



BeFriending Creation

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QUAKER EARTH CARE WITNESS

Affirming our essential unity with nature Vol.33 Number 2 • APRIL-MAY-JUNE 2020

In Uncertain Times

By Mary Jo Klingel

I HAVE HEARD the conventional wisdom that the business community needs certainty to function, and that the stock market needs certainty to grow. When I hear that, I think, “Well, what you are really saying is that you need to know that you will continue to make money even if that means that you take more than your share and your competitors make less money.” It speaks to an assumption that I have a right to have what I need and not worry about what the other person needs.

That conventional wisdom leads directly to the abuse of our lands and waters and people to provide value to those who have, and want to have, even more. As we are seeing now, it also doesn’t work. None of us can claim to own the resources that are evaporating in this pandemic world. The demand for certainty is a fantasy.

Nevertheless, that certainty has such a hold on our culture that it is worthwhile to ask why it is so pervasive. Why have we not seen through this illusion of a need for certainty? I would suggest that underneath the claim to certainty is fear. That fear often takes the form of a “What if?” question: What if I don’t have enough money? What if I don’t have enough food? What if I don’t have a big enough house...or big enough golf club? Questions that start with “What

if” are frequently unconscious, but they are felt in one’s body as anxiety that can become part of our processing—it gets locked into place neurologically and it is passed down from generation to generation.

This pandemic may be our generation’s Great Depression, leaving scars for years. I know how profoundly the Depression shaped my father’s entire life. My parents were comfortable financially in their later years, but my father never stopped saving tin foil or keeping small pieces of string to tie together to make a big ball of string. By saving string, he didn’t need to buy it. I think he did that automatically and never asked why he did it, what he was afraid of, what was dangerous about not having enough string. Or was it really a deeper fear, the fear of not having enough? Or not being enough?

Today we have many resources to help us to know what to do with our fears. Psychology and neuroscience have plenty of answers. Let me offer some of what we know.

To work with your own anxiety, first, own it. Acknowledge that you are anxious, with no judgment of your fears. Our fears need not be secret, and have less energy if brought into the Light. Breathe deeply, and then get on with whatever calls to you. However you are led, that is your path, perhaps

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

Interested in being a member of QEW? Membership is open to all who demonstrate a commitment to support the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness and who support its work at the Monthly or Yearly Meeting levels, or through other Friends organizations. Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

VISION AND WITNESS

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God.

WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity.

WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

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Earthcare Calendar

June 15, 2020 Deadline for
articles for July-Aug-Sept issue

Our Request to You

Dear Friends,

On behalf of our Steering Committee, staff and volunteers, thank you for being part of the Quaker Earthcare Witness network. Your much-needed support allows QEW to work for environmental justice and a right relationship with the Earth.

Can you make a donation to support Friends' Earthcare work? We know that each donation comes with moral and spiritual support to continue our work on the environmental crises of our times.

Even before the global Covid-19 pandemic, we witnessed a growing change in consciousness in both the general public and the Religious Society of Friends—more and more people are recognizing the magnitude of the ecological problems that we are facing, and make effective, spirit-led change. Last year, we were able to reach out to growing numbers of Friends, and still meet our budget. This year is filled with uncertainty, but we do know that we can use our virtual tools to continue to connect Friends who care about the earth.

We'll be offering more online webinars and resources this year. In April, we hosted a successful online Steering Committee Meeting of more than 60 Friends from across the US and Canada. We are also hosting monthly online worship sharing opportunities in partnership with Friends General Conference. Instead of traveling to Yearly Meetings this year, we'll be sharing our work virtually through online sessions.

Would you like us to "visit" your meeting? We welcome invitations to host virtual adult education sessions for your Meeting. Please share with us how else we can support your meeting in engaging with Earthcare concerns.

Scientists tell us that we have to make huge structural changes over the next five to ten years to avoid several tipping points. As Friends, we know that this means expanding our sense of spirituality to include interconnections with all facets of the natural world, and listening to Spirit to take collective action. As people of Faith, we are called to this challenge.

Please consider making a donation to support Quaker Earthcare Witness today. Please do not hesitate to contact me at shelley@quakerearthcare.org if you have questions. Thanks again for being part of our network. Together we are making a difference in the world.

In Friendship,
Shelley Tanenbaum, General Secretary

To make a donation to Quaker Earthcare Witness, visit quakerearthcare.org/donate or send a check to Quaker Earthcare Witness, P.O. Box 6787, Albany, CA 94706. Thank you.

