their support of QEW they added:

**WE APPRECIATE** your welcoming us back to the U.S. after 3+ years working for the Peace Corps in Paraguay. It is honestly a most hopeful and inspiring time to return! Never have we seen so much enthusiasm for a government and hope for a brighter, greener tomorrow (even in the face of difficult economic times).

We are taking this opportunity to reconnect with F(f)riends, family, and America by riding Amtrak all around this great nation for a few months as we look for work in sustainable agriculture. Currently we are learning about the Greening of Detroit, where tree-planting and gardening are becoming more popular, as some 27 percent of the city is vacant land!!

Meanwhile, there is a timely story behind the "HOPE GARDEN" photo (above) that was taken of us just before leaving Paraguay. We took that picture in mid-November to include in a letter we sent to then President-elect Obama before he took office, encouraging him to plant a "Hope Garden" on the White House lawn.



**Justin and Amanda sent a message to President-elect Obama just before leaving Paraguay in Nov.**

As it turns out, we weren't the only ones who thought that was a good idea, and we returned to the U.S. in December to an impressive groundswell of grassroots organizing to push the new president to plant a White House organic garden as a model of sustainability and good nutrition for the nation.

Delightfully, the new administration seems to have listened to us, and on March 20th, Michelle Obama broke ground on an 1,100-square-foot organic kitchen garden on the South Lawn! It'd be a wonderful thing to report to BFC readers!

—Justin Mog <[justinmog@gmail.com](mailto:justinmog@gmail.com)>  
Amanda Fuller <[abfuller@gmail.com](mailto:abfuller@gmail.com)>

**A DRAMATIC SEQUEL** to Justin and Amanda's literally "grassroots" lobbying was another e-mail to the Obamas that was leaked to the press recently. In that e-mail, an association of U.S. chemical manufacturers took the Obamas to task for possibly giving consumers the "wrong impression" about the safety and effectiveness of "conventionally grown" food (which relies on non-renewable synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides).

That's one reason why we need activists like Justin and Amanda. Big corporations can have a lot of influence on public policy, but committed individuals and citizens groups can push back! ❖