

Unity with Nature Committee Report to Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session 2014

Our Report to Representative Committee a few months ago describes most of our activities since Pacific Yearly Meeting's (PYM) last annual session.

Since then, we have received one mini-grant application from Casa de los Amigos, which will likely be approved at our committee meeting at Walker Creek. Attached is a report about last year's mini-grant projects.

We have again arranged a simple meal this week, an opportunity for awareness. "To live simply so others may simply live."

The simple meal raises awareness of how we live, and how our use of resources influences their availability for others, including all flora and other fauna. Sadly, the demands of "First World" lifestyles crowd out the needs of many others. Smaller portions of simple, nutritious food are sufficient, tasty and friendly to the Earth. We can accurately think of wealth as 'wellth,' which means that resources which fail to increase overall welfare don't qualify as wellth.

Any money raised will be donated to the Unity with Nature Mini-Grants program and Right Sharing of World Resources. In 2009 the simple meal raised approximately \$700 which was divided between 3 Quaker organizations.

As you know, we nurtured and are sponsoring two interest groups at the 2014 annual session, one on divestment from fossil fuel stocks, and the other about Eco-Mysticism: deepening worship in unity with nature (Friday at 10:45 am). Also, other concerned Friends are presenting an affinity group about nuclear waste.

"What canst thou say?"

We sponsored an earthcare interest group at the College Park Quarterly Meeting. Inspired by the Kabarak Accord from the Sixth World Friends Conference in Kenya in 2012 and some earth-loving poetry, each participant shared their own evolving earthcare testimony. We expect to continue to develop an earthcare minute or testimony. There are already dozens that have been approved by various meetings and other Friendly organizations, and they are serving as resource material. Discipline Committee will no doubt welcome communication and coordination on earthcare concerns as they begin to review and revise Faith & Practice.

The goal of a sustainable PYM is relevant to an earthcare minute, as well as to the proposal to divide PYM into north and south components. The SPICES testimonies offer a sound structure for discerning the specifics of a sustainable PYM. However, ending our fossil fuel addiction is a huge challenge, perhaps 'The Moral Equivalent of War.' Opposing this kind of progress is the fact that our monetary system is trapped in the fossil fuel economy, and the land we need for local farms and so forth, is trapped in the monetary system.

Long-term vision is needed for the long slow and huge emergency of climate change. Its nature lulls us into making marginal changes, which are piling up like so many band aids stuck atop one another. But radical surgery, a whole different infrastructure and tool set, is healthier for all.

We are discussing and seasoning the grassroots procedure developed by Peace & Social Order Committee for circulating draft minutes among monthly meetings before bringing them to the yearly meeting. We are

also considering our mission as described by our charter from PYM, the job descriptions for the QEW representatives, and in general how to build stronger communications, mutual inspiration and support and unity about earthcare concerns and projects between Meetings on all levels and with national earthcare organizations.

We are wondering how to make our earthcare concerns more heard and weighed in the larger world. We appreciate the excellent web presence of, and encourage participation with, Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), and Friends Committee on Legislation in California (FCL-CA). The QEW site and newsletter have great information about earthcare concerns researched and written by Friends. QEW has a forum where you can go and discuss these issues online. You can sign up at the FCNL and FCL-CA websites for the letter writing campaigns and related initiatives to express Quaker Witness of the necessities of peace, earthcare, and social justice.

Our table presentation at this annual session has pictures and more about the 2013 mini-grant project reports, educational materials, and a special presentation from the national organization, Quaker Earthcare Witness. Also at our table will be some reports from various meetings about their earthcare projects in the last year or two. Several areas of concern are fracking and food justice issues.

Of special note is the strong interest raised in at least two monthly meetings (Berkeley and Strawberry Creek) about divestment as a strategy for curtailing the burning of fossil fuels and thus slowing climate change. Here, divestment is not being considered as a substitute for personal responsibility and needed life style changes, but rather a recognition that fossil fuel burning is a global problem and needs to be also addressed globally at the source of it – the fossil fuel extraction companies. Strawberry Creek presented two very well attended adult education workshops – one on divestment from fossil fuels and one [with Berkeley Meeting] on responsible reinvestment. The Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness committee of Strawberry Creek developed a well-written concise statement on Climate Change and Divestment from Fossil Fuel Investment, attached below, which as of this writing (very early July 2014) has been presenting for a first reading at Strawberry Creek's Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Business. We hope Friends will consider it thoughtfully.