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as simple as calling a friend or weeding your garden or taking a walk. Sit still in the Light or walk in the Light. Nourish your own soul. These are not as easy to do as they are to say, but they are possible.

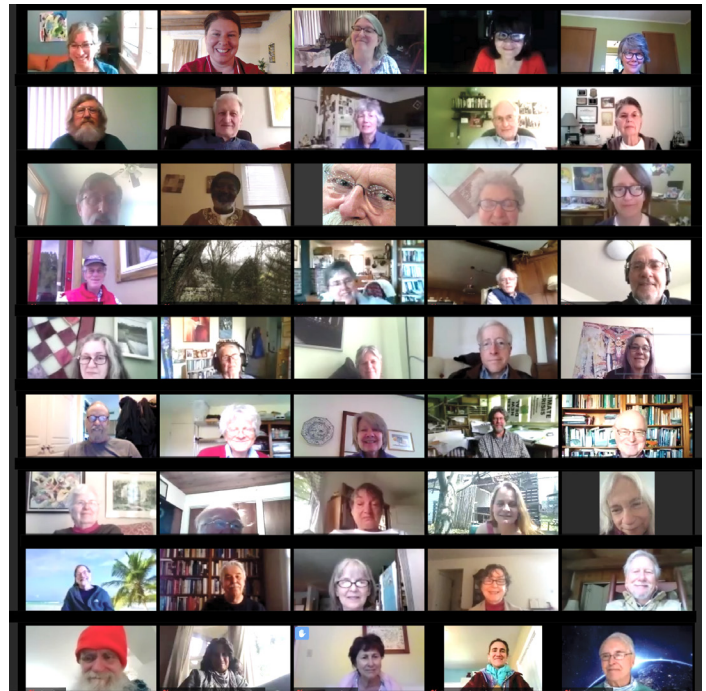
These days I have been working with my own anxiety by looking at my home, really seeing it, and not liking what I see. I have been sorting, opening boxes, asking myself, what is all this stuff? I have been finding unused knitting needles and yarn, and listing them on my little community virtual bulletin board. It is really fun to see the joy when somebody gets a bag of needles or yarn for free.

Please listen; really listen, especially to the media (but not all day). Use our Quaker skills of discernment. Are you practicing social distancing? I am not. I will not. Nope. I am practicing physical distancing while I connect socially. How absurd to give up connection. We are all still tribal beings. I can look across seven or eight feet and still smile at another person.

I can also look across a continent and smile and wave to another person—through the online magic of Zoom. It is amazing how rapidly the change to virtual meetings has occurred for Friends. Someone referenced Zoom on the Quaker Earthcare listserv. Within 24 hours, Friends had e-mailed in to report on twenty-two meetings that had begun to meet online. We heard from Friends in Washington to Iowa, from Southeastern Yearly Meeting to Alaska, from Gunpowder Monthly Meeting to Durango, Colorado, like the Pony Express on line.

Quaker Earthcare Witness Friends met for worship recently. Again we gathered from across the country, from Florida to Washington. We worshiped, we shared, and we sang together.

Please sing. It doesn't matter if you sing well, or know the words. If the only words you know are to "Take me out to the Ball Game" or "The Itsy Bitsy Spider," sing those. Sing the wisest or most beautiful or funniest song you know. I am sure that singing nourishes our hearts and binds us more strongly to the web of life. So, sing.



QEW Steering Committee members gather online for our Spring Meeting.

How Can I Keep From Singing*

*My life flows on in endless song
Above earth's lamentations
I hear the sweet, though far off hymn
That hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear that music ringing
It sounds an echo in my soul
How can I keep from singing?*

*Sung at our QEW virtual worship, March 31st, 2020

Mary Jo serves as Clerk of QEW. She grew up as a Friend in the loving care of Southeastern Yearly Meeting. She is a clinical social worker and brings that perspective on healing to all her Quaker work.

How are you faring during this time of enormous change and upheaval? What is alive in you and in your life? What is being released?

How does this new reality provoked by a global pandemic relate to your care for/about Earth and environmental justice?

What I'm Learning

By Shelley Tanenbaum

EVERY YEAR WE Friends ask ourselves, “How has truth fared for Thee?” It is a way of refreshing ourselves, of self-evaluating personally and in our Meetings. It gives us an opportunity to change course and to respond to emerging leadings. What if we see the coronavirus pandemic as an opportunity to change course, to respond to global and local emerging leadings? What are we called to do in this time of a pandemic crisis, and how does that relate to the multiple ecological crises humanity is facing?

