

# QUAKER SUSTAINABILITY TESTIMONY

Draft 3

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Summary by Edward Hill, Blackheath Quaker Meeting, with thanks to all contributing Living Witness Project Meetings. Please send comments, corrections and further submissions to [edhill@glartists.com](mailto:edhill@glartists.com)

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## Introduction

This Overview of Quaker Sustainability Testimony is based on the witness of Quaker Meetings participating in the Living Witness Project (LWP), on Testimony in Quaker Faith and Practice, and on Quaker EarthCare Witness from the U.S.A.

The Overview starts from the fundamental scientific measure of the Ecological Footprint, which can be determined for each country. This is basically a measure of the resources used per person multiplied by the population, and it currently exceeds the land's capacity to regenerate by 50% globally. Most countries including the U.K. are exceeding their limit.

The overview then details the actions being taken by Friends from LWP meetings, including energy saving in Meeting Houses, and Friends' involvement in local Transition Towns and street neighbour groups with Ecoteams and 10:10. It raises some possible local, national and international policy changes that Friends could campaign for.

30 years of Quaker witness of the environmental crisis and climate change includes many different Testimonies. There is an over-riding Testimony of Love that a 'spiral of love' is the only mechanism for non-violent change. There is a Peace Testimony about the threatened onset of 'resource wars' during the 21st Century. There is a Testimony of Simplicity that Quakers have a special role to play in teaching appreciation that less can be better. There is a Children Testimony that we must become active agents of change on behalf of our children who have grown up faced with such an enormous and unprecedented predicament, and that history will not judge us well if we do nothing. Importantly, there is a Testimony of Hope that we can still be optimistic and that there is still just time.

Quaker Earthcare Witness, U.S.A. <http://www.quakerearthcare.org> gives a broad forward-looking view of many topics: Climate Change, New Cosmology, Earth Awareness and Eco-psychology, Eco-Communities and Permaculture, Eco-Economics/Alternative Currencies, Genetic Engineering/Biotechnology, Judeo-Christian Foundations of Earthcare, The Dark Side of Our Dependence on Fossil Fuels: Time for Quakers to Take a Stand, Friends' Population Concerns: Rapid Population Growth/Overconsumption, Peak Oil/Fossil Fuels/Renewable Energy/Conservation, The Sacred Commons of Water, Air, and Soil, Traditional Earth Wisdom/Native Understanding, The United Nations.

## A. Overview of Witness, the Living Witness Project

“Many Quakers are now awakening to the fact that Climate Change is not just a prediction, but a contemporary fact. This awakening has often come in the recognition that, as tackling climate change is a long-term commitment, individual behaviour change and a simple lifestyle is key. The Quaker writer Alistair McIntosh speaks of our ‘ecocidal’ and self-destructive consumption tendencies that have ultimately left us less human. But I believe, as many do, that a reclaimed sense of humanity must also come from elsewhere – political activism.”

A Friend from a LWP Meeting

“There is a need to lobby government in the UK, in the EU and UN, to aid with changing national and international agendas to support measures to reduce the impact of climate change. It is a national and international responsibility to effect meaningful change, not just that of the individual or local meeting.

In analysing the problem, the following elements should be included:

- Climate change caused by increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere as a result of human activity
- Depletion or insufficiency of resources – not just energy but food and water – reaching a crisis by 2030
- The above leading to increased migration from these countries.

The actions we commend in response to these problems should contain the following:

- People in rich countries, like ourselves, need to demonstrate that we are willing to reduce our consumption of resources (and production of greenhouse gases)
- Show that we are willing to share resources fairly
- Encourage organisations that we are connected with (such as Quaker Meetings) to reduce consumption of resources
- Encourage our local and national governments to bring in measures to encourage reduced consumption and fair sharing
- People in all countries need to consider what they can contribute to solving problems.
- Governments need to take actions to – encourage the development of renewable and sustainable resources, cooperate with each other to prevent conflict arising from competition for resources.

- Multi-national bodies like the EU and the UN need to encourage these actions.

We see this as necessitating significant changes to personal habits and relationships as well as to domestic and international structures, processes and powers. This will manifest itself in many ways, perhaps most obviously in how we share and use the world's resources but also in the organisation of economic relationships and the way in which we govern ourselves.

We look to technological innovations and human inventiveness to alleviate some problems and must view this as a positive outcome. There should be a willingness to commit the necessary financial investment on a vast scale. This will be needed to support academic research, promote green initiatives and industries, and meet the current huge needs of developing countries in respect of the millennium development goals, as well as respond to the catastrophic consequences and enormous economic costs of climate change, as detailed in the Stern Report."

LWP Meeting

"As the planet is poised at the tipping point of irreversible climate change, we struggle to conceptualise this potential catastrophe and its consequences. Too awful, perhaps, to deeply contemplate the consequences of inaction, we bury this awareness in order to re-establish the emotional comfort zone of denial. Believing, perhaps, that we are individually helpless to impact on this terrifying escalation, this helplessness is often felt as despair and moral confusion. Could an enriched sensibility to our place in nature enable us to shift from passive anguish to psychologically-healthy problem solving and greater emotional health? Can we creatively harness our awareness of our relationship with nature – rather than suppress it?" This theme for a conference at the Eden Project in Cornwall challenges our inertia in the face of the global threats to the environment. How can we motivate ourselves to change our habits? We know that there is an economic motivation for living more energy efficiently, wasting less and recycling more. There is also satisfaction as well as good health and fun in growing some of our food, in walking more, and in getting to know our neighbours. These things require us to slow down, maybe for an hour each day, a day each week, and are part of a richer lifestyle that we should be teaching our children. We need to have more confidence that small steps taken by many people in a community can really change things, and to start them ourselves. One mitigating action we can take is to donate money to tree-planting organizations to offset some of the damage we are doing with our high-carbon lifestyles. The tiny remnants

of our ancient forests remind us of the countless generations of ancestors who have gone before, and forest replanting would be a tangible sign that we mean to pass on the environment in better shape to all our grandchildren.”

A Friend

“We know that if we do not act now then our descendants in the world within 40 years will almost certainly experience not just uncontrollable climate change, but also the death of the oceans, the loss of biodiversity, topsoil loss and scarcity of fresh water. If we choose to ignore all this, then history will not judge us well.”

A Friend

## **B. Measuring human impact on the earth's ecosystems**

*Note: This introductory section is based on a Friend's notes on the scientific measurement of the problem. Like climate change itself, the reality of the Ecological Footprint is counter-intuitive for many people.*

### **Ecological Footprint [www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)**

The Ecological Footprint is the scientific measurement of how lightly we tread on the planet, the world's premier measure of humanity's demand on nature. Conceived in 1990 by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees at the University of British Columbia, the Ecological Footprint is now in wide use by scientists, businesses, governments, agencies, individuals, and institutions working to monitor ecological resource use and advance sustainable development. It is comprised of 241 National Footprint Accounts, based on about 5,400 data points per country per year, with statistics from the United Nations. It measures human demand on the Earth's [ecosystems](#), comparing human demand with [Earth's ecological](#) capacity to regenerate. It represents the amount of biologically productive land and sea area needed to regenerate the resources a human [population](#) consumes and to absorb and render harmless the corresponding waste. Using this assessment, it is possible to estimate how much of Earth, or how many planet [Earths](#) it would take to support humanity if everybody lived a given lifestyle.

The ecological footprint can be measured for each country. It basically multiplies the consumption per person by the size of the population, so each country can choose its relative levels of population and consumption to arrive at an ecological footprint which is in balance with its biocapacity, or the land-carrying capacity. Since the late 1970s, humanity has been in ecological overshoot with annual demand on resources exceeding what Earth can regenerate each year. Every year, the rising overshoot number is recalculated – with a three year lag due to the time it takes for the United Nations to collect and publish all the underlying statistics.

For 2006, humanity's total ecological footprint was estimated at 1.4 planet Earths – in other words, humanity uses ecological services 1.4 times as fast as Earth can renew them. We maintain this overshoot by liquidating the Earth's resources. Overshoot is a vastly underestimated threat to human well-being and the health of the planet, and one that is not adequately addressed. By measuring the Footprint of a population—an individual, city, business, nation, or all of humanity—we can assess our pressure on the planet, which helps us manage our

ecological assets more wisely and take personal and collective action in support of a world where humanity lives within the Earth's bounds.

### **Global Footprint Network** [www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)

Global Footprint Network has been co-authoring the Living Planet Reports of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for over ten years, which use the Ecological Footprint. Since the Ecological Footprint of each country is basically a multiplication of its consumption per person by its population therefore to reduce its ecological footprint, a country has to decide whether to reduce either consumption or population or both.

**World.** The [Living Planet Report 2008](#) shows that if current trends don't change humanity will be demanding two planets' worth of resources by the mid-2030s. The report includes updated Ecological Footprint and biocapacity data for 150 countries, projections for 2050, and suggested pathways for humanity to change course towards one planet living.

**China.** If China were to follow the consumption patterns of the United States, it would demand the available biocapacity of the entire planet. In contrast, it could model a new development path that achieves environmental quality and human well-being and lead the way for the world as a whole.

**Africa.** The 2008 report on Africa by [Global Footprint Network](#) and [WWF](#) reveals that while Africans per capita consume very little of the world's biological resources, the region's growing population is bringing it close to reaching its ecological limits.

**Canada.** According to the [Canadian Living Planet Report 2007](#), if everyone lived like Canadians, we would need 4.3 Earths to support us.

**Europe.** The growing economic strength of the European Union has doubled the ecological pressure on the planet in the past 30 years., according to the report, [Europe 2007 – Gross Domestic Product and Ecological Footprint](#), released by [Global Footprint Network](#) and [WWF](#). Despite technological advances, environmental pressure has been growing at a faster rate than the European population, creating a deficit of natural resources for the rest of the world and for future generations.

**U.S.A.** The U.S.A.'s Ecological Footprint is about double its land's ability to regenerate, its biocapacity.

### **Carbon footprint**

The carbon footprint is a subset of the [ecological footprint](#). It is useful for measuring the ecological impact of individuals, expressed in terms of the weight

of carbon per year that each person produces. 'Carbon' is shorthand for carbon dioxide or CO<sub>2</sub>. An [individual](#)'s carbon footprint can be measured with a 'Carbon Calculator' which converts one's measured consumption of energy, travel, food and other goods into a figure for the weight of carbon produced. There are various carbon calculators on the internet, each slightly different but all broadly similar. They convert each of your various utility readings and consumption figures into a carbon figure so that they can all be added up. A strategy can be devised to reduce each individual's carbon footprint, in particular by saving energy in the home, by using air travel and cars less, eating less meat and by living more simply. This is the aim of 10:10 groups and Ecoteams.