This year at our table we are offering a project new to Unity with Nature, a Dime-a-Gallon Fund. Modeled on Strawberry Creek's idea, this is a voluntary carbon offset credit, a DIY carbon tax, and a fundraising effort this year for the mini-grant project.

We invite friends to visit with us and our table for more about all of this.

Respectfully submitted,
Muriel Strand, co-clerk, Unity with Nature Committee
Catya de Neergaard, co-clerk, Unity with Nature Committee

Attachment 1: PYM Unity with Nature Committee 2013 Earthcare Mini-Grant Reports
Attachment 2: Strawberry Creek Proposed Minute as of June 8, 2014 on Climate Change and Divestment from Fossil Fuel Investments

Attachment 1

PYM Unity with Nature Committee 2013 Earthcare Mini-Grant Reports

Casa de los Amigos, Mexico City

Casa de los Amigos installed a new 300-liter solar hot water heater on the new roof of their historic building. Great care was taken with research of the design and selection of the installation company. The water heater is guaranteed for 20 years.

They report that it provides almost half of their hot water, and that they are saving 10%-20% of their previous usage of natural gas. This “important step on our journey to reduce the Casa’s footprint and deepen our ecological work in Mexico City” was also supported by a grant from Quaker Earthcare Witness.

The Woolman Semester

The Woolman Semester received a grant to buy an orchard ladder for harvesting fruit trees.

Redding Meeting

Redding Meeting continued its work at the Sequoia Garden by constructing a greenhouse. This is their third year of supporting this garden at the Sequoia Middle School.

The garden is managed through the students in the garden elective class. Some 25 students participate in the garden daily. Produce is planted, harvested and cooked by students. Some is sent to the school kitchen three days per week. During the summer the garden is managed by some 16 families in the garden tract. The garden helps feed the neighborhood along with its teaching mission.

Half of the mini-grant was used to purchase some of the steel for a gate and side fence. A Shasta College woman welder built the gate. A local business donated half of the cost of steel for the gate. The other half helped build the new greenhouse. Many donations from several communities make this project happen.

Attachment 2

Minute on Climate Change and Divestment from Fossil Fuels

Climate change is a real and urgent threat to humanity's current way of life. As Quakers, we see it as imperative that governments must take immediate action to curb climate change. When governments are unwilling to take swift action, then we turn to divestment as a way to make our concerns heard.

Divestment from fossil fuel stocks calls for a halt in profiting from the destruction of the earth that fossil fuel emissions create. Divesting is congruent with our testimonies of peace, equality, community, and simplicity since climate change will sow the seeds of war, poverty, and injustice.

While Strawberry Creek holds no stock of any kind, we recommend the divestment of fossil fuel stocks or funds by all Quaker bodies, including Friends Fiduciary, and we commit to not buying any fossil fuel stocks and funds in the future.

Fossil fuel companies have not been responsive quickly enough to shareholder advocacy and they make clear that they will keep on taking oil, gas and coal from the earth, even if it warms the earth more than 2 degrees centigrade rise that scientists have agreed we must not go above. We applaud Friends Fiduciary for establishing a green fund, but we request that they divest from all fossil fuels in their portfolio.

Divestment can result in reinvestment in green, sustainable energy causes and in thriving local economies. While we are all dependent on fossil fuels at the current time, we hope to see more affordable, efficient choices in the future to use water, wind and solar energy to power our lives. We would like fossil fuel companies to stop blocking legislation that would slow climate change, to stop receiving governmental subsidies, and to become transparent in their funding of political candidates.

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting approved an Earthcare testimony in 2010 which reinforced our commitment to stewardship of the earth. In part it says, "We feel a sense of urgency to bring our lives into right relationship with the community of life on earth. We are called to be faithful to continuing revelation in these matters..."

We urge Meetings and other Quaker bodies to divest as a needed tactic in an effort to contain climate change.

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