Annual Report to Baltimore Yearly Meeting

Unity with Nature Committee

2025

The Unity with Nature Committee has had a busy year. We meet online on the second Monday of each month, and feel refreshed by our time together. Several members have resigned this year because of health concerns or time pressure, and, like many other committees of BYM, we are actively looking for more volunteers to fill the empty spaces on our Committee roster.

We are continuing our “environmental injustice” initiative, aimed at identifying situations in the Baltimore Yearly Meeting area where public policy decisions have imposed undue environmental burdens on poor and minority communities. Landfills, power plants, pipelines and polluting industries, for example, are often sited in such communities, and these communities are less likely to be defended against flooding, heat build-up and other adverse impacts of climate change. At annual session in 2024, we began compiling a map showing where problems of this sort exist in our Yearly Meeting area. Our ultimate goal is to engage local meetings in seeking to address them wherever they are found.

We are also continuing our “One Hand in the Soil” project, which offers formers and horticulturalists in BYM a chance to meet online once a month for informal conversation. The discussions have been lively and informative, as participants share their questions, suggestions and concerns. Anyone with an interest in farming is invited to participate.

We reserved time in a meeting last fall to hear a report from the Right Relationship with Animals Working Group, which is under our care. We intend to hold such conversations at least once a year in order to maintain a good working relationship. The Working Group encourages Friends to consider the implications of their food choices, and is open to anyone willing to explore this concern.

We were actively involved in reviewing the draft *Faith and Practice* section on “Care for the Earth” which was circulated for comment. We feel strongly that humankind needs to understand that we are members of creation, not its masters, and that this should be reflected in the Baltimore Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*. We encouraged Friends involved in environmental concerns to share this perspective with their local meetings.

We have also been strengthening our relationship with Quaker Earthcare Witness, which is undergoing an exciting process of transformation that will make it a vital, spirit-led center for Quaker action and advocacy around environmental issues. At our monthly committee meetings, we have received regular updates from Barb Adams (Richmond), the BYM representative to QEW’s national steering committee. We are actively promoting QEW’s Quaker Earth Action Map project, that tracks what Friends meetings around the world are doing in the area of environmental concerns. We offered a presentation at the BYM Peace and Social Concerns Networking Day and will be finding ways to reach out to all local meetings.

In 2024 we arranged a tour of the farming program ar the Friends Meeting School during annual session, and plan to do so again in 2025. We are grateful to have the FMS farmer as a member of our committee, and would love to recruit additional members who are involved in school farming programs. We also are grateful for our close connection to Friends Wilderness Center and the Rolling Ridge Conservancy, which are wonderful resources for BYM Friends.

This past fall and winter we communicated with all the local meetings in Baltimore Yearly Meeting to ask if they have a committee or working group addressing environmental concerns. We have compiled a list of local meeting contacts who can let us know what is happening at the local level, and share information about what Unity with Nature is doing. Please let us know if you would like to get involved!

Deborah Haines and Carl Benson, Co-Clerks