There are some clear parallels between the pandemic and longer-term crises such as climate change, crashing biodiversity, depleted soils, and dying oceans. First, a slow response on both the pandemic and ecological crises only leads to a worse outcome. The US and South Korea both had their first cases of Covid-19 on the same day, yet the outcomes have been radically different. South Korea brought the number of cases and deaths down to a crawl through extreme measures of testing, social distancing, and changing business as usual. The response has been much slower in the United States, with exponential disease rates wherever the disease has hit. Some states such as California imposed stringent public health controls and at least as of this writing, have managed to dramatically slow the rate of disease.

Both the pandemic and climate change require major shifts in business as usual (I'm going to compare the response to Covid-19 with climate change, but any of our ecological crises would follow the same comparisons). Most individuals and most governments

understand that to dampen the rate of infection—“flattening the curve”—we all had to change almost everything we do in day-to-day life. This meant no more gatherings, working from home when possible and shutting down business/shops if they weren't related to basic needs such as food and health, closing schools, and moving to online classes as much as possible, taking extreme precautions such as wearing masks in public, washing hands obsessively, and cleaning and/or quarantining any items that are entering our homes. The South Korean example shows us that these extreme measures can work. But Covid-19 is like climate change on steroids; without extreme measures we see sky-rocketing death rates, while with extreme measures we can flatten the curve. With climate change, even though we are seeing rapid change globally in our lifetimes, the change isn't fast enough for most of us to feel it personally.

What are we called to do in this time of a pandemic crisis, and how does that relate to the multiple ecological crises humanity is facing?

The most significant lesson that I am learning from Covid-19 is that we have a profound choice to make in this health crisis. Do we live as if we were already part of the Beloved Community and treat each other with loving care, or do we live as if we are isolated fortresses stocking up on supplies and keeping out the invaders? The most important thing most of us can do, especially if we aren't healthcare workers, is to (ironically) stay away from each



A statue made out of trash in Albany, CA where Shelley walks. A testament to the possibility of transformation.

other. More than ever, we need to show how much we care for each other, share our resources, and change what has been business as usual.

Here is another lesson I am learning: We can change business as usual if we have the will do so. How often have we heard the excuse from government officials or industry executives that changing our way of doing business and restructuring our economy to support wellbeing over profit is impossible? Now we know: dramatic overnight changes happened when people understood the immediate threat.

We have also seen the public (most of us) willing to give up so much to benefit a segment of society, those who are most vulnerable. With Covid-19, that means younger and healthier people who have a smaller risk acting to benefit older people and those with pre-existing health problems, who carry a greater risk. With climate change, the story is reversed, however. Most older people will not live long enough to directly experience the worst impacts of climate change; younger

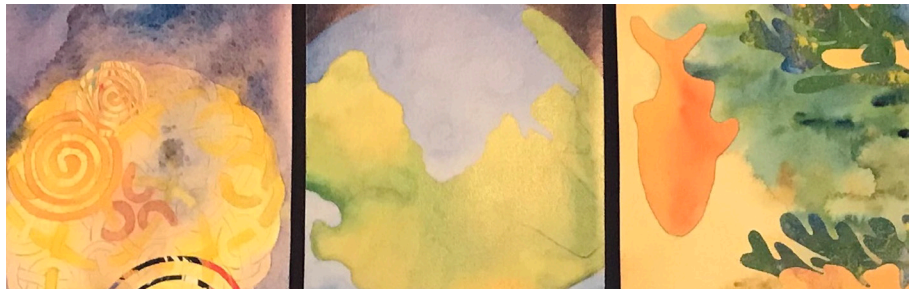
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people will spend the rest of their lives with worse and worse living conditions. Howard Zinn writes,

“To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

So, suppose we all learned these lessons and our world started responding to climate change the way most of the world is now responding to Covid-19. It would probably look a lot like the Green New Deal: 100% renewable energy within the next 20-30 years, financial and infrastructure support for those transitioning out of a fossil fuel economy, valuing human (and other species) well-being over the stock market. Suppose we went further, not just to understand, but to embrace our kinship with the natural world. Shocked into change out of fear, the pandemic gave us an important opportunity. We are called to act in these times: to quit denying the scientific facts, act boldly and respond out of love.

Shelley is QEW’s General Secretary and a member of Strawberry Creek (CA) Meeting.



New Universe Story

Mary Conrow Coelho, a longtime member of QEW’s Steering Committee, is donating proceeds from the sale of her accordion books to Quaker Earthcare Witness. Visit her website <newuniversestory.com/accordions> to see them and order, noting they are a donation to QEW. They cost \$65 each.