### ***Closing the carbon footprint gap***

In the UK the average personal, non-work carbon footprint which is under our direct control through our consumption is about 12,800 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. The Climate Change Act 2008 makes the UK the first country in the world to have a legally binding long-term framework to cut carbon. It specifies an 80% cut in emissions by 2050. It has been calculated that, at current levels of population, we in the U.K. would need to reduce by some 80% to a personal carbon footprint of about 2000 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

The 10:10 campaign is to achieve a 10% cut in carbon emissions by the end of 2010. For individuals this requires a personal reduction of about 1280 kg per year.

The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan plots how the UK will meet the 34% cut in emissions on 1990 levels by 2020. This requires a personal reduction of about 4300 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

The London Plan calls for 60% cuts in CO<sub>2</sub> by 2025, a personal reduction of 7680 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

### **Consumption**

How much can consumption be easily reduced? Existing Quaker simplicity of lifestyle means that it is actually harder for Quakers than for some other groups to make these reductions. An average U.K. citizen can reduce their consumption of energy and goods by up to 30% before large impacts on their lifestyles occur. The 10:10 process of trying to make a 10% reduction has shown that a carbon reduction of even 30% will require difficult choices, and an 80% reduction is not feasible. The reality behind these figures indicates that the lowering of the U.K.'s ecological footprint to the levels required in the Climate Change Act will require starting to reduce the U.K. population as well as reducing consumption.

## Human population

Excessive human population is a national and global problem. It has been referred to as “the elephant in the living room” with regard not just to the environmental crisis but also with regard to conflict and poverty around the world. World population is projected to rise from today's 6.8 billion to at least 9.15 billion and as much as 11 billion in 2050. Many believe that we humans are rapidly destabilising our climate and destroying the natural world on which our descendants depend for future life.

Stan Becker, a demographer who is a supporter of Quaker Earthcare Witness in the U.S.A. has travelled a 30-year personal journey under the weight of concern for population issues. His witness is discussed in the section on Quaker EarthCare Witness below, section 9 on ‘Population’.

In the UK, the population grew by 434,700 in 2007 alone, an increase equivalent to a city larger than Cardiff. It is projected to continue rising – from 61 million (mid-2008), to pass 70 million in 2029 and reach 77 million in 2050, and 100 million by the end of this century. The UK in 2005 has 250 inhabitants per square kilometre and its population density makes it more densely populated than China, and the third most densely populated in the EU 15 after the Netherlands (393) and Belgium (341). The Optimum Population Trust (OPT), [www.optimumpopulation.org](http://www.optimumpopulation.org), believes that, at present levels of consumption, the Earth may not be able to support more than half its present numbers before the end of this century, and that the UK's long-term sustainable population level may be lower than 30 million.

## C. Living Witness Project Meetings Actions

### Living Witness Project

Living Witness Project (LWP) [www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk) is a network from Britain YM exploring and promoting awareness of the need for a green lifestyle. It includes background information, news, events, resources, and contacts. The project involves developing and supporting a growing and vibrant network of Quaker meetings exploring their corporate witness through study groups and practical activities, and seeking to learn from the experience. It aims to support the development of Quaker corporate witness to sustainable living and explore ways of taking it to the wider community in Britain and elsewhere.

### LWP Meetings: Friends' actions to reduce their carbon footprint

#### **1 Individually in our own lives**

As individuals we can all have the satisfaction of reducing the greenhouse gases that we produce. Although it is more fun and easier in a group (see below), it is perfectly possible to work out for ourselves how we can change our carbon footprints. Measuring and monitoring our use of gas, electricity, travel and consumption is an essential first step if we wish to reduce our carbon footprint.

"We are willing and intend looking at our personal contribution to carbon reduction. Some intentions are limited by factors beyond our control e.g. safety considerations in cycling. Decisions are complex. Individuals can only achieve so much unless infrastructure is changed too. Reduced meat eating can contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases, but vegetarians should note that the increased use of soya leads to environmental damage. Buying local produce is to be encouraged but we are also mindful of the possible losses for some farmers in third world countries who export to countries such as the UK.

We intend to review our own carbon use and to share these ideas and support each other in our intentions. We hope that we are able to set an example for Friends beyond our meeting to follow e.g. shopping at local Farmers Markets. We are mindful of the size of the problem."

LWP Meeting

## **2 Meeting Houses Energy Efficiency**

Most Meetings have taken steps to make their Meeting Houses more energy efficient:

### *Heating, insulation and draughtproofing*

- Undertake an environmental audit of the Meeting House with the aim of minimising your impact on the environment.
- Reduce CO2 emissions by draft reduction. Have your sash windows professionally refurbished and draft-proofed. It may be possible to get a grant, such as from [the SITA Environmental Trust](#).
- Besides draughtproofing, insulation of roof and walls (if they are cavity walls) is the most cost effective way of saving energy.
- Consider replacing your central heating boiler for a modern condensing boiler if the old one is 20 years old, and refurbish your heating system to make it more efficient.
- Change your electricity supplier to Good Energy, which ensures your electricity consumption is matched by generation from renewable resources. But this does not make it cheaper.
- One Meeting is now down to 65% of their original energy usage despite this last winter and are doing their best to get a huge solar PV array on our roof.
- “We have had a major consultation with our warden on what temperatures heaters in the building should be set to”.

### *Actions on renewables*

- Use environmentally friendly (Ecover) cleaning products.
- Install recycling bins.
- Buy a refrigerator with an A+ energy rating.
- Use Evolve recycled paper for newsletters.
- Become a Fairtrade Meeting.
- Place an order with a local wholesaler for low energy lightbulbs giving all members of the Meeting the opportunity to upgrade at a relatively low price.

## **3 Action by Local Meetings**

“We shared a common feeling that in our Framework for Action document the section on sustainability was the weakest in preparing us to face environmental concerns, not least the possibility of environmental catastrophe caused by global warming.”

LWP Meeting

- Cotteridge in Birmingham has a useful website, with lots of tips for energy saving by both Meeting House and by Individual Quakers. The website includes costings for the improvements (<http://www.cotteridge.quaker.eu.org>). Cotteridge Quakers have become the first religious group in the UK to sign up to the [Every Action Counts Climate Change declaration](#) (see *The Friend*, 16 November 2007; <http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/declaration/who.asp>). The Declaration is intended as a statement of intent from Third Sector organisations to tackle the issue of climate change by taking action in our organisations and in our communities.
- One Meeting has become an Eco-Congregation of The Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. This is an ecumenical programme helping churches make the link between environmental issues and Christian faith, and to respond in practical action in the church, in the lives of individuals, and in the local and global community.
- One Meeting has planted 600 trees
- 10:10. Some Meetings have signed up to 10:10 as a Meeting, rather than as individuals
- Landscape gardening. Several Meetings are doing work landscaping the area around their Meeting Houses to make them more attractive, for instance with a pond and flower plantings, and sitting areas with new native trees. Some LWP Friends are permaculture experts, and combine these principles with organic food growing. [www.permaculture.org.uk](http://www.permaculture.org.uk)
- Transport. Car transport is often a necessity for Friends, particularly for Meetings in more rural areas, but it can be minimized by car-sharing.
- A Friend in one Meeting has produced a game about Climate Change
- A member of one LWP Meeting has produced a 5 year plan for consideration.
- There can be occasional inaction: "The Sustainability Group went into hibernation over the last winter"
- A Friend in one Meeting is part-way through a ten-week course on climate change, after which he will be in a position to tell other Friends about it.
- Low Carbon Communities Project ([www.lowcarboncommunity.org](http://www.lowcarboncommunity.org)). Friends are involved with one LCCP project to reduce the carbon emissions of three communities, by the installation of community owned and operated renewable energy systems and engaging the community to reduce energy use. Members of the community are guided through tailored energy saving plans, drawn up on an individual basis for households, businesses and community buildings. Plans involve the installation of energy efficiency measures and small scale renewable technology.

- Forming groups with neighbours. Some Friends have used a combined 10:10 and 'Ecoteam' approach, forming groups with their street neighbours to reduce their carbon footprints.

#### **4 Influencing other Friends in our Meetings**

Some Meetings have arranged discussion groups on sustainability

It can be difficult to persuade other Friends in one's own Meeting: "Getting other people in our meeting to take personal action is more difficult."

#### **5 Area Meetings**

Actions by Area Meetings include keeping in touch with the progress of their local Meetings, meeting to discuss Climate Change as a theme, and have signing up to 10:10 as an Area Meeting.

#### **6 Campaigning locally: linking up**

- "How can we as Quakers inspire and motivate people to modify their lifestyles? Prophets were influential people. Could we become prophets? Why not?"
- Linking with a Transition Town has been successful for several meetings. See section above on Transition Towns.
- Multi-faith approach. Members of some Meetings have co-operated with other faiths such as Muslims on events to publicise the need to care for the Earth.
- One LWP Meeting organised an Operation Noah conference on 'Climate change: what can Christians do?' with local churches. [www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org)
- LWP members of one Meeting decided to send out a factual campaigning letter out widely to as many people as they could usefully think of, and a letter of support and concern to those with a more active interest in the issue.
- Friends have met their local M.P.s and their local 'Churches Together' to discuss sustainability

#### **7 Joining other local groups**

10:10 [www.1010uk.org](http://www.1010uk.org)

The 10:10 campaign is trying to achieve a 10% cut in carbon emissions by the end of 2010. For individuals this requires a personal reduction of about 1280 Kgs per year.

A brief tally of sign-ups gives an idea of the topsy-like like growth 10:10 has enjoyed in its first 120 days or so: more than 50,000 individuals promising to cut their carbon footprint by 10% in 2010; more than 2,000 companies, from high-street giants such as Adidas and B&Q to tiny family businesses; some 100

councils, including major cities such as Manchester and Edinburgh; over 1,500 schools, further education colleges and universities, and at least 1,000 other organisations ranging from churches and hospitals (10% of NHS Trusts have now signed up) to BAFTA and the Lovebox and Bestival pop festivals.

*Ecoteams* [www.ecoteams.org.uk](http://www.ecoteams.org.uk)

One Meeting ran an Ecoteams training event with other local groups.

EcoTeams was set up by Global Action Plan as a way of making helping the environment fun, easy and effective. Whether it's with like-minded friends, neighbours, colleagues, or even strangers, EcoTeams connects people who want to reduce their impact on the environment and achieve something significant together.

EcoTeams is a long established and effective and has been independently certified, and endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme. A household taking part typically:

- improves energy and water management, reducing CO2 emissions by 16.6%
- reduces bills by £170 a year
- reduce waste by 20%, while increasing the proportion of rubbish that is recycled
- reduces water used by 15%

and many people continue to keep improving even when they are no longer involved in a team.

