

# earthQuaker

newsletter  
issue 92  
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Leeds, Carlton Hill Meeting House, now has more parking spaces for cycles than it does for cars!

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## Editorial



Greetings from your new editor. I was due to take over earlier in the year but due to a problem with my eyes – extreme double vision – I was unable to do so. Now, after endless hospital visits, tests and examinations the doctors have declared that everything is progressing ok. My sight is still not right but at least I can now cope with it. Oh, the joys of wearing out!!

Many of you will already know me but for those that don't, I have been involved with LWP since around 2008 although not very active for the past four years, whilst I was living in a Buddhist centre. I am now living in Leeds and “back in the saddle” again.

Pete Redwood

### 365 conversations about climate change

Three weeks ago, Harriet Martin and I were at the Resurgence conference to celebrate fifty years since the magazine was first published. There was a fine line up of inspiring speakers, many of them on the topic of the challenge we face on climate change. We were both inspired by George Marshall, talking about the importance of engaging with people who disagree with us, and whose values are different, and seeking to find common ground. He suggested a very practical way of doing this, and Harriet and I have resolved to take up this challenge.

The idea is to engage someone in a conversation that relates in some way to climate change, if not every day, then as often as is feasible. It could be a stranger, someone on the bus or train that you get talking to, or it could be a friend or family member – and in a manner that is linked with the conversation, bring up something about climate change. We know it is easier to rise to a challenge if you are doing it with other people and can share experiences, so we are going to set up a site on social media – we will take advice as to whether it is Facebook or a blog – where we can share some of our experiences, and hopefully lead others to join us in the challenge.

Would you be interested? If so, please email me, and as soon as we set up the site, I can let you know.

**Rachel Berger**

*rachel.berger0@gmail.com*

**Harriet Martin** adds:

I have attempted climate conversations with strangers several times over the last three weeks. I find it works best if I am sitting next to someone, on a train, a bus or park bench or at a café table. Particularly if I am alone and the particular venue is crowded, this has been quite easy. In any case, I have been saying “hi” to people passing on the street lately, so I find the starting “hello” to a stranger comes pretty easily.

George Marshall apparently goes straight for the jugular with “What do you think about climate change?” I prefer to look for something we are both seeing or experiencing to start a chat (some shoes with purple laces like the young Elizabeth Fry’s worked well on a park bench; a magazine on model railways did the trick on a train). The weather is, of course, always available.

I find it works well to talk a bit around the chosen subject, trying if possible to establish what my conversationalist and I have in common. (I read somewhere that if people feel you are in the same social group as they are, they will be more inclined to want to agree with your opinions.) The park bench/purple laces lady was on a walk; I spoke of how much pleasure I have been getting over the last few months by trying to walk and/or take public transport to reach my

destination and I also feel great satisfaction when using less fossil fuel because of climate change. What did she think of climate change?

In this case park bench lady pulled into herself a bit with, “Oh, every time I hear someone talk about it, someone else disagrees. It’s not very certain, is it?” I need to find a better response to this than just, “Oh, 97% of climate scientists are fully convinced of it.”

George Marshall urges us to appeal to people’s emotional brains, not their calculating brains. (It is our emotional brain that normally ends up making decisions regardless of logic.) Thus next time I may try, “I have no doubt at all about it. Anyway, I find I am really happier all round when I am living more the way I did in the 1970’s—walking more, talking with neighbours more and shopping a whole lot less.”

It is gratifying when some conversations prove really easy. The young man interested in model trains was very enthusiastic about talking train travel, why trains are so energy efficient, why they are so much better for going places in this era of climate change. Better still, our train carriage was pretty quiet, so lots of folk on surrounding seats could overhear.

Even if, for some reason, the conversation doesn’t get past the “hi”, I find I feel better for having smiled at a stranger.

