

## What else can Friends do?

1. Hold these matters in the Light. Consider them in your Meeting.
2. Support population education (including education about sex and contraception).
3. Help give presentations of the concern via films and other resources (see next panel).
4. Ask Friends groups—FCNL, AFSC, QEW — to devote greater efforts to this concern.
5. Support groups working on population, such as the Population Institute or Population connection. Support actions by our government, private organizations, and the United Nations to provide contraceptives to those who want them.

**Quaker Earthcare Witness works “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.”**

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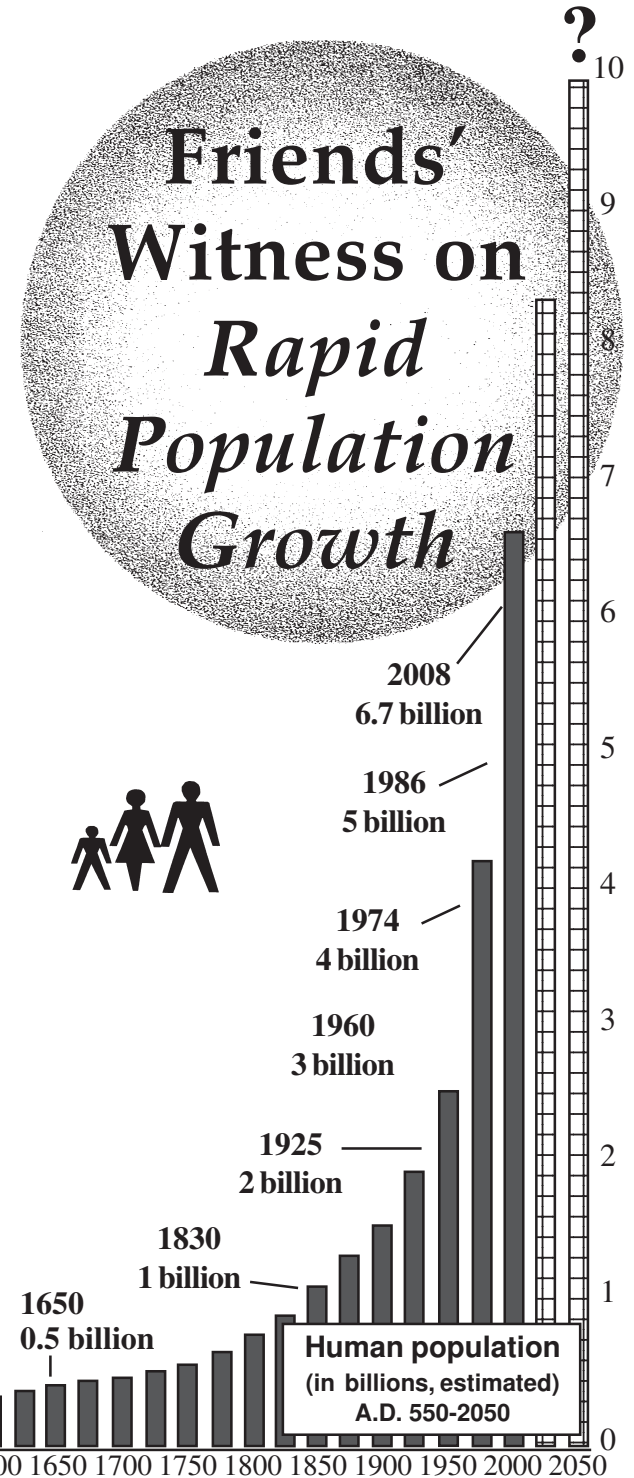
## Resources

- A Witness on Sexuality for Friends.* 2003. Quaker Earthcare Witness, Burlington, Vt.
- Adoption—An Earth-Friendly Alternative.* 2004. Quaker Earthcare Witness, Burlington, Vt.
- Toward Taking Away the Occasion of Abortion.* 2001. Quaker Earthcare Witness, Burlington, Vt.
- “Popular Little Planet,” (Video for children). Children’s Television Workshop, GPO Box 5373, New York NY 10087-5373. \$26.84.
- “Population and People of Faith: It’s About time.” Video. Institute for Development Training. PO Box 267-B, Trenton ME 04605. <[www.idtonline.org](http://www.idtonline.org)>.
- World Population Data Sheet.* Population Reference Bureau. Online at <[www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org)>.
- United Nations Population Division. Projections 2003. World Population in 2003. Online at <[www.un.org/esa/population/publications/longrange2/longrange2.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/longrange2/longrange2.htm)>.
- Population is People, A Friends Perspective.* Stan Becker, Louis Cox, and Lisa L. Gould, eds. Quaker Earthcare Witness, 2000. \$13.50.