Mary writes, “These accordion books are painted in celebration of our new origin story. They invite us to a fresh depth of seeing and to an awakened, living relationship with the earth and all its beings, human and other than human. As a student of biology, I studied evolution, invertebrate zoology, botany and geology, fascinated by the ages of the earth and the diversity and beauty of its many inhabitants, past and present. However, it wasn’t until I learned about our common origins as told by the new story of the evolutionary universe, a story which includes the mystery of the nature of matter and its unfathomed interior depth, that I awoke to a new understanding of my identity within an ancient, miraculous continuing story that is still being written. May we celebrate our new origin story as we are given a remarkable identity, and may we embrace its invitation and its guidance to live in congruence with the wisdom and intelligence of our ancient home.”

Population is Personal

Stan Becker writes, “Population statistics can turn people off. Consider: we are adding about 80 million persons to the planet each year. There were 2.5 billion people on earth in 1950 and 7.8 billion in 2020 and the United Nations projects that we will be 9.8 in 2050. Most of us have difficulty visualizing a million or a billion. The Foundation for Deep Ecology published the large book *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overconsumption* with pictures of what we are doing to the planet. Obviously, the population statistics are behind the pictures of tons of trash, polluted lakes and rivers, rows upon rows of apartment complexes in China, traffic jams, etc. etc. But we can relate much better to these pictures than to the statistics.”

Stan Becker has shared of his spiritual and professional journey initiated by his early concern for the growth of human population on Earth. It is a story of his initial “vivid visual experience” in Mexico, which led him to search for an academic program that would allow him to work on population concerns. He tells the remarkable story of his career following this leading. It is a very inspiring story, which is available on the QEW website at <quakerearthcare.org/population>.



Endless War, Endless Environmental Harm

By Emily Wirzba and Alicia Cannon

Photo: FLICKR/ My Photo Journeys/Creative Commons flickr.com/photos/widdle/16894823301

THE QUAKER VALUE OF PEACE calls us to advocate for a reduction in Pentagon spending and military interventions abroad. The value of stewardship urges us to address climate change and seek an earth restored. While it might seem surprising, these two issues are intrinsically linked.

The military, concerned about impacts on current and future operations, has begun actively preparing their own solutions to address the climate crisis. A recent report titled “Implications of Climate Change for the U.S. Army,” commissioned by General Mark Milley, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recognizes that the Department of Defense must establish “a culture of environmental stewardship across the force.” However, the troubling recommendations for doing so include the need for new foreign interventions and massive permanent domestic military infrastructure to prevent the power grid from collapsing.

The Pentagon cannot be the sole place where climate “solutions” are housed. This would perpetuate a ballooning Pentagon budget and military intervention around the world.

A militaristic lens to climate solutions is not the answer. If we want to sincerely address the climate crisis, solutions must be based in humanitarianism and diplomacy, not a larger military footprint.

Here are a few ways in which environmental harm and endless war are related:

Climate Change Can Exacerbate Conflict and Instability

Climate-exacerbated events, like drought and sea-level-rise, can spark violence, instability, and contribute to climate displacement and forced migration. They create the potential for conflict and increased military activity abroad, perpetuating a cycle of endless war.

For example, in the years leading up to Syria’s civil war in 2011, the Middle East experienced a devastating drought. More than 1.3 million Syrians were affected, and in some areas up to 85 percent of the country’s livestock were killed. People across the Middle East were forced to migrate to cities, contributing to an already unstable situation.

The Military’s Contribution to Climate Change

As the world’s single biggest institutional consumer of fossil fuels, the military contributes significantly to climate change. Endless wars have led the military to consume an incredible amount of energy and emit staggering levels of greenhouse gases into earth’s atmosphere.

Before 9/11, the military’s energy consumption was steadily declining. Now, the Department of Defense consumes between 77 to 80 percent of all government energy and emits more greenhouse gasses than two-thirds of the countries on earth. Continued intervention in conflict abroad will further exacerbate our reliance on fossil fuels and worsen the climate crisis.

Physical Violence to the Planet

Military conflict destroys ecosystems, damages water sources, and harms human health. Military bases leach chemicals and toxins that pollute water supplies and cause severe health issues.

Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, environmental toxins from depleted uranium left children living near American bases with an increased risk of ailments such as congenital heart disease, spinal deformities, and cancer. More than 180,000 U.S. veterans have documented health concerns due to exposure to toxic materials that the military burned in open-air pits.