## Composting the Covenant Talking about Quaker faith and sustainability

At a gathering at Woodbrooke over three days, sixteen Friends explored how our faith relates to ecology and sustainability. Prepared contributions included discussion papers, poetry, film clips, slideshows and experiential and creative activities. We reflected at length in worship-sharing and discussion. The various contributions, other resources, flipcharts and notes can be accessed via a link in the online version of this summary at [www.livingwitness.org.uk/hd/](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk/hd/)

We distilled three main themes – each of these is a dimension of our eco-spirituality:

1. Communion and community – our experience of and commitment to connection with people, other living beings, and the whole universe.
  2. Telling our stories – including our history and vision, the ways we’ve engaged with challenges, the way we articulate our values, our experience of our own darkness and of transformation.
  3. Action/change agency – including our commitment to self-change, our practices and processes for discernment and support in our witness, and our principles for action as a faith community.
- People find different ways into ecospirituality. Some start with connection, some with vision or narrative, some with action. But these are inseparable and mutually entwined paths. There are distinctive Quaker approaches to each (see figure overleaf).

We draw on our corporate roots in Christianity and the witness of early Friends, as well as our personal backgrounds in a variety of religious and secular traditions. We find resonance between the writings of George Fox and others in the Quaker tradition, and our own experiences of God’s presence in all creation, in the web of life and in the cosmos. We also find many sources of new light, from the values and cultures of indigenous peoples to the insights and practices of movements such as the Work that Reconnects.

Friends have a well-developed witness in our approach to the spiritual life, to transformation (standing still in the Light, letting it show us our darkness and bring us to new life) to human relationship (answering that of God in everyone) and to community (setting aside personal positions in seeking unity). We are led to extend the resulting principles of peace, love, equality and community to our relationship with all beings and the natural world – seeking to answer that of God in all creation.

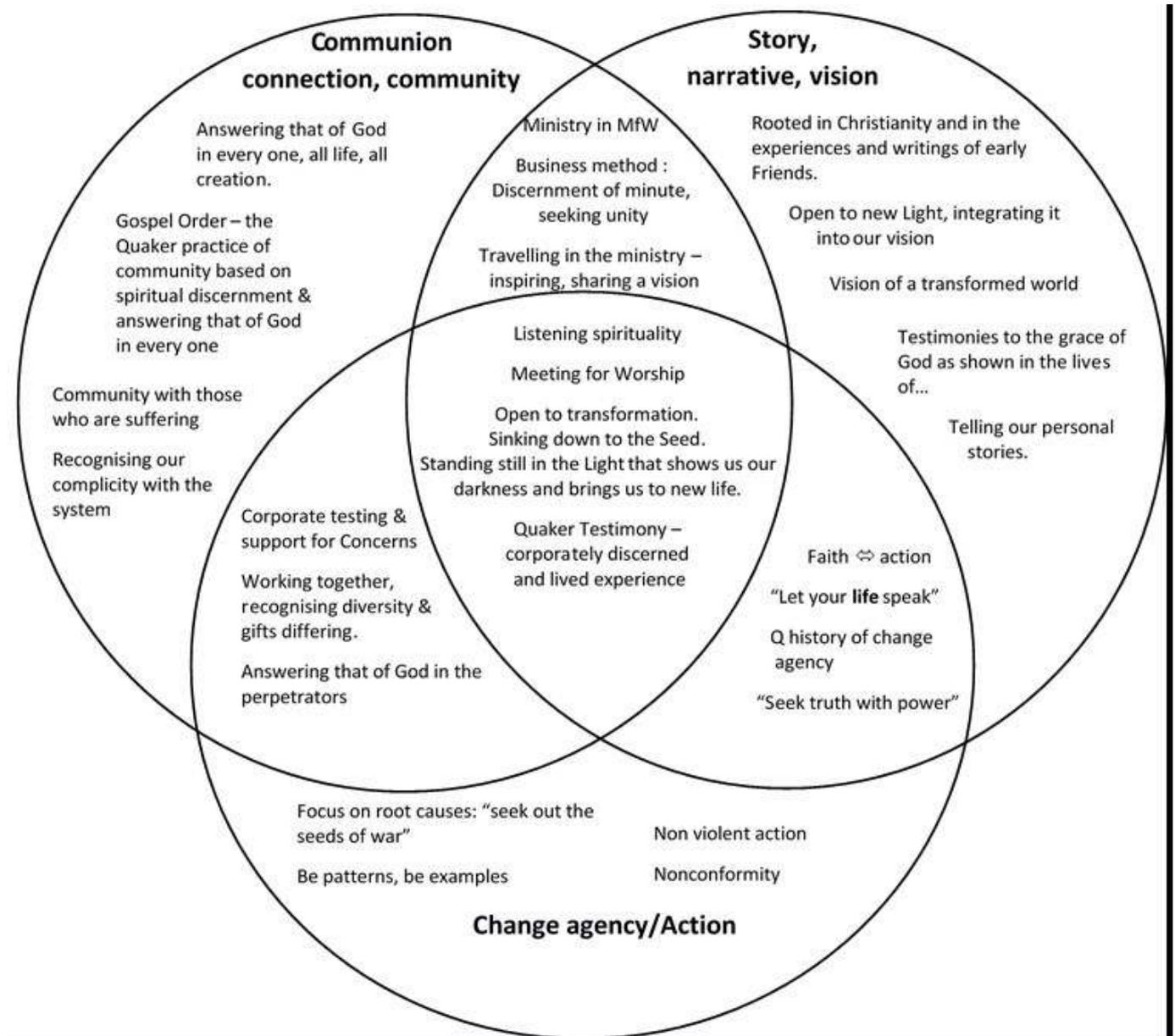
Our faith, lives and action are inseparable. We have a passion to make manifest the vision of Gospel Order through our practices and structures, and through our work in the world for