Making changes is easier when we do it with friends and neighbours, rather than working alone. Your EcoTeam will be one of hundreds running in the UK. EcoTeams are great because they can be run in many different ways with people from all walks of life. Together, you can make simple but tangible differences, which amount to significant savings. It's worthwhile making even little changes because if lots of people make small changes it can add up to big changes.

### *10:10 Ecogroups of Neighbours*

Some LWP Friends belong to a Transition Town where they have helped set up street groups with neighbours which combine the 10:10 and Ecoteams concepts. They have formed small 10:10 neighbours' groups, with meetings every few months from January 2010. Their experience has been that it is much more fun and more effective to do 10:10 as a group. It has led to getting to know neighbours better while chatting about all sorts of things with something to eat and drink. Besides tips on carbon saving, discussing what is going on locally has

led to a sense of street community, and this year the street is organizing a 'Big Lunch'. [www.thebiglunch.com](http://www.thebiglunch.com)

*Transition Towns* [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

"We felt that there would be support for a local transition town group. We would like to consider whether we could take a lead on this, as part of our ongoing work and witness as a Meeting, without unduly increasing the burden on Friends. A small nucleus of committed people could perhaps catalyse action by many more."

LWP Meeting

Meetings which have been able to collaborate with a neighbouring Transition Town have found this both energising and creative, and you may want to consider joining one or even helping to form one locally.

Transition Towns, which were started by Rob Hopkins in Totnes in Devon, are a local response to the challenges of climate change and peak oil. They are a growing international network of local people looking to take action to inspire their communities to make a transition towards a positive and truly sustainable future. Transition initiatives, instead of simply calling for government to make the necessary changes for us, are about people making practical, visible, useful changes now, and with each other's support. Ending our oil dependence means changes for almost every aspect of our lives, from food to transport, from healthcare to how we entertain ourselves. It is a turning point unlike anything that has come before. So Transition Towns are not a single-issue 'environmental' project, but will embrace anything and everything that will make the community better able to thrive. They do not aim to replace or compete with any of the many groups already doing valuable work in the community, but instead want to celebrate, tap into and spread the word about all of that existing expertise. Neither are they party political.

To see if you have an official Transition Town yet near you, check out their website [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org). That list does not include newly formed and unofficial Transition Towns, so try googling 'Transition xxx ' with your locality. Starting a local Transition Town near you can be done very informally by getting together with half a dozen people in someone's home to discuss forming one. To get tips on how to find your group and get started, look at the resources page on [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

## **D. Campaigning Objectives**

The problems caused by the environmental crisis require changes at local, national and international levels, and it helpful to be aware of the thinking at other levels while acting locally as a LWP Meeting. Please keep sending in your ideas for action at all levels. These are some ideas from LWP Meetings:

### **Campaigning nationally and internationally**

"Climate change is an issue of overwhelming importance and complexity that our Meeting feels it is imperative that the Religious Society of Friends make a statement prior to the Copenhagen summit. This is the only way to give momentum to the national and international political will required to initiate change. This is a global issue. There are dilemmas concerned with trade justice and the personal desire to travel to maintain family connections and the effect of not travelling on other economies. Friends should become politically active to be an effective part of this process. There is a need to lobby government in the UK, in the EU and UN, to aid with changing national and international agendas to support measures to reduce the impact of climate change. It is a national and international responsibility to effect meaningful change, not just that of the individual or local meeting."

Friend from a LWP Meeting

### **Some initial ideas for national policies**

- An overall U.K. population & consumption policy to address the U.K. Ecological Footprint.
- Redrafting of the U.K. National Planning Framework to achieve the agreed objectives of the UK Climate Change Act, the UK Marine Act and the EU Biodiversity Directive, which the UK has signed.
- Reform of the local planning process to encourage energy saving and to maintain local biodiversity.
- Lobby other governments for the adoption of a 'United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth'. <http://motherearthrights.org/> and <http://climateradio.org/>
- Lobby other governments for the creation of a new international crime of 'Ecocide', the destruction of the planet's ecosystems such as forests, to be tried by the International Criminal Court. <http://www.thisisecocide.com>

- National regulations to reduce wasteful consumption, for instance by banning products with inbuilt obsolescence, or products which are hard to repair or recycle.
- Action to refurbish old housing stock to new energy efficient standards. 500,000 old homes a year in the U.K. need to be made energy efficient.
- Give more powers back to Local Councils to co-ordinate change
- Energy saving by setting Scotland's time differently to that of England.
- "There should be two hours of positive and humourous television programming every day to highlight the joyful possibilities of change. This should be backed up by creative advertising campaigns which make change seem normal."

LWP Friend

### **Some ideas for Local Council policies**

- Use all available mechanisms of the existing planning system to promote energy saving and low-carbon development.
- Incorporate the nationally agreed objectives of the UK Climate Change Act, the UK Marine Act and the EU Biodiversity Directive into local plans.
- Publicise and follow best practice of local councils such as Uttlesford, who pioneered a way to allow visible solar panels in a Conservation Area. [www.uttlesford.gov.uk](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk).
- Set up Energy Advice Centres, and energy saving demonstration houses.
- Streamline the local planning process so that all individuals and groups can participate easily and without facing costs if they want to challenge developments which threatens local biodiversity.
- Redraft local planning guidance to encourage energy conservation. Embodied energy should be a part of any equation, to discourage total redevelopment.
- Use the best practice for in-house energy conservation in Council buildings and vehicle fleets, and in waste recycling.

### **The international perspective**

*A Friend's notes about the Haldane Society lecture by Polly Higgins at the College of Law*

Polly Higgins, the British environmental lawyer who attended the Copenhagen meeting on climate change, believes that there is no possibility of 187 different countries coming to an effective agreement when they are only really discussing how to tackle symptoms. The better way is for them to agree international laws which tackle the root causes of climate change and the environmental crisis, and

which are enforceable through the United Nations. She quoted United Nations figures that uncontrolled plundering of natural earth resources amounted in 2008 to \$2.4 trillion and in 2009 to \$4 trillion. She compared this financially-driven business with the slave trade. A new law to stop the slave trade led within a year to the companies involved finding other ways of making money.

A contemporary example of the effectiveness of good international laws is the Montreal Protocol, which effectively stopped the production of chemicals which damage the ozone layer. It is believed that, so long as that international agreement is adhered to, the ozone layer will recover by 2050. Due to its widespread adoption and implementation by 196 states it has been hailed as an example of exceptional international co-operation with [Kofi Annan](#) describing it as "perhaps the single most successful international agreement to date".

There are two potential legal measures which the United Nations could adopt if enough national governments supported them. The first will be discussed by participating governments at a June 2010 U.N. meeting in Kampala (see [link](#)) and the second has been discussed at a recent conference in Bolivia (see [link](#)).

## Ecocide

A proposed new international crime of 'Ecocide', or destruction of the planet's ecological systems, such as forests. It would be tried by the U.N. International Criminal Court. It has been proposed by British environmental lawyer Polly Higgins and she is currently looking for support, because there is a small window of opportunity for this to be agreed by the UN meeting at Kampala in June 2010. Only two thirds of attending countries need to support it.

This legislation would make individuals liable anywhere in the world, whether or not that country has signed up. It would even make liable individual directors of finance companies who invest in companies that engage in ecocidal activities such as cutting down the rainforests. [www.thisisecocide.com](http://www.thisisecocide.com) and <http://www.youtube.com/...!>

*United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.* First proposed in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and taken up by Bolivia. This would follow the previous example of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which was initially rather disdained but has come to be adopted by very many states with enormous impact. <http://unfccc.int/...> and <http://motherearthrights.org/>

This is a report by Naomi Klein about the meeting on 23rd April in Bolivia: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/...> and <http://climateradio.org/>

## **E. How to change attitudes to climate change**

"A spiritual change of the deepest kind is required, in terms of how we all think, feel and act. A profound transformation of human consciousness is essential if the horror of global warming on the scale now deemed likely by many scientists is to be averted. Thus, we assent wholeheartedly to the following words: "At the heart of this transformation needs to be recognition of community – from the local to the global: of common interest in our shared planet and of the interconnectedness of all our actions. We need to act from a position of love for Creation and for our fellow human beings: not just fear about what the future may bring." (Quaker Climate Change document 6 Seeking a sustainable path) We have hope and faith that a better world can emerge, with greater social justice, and enduring deep concern for all living things that share our beautiful planet."

LWP Meeting

"There have been unambiguous warnings about the consequences of climate change during our lifetime from world climate scientists, the Royal Society, and Government Chief Scientific Advisers. But public opinion in the U.K. remains largely unconcerned about the danger and sceptical whether the problem is even human-caused. Meanwhile the government's environmental policies have barely altered. Why?

Many of us stop paying attention to climate change when we realize there is no easy solution, and none without worldwide co-operation. The tendency for the self-interest of individual countries to deplete and destroy shared limited resources (atmosphere, oceans and land), despite this being in no-one's long-term interest, requires a globally monitored agreement. This could be based on each country agreeing to match its own ecological footprint with its biocapacity, choosing either a lower population and higher individual consumption or a higher population and a lower individual consumption.

The scale of the change required to deal with climate change means it can only be brought about by governments. They can alter the framework of rewards and constraints to motivate us to change our behaviour, either indirectly such as through individual carbon rationing, or directly such as by taxing cars more heavily and subsidizing energy saving in homes. But politicians in democratic countries risk being voted out if they go against public opinion. There is also political resistance to effective action from the fossil fuel industry and the economic growth lobby.

Climate change directly questions our culture's dominant belief in perpetual economic growth, and alternative economic models are still little developed. At present we define ourselves around our high-carbon consumption habits, especially loving our cars and flights and material goods. A more services-led economy that promotes personal growth and self-realisation through closeness to other people and to nature would have health benefits for family, community and national life.

Dick Beckhard's equation states that any change will only happen when individual dissatisfaction with the status quo, plus the clarity of vision and perceived benefits, plus the availability of practical first steps, add up to a sum greater than the psychological and financial costs of changing. There is a natural tendency for the status quo to persist because that is the easy option, particularly if there are many difficulties to overcome.

We think we can ignore climate change because it will affect us at best in the future and we are too busy with solving the day-to-day family, money and work problems of the present. The danger is perceived as long term, is invisible and is caused by all of us, whereas our human risk response mechanism (fight or flight) is triggered by visible, immediate and personal threats.

We are not receiving the clear scientific message that we must act now to minimize the losses. Repeated and accurate information about the threat and the solutions is essential for a change of public opinion about climate change. As individuals we use a denial strategy of trying to know as little as possible about reality. Few have read even a summary of the pivotal 2007 report. Instead, scepticism has grown because of a media distortion of the real scientific consensus about climate change, due to 'balanced' reporting which exaggerates small doubts about the evidence. The warnings about climate change are based on long-term scientific data comparing rising global temperatures with the levels of gases such as carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Denial of climate change may take the form of unlikely fatalistic optimism, for instance that 'the government will deal with it', 'technology will solve it', or 'it is in the hands of God'. Humans have been growing up psychologically for a long time, for most of it feeling like children in relationship to the Earth and Universe, whose sublime mysterious nature we may experience only partially or rarely. At some level we still believe that our 'parents' will again be there to look after us, provide for us and love us, whatever we do. Human

intelligence will have found out about the threat of climate change in vain if human wisdom cannot quickly bring about responsible action.