A Better Way Forward

In order to seek a reduction in Pentagon spending and militarization, we must seek an Earth restored. If we aren’t proactive, climate-exacerbated events could lead to more conflict, more troop deployment, more displacement, and more military action.

As advocates, we must take a wholistic view of the world and encourage Congress to uphold the common good. We need to prioritize diplomacy rather than an expanded military presence and unabated use of fossil fuels.

Emily is the former Legislative Manager for Sustainable Energy & Environment at FCNL and Alicia is the Program Assistant. Visit <fctl.org> for ways to take action.

Quakers Caring for God's Creation

A Kessler Family Journey

By Jim Kessler

SERENDIPITOUS moments are transformative intellectually and spiritually. In 1970, close to the first Earth Day, I was finishing a Masters in Biology at the University of Northern Iowa. I bought a Sierra Club book entitled *A Moment in the Sun*. Its clear description of the environmental crisis radically changed my world view. Soon after, while teaching high-school Biology, I was invited to visit a virgin prairie near the school. I fell in love with its incredible beauty and wildness. A year later it was sold and plowed. My wife Kathy and I deeply grieved its loss.

In the late 1970s, the National Wildlife Federation Backyard Program inspired me to teach my students about native plantings in yards. We soon planted a butterfly garden in our yard. Kathy and I began to dream that we might find a property near our church family at Grinnell Friends Church where we would live and restore native habitat.

Miracles still happen. Kathy is a serious birder. While attending an Audubon Society meeting, she shared our dream. One of the people at the meeting owned land nearby. A nine-acre woodland was available for sale. Someone else had an option to buy 20 acres adjacent to the woods. We told the owners that we didn't want to destroy 150-year old oaks to build a house, but if the 20 acres became available we would be interested. Kathy went home and prayed that the other folks would drop their

option. They did. Two weeks later we were amazed when the owner called us with good news. We bought the 29 acres in 1997.

We planted tallgrass prairie on 14 acres of the property and began to remove invasive grasses, weeds, shrubs and trees from the landscape. Then we removed downed wood, pulled wild hemp, sprayed Multiflora Rose bushes and inter-seeded native species in four-acres of Bur Oak savannas. We had our new home built in the middle of the property in 2003.



Gray Headed Coneflower, an iconic wildflower of the tall grass prairie.

Next we began three acres of wetland restoration in old sloughs and on creek banks. Controlled burns were reintroduced into all of these fire-dependent habitats. Native seeds were purchased and others were collected from area native habitats. Currently there are about 270 local native species growing on the property. Kathy and I, our oldest son Paul, and seven grandchildren, have been involved in the restoration process.

Our current project is restoration of nine acres of Bur Oak/Hickory woodland. Invasive tree species and shade-loving trees that threatened the mature oaks were ringed and killed.

In 2017 we donated the Kessler Prairie, 27 acres of restored habitat, to the Bur Oak Land Trust, which is located in Iowa City, for perpetual protection and active management. They regularly send crews to help with controlled burns, wood removal, and cutting brambles.

The process of restoring a small piece of God's Creation has blessed us with excellent physical, spiritual, and mental health. We have opened our home to people for spiritual retreats, in times of crisis and as a place to stay for a while. Those who visit often comment that it is a place of healing. We have grown in our Christian faith as we daily experience the beauty of native wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, trees, and an abundance of pollinators, songbirds, and wildlife. This restoration of the Earth and our lives continues.

Jim and Kathy are members of Grinnell Friends Church (Iowa Yearly Meeting -FUM). Jim teaches Environmental Biology at Iowa Valley Community College-Grinnell. He is active in QEW. Jim has shared almost 100 presentations and workshops about native plant landscaping and larger native plantings in Iowa and other states.

How Will I #ShareMyCheck?

By Hayley Hathaway

MY BANK ACCOUNT looked good after I received my Economic Impact Payment of \$1200 this spring. I felt grateful for the money. Yet, I still have a job, unlike the 25 million people who have applied for unemployment in the US since the pandemic started. I got my check—but millions didn't. The government's program left out those who don't have social security numbers or home addresses, are undocumented or incarcerated, and young adults claimed as dependents. As a response to this inequity, grassroots groups and frontline communities across the country are calling on those of us who received the stimulus money to #ShareMyCheck. This people-led distribution is one of the ways we can practice solidarity during this crisis.

The website <sharemycheck.org> is hosted by Resource Generation, a multiracial membership community of young people (18-35) with wealth and/or class privilege committed to the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power. They encourage those who can to donate to local mutual aid efforts and grassroots movements.