transformation and for reconciliation. In our final go-round, participants called for a clearer articulation of our Quaker eco-theology and vision, and for acceptance of spiritual practices that connect us with the Earth. Quaker discernment processes and approaches to relationship are particular gifts which, if we could breathe more life into them, have much to offer the healing of our world.

We parted with new energy for our own journeys, projects and challenges, in our lives, meetings and beyond – and also with a sense of companionship, which many of us would like to sustain and develop.

### Quaker Distinctives

These are some of the aspects of Quakerism that most speak to me – and which I think should shape a Quaker approach to sustainability.



# SUPPORTING OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER IN OUR WORK ON SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the interest groups that emerged at the Living Witness weekend in October was focused on wellbeing. Each member of the group had a concern about how we can support ourselves and each other to face the challenges posed by climate change over time; how we can continue to do the work we do without feeling overwhelmed and burnt-out in the face of its enormity.

The conversations we had showed that we saw the challenge in our own nuanced ways and pointed to four areas of immediate concern:

## **Overcoming Emotional States that Prevent us from Taking Action**

Sustainability is about the survival of future generations. However, being made aware of the enormity of the problems we face, such as climate change, can lead to guilty paralysis rather than action. There is need for emotional nurturing and guidance, to enable us to be active in working for change. Under this heading we would like to explore ways of facing “the mess we’re in without going crazy” as Joanna Macey and Chris Johnstone succinctly define the challenge in their book “Active Hope”.

How can we allow ourselves to be motivated and energised by love and gratitude, rather than by fear, which can stop us from taking action altogether? Or being motivated by anger, which can alter the meaning and outcomes of our actions?

### **Acceptance**

Some of us will need to reach a place of acceptance before we can face the world as it is and act freely on our concerns about sustainability and climate change.

Recognising and accepting the reality we face right now is the first step to opening ourselves to the possibilities of change.

### **Supporting Ourselves and Each Other along the Way**

In a recent Radio 4 programme, a war

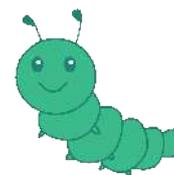
correspondent was asked how she was able to continue working in hostile and traumatic environments like Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan for months at a time. She explained that in complete contrast to her work, when she returned to the US, she focused on activities that reconnected her with family and friends, and to the beauty of nature and art.

What are our own strategies for reconnecting to ourselves and for replenishing the energy required to continue working on sustainability and climate change in the face of challenges and setbacks? How do we celebrate the successes of our work?

What can we do to strengthen our resilience individually and as a community?

## **Reconnecting with Nature**

We recognise the special part that our relationship with nature has in our work: for some of us it is the inspiration for what we do and equally provides a place of sanctuary, healing and renewal.



How can we reconnect with nature and make it part of our individual and shared support systems?

