

# Baltimore Yearly Meeting

*of the Religious Society of Friends*

## 2026 Annual Sessions Theme Statement

### Living in Harmony with the Earth and Each Other

*"The world is God's creation. How we treat the Earth, and all its creatures is basic to our relationship with God, and of fundamental religious concern to the Society of Friends"*

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1998

We are all members of creation. From the tiniest microbe to the giant whale and the wisest human being, we are part of an intricate and marvelous web of life. Every person in the world is kin to us, regardless of the guise they wear. Every insect and plant and animal is a distant cousin. Imagine the music we could make if we all sang in harmony.

Throughout history, many people have thought of nature as an inexhaustible resource. We cut down forests, dammed rivers, drained swamps, and gathered wealth with little regard for the consequences. Now, we are called to the awareness that all life is interdependent, that life creates the conditions necessary to sustain life, and that our heedlessness could throw the whole system out of balance. Weather patterns are changing. Species are going extinct. The total biomass of the planet is diminishing. We need to do better.

Life matters, even when it is very small. Life is the condition that makes life possible. None of us likes being bitten by a mosquito, but we are a natural food source for them, and mosquitoes are a food source for birds. Can we learn to see all living things in relation to each other? Can we learn to tread more lightly on the earth? Can we learn to be more tender toward each other? We are all part of the same human family. "We all inhabit this small planet," John F. Kennedy wrote in 1963. "We all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's future, and we are all mortal." May we find the strength and wisdom to sing together in harmony.

See also, BYM Faith & Practice, Section **20. How do we live our faith in care of the Earth?** (2025 Edition, Page 50)