

# Pastoral Care *Newsletter*

*For Member Care Committees,  
Ministry and Counsel, Overseers,  
and others who provide pastoral care  
in unprogrammed Friends' meetings.*

*Vol. 19, No. 3, March 2012*

## **Making Choices:**

## **Where Pastoral Care & Environmental Concerns Meet**

**by Patricia McBee**

A few years ago I was speaking at a large meeting in the West about environmental concerns and Quaker testimonies. We met after a potluck and I asked the 20 or so people present to guesstimate what proportion of the meeting members feel that there are growing concerns about the environment. We did it in the style of "The Price is Right" in which I guessed at a number and the meeting members told me to go higher or lower. We landed on a number of 95 percent or more.

OK, I asked, what proportion has modified their lifestyles to some degree in response to those concerns? That registered in the high 80s, still a high proportion, and not surprising that behavior lags behind beliefs. Then I asked what proportion felt that we are on the brink of major environmental crises. Now the number dropped to about 40 percent. And what proportion had radically altered their lifestyles in ways that responded to the sense of crisis? They could easily name the two households that had done so.

This issue of *Pastoral Care Newsletter* is not about who is right and who is wrong in those differences of opinion (though I have my point of view on the subject). It is about how we maintain our meeting communities and search together in our differences.



**Patricia McBee**

If we are at different places on the spectrum of environmental concern, how do we make choices about the life of the meeting? For the meeting holiday dinner do you buy organic, free-range turkeys that cost as much as 10 times the price of a conventional turkey? Or should you have stuffed pumpkin instead? Growing meetings might feel that they have come to the time to build or expand the meetinghouse. Should it be a high level green building with possible additional building costs? Should you build inexpensively and use the saved money for good works? Or is it unconscionable to build any kind of new building because of all the energy and material demands that go into construction? It can be hard to maintain love and unity when some see this to be an issue of terrible urgency while others don't see it as a major concern.

Here are some general guidelines for consideration in your meeting.

### **Sink down into the Spirit:**

Friends are at our best when we begin exploring a difficult issue by settling into the deep pool of divine love and wisdom. By sinking down into that place of safety we can slough off our fears: fears of catastrophe, fears of having to change in ways we don't understand, fears of being judged by others. We can open our ears and our

hearts and our minds to what faithfulness might demand in these times. Pastoral caregivers serve the meeting by helping create an atmosphere of searching together in the Spirit.

### **Inform yourselves:**

There is a lot of information available, and some of it is confusing or contradictory. Even among those who see the environmental situation as serious, there is debate about what Friends should be doing, what dimensions of the environmental crisis we should focus on, what public measures we should support. The pastoral care committee can join with other groups in the meeting, perhaps Peace and Social Concerns or Adult Religious Education, to create opportunities for learning more about the science and politics of the environment. The meeting can explore various points of view through forums, panel discussions, shared readings, and working groups.

### **Find common ground:**

Those in the meeting who carry a concern for the environment might make common cause with those committed to the peace testimony by examining the role of competition for energy and water resources in conflicts around the world. Those committed to deepening the spiritual life of the meeting might explore how finding ways to live closer to nature can draw us closer to the Spirit.

This is a problem that is not going away. It provides an opportunity for us as Friends to go deeper in the Spirit, strengthen our community, and struggle together with the elusive question of what faithfulness demands of us as individuals and as a meeting community.

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In the following article, I describe the planning process for greening Friends Center in Philadelphia, PA.

## **Green Building: How Friends Center Achieved Unity**

If your meeting is considering a building project and one or two enthusiasts are pushing for green building while everybody else has fear in the pit of their stomachs—take heart, you are on the first rung of the ladder of green building.

I have learned that typically green building projects start with one or two people saying “we need to make our building sustainable,” and the rest of the decision makers raising up fears: will it cost more than we can afford? Do the technologies work? Where can we get reliable advice? That is where the Friends Center board found itself as it started planning for the renovations that took place in the late '00s.

The next step was to try to learn more about what green building really means. We were fortunate to get a grant to allow us to bring in experts to educate us. Now, many architectural firms or local green building councils can provide an educational program to explore green building options. We had a two-day “green charrette” (collaborative session) which brought together 100 stakeholders: meeting members, employees in the building, regulators from the city along with experts in heating and

lighting and water conservation and interior design. The design team provided information about the why and how of green building, and they led us in brainstorming what we really wanted in our buildings.

This process transformed the project. We went from thinking of green building as putting in more energy efficient systems to understanding it as integrating every element of our thinking and planning to produce an earth-saving outcome.

The green charrette moved us from having a few people pushing for green building to having a majority of stakeholders and decision makers committed to moving in this direction. But there were still decision makers with serious reservations about the costs.

Two things got us over that hurdle. The first was that we found that donors were enthusiastic about adding a witness for social responsibility to the project—we could raise more money. Then our engineer produced a life cycle cost analysis. That is, he calculated that if we did our renovations in a conventional way it would cost us \$50.5 million to operate the buildings for the next 20 years.