## **Forthcoming Events**

To address these concerns and to support Friends in their sustainability journeys and their work on climate change we are hoping to organise two following two events:

The first event, a weekend retreat, is likely to take place during the third quarter of 2017 at the Quaker Community in Bamford and will focus on ways of building resilience by balancing the intensity of our work with ways of supporting ourselves individually and in our community.

What are the resources and insights we already have or need to develop to take care of ourselves and each other to avoid burn-out?

The second event, a Woodbrooke-style weekend, is likely to take place in 2018. Our current thinking about it is to bring together

Living Witness, the Woodbrooke tutor team and psychologists working in the field of climate change to explore personal and community resilience. We would hope to invite speakers – both Friends and others – whose work is centred around the psychological impact of climate change and to link the event with the interests of the Human Dimensions of Climate Change group, which Living Witness has facilitated.

These events will be offered in addition to the Living Witness Annual Gathering which is being planned for the second quarter of 2017 and is expected to take place at the Quaker Community in Bamford.

Andrew Taylor Brown  
Elizabeth Coleman  
Lina Jordan

## Thinking Aloud

I seem to have been involved in a number of conversations recently on the subject of personal transport.

I spent nearly seventeen years driving for living, starting off with trucks but ending up as a chauffeur with limousines. All in all, an average of around 1,000 miles a week for the whole of that period. That said, I have never owned my own car and nowadays I don't even have a driving licence, since I refused to renew my photocard.

The main topic of conversation has been the perceived “freedom” that car ownership seems to offer. The number of cases I have had quoted at me where it would not be possible to live in a particular location, the children would not be able to go to a particular school, certain enjoyable activities would not be possible if it were not for car ownership.

I tend to view things from a different perspective. Because people want freedom to drive where they wish, and because Leeds City Council seems unwilling to limit that freedom, Leeds is one of the most heavily polluted cities in the country – excluding London. Traffic in Leeds is almost at a standstill for most of the day and the bus company finds it impossible to maintain anything approaching a regular timetable. For a city sprawling over 550 sq km there is just one park and ride, the football stadium car park, which cannot be used on match days!

Yes motorists have their perceived freedom, but that is at the expense of everybody else. And of course the topic of pollution leads on to which is the “best” car to drive. A recent series

of tests by campaign group Transport & Environment showed that not one of the diesel cars currently on the market passed the EU Euro6 tests in actual road tests, some considerably worse than others (notably Fiat), although all of them apparently passed laboratory tests. Hybrids definitely reduce pollution but vary considerably in performance. Pure electric are fine for local work and light driving but most lack the range for long distances.

Surely, the best way to cut down on pollution is to question, not which type of car to use, but to ask the question “Do I really need a car?” For the majority of people, if they are completely honest, the answer is “Probably not.” For the few occasions when a car is essential it may be possible to hire, or to use a taxi for a one off journey. For everything else, public transport is usually a possible – or get exercise - by cycling or walking.

As I explained earlier, I have never owned a car, and yet we brought up three children, and never had a problem doing what we wanted to do. Interestingly, now they are grown up and with their own families, none of them have their own cars, even though they are perfectly able to afford them. And now, when I am less mobile than I was, I still have no problem getting around and doing what I want to do.

Pete Redwood



## Building resilience to climate change – practical work for local Quakers?

Many people, including Quakers, who are deeply concerned about climate change, feel powerless in the face of the huge changes in economic systems, politics, and societal values that are needed to tackle the challenge it poses to the whole fabric of life on earth: they do not know what practical steps they could take that would have a wider impact than personal lifestyle change. When I retired from my job with an international NGO, working on climate policy and how to help those in developing countries who would be most affected, I too felt at a loss for how to continue working on climate change effectively, in this country.

Then in 2012 I attended the last of Woodbrooke's Good Lives weekend courses, led by Pam Lunn. One of the workshops was on resilience, and we discussed very particular challenges that people in Britain could face as weather becomes more extreme: flooding, gale force winds which could fell trees and power lines, and power cuts caused by ageing power stations and a lack of renewable energy generation to replace them. It was clear that Quakers could potentially offer a lot to their communities in the event of a crisis: the safety of a meeting house, where hot drinks and temporary basic accommodation could be offered to people flooded out or without means of preparing hot food or drinks. Our typical older age profile, with frugality and basic cooking skills embedded in us, would make Quakers ideal as leaders of local soup kitchens! Our listening skills too, and our stillness would be welcome to people suffering trauma.

