

NEYM Prophetic Climate Action Working Group Epistle from the August 2018 Encampment

Members of the Prophetic Climate Action Working Group (PCAWG), along with other kindred spirits, gathered for an “Earthcare Encampment” at Sun Moon Farm in Rindge, N.H., in August 2018. We have been called by God as a faith community to respond to the global climate crisis and other enormous challenges facing our world today.

During our weekend retreat, we used role-playing, personal stories, and inspiring accounts of earlier nonviolent actions to help us focus on our main task of deepening our understanding of and commitment to prophetic witness. Moving into worship-sharing, we laid ourselves open to hearing where the Spirit wants us to go next. We reflected on how we as individuals and as a community can discipline and reform our lives to adequately respond to the current climate reality. Some of us expressed disappointment or dissatisfaction with our group’s use of time for continuing discussion of matters on which we have basic unity when there are worsening conditions that call for our immediate, committed action.

We looked to the example of prophets and prophetic communities that have stood for Truth in other times, especially the example of Friends who during the middle of the 17th century waged what they called a “Lamb’s War” to raise up God’s kingdom on Earth. (However, some among us did not find that this particular dated war imagery spoke to their condition.)

In waging our Lamb’s War we too are seeking to be open, welcoming, and nonjudgmental, willing to trust in the still, small Voice and willing to be weak and foolish in the eyes of the world if that is necessary to be witnesses for spiritual power. We are exploring nonviolent alternatives that undermine and discredit the powers and principalities of the world. We are praying for spiritual guidance so that our outward actions can be signs of an inward change and the emerging Kingdom.

While at Sun Moon Farm we also strengthened our connection to Earth and its commonwealth of life by engaging in manual farm labor to pay for part of our food and housing. It was joyful and inspiring to take part in many activities of an intentional farming community that seeks to operate on an alternative economic model that emphasizes caring for people and the land.

Our public direct actions over the past year have shed light on ways that we need to do more inner work, and this weekend it seemed clearer that we are being taught by the Inward Light. We are being prepared to understand more clearly how our Quaker tradition can inform our vision of a new Creation, not merely a reform of present systems. We also are trying to follow a Spirit-based model of activism based on small worship-sharing groups or faithfulness circles, which may be distinguished from secular affinity groups by a prayerful discernment process and a search for spiritual unity rather than consensus.

We acknowledge our total dependence on God for guidance to proclaim Truth and for strength to bear the suffering that may result from putting our bodies on the line. We look for fruits of the spirit in our interactions and our presence in the world — love, forbearance, patience, gentleness, and meekness — to discern whether our group is on more of a spiritual

than a secular path. We also acknowledge our direct and indirect support for the principalities of the world and their dominant life-denying materialistic culture through our own consumerist habits.

Our first motion is Love — love for Earth and all its inhabitants, love for the poor who will suffer most from climate change though they have contributed the least to it, and love for our children and grandchildren, who face the threat of a terrifyingly altered home planet

We do not know yet how to respond to these challenges, but we are seeking to turn our lives over to God's guidance. We seek patience to wait for spiritual leading rather than acting out of a sense of urgency or our own intellectual notions of what may be effective or strategic. We seek to speak from spiritual authority rather than eloquent words or arguments.

The truth of God's longing for humans to live in harmony with each other and with Creation stands in sharp contrast to the values and assumptions of the world. We seek to make our lives patterns of the way all humans can be good stewards of Earth. We acknowledge our own struggles in letting go of the comfortable ways we have been accustomed to because of our own privilege and our dependence on unsustainable use of Earth's resources.

We recognize the seriousness of what we are facing. We are struggling against hatred, greed, deceit, fear — an age-old pattern of separation from Love and Truth, not individual bad actors but deeply entrenched systems that destroy community and life. We are offering holy resistance to Empire by generally refusing to continue with business as usual. We are listening for God's leading for what specific acts of non-participation and visible witness to carry forth.

The challenge is daunting and the risks are enormous. It often feels like anything we can do in grappling with climate catastrophe is too little and too late. And yet we live in possibility. We undertake this journey in hope and faith in the living God at the heart of all.

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