## Organizations

- Planned Parenthood Federation of America. 434 W. 33rd St., New York NY 10001. <[www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)>.
- Population Action International. 1300 19th St. NW, Second Floor, Washington DC 20036. <[www.populationaction.org](http://www.populationaction.org)>.
- Population-Environment Balance. 2000 P St. NW, Suite 600, Washington DC 20036. <[www.balance.org](http://www.balance.org)>.
- Population Reference Bureau. 1875 Connecticut Ave. Suite 520, Washington DC 20005. <[www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org)>.
- Population Institute. 107 2nd St. NE, Washington DC 20002. <[www.populationinstitute.org](http://www.populationinstitute.org)>.
- United Nations Fund for Population Activities. United Nations Plaza, New York NY 10017.

# Friends’ Witness on Rapid Population Growth





# Friends' Witness on *Rapid Population Growth*

## Facts

**W**ORLD population has been growing at an astonishing rate!

- ◆ In 1650, when George Fox was alive, the world's population was one-half billion. Today there are more than 6.4 billion humans on this planet.
- ◆ World population is now growing by about 78 million persons per year. This is about 215,000 persons per day, or 9,000 per hour!
- ◆ Some 50 nations of the world will double in population size in less than 25 years.
- ◆ The United States population is growing by about 3 million persons a year.
- ◆ At present rates, the world's population could exceed 8 billion by 2025.
- ◆ Until now, world food production had managed to keep up with increases in population. But now we have reached the limits of arable land, ocean fish populations, and fresh underground water.
- ◆ Forests are being cut down at the rate of 5,000 acres per hour, partly to feed a growing population. Massive soil erosion continues to threaten agricultural productivity. Water tables are being drawn down for irrigation at alarming rates, and pesticide residues are contaminating the soil.
- ◆ Human waste and pollution are poisoning the air, water, and land at an unprecedented pace. Rapid population growth is also a factor in persistent public health problems, poverty, crime, wars, and other social issues.
- ◆ The developed nations, with 20 percent of the world's population, consume 80 percent of the world's resources.

## Questions

1. What will the world be like if population reaches 9 billion people? What would the world be like if population could be stabilized at a level closer to the current 6.4 billion than to 9 billion?
2. If relieved of the burden of feeding, clothing, and housing an ever-growing population, what higher goals of human fulfillment would society be able to pursue?
3. How would we limit population to what the earth can support? Where is the line between (dis)incentives and coercion?
4. What social and cultural values lead people to have large families?
5. How is family size an economic issue?
6. To what extent is family planning a women's issue? How can men participate more responsibly?
7. What is the spiritual basis of our desire to reproduce? How do we relate this to responsibility for the fate of the earth?
8. What approaches have we found to population problems that are consistent with the religious outlook and social concerns of Friends?
9. Does the support for population stabilization encourage abortion? (Consider that effective family planning can prevent pregnancies and therefore reduces the need for families to consider abortion.)
10. Which is more important—to reduce excess consumption in richer countries or to limit population growth in the poorer countries? How are both concerns vital to the future?

## What can we do?

IN light of these facts and questions, many Friends are concluding that voluntary population limits are needed if the Quaker vision of an Earth restored and a peaceful, just society is to be realized.

If nothing is done to stabilize population, coercive policies like those in China may become more common. Suffering and death rates may rise in some nations that cannot feed their people.

Quaker Earthcare Witness supports the following changes in order that population may be stabilized and brought into harmony with the Earth community:

- ◆ Adequate funding for *family planning services* to the millions of couples worldwide who want to limit their fertility.
- ◆ Raised *status of women* and better education for women and men—both are keys to changed attitudes and motivations regarding family size.
- ◆ A shift from the idea that everyone needs to have biological children by encouraging adoption, while recognizing the sacredness of parenthood.
- ◆ *Simpler lifestyles* in high-consuming nations (fewer possessions, more community sharing, eating less meat or no meat); more research on food production, renewable energy, and sustainable ways of meeting basic human needs.
- ◆ Support for those who choose adoption, community living with shared childrearing, small families, or celibacy.