Responding to a local crisis is only one part of what is needed – more important is building resilience in the community – a preparedness for the changes to come. Simple practical things like having torches and candles ready, or solar powered lights, and a supply of foodstuffs that can be eaten cold; knowing which of your neighbours has a wood burning stove where those whose homes are centrally heated or with only electricity could go for warmth, and knowing where particularly

vulnerable people live, who would need support. On 23rd December 2013, Bradford on Avon's town centre was flooded, as heavy rain led the River Avon to flood the bridge, the only river crossing for several miles. The Council's emergency planning team and most Environment Agency staff had gone home for Christmas, and it was left to the police and fire service to shuttle people across the river, and for local businesses to face the devastation. Before I got round to making contact with the Council to see what was already in hand on planning for such events, and how volunteers could help, I found that the town council was encouraging people to support a group called Community Emergency Volunteers. I joined this group, excited by the opportunity to get involved, and without having had to organise anything! It emerged that a near neighbour, affected by field water flooding, had decided to take the initiative.

We meet monthly, at the Fire Station, for a couple of hours' training. This began with learning what our role could be when there is an emergency such as flooding. We have learnt what we would do to support the professional rescue service in managing people and traffic, and in helping rescue someone in the water. We have learnt how to erect the flood barriers for the riverside council offices, and to protect the bridge by erecting barriers provided by the Environment Agency. In the event of snow, our role would be to clear key pavements and footpaths leading into the town centre. The Town council has provided us with a full outfit of protective clothing, walkie talkie radios, and tools for shovelling snow. We have learnt about crowd marshalling and first aid, and learnt about the chain of command in a national emergency, from the government's COBRA team, right down through regional, county and local levels of command within the police service and local government.

Our Quaker Meeting House is one of two Council-designated rest centres in the town, and a few of us in the Meeting have been trained in what our role would be in the event

of people arriving there following a crisis- whether flood or fire or something else like a train crash. The volunteers number around 20 and what is really positive is that it is a much broader cross section of the community than many organisations. It seems our small town is leading the way in this – people from Bristol City Council, and other bodies involved with emergency planning have attended our sessions to understand how we operate. We get the opportunity to practice our skills at local events where we help manage crowds – such as bonfire night, or local cycle races, and through refresher training.

I see an opportunity, through conversations on the need for building resilience, (where

people become interested out of personal as well as community concern) to raise awareness about climate change and our responsibilities as individuals and communities for building our own skills as well as making changes in how we live. There is a close link between this and the Transition Town movement, but the latter still tends to involve those already aware of and committed to making changes; resilience work could be a way to involve other sections of the community. I am offering myself to our local Wiltshire Climate Action Network (Wiltscan) as a speaker, in the hope of reaching groups where awareness about what can be done is less advanced.

Rachel Berger

## Reflection

I grew up on the slogan that the personal is political.

It cuts both ways, the political is also personal, the politics of love is spiritual.

I believe in the sun, even when it's not shining

I believe in love, even when I don't feel it

I believe in God, even when he is silent,

I rarely use the language of God, but don't want to dishonour the anonymous Holocaust victim who wrote these lines in the darkest of times.

I believe in life's longing for itself, even when the humans at the top of the foodchain seem bent on destroying it.

Environmentalists act with religious zeal, complain our political opponents.

Quakers are getting too political complains the occasional Sunday worshipper.

Isn't a Quaker someone who puts faith into practice? As a Green Quaker who tries, I will say yes to both charges, not guilty, but response-able.

I believe in Quakers putting our faith and love into practice.

We are adventurers, wonderers. In any adventure, the odds are tough, the stakes are high and the outcome is uncertain.

The planet will be fine, whatever we do, it's a rock.

It's ability to sustain life is much less certain.