LWP Friend

## F. Quaker Testimonies

“The experience of Friends was that the Light led them into an understanding of the Christian life and the way it was to be lived. We express the principles they discovered in terms such as Truth, Equality, Simplicity and Peace. However, these are not abstract qualities but vital principles of life. Early Friends expressed them in the ways of action which they called the testimonies, and for which they were prepared to suffer and die.”

*Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP)*

“The testimonies are ways of behaving but are not ethical rules. They are matters of practice but imply doctrines. They refer to human society but are about God .... A testimony is a declaration of truth or fact ... It is not an ejaculation, a way of letting off steam or baring one’s soul. It has a purpose, and that is to get people to change, to turn to God. Such an enterprise, be it in words or by conduct and example, is in essence prophetic and evangelical.”

John Punshon, 1987, QFP

The testimonies about the environmental crisis are grouped the different testimonies into various strands of an overall testimony. The love testimony is placed first because it is the witness of many Friends that it will be the active power of love and friendship that will make change possible.

### The Love Testimony

“What is love? What shall I say of it, or how shall I in words express its nature? It is the sweetness of life; it is the sweet, tender, melting nature of God, flowing up through his seed of life into the creature, and of all things making the creature most like unto himself, both in nature and operation. It fulfils the law, it fulfils the gospel; it wraps up all in one, and brings forth all in the oneness. It excludes all evil out of the heart, it perfects all good in the heart. A touch of love doth this in measure; perfect love doth this in fullness.”

Isaac Pennington, 1663, QFP

“Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity; but, for that reason, it should be most our care to learn it”.

William Penn, 1693, QFP

"We are called to obedient love even though we may not be feeling very loving. Often it is through the performance of loving acts that loving feelings can be built upon us. We may start with small, perhaps very tiny steps. It is only as we being to allow Christ's love to act in and through us that it can become part of us."

Sandra Cronk, 1983, QFP

"Spirituality is revealed as that which gives life and, specifically, life as love made manifest. I believe that none of us can force love to happen. It doesn't come from an act of will mandated from the ego. Love is an opening, a gift of Grace. It comes from the Spirit that animates the soul, and is within conscious intent but beyond conscious control. We can ask to love and be loved, but usually we must wait. In the waiting we have to sit with our emptiness. That's where courage is called for. The courage to face the truth without resorting to the masks of lies and addiction. It is the deepest meaning of prayer. God does not force love upon us ... The reality is that God simply invites us to say 'yes'. All else follows on from that deep letting go into Being. It is how the inner life rekindles from its primal source, one that may often trickle, but which never runs dry."

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

"I do believe that there is a power which is divine, creative and loving, though we can often only describe it with the images and symbols that rise from our particular experiences and those of our communities. This power is part and parcel of all things, human, animal, indeed of all that lives. Its story is greater than any one cultural version of it and yet it is embodied in all stories, in all traditions. It is a power that paradoxically needs the human response. Like us it is energized by the reciprocity of love. It wills our redemption, longs for us to turn to it. It does not create heaven and hell for us, but allows us to do that for ourselves. Such is the terrible vulnerability of love."

Harvey Gillman, 1988, QFP

"In friendship we are beyond law and obedience, beyond rules and commandments, beyond all constraint, in a world of freedom. But did not Jesus say, 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you'? Yes, he did. We, on our side, are apt to miss the quiet humour of his paradoxes. 'These are my commandments,' he goes on, 'that ye love one another'. In other words, the friendship of Christ is realised in our friendships with one another. His command is that we rise above commandments, and therefore

his obedience is perfect freedom. Make service your centre, with its laws and duties and self-sacrifice, and life is a bondage. Make friendship the centre and life is freedom.”

John Macmurray, 1942, QFP

“James Gilligan, former director of psychiatric services in the Massachusetts prison system, has said that ‘Violence is the ultimate means of communicating the absence of love by the person inflicting the violence. The self cannot survive without love. The self starved of love dies. That is how violence can cause the death of the self even when it does not kill the body.’”

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

“Without the competitive ethic, modern life would be a very sluggish affair ... competition both motivates and challenges towards perfection. However, competition becomes a destructive force if not held within a wider framework that is cooperative. Today, obsessive competitiveness is pushed in government policy, industry and even at children in the classroom from the most tender age. ... Originally, to compete meant to ‘strive in common’, but ... this sense has largely been lost. Instead, an expression of behaviour has evolved that has become injurious to the soul and destructive of the environment. People are encouraged to compete and consume not out of need, but to keep up on the racetrack of success. The counterpoint to such competition is co-operation ... as in cooperative and mutual business entities. But how can such cooperation be kept on its toes? ... Can such opposites as competition and cooperation pull together? ... Just as we fundamentally are not just individuals but are interconnected, businesses based on mutuality reflect depth psychological reality better than those based on aggressive competition.

Interestingly, some forward-looking businesses now expect ‘love’ to be a key ingredient of future business success. There is discussion of a ‘new realism’ based on love and respect which might in future shift our economic system unexpectedly towards mutuality.”

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

## **The Peace Testimony**

“The only antidote to the spiral of violence is the spiral of love. This is the power of non-violence, not as a passive ‘pacifism’ but as vibrant ‘truth force’ or satyagraha as Gandhi called it.

In my experience the military generally believe that while war may be inevitable, and that is what they train for, it is neither a good nor a lasting answer.

The bottom line question is: 'wherein lies true security?' I simply suggest that we need to shift along the spectrum from violent to nonviolent forms of security. Climate change demonstrates this imperative better than anything. We're not going to head off global warming by continuing to bomb our way into other people's oilfields. The only hope is moving towards social and environmental justice across the world. Such has to be the cornerstone of an enlightened defence policy. It includes learning to recognize and process conflict at all levels of society".

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

"We are trustees of a long tradition which has sought to bring our religious convictions into the world and so to excite our endeavours to mend it. We are trying to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars."

1987 London Yearly Meeting

"Mediation is not an easy task. It requires of us an exceptional willingness to listen, to lay aside self, and to enter into the minds of those in dispute. We must not try to find acceptance for our own solution to the conflict, but rather act as the ground in which, with our help, others can work out their answers. A few people are natural mediators; most of us can learn the skills if we feel called to that service. Friends' opposition to all forms of violence imposes on them the responsibility to seek alternative responses to conflict and injustice. Mediation is one method which can be offered or suggested.

Sue Bowers, 1991, QFP

"Governments need to take actions to encourage the development of renewable and sustainable resources, cooperate with each other to prevent conflict arising from competition for resources."

LWP Meeting

"Conflict happens, and will continue to happen, even in the most peaceful of worlds. And that's good – a world where we all agreed with one another would be incredible boring. Our differences help us to learn. Through conflict handled creatively we can change and grow; and I am not sure real change – either political or personal – can happen without it. We'll each handle conflict differently and find healing and reconciliation by different paths. I want

nonetheless to offer three keys, three skills or qualities which I've found helpful from my own experience.

The first skill is naming: being clear and honest about the problem as I see it, stating what I see and how I feel about it .... This ability to name what seems to be going on, is crucial to getting the conflict out into the open, where we can begin to understand and try to deal with it. Such a skill is dangerous. It can feel – indeed it can be – confrontational. It feels like stirring up trouble where there wasn't any problem. It needs to be done carefully, caringly, with love, in language we hope others can hear. We need to seek tactfully the best time to do it. But it needs to be done.

The second skill is that of listening: listening not just to the words, but to the feelings and needs behind the words. It takes a great deal of time and energy to listen well. It's a kind of weaving: reflecting back, asking for clarification, asking for time in turn to be listened to, being truly open to what we're hearing (even if it hurts), being open to the possibility that we might ourselves be changed by what we hear.

The third skill is letting go: I don't mean that in the sense of giving up, lying down and inviting people to walk all over us, but acknowledging the possibility that there may be other solutions to this conflict than the ones we've thought of yet; letting the imagination in – making room for the Spirit. We need to let go of our own will – not so as to surrender to another's, but so as to look together for God's solution. It's a question of finding ways to let go of our commitment to opposition and separation, of letting ourselves be opened to our connectedness as human beings.

If we are to do any of these things well – naming, listening, letting go – if we need to have learned to trust that of God in ourselves and that of God in those trapped on all sides of the conflict with us. And to do that well, I find I need to be centred, rooted, practised in waiting on God. That rootedness is both a gift and a discipline, something we can cultivate and build on by acknowledging it every day.

Mary Lou Leavitt, 1986, QFP

"There is a danger of 'resource wars' during the 21st Century due to pressure from increased human population and increased resource requirements. History shows that it has often been rising populations coupled with limited supplies of food, water or other essential resources which led cities and states to attack their neighbours."

A Friend

## The Environment Testimony

"In 1949 Aldo Leopold described conservation as 'a state of harmony' between people and the land. He proposed a 'land ethic' based on the principle that 'a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the whole web of life, and wrong when it tends otherwise. At the end of the day ... the world of consumerism is sad and tawdry. Except where economic growth serves the fundamental needs of the poor, it measures little more than rate at which natural beauty and human effort is trashed. Consumerism's beauty only goes skin deep, whereas true beauty is experienced when inner values harmonise with outer action. This is why right relationship with nature makes us whole. It salves our neurosis; it is a form of 'salvation'.

Children need an 'elemental education' fully to be able to appreciate reality. They need contact with nature where they can learn about matter and energy, cosmology, the atmosphere and its weather, the soils and the rocks, and the rivers, lakes and seas and their flora and fauna. They need to experience nature's beauty and the sheer fun of it, for nature absorbs children in so many different ways. Children need to the ancient four 'roots' or 'elements' of reality – fire, air, earth and water. They need to know them in all their dangers which demand respect and courage, and to know them in all their sensitivity and vulnerability – the filigree of frost on a winter's morning leaf – the hallowed loveliness that brings a tear to the eye.

None of this means treating the world in a 'precious' way. Even the most 'spiritual' of indigenous tribes kill animals, fell trees and hew stone. But it does mean doing these things with respect, with gratitude."

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

## The Grace Testimony

"Jesus's question in the Sermon on the Mount: 'If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye to excess?' What do ye to excess? How often he showed his approval of extravagant generosity when arose from a simple and pure impulse of the heart. He defended the act of the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment so that she might pour it over his feet .... It is this excess, this extravagance, which we find in God's love for us, that for me shows the meaning of the word 'Grace'. It is for this grace that we

pray; that we, too, may love to excess even though it may appear foolish in the eyes of the world.

