

2002 MINUTE ON SUSTAINABILITY

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends believe that the web of life, and each being within it, are expressions of the Spirit. We further believe that all our actions resonate throughout the symphony of Creation, flowing through space and time. We affirm the inherent worth of the natural world and all its beings, beyond their economic value for humans.

We recognize that the Earth community is in a crisis that is increasingly visible. We witness the decline of world resources, and especially biological diversity. With great concern, we witness an increase of toxic contaminants in our soil, air, and water. This exploitation is not in accord with good stewardship, which calls for us to care for, protect, and preserve the Earth.

As we search for the roots of these problems, we keep coming back to ourselves. We see industrial production spiraling out of control and personal consumption increasing at an intolerable rate. These are not in accord with our testimony of simplicity.

The disparity in right sharing continues to grow. We know that the poor of the world bear the greater hurt. Toxins find their way far more often into the lives of the poor. As increasing production and consumption amplify the impact of continuing population growth, the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. This is not in accord with our testimony of equality.

We are therefore called to walk more gently on this Earth. The right sharing of the world's remaining resources requires that we in "overdeveloped" nations reduce our present levels of consumption and pollution, so people in non-industrial nations may live better, and so ecological systems may heal. Living more simply can be a source of enrichment for ourselves as well, as it opens us to more direct and grateful contact with the mysteries of life and therefore with the Spirit.

But our individual efforts toward simplicity are not enough. For deep changes to occur in our corporations and governments, we must also speak and act as a religious community. We especially want to stop blind expansion, beginning in our own neighborhoods and home region. We must instead support ecologically sustainable activity, that which will allow future generations to flourish. The route to sustainability is not clear. Historically, we have misjudged the results of our actions. But for any activity to be sustainable it must, at the very least, withdraw renewable resources no faster than their natural sources are replenishing themselves. It must also replace the use of non-renewable resources with renewable alternatives, and release pollutants no faster than they are being recycled by nature.

As a first step we minute our commitment to live more sustainably. We will speak and act both as individuals, and as a religious community, for the cause of sustainability. We will encourage and join with other spiritual and social groups in similar action. We will strive for deep structural changes in our communities, corporations, and governments. We affirm all beings and elements, beyond humans alone, as unique embodiments of the Creator, the Ground of all Being, who inspires us and enables us to change our lives.

We take these first steps toward speaking truth to power, even when it is to ourselves. We will seek further leadings as the light guides the way. We will strive for sustainable lives in order that all living beings, as well as those yet to be born, might flourish.

Approved August 2, 2002