Life becomes more precarious with every ton of carbon emitted, every tree logged or burnt in forest fires, every square metre of melted permafrost, every human act of cruelty, indifference.

Love, life's longing for itself, is made more visible, solid and secure with every wise decision, every living thing protected, ecosystem restored restored, every human act of kindness.

We are the Generation that will decide which prevails

Lesley Grahame

Norwich

# Experimental A and Q

## — our own efforts (Discussion Group) on WATER

Are you aware of the way water is used in the production of things you buy? Consider limiting the amount of chemicals or pollutants you add to your waste water.

Are you aware of your use of water - domestically? If you haven't already done so, consider installing a water meter.

Do you consider the plight of the one in nine people worldwide who do not have access to clean drinking water? Remember that there are charities, such as Water Aid, who help to provide safe, clean water, and consider supporting them.

Do you appreciate the glory of rain? Remember to do all you can to conserve it, and be grateful for it.

Do you know that the plastic microbeads used in many skincare products for exfoliation are polluting our lakes and oceans worldwide? Consider only buying products that do not list 'polyethylene' or 'microbeads' as ingredients — and consider using instead, natural sugar or salt scrubs that can easily be made at home. You could also consider buying products which list natural ingredients such as pumice, walnut husks, oatmeal or apricot, as exfoliants.

Jan Pawson

Exmouth

## Can we truly love the world?

"If you truly love nature, you will see beauty everywhere". These are reputedly the words of Vincent van Gogh. The poet Kathleen Raine takes us further with "violet, raindrop, long wet grass, a young bird looks at me. Their being is lovely, is love." The sentiments expressed are far older than these quotes. There are echoes of them in every wisdom tradition I am familiar with, and doubtless also in those I do not know. "There is nothing new under the sun", as it says in Ecclesiastes. I find the modern restatements useful, since they help me hear the wisdom more clearly. My own experience is that noticing the beauty motivates a "sitting with", which helps me experience the love and reinforces a sense of connection. For others perhaps the love comes first. No matter. Whichever path we take to expanding our awareness of connection with, and dependence on, the natural world will also be a path to noticing promptings of love and truth that ask us to care and protect. This is expressed well in advice 42 – "show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and

variety of the world". The Canterbury commitment to be a "sustainable community" is simply an extended discernment of what this means for us now.

At the Living Witness gathering in Bamford in early October a dozen Quakers spent time together reflecting on how Living Witness might support the Quaker community. The aspect of the discussion that most inspired me was the idea of helping others experience the love the world is expressing for us. It seems to me that this addresses directly the feelings of low self-worth, which are often at the root of our destructive behaviours (certainly mine). How many of us can experience love, and not realise our own love for the source of the love we experience?

Once we have felt our love, we will be led to act. My experience is that action that arises from my own inner promptings is more helpful, and more life affirming, than action that is "required" by others. It is important to support one another and allow all the flowers to bloom.

I think it is also helpful to recognise that we are not alone. Every faith community in this country is working towards a richer understanding of the riches we have been given in the world and a more balanced relationship with them. Rather than work alone and risk feeling overwhelmed, we can find and work together with people from other traditions who share our leadings. This notion led some of us to agree to organise a short conference next year, the provisional title is “Interdenominational and Interfaith approaches to environmental action”. Perhaps those of you who know of an action in your own local community, which others might learn from, can help us by getting in touch and giving us details of a suitable contact.

Ian Marshall – North and Central Lancashire  
ian.marshall@physics.org

## Have we lost the plot?

We all use two words that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have had their meaning distorted.

Every politician, and just about every media outlet talks about the “economy” when they really mean the manipulation of market forces to distort peoples' wealth.

The word economy comes from the Greek – **ecos** meaning *the home*, and **nomia** meaning *to manage*. In Middle Ages the word “economy” was simply a word for household management. We have succeeded in distorting it to mean, purely, management of finance at state or world level.

From exactly the same root as “economy” we have “ecology” - **ecos** = *home*, **logia** = *study*. Therefore, ecology and economy are closely connected – connected to the home and the home environment – never intended to be corrupted into a global context, losing sight of the original meaning.