Phyllis Richards, 1949, QFP

“My father used to say that kindness is what matters above all else. Even when there is little else that can be done – when the actual or metaphorical floodwaters are rising all around and hope gets put to rest – even then, we can still try and be kind. Gratitude is what sustains and completes the cycle of grace. It is the essence of ‘worship’ – and Old English word meaning the celebration of ‘worth’. If in our pride we neglect gratitude there will be no hope of building true community because the doors of life’s deepest gifts will stay closed.

The American environmental educator David Orr goes so far as to believe that gratitude is the single most important quality needed to address climate change. He says that only in such a spirit can we be freed from the loveless illusion of independence, and discover the sustaining truth of interdependence. This applies both for our relationships with one another and with the natural world. It is the flow of grace that opens the doors of ‘providence’ or ‘provide-ence’ in all walks of life. Such is what it means to find blessing. Orr writes ‘In our universities we teach a thousand ways to criticise, analyse, dissect and deconstruct, but we offer very little guidance on the cultivation of gratitude – simply saying “Thank you”’ And Rabbi Abraham Herschel has said ‘Humankind will not perish for want of information, but only for want of appreciation.’”

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

## **The Truth Testimony**

“I come back again and again in my own mind to this word Truth. ‘Promptings of love and truth’ – these two sometimes seem to be in conflict, but in fact they are inseparable. If we are to know the truth, we must be able to see with unclouded eyes, and then we will love what is real and not what is duty or fancy.”

Alison Sharman, 1986, QFP

“Creeds are milestones, doctrines are interpretations: Truth, as George Fox was continually asserting, a seed with the power of growth, not a fixed crystal, be its facets never so beautiful.”

John Wilhelm Rowntree, 1904 QFP

'Truth is a complex concept; sometimes the word is used for God, sometimes for the conviction that arises from worship, sometimes for the way of life.'

QFP 19.34

"Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God."

Advices 1964

"It is often supposed that science and religious belief are incompatible. Indeed a dichotomy does exist between some traditional views of God's interaction with the universe and science's perception of natural laws. If we only use God to fill the gaps wherever a rational explanation has not been found, God's role must diminish as scientific understanding grows. A 'God of the gaps' is inevitably a rather small God. However, the immanence of God in our world may be appreciated through Science as vividly as through the Arts. Many scientists daily experience God through their work: in the elegance and sophistication of natural design or the beauty and harmony revealed in certain theories. The growing body of scientific knowledge demands a continuous re-thinking of what is meant by 'Creator' but our greater understanding magnifies rather than diminishes our appreciation of God.

Science and religion have much in common. They are communal activities and involve a search for some greater truth. The sharing of ideas is fundamental to both. The discipline of science can make a valuable contribution to religious thought; critical honesty, the willingness to abandon old ideas and modes of thought when fresh insight demands it and the centrality of experience as an arbiter of truth are as important in one as in the other. In both the scientific and religious searches for truth, the implications of current beliefs are explored to see where they lead. Beliefs are not just safe ledges in an uncertain reality, but rather handholds from which further heights can be reached.

Eleven Quaker scientists, 1989 QFP

"Grace – both given to us and shared by us – walks hand in hand with Truth. The first verse of the Hindu gospel, the Bhagavad Gita, describes how power on its own is profoundly blind precisely because it finds Truth, and telling truths, so challenging. Whether in the politics of a king or in the everyday lives of us all, power is always tempted to fabricate reality by putting a spin on things. Nicolai Berdyaev has written that 'The lie of the contemporary world has come about because we have been subjected to or have permitted the disappearance of the very criterion of truth'. This distorts our perception

of reality, unless we can find the clarity of spirituality to see where we are going. We all get caught up so easily and deeply in webs of untruth and delusion. It makes truth and integrity one of the most challenging of spiritual practices. We fret ... at our complicity in 'little white lies' but miss the structural whoppers.

It is no coincidence that the secular age is the age of the lie, for consciousness itself has dimmed. Our sense of aliveness fades, and there's only the ache left behind – the lacuna in the soul – the promise of what could otherwise be .... Soul retrieval is the ultimate ministry of the planetary hospice worker.

The more that I reflect on the culture of the lie in relation to what drives world problems like war and climate change, the more I'm convinced that the deep answer starts with trying to live truthfully. Truth is the grace that kick-starts our lacklustre spirits back into touch."

*Alastair McIntosh, Hell and High Water*

### **The Testimony of Integrity**

"My call is to rekindle inner life .... But too much inner life without the grounding nourishment of getting our hands dirty is just as toxic to the soul as the other way round. We need a dance between the fantastical and the practical; not apartheid between the two. Our drift must be towards becoming whole people in a whole world. We are talking here of a spirituality that is both transcendent and immanent. An incarnate spirituality that is not of the 'world' in all its wicked ways, yet neither abandons that world: 'For God so loved the world ....' Even if we find ourselves forced to view the little steps we take today as patterns and examples for reconstruction after the grand melt-down in some post-apocalyptic scenario, what matters is that we never give up. Love does not succumb to compassion fatigue .... And hope is not about sitting back on tenterhooks and waiting for a miracle to happen. Hope is being receptive to a new mind and a new heart. Hope is about setting in place the preconditions that might reconstitute life, and then getting on with it."

*Alastair McIntosh, Hell and High Water*

### **The Testimony of Equality**

"There is a fundamental fairness in allocating planet-space equally based on each country's ecological footprint. The Equality Trust quotes evidence from

respected sources to show that greater equality within the rich countries seems to lead them to adopt policies which are more helpful to poorer countries, as well as policies designed to tackle global warming. During the next 40 years or so carbon emissions will have to be cut by 80 or 90 percent. Politics for perhaps the next generation will be dominated by environmental issues: either with cutting carbon emissions or with the results of our failure to do so. It is therefore important to see how the creation of a sustainable economic system is dependent on greater equality.”

[www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

LWP Friend

### **The Place Testimony**

“Friends are not about building walls but about taking them down. For us as rural Friends, living many miles from each other and a Quaker meeting, having dual membership is a way of acknowledging our involvement with where we live: with local activities including Christian ones. Our origins have been in other branches of the church, giving experience which we value. Yet we wish to affirm that, for us, waiting on God in the silence of Quaker worship is at the very centre of our lives and the mainspring of our other activities.

Members of North Northumberland Meeting, 1994, QFP

“Research in ecopsychology – ecological psychology – has repeatedly shown that we need to be able to attach to places as well as to other people. We tend to be most at ease within ourselves when we have a sense of ‘home’ that is both emotional and geographical. As such, communities of place – our country, town, village or a bioregion such as an island or a watershed – tend to be very strong markers of identity. ‘Place’ is a very warm word. It is the product of both environment and culture; of nature and society. There is a sequence of reconnection with place that I have observed from my work with community regeneration ...

- 1 A sense of place (grounding)
- 2 gives rise to a sense of identity (ego/head)
- 3 which carries with it a sense of values (soul/heart)
- 4 generating a sense of responsibility (action/hand)

That final sense of responsibility then feeds back into renewing sense of place. All this builds social and environmental cohesion. If the cycle is broken at any point, both human community and natural ecology are damaged – it

becomes a vicious cycle. Conversely, if it is strengthened, people and place regenerate.”

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

### **The Community Testimony**

“Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.”

Isaac Pennington, 1667, QFP

“Today there is a bit of the indigenous and a bit of the alien in most of us. A construct of identity that allows the honouring and melding of these can really work, and powerfully so, where community is at its heart. In Govan where I live, the Galgael’s workshops teach the participants traditional artisan skills using natural materials like wood, wool and stone. The simple act of anchoring community in a context of mentoring and eldership gives people back themselves. It calls back the soul. Skills like these could be applied in many different contexts. They could, for example, help to ease the pain of cultural dislocation that people in the future are likely to experience from climate change.”

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

### **The Life Testimony**

“Along the paths of the imagination the artist and mystic make contact. The revelations of God are not all of one kind. Always the search in art, as in religion, is for rhythms of relationships, for the unity, the urge, the mystery, the wonder of life that is preserved in great art and true religion.”

Horace B. Pointing. 1944, QFP

“Worshippers are like the spokes of a wheel. The nearer they come to the centre of all Life the nearer they are to each other. Having reached the centre they become united in a single life through the creative love of God”.

Howard H. Brinton, 1931, QFP

“I believe in the powers of ordinary men and women; in their immense potentialities; in their capacity to rise higher than themselves; in their essential creativeness; in them as artists. I do not believe in the ‘chosen few’: I believe in us all.

I believe we were brought into this world to live and to enjoy it; to take out of it all that, in our full stature, we were able. I believe it then falls to every person to reach that state of fecundity and richness that makes him long to put back into life something uniquely his own."

Robin Tanner, 1963 QFP

"All our senses are given us to enjoy, and to praise God. The smell of the sea, of the blossom borne on the wind, of the soft flesh of a little baby; the taste of a ripe plum or bread fresh from the oven, the feel of a warm cat's fur, or the body of a lover – these are all forms of thanksgiving prayer. I am sure it is as wrong to fail to delight in our bodies as it is to misuse them through excess. Not to be a glutton does not mean that we may not delight in good food: not to be ruled by lust does not mean we must not enjoy the exquisite pleasure of sex: not to be slothful does not mean we must never lie in the sun, not doing, just being. When Jesus said, 'I am come that they might have life, and they might have it abundantly', I do not think He was speaking only of the spiritual life – I think He meant us to have positive delight in all good things in this wonderful world which his Father created.

Bella Brown, c.1980, QFP

### **The Stewardship Testimony**

"Our planet is seriously ill and we can feel the pain. We have been reminded of the many ways in which the future health of the earth is under threat as a result of our selfishness, ignorance and greed. Our earth needs attention, respect, love, care and prayer.

In comfortable Britain we are largely insulated from the effects of the environmental crisis. It is the poor of the world who suffer first.

As a Religious Society of Friends we see the stewardship of God's creation as a major concern. The environmental crisis is at root a spiritual and religious crisis; we are called to look again at the real purpose of being on this earth, which is to till it and keep it so as to reveal the glory of God for generations to come.

It is a stony road ahead but our faith will uphold us; the power to act is God's power which is mediated through each of us as we give and receive support from another. We can all listen if we will to the sounds of the earth, tuning into it with joy.

London Yearly Meeting, 1988, QFP

“As to our own planet which God has given us for a dwelling-place, we must be mindful that it is given to us in stewardship. The power over nature that scientific knowledge has put into our hands, if used in lust or greed, fear or hatred, can bring us to utter destruction. If we choose life we may now feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick on a world scale, thus creating new conditions for spiritual advancement so often till now prevented by want. Many of our resources – of oil, of coal and of uranium – are limited. If by condoning waste and luxury we overspend the allowance God has given us, our children’s children will be cheated of their inheritance. Limited too is the natural bounty of nature. The material foundation of our life is the tilling of the earth and the growing of food ... We must conserve the goodness of the soil and not exploit it.