Marla Marcum, of the Climate Disobedience Center, also encourages a thoughtful approach to redistribution based on reparations and relationships: "We join many others to proclaim that this is an opportunity to move the wealth generated through colonization and slavery back to those from whom it was originally stolen. If you do receive these funds, we invite you to discern whether you are called to move (or return) those resources to projects led by Black, Indigenous, and undocumented people. If your income is high enough to exclude you from receiving these funds, we invite you to begin or deepen a commitment to making reparations real. We mourn that so much of our society was created and is sustained by extraction of resources (including labor) from people and the land."

The Climate Disobedience Center's website includes examples of where their team has given their money, such as Ekvn-Yefolecv, an intentional ecovillage community of Indigenous Maskoke persons in Alabama, and Restoration Urban Farm, a Black-led urban farm for formerly incarcerated people in Pawtucket, RI.

I'm motivated by these efforts by my peers to move towards a place of integrity and right relationship in a practical way. I will #sharemycheck. Will you?

Hayley is QEW's Communications Coordinator and worships with Santa Fe (NM) Friends. She also encourages you to consider giving to QEW today (see page 2).

Youth Activists' Earth Day Demands

QEW IS ONE OF 400 organizations that form the US Climate Strike Coalition. The Coalition is led by young people, through groups like Fridays for Future, International Indigenous Youth Council, Future Coalition, and Sunrise Movement. This Earth Day they organized three days of global online action and released the following demands for the US Congress and the next US President. Visit <strikewithus.org> for the full demands. As they say, "Together, we can change our world into one that is not only safe and sustainable, but flourishes for generations to come."

A People's Bailout. In the short term, we need a People's Bailout prioritizing and funding those who have been hit first and worst by COVID-19 and the current recession... We demand that Congress immediately act as follows:

1. Health is the top priority, for all people.
2. Provide economic relief directly to the people.
3. Rescue workers and communities
4. Make a down payment on a regenerative economy, while preventing future crises.
5. Protect our democratic process while protecting each other.

A Green New Deal. Immediate relief is only the first step. With our communities and our futures on the line, we call on Congress and the next President to kickstart the era of the Green New Deal to transition our society and economy toward justice and sustainability:

1. Enact a Green New Deal to transform our economy to 100% clean, renewable energy by 2030.
2. Ban fracking everywhere.
3. End all government subsidies for fossil fuels and require that banks, insurance companies, and asset managers.
4. Protect and restore biodiversity.

Indigenous Land Back.

1. Return stolen sacred, ancestral Indigenous lands and lands that were unjustly taken through broken treaties.
2. Honor the treaties protecting Indigenous lands, waters, and sovereignty and protect all frontline communities.
3. Prioritize an immediate end to all dirty resource extraction projects affecting or on indigenous lands.
4. Protect sacred ecosystems and the alignment of human law with natural law in defense of our environment and people.
5. Include the immutable rights of nature into the US constitution.

Love in the Wilderness: A Path for Climate Action

By Mey Hasbrook

LOVE SPEAKS OUT to me from the Biblical account of Exodus as a way to face climate breakdown. I hear this as someone of Cherokee Celtic-Irish descent and a Quaker carrying a ministry about Right Relationship, connecting care of the Earth and human communities. The mythology tells us about Moses the prophet and liberator; God as Yahweh of the burning bush and whirling wind, plagues and parting the Red Sea. On the whole, we learn how the Hebrews receive a new way of life—the covenant—from Yahweh, and eventually reach their Promised Land.

I'm reminded how cultural stories among indigenous peoples relay instructions for survival. This storytelling happens in ceremonies and daily life to instill hope and deepen relationships. What most simply sounds out to me from Exodus is instruction for survival: Walk the path of Life that is Love. It's a path of liberation through deadly overwhelming circumstances, just as we face today with climate breakdown and interwoven issues. The direction is starkly clear: Surrender every day in order to bring forward Life— that is, Love.

In Exodus's beginning, we read about figures who risk everything to preserve life. Midwives spare newborn boys from genocide ordered by Pharaoh. A mother hides then releases her child to the river where others are drowned. As child-sister Miriam follows, she finds Pharaoh's daughter rescuing, then renaming her brother Moses. I hear Love in these life-saving acts.

I recognize the same risks taken by indigenous peoples who, after facing centuries of genocide, today suffer murder while protecting lands, one another, and the whole web of life.