And so, with this in mind, we look at the world climate change talks currently taking place in Marakesh, Morocco – COP22 - - the 22<sup>nd</sup> discussion by the representatives of 195 countries belonging to the Conference Of the Parties (world leaders) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). If number 21 last in Paris is anything to go by one has to question what they achieve. Yes it is good they are talking, but are they talking about the right things or are they letting their idea of “the economy” get in the way?

The report from number 21 ran to several pages of what was basically basically gobbledegook. Nowhere did it mention any idea of limiting carbon emissions; no mention of the damage caused by fossil fuel burning; no mention of curbing the excessive promotion of the internal combustion engine and the encouragement of personal transport world-wide. Reading into what wasn't there, it was a charter to carry on as normal. Even the Secretary of United Nations admitted that it stood no more than a 50:50 chance of bringing about any reduction in climate change.

And this in a year that has seen the highest global temperatures ever recorded. In a year when all the leading climate scientists have been totally emphatic that if we are to stand any chance of limiting climate change to an absolute maximum of 2 degrees C the we MUST leave all fossil fuels in the ground and accelerate the process to use alternatives – most of which already exist, but do not generate the massive profits that multi-nationals want to see. And under the present “economic” system unless something attracts the multi-national companies it never becomes mainstream.

Let us hope and pray that those basking in the sweltering heat of Marakesh will at last come to their senses and produce some meaningful agreement.

## Diary

**The Great Belonging:** the way of evolutionary activism.

Course at **Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre** led by Clíodhna Mulhern and Maggie Taylor-Sanders. **20 -22 January 2017**. To book please contact Woodbrooke. see [www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk)

**Green Spirituality.** Retreat at **Quaker Community, Bamford, 24-26 March 2017**

A retreat to explore what in the natural environment and in living more sustainably inspires our faith. And to explore what in Quaker faith and practice and other Quaker writing leads us to live sustainably. To book please contact the Community at [mail@quakercommunity.org.uk](mailto:mail@quakercommunity.org.uk)

**Yearly Meeting Gathering, Warwick University, 29 July - 5 August 2017.**

Please contact [laurie@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:laurie@livingwitness.org.uk) if you'd like to be involved in Living Witness activities at YMG, or to be put in touch with Friends considering forming a self-catering vegan group.

**Living Witness Summer Gathering. Quaker Community, Bamford, 29 June - 3 July 2017** with a full programme for the weekend of 1st/2nd July. An opportunity to reconnect with like-minded Friends and to support each other in the sustainability witness of our lives, work and communities. To book please contact [info@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:info@livingwitness.org.uk)

**Wellbeing and Resilience.** Living Witness Retreat at **Quaker Community, Bamford, 22-24 September 2017**. Building resilience by balancing the intensity of our work with ways of supporting ourselves individually and in our community. To book please contact [info@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:info@livingwitness.org.uk)

## Membership subscription form

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# Deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker - Monday 30th January 2017

Please post or email contributions to the editor  
Pete Redwood, 7 Barran Court, Bayswater Place, Leeds LS8 5LY  
or **0113 217 4973** or email: **pete@livingwitness.org.uk**

All contributions welcome: articles, reports, poems, ideas, letters, photos

Include your postal address and telephone number or email address but we will not include contributors' contact details in earthQuaker unless specifically asked to. Members wishing to contact a contributor can get in touch through the editor—contact details above.

We reserve the right to edit but will always try to check substantial edits with the author.

Living Witness (LW) is a Quaker charity supporting Friends' witness to sustainable living and taking it to the wider community in Britain and elsewhere.

LW has worked since 2002 with a growing network of Quaker meetings, connected through regular link group gatherings, newsletters and shared resources.

At the beginning of 2008 LWP merged with Quaker Green Action, which since 1986 has been the main forum for Friends sharing a Concern for sustainability.

We welcome both individual Friends and meetings as members of our network and participants in our gatherings. Please get in touch with the LW co-ordinator if you would like a workshop or speaker session in your meeting.

The co-ordinator is Laurie Michaelis.

The office address is Living Witness, Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LW.

To contact Laurie by email use as before: *laurie@livingwitness.org.uk*

Website is [www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk), where publications including earthQuaker (colour version!) can be downloaded.



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