We must guard, too, the abundance and variety of untamed nature, and not forget the spiritual resources available to us in the continued existence of unoccupied lands. Modern civilisation perpetually threatens our awareness of the true nature of our being which in the presence of the wild we can more easily retain or at length recapture. Year by year silence and solitude are growing more needful, yet harder to obtain, and contacts, by this means, with the mind of the Creator more tenuous. To conserve nature is thus again a contribution to the fuller life of mankind.

Norfolk, Cambs & Hunts Quarterly Meeting, 1957, QFP

“Permaculture requires caring knowledge and experience of how to design and look after a complex but largely self-sustaining ecological system. The role of the gardener is to watch and influence the growth of different parts of the system, so that they are neither too vigorous or too weak. A well designed permaculture system runs largely by itself, balancing competition and co-operation between its parts.”

LWP Friend

### **The Testimony of Simplicity**

“The heart of Quaker ethics is summed up in the word ‘simplicity’. Simplicity is forgetfulness of self and remembrance of our humble status as waiting servants of God. Outwardly, simplicity is shunning superfluities of dress, speech, behaviour, and possessions, which tend to obscure our vision of reality. Inwardly, simplicity is spiritual detachment from the things of this

world as part of the effort to fulfil the first commandment: to love God with all the heart and mind and strength.”

North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), 1983, QFP

“Were all superfluities and the desire of outward greatness laid aside, and the right use of things universally attended to, such a number of people might be employed in things useful, as that moderate labour with the blessing of Heaven would answer all good purposes relating to people and their animals, and a sufficient number have time to attend to proper affairs of civil society.”

John Woolman, 1763, QFP

“If John Woolman’s approach is the right one for the Society of today it is not enough to go over our own behaviour in detail, cutting back a bit here and pulling back a bit there; we must be concerned with our and society’s attitude to life as a whole, to ‘live answerable to the design of our creation’.”

Michael Lee, 1976, QFP

“Is our concern for simplicity relevant to our concern for the national economic situation? If we think of simplicity in terms of doing without certain things, of voluntarily reducing our standard of living, I believe this is almost irrelevant at the economic level in view of the world’s need.

If we think of simplicity as a spiritual quality which incidentally simplifies our life styles then I believe it has relevance. This kind of simplicity goes straight to the heart of things and puts first things first, is needed to rectify our distorted values, to help us to accept changes in our pattern of living. As this simplicity grows in our hearts and bears fruit in our lives, we may learn and help others to learn that the really abundant life is not to be found in the clutter of material complexity, but in simplicity.”

L. Hugh Doncaster, 1976, QFP

“I wish I might emphasise how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire.”

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941 QFP

“To activate the inner life means to deepen the capacity for presence. Presence applied to what we consume means a savouring of things, a drawing out of the full satisfaction that something can give us because our attitude receives its totality ...

For example, as much as we can in our home, we buy certified organic meat from the local farmers' market. It costs double what we'd pay for the generic product in a supermarket so we eat smaller portions and a little less often than might otherwise have been the case. But it pleases us more, because we know it treats the soil, farm workers and the animals better. It is the combination of product and presence that builds augmented satisfaction. Whisky demonstrates the principle perfectly: the older the bottle, the smaller the dram.

Applying the same principle to consumption as a whole, we are all called upon to become connoisseurs. That's how to make more out of less and be the richer for it. Far from being a recipe to kill joy, it's the only sustainable way to en-joy."

Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water*

"I want to list ten controlling principles for the outward expression of simplicity. They should not be viewed as laws but as one attempt to flesh out the meaning of simplicity into twentieth-century life. First, buy things for their usefulness rather than their status. Second, reject anything that is producing an addiction in you. Third, develop a habit of giving things away. De-accumulate. Fourth, refuse to be propagandised by the custodians of modern gadgetry. Fifth, learn to enjoy things without owning them. Sixth, develop a deeper appreciation for the creation. Seventh, look with a healthy scepticism at all 'buy now, pay later' schemes. Eighth, obey Jesus' injunction about plain, honest speech. Ninth, reject anything that will breed the oppression of others. Tenth, shun whatever would distract you from your main goal.

Richard J. Foster, 1979, QFP

## **The Communication Testimony**

"One of life's hardest lessons is that there is no justification for expecting that our neighbour is to traverse precisely the same path as that which we ourselves have followed ... The difficulty a man has in grasping this truth is increased in proportion as his own experience has been vivid and clearly defined. One who has been lifted out of the horrible pit, has had his two feet set upon a rock, and a new song put into his mouth, finds it hard to believe that another who has arrived quietly and without crisis, with no strong

consciousness of guilt and no corresponding ecstasy of deliverance, can really hope to be a disciple at all.”

William Littleboy, 1916, QFP

### **The Children’s Testimony**

“The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.”

John Woolman, 1772

“My children were having a hard time. Really bad – I mean drugs, sex gone wrong, quite unable to fit in anywhere for the time being. Yet now they have come through it .... I felt desperate with guilt ..., but as more time passed I came to see that what had happened was not entirely our fault, as parents. It was also that they were the inheritors of social guilt and social pain. Our children are the first generation to grow up facing the possibility of the end of our species. Perhaps it is partly the planet crying out to us? Perhaps the violated earth needs to cry and feel desperation in us?”

Damaris Parker-Rhodes, 1982

“I recall a family weekend, when the children, about twenty four of them, aged three and upwards, had their own sessions in parallel to the adults. On the first evening, after the getting-to-know-you games, we sat down on the carpet to worship. We lit some candles on the hearth, turned off the lights, asked two children to be elders, and were still. The meeting went on for over a quarter of an hour, and was very deep. Then the two elders shook hands, but the silence continued. After another five minutes, I started a conversation but no one responded to my cheerful comments. I was the one who had lost touch. When the children did speak, it was slowly, thoughtfully, with long spaces between. This was when I realised that children do minister .... That meeting lasted until someone entered the room and interrupted us – about forty minutes.

Anne Hosking, 1984, QFP

### **The Social Action Testimony**

“True Godliness don’t turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it: not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.”

William Penn, 1682, QFP

"Perhaps the most neglected of all the advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stockings, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn't mind making a fool of itself occasionally".

Gerald Priestland, 1977, QFP

"Those of us known as 'activists' have sometimes been hurt by the written or spoken implication that we must be spending too little time on our spiritual contemplative lives. I do not know many atheists who are active to improve the lot of humankind; but, for those of us who are Friends, our attendance at meeting for worship and our silent prayerful times are what make our outer activity viable and effective – if it is effective.

I have similarly seen quieter Friends hurt by the implication that they do not care enough, because they are not seen to be 'politically active'. Some worry unnecessarily that they may be doing things of a 'less important' nature, as if to be seen doing things by the eyes of the world is the same thing as to be seen doing things by the eyes of God. I suggest that we refrain from judging each other, or belittling what each is doing; and that we should not feel belittled. We cannot know the prayers that others make in their own times of silent aloneness. We cannot know the letters others may be writing to governments, similarly .... We are all made differently, in order to perform certain tasks. Let us rejoice in our differences.

Margaret Glover 1989, QFP

"The social activism of Quakers is well known, in particularly their campaigning against the slave trade, and for the rights of women, prisoners and homosexuals. They were also involved in founding important charities such as Greenpeace, Oxfam and Amnesty International. It would be part of a long tradition if they became more active in their communities and in politics with regard to the present environmental crisis."

LWP Friend

In recent years I've taken to attending Quaker meetings again. Partly because the Society of Friends is as welcoming as its name suggests, and partly because the lack of doctrines makes it the most tolerant of churches. I also admire the way Quakers express their faith through action and example rather than praise and contemplation. Mostly, though, I go because the intense shared silence of a meeting still refreshes those parts other religions cannot reach.

Tom Robinson

## **The Change Testimony**

“We are building towards the climax of the crisis. The spiritual crisis is folding into the ecological crisis and the ecological crisis is folding into the economic crisis. As Christians, it seems to me, we are now required to critically assess the capital driven market economy and identify it as a false religion, a fabulously productive but ultimately destructive system bringing closure on God’s goodness in creation and bringing a creeping atheism to the soul. To look this system straight in the eye and call it to account is a critical test of Biblical faith.

Challenging market economics with a Biblical sense of the goodness of God in creation is to join a spiritual struggle. Faith in God, solidarity with suffering poor and all other forms of life demands that we take a stand and say, ‘This destruction must stop’. We must be perfectly clear about the implications of undertaking this responsibility. It is more than just setting up household recycling bins, growing organic vegetables or riding a bike to work. It is more than a talking job. It is a renovation which will change everything: the way we do business, the way we eat, the way we travel, the houses we build, the products and the services we can expect and the prices we pay for them, the way we feel about trees and the way we worship God.”

Keith Helmuth, 1990 QFP

“The art of living must be studied, as must every art. It calls for imagination, so that every advance, every change, is not merely a difference, but a creative act. Achievement, at any level above the lowest, calls for courage to hold on, in spite of current moods, and for exacting self-discipline. The art of Christian living calls for the same self-preparation; but its reward is not merely aesthetic satisfactions. The soul, hungry for God, is fed. Life itself takes on new meaning. Thus it is that we break from the confines of the prisons we have built about ourselves. Thus it is we are brought into the freedom of the Kingdom of God which, every day, through the wide world, is being realized in the hearts of men.

Horace B. Pointing, 1946 QFP

## **The Testimony of Hope**

“We seem to be at a turning point in human history. We can choose life or watch the planet become uninhabitable for our species. Somehow, I believe that we will pass through this dark night of our planetary soul to a new period of harmony with the God that is to be found within each of us, and

that S/he will inspire renewed confidence in people everywhere, empowering us all to co-operate to use our skills, our wisdom, our creativity, our love, our faith – even our doubts and fears – to make peace with the planet. Strengthened by this fragile faith, empowered by the Spirit within, I dare to hope.

Pat Saunders, 1987, QFP

“And now at this critical point in time, when our outdated worldview no longer satisfies, comes this breakthrough: science and mysticism speaking with one voice, the rediscovery of our own (Christian) creation-centred and mystical tradition, and the recognition of the spiritual wisdoms of the native traditions. All uniting and all challenging in a profound way our narrowly drawn boundaries.

Are we willing to open ourselves to this wider vision, to cease our urge to control and dominate, to listen instead to our hearts, to recognize again the integrity and sacredness of this planet which we have so abused? This means entering into a new relationship with ‘our Mother the Earth’, it means seeing ourselves again in a cosmic context, a larger perspective, which includes fire-ball, galaxy, planet and all other life forms.

