

19YM04: Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends approves the following:

Testimony To Earthcare

We, as Quakers, are called to live in Blessed Community, in peace with each other and the natural world. Friends deeply lament the injury already done to the Earth and its inhabitants, and are alarmed at the continuation of environmental degradation and its dire implications for future generations.

Friends experience a deep spiritual connection to the natural world, arising from our experience of communion with the Divine. This sense of connection integrates with our Quaker Testimonies of Simplicity, Integrity, Peace, and Equality, and centers on living in peace as part of the environment. We arrive at this sense of deep connection, as with all things, by many paths. Many of us share in all or most of these paths, and we all unite in seeking a greater sense of communion with the natural world.

Our Testimony of Simplicity calls us, to live so that there is room for Spirit in our lives. Our search for material gain and individual satiation regardless of cost violates this commitment to Simplicity. As Quakers, we understand and acknowledge that living in Blessed Community with each other and the natural world fosters a natural, clean, and safe environment. This has far greater value than all the material gains that arise from its destruction.

Our Testimony of Integrity compels us to live lives that are honest, fair, and just. We find that lives lived at the expense of others lack integrity. Such ways of life have far reaching and devastating impacts on Earth's life-sustaining systems in our communities, states, nations, and the world.

Our Testimony of Peace calls us to overcome evil with good. The Commons, including air, water, and soil, are integral to Earth's life-sustaining systems, and benefit all. Unwise usage and unmitigated pollution of our common resources harm individuals and communities, disrupt or destroy infrastructure, leading to civil unrest and war. As we strive to take away the causes of war, we must also strive to live simple, sustainable lives, promote sustainable economic systems, and responsible sharing of common resources.

Historically, our Testimony of Equality has caused us to object to exploitation of human communities with the strength and resilience of Truth. We find our responses to the conditions that allow for the exploitation of natural resources to be cut from the same spiritual fabric. We are called to break our silence and refuse to consent when environmental injustice is visited upon those whose voices are consistently ignored.

Daily, we become more aware of the suffering of the planet and its people. We find an increasing call to do justice, to "let our lives speak", individually and corporately. We are led, as Friends have been at other daunting moments in history, to overcome our own despair, to relieve suffering, and to unite with Spirit in ways never before imagined to bring new possibilities to Life. Living in Blessed Community in peace with each other and the natural world takes more than words, it requires action.