I hear John Woolman's words, "Love is the first motion," resonate as Moses begs Yahweh to spare his stubborn people. The Hebrews release their clinging to objects like the Golden Calf, and turn to what some Quakers today call the Light. On the long walk through the desert, I hear footfalls of Jesus, a path of Right Relations where all

Do we recognize that our hearts may need to be broken open in order for God to break through? - Jonathan Dale

are welcome to follow...upon leaving behind their material possessions. I am reminded alongside Faith and Hope that Love is the greatest of these:

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but

do not have love, I gain nothing." (I Corinthians 13: 1- 3, NRSV)

The sounds of the wilderness are a response to Friend Jonathan Dale's call, "Do we recognize that our hearts may need to be broken open in order for God to break through?" For new Light reaches us as we surrender in Love. Then we become able to abandon what enslaves us today, and to walk into the Great Mystery of the desert together.

We become able to listen to the Earth and ancestors while guided by the Light's clarity.

In facing climate breakdown and related challenges, we require compassion and community to preserve life. So whatever campaigns may be pursued, it is my prayer for Quakers to root ourselves in Love alongside one another: across our geographies, affiliations, and demographics. The recent Covid-19 pandemic presents us a tragedy and an invitation to walk together through the wilderness with Friends, neighbors, and strangers. May we walk with open hearts and share our stories.

Mey is a member of Kalamazoo Friends Monthly Meeting (Lake Erie YM). Femestiza.com follows the traveling ministry she carries.



Photo by Kathy Barnhart

If I Were a Poet

By Allen J. McGrew, for Heidi S. McGrew

If I were a poet,
I would summon for you the cold creak of the
board walk beneath your booted feet,
And the gentle caress of the cool breeze on
the back of your neck.
My words would paint for you the glint of the
just-rising sun through the trees,
and the scarlet flash of the blackbird's shoulder,
And the soft rap of the downy woodpecker,
And the startle of the waxwing in the morning light.

If I were a poet,
I would know the right words to conjure for you
the lavender blush
of this new-dawning day,
the way the mists hang in mute witness above the
still-flowing stream,
The way your own breath hangs before you
like the crystalline shadow of a prayer
you did not know you prayed.
You would see the cattails transformed into crystalline
blades of shimmering color by the October frost.
And the frost-encrusted wheel of the orb-weaver.
And the delicate perfection of each hoary crystal
fringing the last aster of fall.

And if I were an artist,
I would carry with me a palette of a thousand colors,
And blend them into a nuance of a million hues.
I would know just the way to render the myriad
subtleties of the clouds,
as they drape their mute homage to the
blushing dawn.

My palette would carry not merely a generic rose hip
red,
No. It would have THAT rose hip red—that one, just
over there.
I would crush rubies, and mix them with
glinting diamonds
to capture its ice-encrusted brilliance.
No expense would be too great.
No detail beneath my notice.

And if I were a musician,
and a singer of songs,
I would sing the song of THIS day.
I would beckon from the flautists the whisper
of the breeze
through the autumn leaves.
And from the drums, the far-off rap of the woodpecker,
And the blackbird's call,

And the rattle of
the kingfisher, as it
surveys the
stream.
And I would bring it all
to a rising crescendo of
Silence.
So that you could hear
your own heart beat to the
pulse of the rising day.

And if I were a god,
I would create such a world as this for you.
I would offer it to you ever so gently,
cupped in great hands quaking almost
imperceptibly
with the reticence of their own strength.
I would create such a world as this for you.
And lay it with a single sacrificial tear
upon the altar of my love.

But I am no God,
and but a clumsy-worded poet.
I feel the crimson flush of my cheeks
as I consider the profanity of my words
Against the sanctity of their task.
Nor am I a singer of songs,
Nor a painter,
my brushes dripping with every hue of the world,
and my palette glistening with crushed gems.
No.
I am only a child.

I am only a child.
What know I of poetry,
or painting,
or singing,
or Grace?
I am only a child,
stumbled unwittingly,
slack-jawed with awe,
Into this throne room of Wonder

So I give you my awe,
It is all I have to give.

*Allen is a QEW Steering Committee Representative
for Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, worships with Dayton
Friends, and is a professor at the University of Dayton.*



Continued from back page

Our idea was to provide more food security for a future made uncertain by the climate crisis. The one-and-a-half-acre (with room to expand as needed) is designed as a demonstration site, augmented by a nursery area across the river on another area of cultivation in Celo Community. Four members of Celo Meeting are part of both the mutual aid effort and the Miles Food Forest, supplemented by young volunteers.