If we can move from our ‘human-sized’ viewpoint and look instead from the cosmic viewpoint, there is a sudden and dramatic widening of the lens through which we look. Redemption is seen to be for all creation, and our human story, far from being diminished, is incorporated in the whole drama of an emerging universe.

Grace Blindell, 1992, QFP

## **APPENDIX: Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) U.S.A.**

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) is a network of Quakers in North America and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world from a spiritual perspective, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies. Quaker publications and leaflets are available through the website: [www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)

### **1. Climate Change**

“The overwhelming majority of the world's professional climatologists now agree that human activities—mainly through the industrialized world's release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere—are significantly disturbing the earth's climate, with increasingly catastrophic effects on all life systems that are already being observed.

From the rapid melting of glaciers to the bleaching of coral reefs and from the spread of tropical diseases and invasive species to increasing frequency of extreme weather events of all kinds, we now know that a virtual Pandora's Box of woes and disasters has been released that is sure to change life on earth for generations to come.

Any responses to this crisis that focus simply on technological solutions in order to make the earth safe for civilization are bound to fail. We must grasp the "inconvenient truth" that we are in a spiritual crisis, raising questions about the purpose of human life itself. If all our material "wealth" necessarily is gained at the price of deterioration of the ecosphere, if the industrial model for development has become toxic to the planet itself, don't we need a different model?”

### **2. New Cosmology/Recent Discoveries in Physics and the Life Sciences**

“Many Friends have become intensely interested in the implications of the New Universe Story or New Cosmology, as illuminated by recent discoveries in physics and the life sciences that confirm what many ancient wisdom traditions have always maintained, that everything that exists is in fundamental unity with everything else, in a creatively unfolding universe.”

### **3. Earth Awareness and Eco-psychology**

“Our struggle to save this beautiful planet is spurred by growing scientific evidence that humanity urgently needs to make a course change, to come up with a "Plan B," or to devise some other solution to the global crisis in ecological sustainability.

But this is not a campaign that can be waged just with the conscious mind. Just as the scientific study of ecology is documenting the vulnerability of Earth's ecosystems to human-caused disruptions, the study of eco-psychology is revealing the damage that modern civilization is doing to our "inner ecology" —that web of spiritual integrity that is essential to our health and sanity. At the same time, the suffering of the natural world at our hands mirrors our inner suffering.

Our aloofness from the natural world began over ten millennia ago with the introduction of agriculture and urbanization. But in the last couple of centuries of industrialization we have all but lost the visceral sense of being held in the bosom of our Great Mother that our ancestors took for granted. Consequently, we find it harder and harder to rise to her defense, even when confronted with mounting evidence that she is being mortally wounded.

To remedy this growing crisis of psychic disconnection from the earth, many of us are experimenting with personal practices, such as Earth awareness, in an effort to shed the "cultural armoring" that is preventing us from experiencing who we truly are and knowing how to be truly at home on the planet. (Of course, if more of us actually lived in harmony with the earth, we might not need to develop such programs, any more than a person whose daily life required a healthy amount of strenuous physical work would have any use for a gymnasium. But until we figure out how to radically simplify our lives, we need to take steps to regain our psychological fitness through regular exercises in Earth awareness.”

### **4. Eco-Communities and Permaculture**

Many QEW supporters are convinced that being part of a supportive community is the key to successfully redirecting our materially addictive lives to a healthier, mutually enhancing relationship with the Earth community.

For some this can be a 12-step-type support group or a support committee from their Meeting. Others are called to pioneer a different way of living socially and ecologically that depends less on isolated nuclear families and gives people full access to a wide range of mutually beneficial relationships, which also can promote simpler lives and more ecological behavior.

Several QEW members belong to co-housing communities. Some are involved in more communal, egalitarian intentional communities. Some are learning about permaculture as a basis for living happily in communities as well as sustainably on the land.

QEW adopted the following Minute on Community in 1994: As Quaker Earthcare Witness works to deepen understanding of our spiritual relationship with the earth, increasingly we recognize the need to nurture and affirm the human and non-human communities of which we are a part.

Our life depends upon and involves many communities. There is the community of living soil, from which we come, and to which we will return. We are part of the living fabric of plants and animals upon the earth. We are also members of our human communities, challenged as never before to reestablish living patterns that are healing to the earth and to the human spirit.

Friends' experience with inclusive decision-making and our testimonies of simplicity, right sharing, equality, and peace provide a spiritual core from which to contribute to the healing process. We encourage Friends to help reestablish sustainable and regenerative relationships with the earth, relationships which, through our living faith and practice, will embody balance and harmony.

Quaker Earthcare Witness seeks to support and nourish Friends and Friends' institutions as we develop ways to put this faith into practice in a spirit and life of faithful, loving kindness toward all Creation. We seek ways to uplift and nurture, rather than be overwhelmed with environmental despair. Our witness is a celebration of life and of the power and beauty of the Light within and around us.

## **5. Eco-Economics/Alternative Currencies**

In the 1990's "third wave" of environmentalism (of which QEW is a part) grew out of the realization that earlier progress had faltered in the 1980s on a wide range of issues—from clean air and water to automobile gas mileage, from protection for endangered species to renewable energy development. Obviously something was missing.

Actually, it turned out there were two things lacking: 1) There is a need for inward transformation or change of heart as a necessary condition for acting on the accumulating scientific evidence, and 2) There is a need for systemic change in the way industrial societies are organized, without which no amount of legislation, public education, and technological advances can make enough of a difference.

Friends' interest in eco-economics has grown out of the second concern for systemic solutions to systemic problems. Drawing inspiration and insights from

earlier non-conventional economists like E.F. Schumacher and Kenneth Boulding, they have been exploring the ways that modern economic systems, with their requirement of endless growth and their blindness to the limitations of the earth and the rights of other species and future generations, present an enormous stumbling block to long-term sustainability. Those in government and industry with vested interests in the dominant economic paradigm are, moreover, deaf to any persuasion about the need for change.

But there is good news! Critics of the politics of greed and growth have shown that there is nothing ultimate or inevitable about the status quo. We see countless examples today of small-scale alternatives sprouting up all over the world, shining light on the dim path to a sustainable future. These determined and creative "counter-economies," ranging from local currencies and barter systems to true-cost pricing mechanisms, are spreading rapidly because they promote health and happiness in the present, not just hope for the future.

## **6. Genetic Engineering/Biotechnology**

Genetic Engineering (sometimes called genetic modification and bio-technology) involves the use of highly sophisticated methods to transfer a selected piece of genetic code (DNA) from one organism into the cells of other organisms (typically from another biological family), for the purpose of permanently altering their biological traits. Desired traits might be increased yield or resistance to certain diseases for target farm crops.

This relatively recent technology has gained a foothold in the world's food system, particularly North America, largely on the basis of promises by the biotech industry that it would lead to cures for many diseases or congenital defects, increase world food production to keep pace with population growth, and even allow the development of organisms that are able to carry out unique and useful tasks for human benefit.

However, not only have the products of biotechnology frequently fallen short of their lofty promises, but they have opened what many critics fear is a Pandora's Box of alarming unintended side-effects, including long-term health risks.

It is not within the scope of this publication to analyze these controversies. But there is one dimension to genetic engineering that is highly disturbing from the standpoint of QEW's special focus on spirituality and ecology: QEW members are among those raising questions about what narrowly focused and profit-driven manipulation of the world's genetic stock is doing to fundamental relationships among humans and between humans and the natural community. At stake are basic patterns of living that affect our self-concept and sense of purpose in life.

When virtually everything in nature can be subverted to human whims and fancies, we lose forever the sense of the sacredness of Creation that up to now has kept the scope and impact of human activities at a level that the natural systems of the earth can sustain. Paraphrasing the words of Jesus, "What does it profit humanity to gain complete control over nature and end up losing its soul?"

## **7. Judeo-Christian Foundations of Earthcare**

When the "Spirituality and Ecology" movement was getting established in the 1980s, many environmentalists responded with something like, "Whoa! Isn't religion part of the problem? Haven't passages in the Bible, like 'Be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth' encouraged what humans have been doing to the environment?"

Quaker Earthcare Witness, along with other environmental groups with roots in various branches of Christianity and Judaism, has found, on the contrary, that the essential teaching of the Judeo-Christian tradition is for humans to be responsible trustees of the gift of God's creation. Supposedly "anti-environmental" biblical passages, such as the one cited above, are seen as having been misconstrued (owing in part to problems with translation from Hebrew and Greek languages).

It may be true that the Hebrew and Christian scriptures lack the ecological and evolutionary perspectives that have emerged from modern science, having been written for people steeped in Classical thought patterns. At the same time, they retain profound insights about relationships and moral values that the materialistic-reductionist strain of modern science does not recognize, yet are just as relevant to a healthy human-earth relationship as scientific knowledge. In addition, recent explorations have shown that the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and traditions are rich with guidance for loving and caring for Creation.

## **8. The Dark Side of Our Dependence on Fossil Fuels:**

### **Time for Quakers to Take a Stand**

by Sandra Lewis and Kim Carlyle, reprinted in part from the [\*Quaker Eco Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 2, March/April 2002\*](#)

Most of us have reaped the benefits of an economy powered by fossil fuel. There is no need to list the wonders, comforts, conveniences, and prosperity wrought by this century-long dependence. But we can no longer ignore the extreme costs. We are on a collision course with ecological reality. It's time to recognize how our dependence puts us in direct conflict with core values embodied in the Quaker Testimonies of Integrity, Peace, Simplicity, Equality and Community. Events of recent months shed glaring light on the dark side of our nation's dependence on

fossil fuel. The World Trade Towers' destruction is, perhaps, its most dramatic expression to date.

### ***Unacceptable Costs of Dependence***

#### *Seeds of War*

U.S. foreign policy is now driven largely by our dependence on oil. We maintain a global military presence to ensure the flow. We make deals that support oppressive governments and overlook gross violations of human rights to feed our habit — slave labor to build a UNOCAL pipeline in Burma, for example. To ensure our access to oil, we train and arm factions like the Taliban, and then look the other way when these weapons are used to enforce despotic rule.

Gross inequalities of wealth and power among nations fueled by huge disparities in the use of fossil fuels sow the seeds of war. Our Peace Testimony calls on us to work to take away the occasion of war. Ending our dependence on fossil fuel has become an essential expression of this Testimony.