On the other hand, if we borrowed the money to do all the energy reducing strategies, it would cost us \$45 million *including the cost of repaying the loan*.

At that point, we were ready to move forward. We had a vision of how our buildings could be a witness for Friends testimonies, and we had an understanding of how the project could save us money in the long run. The project was completed in 2009.

Looking back over the past few years, I must admit that it hasn't turned out perfectly as we projected. It has taken time to work out the bugs on some of the more cutting edge technologies. The pay back period will be longer than expected because electricity rates have gone down in Pennsylvania and the reduction of energy use has not been as great as predicted.

The good news is that our renovated buildings are beautiful and comfortable. We are consuming 35 percent less purchased energy than we did before the renovation. We are putting zero carbon into the atmosphere and protecting our watershed from our storm water runoff. We have been able to educate hundreds of visitors about the environmental

crisis and how buildings can be less a part of the problem and more a part of the solution.

If your meeting is contemplating a green building project, take heart.

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*Patricia McBee, a member of Central Philadelphia Meeting, was editor of PCN for eight years. This article brings together two passions for her: strengthening our Quaker process and concern for the earth. She is the executive director of Friends Center and headed the successful capital campaign to green the facility.*

*Editor's note: To learn more, see Patricia's article "A Quaker Case for Green Building" web address: <http://www.friendscentercorp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/A-Quaker-Case-for-Green-Building.pdf>.*

*In 2010, the year after its completion, the Friends Center project was awarded the platinum Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certificate. LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system which provides third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at increasing performance, reducing waste, and improving quality of life.*

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## California Friends Seek New Earth Care Testimony

**by Shelley Tanenbaum  
and Kathy Barnhart**

Does 'that of God' exist in everyone and in everything? Do Friends live a testimony to care for the earth? And, what is a testimony?

As members of Strawberry Creek (CA) Monthly Meeting (SCMM), we wrestled with these questions as we envisioned a new testimony—not found in *Faith and Practice*—to describe how our meeting is witnessing care for the earth. While we had never done anything like this before, the process was filled with joy, inspiration and a sense of community.

Friends have been developing an earth care testimony by changing the way we live and how we relate to the Divine, by trying to green our meeting

houses and our homes, being more energy efficient, eating local foods, walking more and so on.

The time was right for Strawberry Creek Meeting to approve a testimony in April 2010, but the meeting's connection to caring for the environment had begun much earlier, with projects and educational programs that reflected our growing spiritual awareness.

Our meeting has been active in environmental concerns for more than a decade. During 2000, we helped revise the Pacific Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*, culminating in a new set of advices and queries on "Harmony with Creation" and a new section, "Toward a Testimony on Harmony with Creation." In 2004, SCMM adopted the Dime-a-Gallon project to encourage members/attenders to be aware of their energy consumption and act

to reduce it (see [www.dimeagallon.org](http://www.dimeagallon.org)). We have enjoyed many environmentally themed retreats and adult education sessions. Often, members and attenders minister on environmental themes.

We enlarged our political action committee's charge to include the interconnection among peace, earth care, and social witness. The committee's new acronym, PESW reflects those changes.

In 2005, we asked Pacific Yearly Meeting to begin the process of considering a testimony on caring for the earth. Since then, interest groups have been held but the Yearly Meeting does not yet feel called to go further. By 2009, our committee was led to write our own testimony. Many committee members were trying to live the principles that would be contained in such a testimony. But were we acting or speaking for our entire meeting?

We knew that we needed to develop the ideas together and season both the concepts and the wording. This was better done in small groups and so the PESW committee began the work.

Early in the decision-making process, we knew it was important to test the concept with meeting as a whole and to invite everyone to participate in the process. Important decisions cannot easily be reached by simply bringing a proposal to Meeting for Business.

Our meeting approved the following minute: *Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting will begin a process of discernment on developing a Testimony on Harmony with Nature.*

We held two meeting-wide gatherings and our committee meetings, held after rise of meeting, were open to all. First, it became clear that we needed to explore what testimonies meant to Friends before we could explore a specific testimony. After listening and discussing for several months, we came to understand that our testimonies are descriptions of a life guided by the Spirit. Further, we learned that the testimonies in various editions of *Faith & Practice* have been modified over time.

We saw the testimony as an expansion of "that of God in everyone" to "that of God in everything." This was a major shift in our worldview and at times it felt as if light were descending

upon us. We came together month after month with new vision and fresh understanding of how our lives are intertwined with the welfare of the earth. We nurtured each other as we sought to nurture the earth and promote right sharing of resources.

Instead of feeling drained, we often left a committee meeting with a greater understanding for each other and for our place in the natural world.

After discussing the wording, one or two of us would volunteer to bring back a revision. Varying the drafters from month to month allowed for broader participation in the actual writing, and created a much richer document. The approved testimony can be found at [www](http://www).

We asked ourselves many questions as part of the discernment process: Are we transforming our lives in order to respect the environment? Do we feel connected to the commonwealth of life on earth? Are we open to the light of a world that is not dominated by humankind?