With the advent of Covid-19, we are quickly repurposing the greenhouse nursery area to growing medicinal plants with anti-viral capabilities. This resource combines with our incredibly mushroom-rich forests and Mountain Gardens, the principal source on the East Coast for Chinese medicinals, to provide materials for local master natural pharmacists to create antiviral tinctures. These folks work with a gifted acupuncturist, trained in Chinese medicine. Every one of these groups has been engaged in preparing for a future that we knew was coming. With the novel

coronavirus, that future has arrived, and these groups have quickly joined in a more active network for which the ground was being laid for decades.

This spring, during the week right after the coronavirus began to take hold, I participated in two workdays which were outgrowths of this collaborative network. The first was a compost-building demonstration, attended by the usual partnership of septuagenarians and thirty-somethings <ecospirit.blogspot.com>, whose product was destined for the Miles Food Forest nursery.

The second work party was at the orchard site, where we have already planted pecans, walnuts, mulberries, blueberries, and raspberries. We planted 18 young paw-paw trees (native to this area, cultivated by the Cherokee) donated by a master gardener in Celo Community. These were supplemented with mulberries provided by the youngest member of Celo Community, the Miles Food Forest, and Celo Friends Meeting. It is noteworthy that this young man, Matt Riley, was the key voice at the

conclusion of the 2016 FWCC World Plenary Meeting, passionately redirecting the body to try one more time to achieve unity on the Pisac (Peru) Call to Sustainability. The clerk had just tried to close the conference, apologizing that there was insufficient time for this document, which many of us present felt was the most important item of the week-long agenda.

We are gifted here in Celo not only with a rich diversity of forest resources, but with a strong tradition of human expertise, consensus-based community, and leadership qualities that Celo Community founder and Friend Arthur Morgan, Matt Riley, and many others have demonstrated. I am humbly grateful to live here

Bob is a charter member of STMA and the Miles Food Forest, and a member of Celo Community and Celo Meeting. He is the outgoing Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting (SAYMA) Representative to QEW and the rising clerk of SAYMA.

Mutual Aid 101

Mutual Aid is a practice and politics that emphasizes solidarity rather than charity. What does that mean?

It means we recognize that our well-being, health and dignity are all bound up in each other. It means that we understand our survival depends on cooperation, not competition. In this particular moment, we see that our health is also dependent on other people's health, and we can literally save each other's lives.

Rather than disengage and feel powerless, mutual aid allows us to plug in where we can make the most impact – locally.

Mutual Aid is...

- Getting people together in your community to provide material support to each other
- Building relationships with your neighbors based on trust and common interest
- Making decisions by consensus rather than relying on authority or hierarchy
- Sharing things rather than hoarding things
- Treating no one as disposable
- Providing all kinds of support, ranging from food prep to childcare to translation to
- emotional support, and recognizing the value of all of them
- A political education opportunity, where we build

- the relationships and analysis to understand why we are in the conditions that we're in
- Preparation for the next disaster (natural or economic). Next time around we'll already have relationships with each other and know who is vulnerable and needs support
- A great jumping off point for other kinds of organizing and movement work

Mutual Aid is not...

- Quid pro quo transactions
- Only for disasters or crises
- Charity or a way to "save" people
- A reason for a social safety net not to exist.

From mutualaidhub.org

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Mutual Aid & Local Food Sufficiency in the Era of COVID-19

By Bob McGahey

SOUTH TOE MUTUAL AID is an organization of people in the South Toe/Celo, North Carolina area who are collaborating in a variety of activities with intent to strengthen our community's capacity to meet our resource needs for overall well-being. As a hub of Co-operate WNC, a regional mutual aid effort, South Toe Mutual Aid (STMA) is focused on creating the organizational structures and skill/resource-sharing strategies necessary for our community to support each other going into an uncertain future.

STMA brings together members of Celo Community, Celo Friends Meeting, and "Greater Celo," a group of like-minded folks. Prior to the current crisis, our main activity has been work parties, which have been extensive and mostly successful. STMA has three sub-groups, the largest of which is a food sovereignty group. Inspired by the self-sufficiency of hardscrabble mountain families,



Master Chinese herbalist Joe Hollis with young apprentice in his apothecary at Mountain Gardens, Celo, North Carolina.

Celo Community leaders experimented with cooperative farming. In our county, the first Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA), where consumers buy a season-long subscription for a farm's produce, began in Celo Community in the early Nineties. I now garden with five families on that land, certified organic before we inherited it. Three CSAs now serve the Valley, and market in Asheville.

Two years ago, a group of us petitioned Celo Community for permission to plant a permaculture orchard and berry patch in an underused field. *Continued on page 11*