#### *Seeds of Corruption*

Nothing illustrates better the link between dependence on fossil fuel and corruption in American institutions than the rise and fall of Enron. Enron flourished in Texas and then nationally under government policies and subsidies bought and paid for by the fossil fuel industrial complex. While the Bush administration and other politicians try to disassociate themselves from the debacle, the fingerprints of Enron and other corporate interests are evident throughout the administration's energy proposals. These proposals are now embodied in legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Enron story exposes a stunning lack of integrity — blatant and insidious — among leaders in government, industry, financial institutions and the media. It challenges us to confront deep threats to democracy itself that arise from our dependence on fossil fuel. Our Quaker Testimony on Integrity calls us to act against these threats.

#### *Seeds of Ecological and Social Disintegration*

Our use of fossil fuels is devastating the earth, destroying cultures, and endangering human health. To discover and recover oil, roads are slashed through rainforests, drilling sites contaminate fresh water and soil, leaky pipelines spill millions of gallons of crude oil on wildlife and pristine tundra, and indigenous people are pushed to the brink of extinction. The temporary influx of cash upsets economies, corrupts governments, and concentrates wealth among a few. Oil refineries pollute the air, soil, and water of the impoverished communities that

surround them. The extraction of coal devastates entire communities as it removes mountaintops, destroys watersheds, and leaves behind hundred-million-gallon toxic slurry ponds.

The combustion of coal and oil are responsible for soot, ground level ozone, acid rain, and an increase in climate-changing atmospheric carbon dioxide. The air pollution exacerbates respiratory illness especially for asthmatic children and the elderly, is responsible for the decline of our eastern hardwood forests, and has poisoned most of the lakes in the northeast U.S. With less than 5% of the world's population, the U.S. contributes 25% of the climate-changing gases, and yet the U.S. government has withdrawn from international negotiations to address world-wide human-induced climate change.

The true costs of fossil fuels are staggering and cannot be measured in dollars. The administration's proposals to expand fossil fuel production and increase our dependence on them are politically corrupt, ecologically and economically dangerous, and morally bankrupt.

### *Toward Sane Energy Policies*

Now is the time for Quakers to speak out for energy policies that are environmentally sound, socially just, and economically feasible. Such policies would explicitly aim at eliminating our dependence on fossil fuels and would include strategies, timetables and investments required to achieve this goal. As a nation, we need to pursue this with the urgency and priority of other great national goals such as landing a man on the moon.

Clean, renewable technologies (such as wind and solar) are currently available and emerging technologies (such as hydrogen fuel cells) are on the verge of being ready for general use. Renewable sources of energy should be phased in through promotion and subsidy for clean power, increasing emissions restrictions, and decreasing support for dirty power. The policy must provide for a transition to these new technologies that would include retraining of work forces and education of the general public.

Sane policies must account for the environmental, social and moral consequences of the energy we use. It is up to us to hold our political leaders accountable for enacting such policies.

### *Renewable energy can stimulate the economy*

A number of studies have shown that energy conservation and the use of renewable sources of energy would in fact stimulate the economy:

- A World Wildlife Fund study indicates that energy efficiency policies and development of renewable energy resources could result in 750,000 new jobs

nationwide over the next nine years and 1.3 million new jobs by 2020. See this study at <http://www.worldwildlifefund.org/climate>.

- A report from the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) entitled “The 2002 Farm Bill: Revitalizing the Farm Economy Through Renewable Energy Development.” shows that developing our nation’s on-farm renewable energy resources (bioenergy, wind, solar, and geothermal) has the potential to boost farmer income, create jobs in rural communities, diversify our nation’s energy market, and protect our environment.
- A Department of Energy study reports that a government-led program to encourage energy efficiency could reduce growth in electricity demand by 20 to 47 percent in the U.S—a savings equivalent of 265 to 610 300-megawatt power plants.

In fact, if our country does not invest in the new technologies, we are likely to be left in the technological development dust as other countries cash in on the boom.

### ***What Friends Can Do?***

Join the Interfaith Climate Change Network (ICCN): ICCN

(<http://protectingcreation.org>) is a new initiative of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment to coordinate interfaith lobbying activities on climate and energy. The Partnership’s goals for energy legislation in this session of the U.S. Congress are to:

- Raise vehicle fuel economy across the board in the shortest feasible timeframe, and require SUVs and minivans to meet the same standards as passenger cars.
- Support the development of hybrid-electric, fuel cell, and other promising clean technologies, and provide incentives to help individual consumers purchase them.
- Increase funding for inter-city rail and metropolitan mass transit.
- Invest more resources in renewable energy research and development with a focus on wind, geothermal, solar and biomass technologies.
- Apply the strictest feasible energy efficiency standards to consumer products including air conditioners.
- Increase funds for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program and other programs to alleviate economic hardship on low-income people.
- Increase funds for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program and other programs to alleviate economic hardship on low-income people.

## **9. Friends' Population Concerns:**

### **Rapid Population Growth/Overconsumption**

When the issue of world population growth was first raised within QEW in the early 1990s, some Friends thought it might be "too controversial," given the often acrimonious public debates going on over sex education, contraception, and abortion, as well as differing perspectives that were pitting affluent countries against many supposedly "overpopulated" Third World countries.

However, with the persistent witnessing of QEW supporter Stan Becker, a demographer, more Friends have come to see that a population concern for Friends does not have to be the anti-human complaint that is heard in many environmental concerns. As modern demographic studies have shown, the factors that serve to stabilize population growth, such as improved status and education for women, easily fit within the scope of Friends' traditional values of equality and compassion for all. Other studies on population have shifted the focus to humans' material consumption as a more significant factor in assessing environmental impact than simply counting gross numbers. In this perspective, the United States is one of the most "overpopulated" countries in the world! Addressing the issue of overconsumption is a good fit with the Quaker testimony of simple living as well.

### **10. Peak Oil/Fossil Fuels/Renewable Energy/Conservation**

Many QEW supporters are involved in solar energy, green buildings, hybrid vehicles, biofuels, wind energy, small-scale hydropower, and other paths to freeing society from its dangerous addiction to fossil fuels. Many also are attentive to details of their lives that reduce their consumption of energy and other resources.

However, for most of us this is not a question of finding technological substitutes to maintain our current high-consumption lifestyles. We are also exploring the spiritual, psychological, and philosophical implications of the ways we obtain and use energy, such as the effect of huge, centralized power systems on personal freedoms, and the problem of alienation from the cycles and rhythms of nature when energy is experienced as nothing more than a commodity that flows with the flick of a switch or with the squeeze of a gasoline pump handle. Information about this QEW interest area and the Friends who are trying to change their relationships to energy will be posted here in the future. Please check back later.

## **11. The Sacred Commons of Water, Air, and Soil**

In the specific and often technical analyses of Earth's declining ecosystems, what is often overlooked is the underlying assumption of our industrialized civilization: that the earth is basically an inherited storehouse of "resources" that is literally at our disposal. Therefore, the argument between the agents of extraction and pollution and environmental protection groups (both private and governmental) tends to come down to the question, "How long do we intend for this bonanza to last?".

However, many QEW supporters and other activists around the world are challenging this materialistic assumption, maintaining that the earth's ecosystems can thrive only when understood as part of a sacred whole. Since we are all members of the human family, as well as of the entire creatively evolving community of life, there is no justification for the claim of ownership that many humans have asserted. Indeed, we must repudiate such a claim if we are to effectively address the underlying causes of the relentless assault on water, air, soil, and other "vital organs" of the living Earth.

Since the machines of exploitation are under the control of powerful corporate forces (who have neither eyes to see the destruction they are bringing about, nor ears to hear the cries of suffering they are causing) Earth itself is rising up, in the form of countless grassroots organizations rallying around protection of the "sacred commons," particularly fresh water. (Many QEW supporters identify more with these popular movements than they do with mainstream environmentalism.)

## **12. Traditional Earth Wisdom/Native Understanding**

Quaker Earthcare Witness has often invited native peoples to participate in our programs as we have met in different regions of North America. We have done this in the belief that resources for restoring the earth may be found in the storehouse of Earth wisdom of many traditional cultures.

This outreach was inspired in part by the examples of early American Quakers, such as William Penn and John Woolman, who felt a "near sympathy" as they tried to be compassionate and fair their dealings with native Americans. But recent overtures have focused more on what we have to learn from them about care of mother Earth. Some examples are:

- Thomas Binyaca, a Hopi elder, led an afternoon interest group in the Unity with Nature Center at the FGC Gathering in Stillwater, Okla., in 1993.
- Harvey Longboat, a Cayuga elder from Canada, led an afternoon interest group at the Unity with Nature Center at the FGC Gathering in Hamilton, Ont., in 1996.

- Don Alejandro, a Mayan elder from Guatemala, gave a plenary talk at the 1999 FGC Gathering in Kalamazoo, Mich., and later led an afternoon interest group under the care of Quaker Earthcare Witness.

All three of these elders emphasized ways that many native peoples ritually express thankfulness to the Creator for the fruits of the earth, constantly reminding themselves that humans do not own the earth and therefore do not have the right to misuse it.

At the FGC Gathering in River Falls, Wis., in 2000, a representative of the Menomonee Nation spoke at the Unity with Nature Center about the sustainable forestry program they have practiced for the past 150 years, based on the principle that the land is held in trust to benefit the entire community, including future generations.

In the 1990s, QEW established a "Native Understanding & Support" committee, for the purpose of giving concerned Friends an opportunity to discuss not only ecological lessons to be learned, but to move to a deeper level of compassion and understanding of what a spiritual relationship to the land really means. One way is to stand in solidarity with native peoples who are under stress, such as those whose traditional lands and hunting and fishing rights are threatened. When we see the land as a sacred trust, we are obligated to defend its integrity.

Members of the committee provided moral support to a group of traditional Mohawks in upper New York State who were caught in a factional struggle over rights to their traditional lands. A representative of that group, Vicki Shenandoah, spoke to the QEW Steering Committee meeting in Burlington, Vt., in 2002.

The committee became less active in following years, however, and recently it was laid down. Some members questioned whether bringing in native elders to talk to white audiences on college campuses was an effective way to change the values and consciousness of those who have been steeped in the larger non-traditional culture. Some native people have expressed similar reservations about the value of such short-term cultural exchanges. These relationships do not exist in an emotional and historical vacuum: Old wounds and resentments are still keenly felt by many.

Those who are currently exploring traditional ecological wisdom within Quaker Earthcare Witness understand that we are all in need of mutual healing, not just mutual understanding. We look forward to new opportunities to open communications with native groups who live near future QEW meeting sites, perhaps in settings where we will have a better chance of becoming humble and teachable.

### **13. The United Nations**

QEW's involvement in the United Nations goes back to its participation as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCED or "Earth Summit") in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Since then some QEW supporters have attended NGO briefings at the UN in New York and have reported on important environmental developments, such as treaties involving intellectual property rights (which have raised alarms about commodification of the world's seed stocks, a threat to small-scale farming and biodiversity.) We are part of the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and we are currently applying to the UN for Department of Public Information (DPI) status, which would give us further access to programs and activities in the UN.

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