The testimonies serve as both a description of how we want to live now and as an inspiration for the persons we will become.

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*Shelley Tanenbaum and Kathy Barnhart are members of Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting in Berkeley, California. Shelley is currently serving as clerk of Quaker Institute for the Future ([www.quakerinstitute.org](http://www.quakerinstitute.org)) and Quaker Earthcare Witness ([www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)).*



**Shelley Tanenbaum**



**Kathy Barnhart**

# Friendly Households: Bridging the Gap between Intention and Reality

by Margaret Mansfield

*"The most remarkable feature of this historical moment on Earth is not that we are on the way to destroying the world—we've actually been on the way for quite a while. It is that we are beginning to wake up, as from a millennia-long sleep, to a whole new relationship to our world, to ourselves and each other."*

—Joanna Macy, author, activist

Concern for eco-justice has been growing in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) during the past few years. Our 2009 yearly meeting sessions centered on the importance of caring for the earth in all our business decisions. The following year, the yearly meeting affirmed a set of five eco-justice goals. Several new initiatives have sprung from these two sessions.

This article describes one such initiative, the Friendly Households Challenge.

Friendly Households challenges Friends to revitalize what they're already doing, awaken to new opportunities, and build community to strengthen their work and spiritual grounding. The challenge begins with four central queries:

- ü What spiritual practices will keep us grounded?
- ü What lifestyle changes will we make?
- ü How will our actions model alternatives and possibilities for others?
- ü How will our civic engagement promote the systemic changes we seek?

Friendly Households will function as a laboratory to bridge the gap between intention and reality.

Five areas of focus are being offered to guide discernment: 1) food, 2) water, 3) the web of life, 4) energy and transportation and 5) money and stuff. As currently conceived, a group of households meets regularly to share and support each other's efforts toward greater

mindfulness of eco-justice and thus toward more grounded lives.

At its summer session in 2010, PYM had set these draft goals:

- ü PYM Friends are in unity around a powerful vision; part of our identity is that many Friends are conscientious objectors to the war against the earth;
- ü PYM Friends are ministers and capacity builders for eco-justice sharing training, education, and pastoral care. Friends amplify our witness, stories, and tools through effective communications;
- ü PYM Friends work effectively for structural change—employing viable inside/outside strategies and working with vulnerable communities;
- ü PYM Friends finances are in right relationship [with the earth and its resources];
- ü PYM Friends households and meeting houses are committed to right relationship and are examining all of their practices in this Light.

Three pilot household groups illustrate the evolving and diverse nature of this initiative. Two of the pilot groups have formed within meetings that already share deep concerns for eco-justice.

Both of these groups are focusing on family food choices. In the first group, one household out of 13 families has grown its own food a number of years. All plan to learn from this family's experience and explore the possibilities of permaculture. (*See Resources page 6.*)

The second group of twelve households, is using a meeting's community garden created two years ago. They have already organized two celebratory potlucks from the garden's harvest and plan to learn more about growing, cooking, and keeping their own food. A member



**Margaret Mansfield**

of this pilot program recently remarked, “The heart of my meeting is lighter and more joyful” because of this community effort.

The third pilot group is much smaller and made up of members from two meetings. Neither community is currently engaged with eco-justice. Since they do not know each other well, the members of this group plan to educate themselves and celebrate their love of the natural world. They will also host movie and discussion nights and invite everyone from both of their meetings.

What have we learned from these pilot programs?

*That the conflicts that arise deepen our understanding of each other and inform our choices.*

We experience joy in the formation of community and we become the resources we need. Since none of the pilot groups are quite what we had in mind, we learned to appreciate surprise and celebrate what emerges.

We daily witness to our testimonies and experiment with new leadings. Through our spiritual practices, we understand ourselves and our world more fully. The decisions Friends make about how to live more lightly—what we eat, how we travel, how we earn and spend our money, what we do for entertainment—all are deeply personal commitments ripe for discord especially when we expect everyone to be in agreement.

But, if we allow time for change to emerge as we work with others, we gain in joy, deepen our connections to the Spirit, and strengthen our meeting communities.

Though individual effort is essential to transformation towards eco-justice, it isn't sufficient. Exploration of lifestyle alternatives, with community support, plants seeds of hope in all our lives and creates space for a deeper, more systemic transformation.

Ultimately, by reverently working together in our care for creation and the human family,

## Resources

Friends Center project website: <http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2010/todays-news/philadelphias-friends-center.html>

Friendly Households web site: <http://www.friendlyhouseholds.org>

Quaker Earth Care witness staff person:  
Anne@QuakerEarthcare.org

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*Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy* Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco, 2009

McKibben, William *The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job and the Scale of Creation and Earth* Cowley Publications 2005

Macy, Joanna & Johnstone, Chris *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re In Without Going Crazy*, New World Library 2012

Permaculture: [www.permaculture.org/](http://www.permaculture.org/)

we connect more deeply to our own essential strengths and spirit.

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