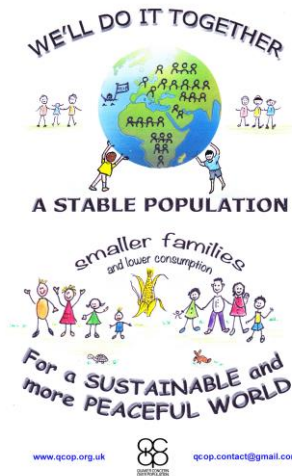


# QUAKER CONCERN OVER POPULATION

## NEWSLETTER 11 AUTUNN 2022

### Winning Poster



We are pleased to announce the winning entry in our art competition was by Maria Grace. Two copies her poster have been posted to each UK member in the hope that they can display them at their meeting house or share with other meetings in their Area Meeting. To obtain further copies contact QCOF on [qcop.contact@gmail.com](mailto:qcop.contact@gmail.com)

### 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2022

Sharp-eyed visitors to our website (currently being revised) may notice an imminent increment in the most significant digit of the world population counter. 15<sup>th</sup> November is the day the estimated world population is expected to exceed 8 billion for the first time in history. Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read about the film “8 Billion Angels” which we recently showed.

I wish to share my perspective on this watershed number for humanity. Personally I think

there is cause for celebration. We have gone forth and multiplied, overcome many problems, cured numerous diseases, fed many more people than we once thought possible and lifted many people out of poverty. But our success as a species comes at a cost: our success has led us to a crisis. The film's makers spell this out on their website [EarthOvershoot.org](http://EarthOvershoot.org) where you can browse the statistics relating to the population of every country in the world. QCOP sometimes hears responses to our concern like "But world population is falling," or "In country X, the population is falling". The website gives a simplified window of a very complex situation. Yes, in some countries the population is relatively static or falling slightly, but the world picture is clear: despite a slowing rate of growth, the population is still rising. Even if it were static with a mean population growth exactly at replacement level, we would still be in trouble. Climate

change is the product of consumption and population, and 8 billion people cannot live the kind of lifestyle to which we are accustomed in the Global North. We are slowly trying to change our consumption, but not doing a good job of it. In light of this failure, it is imperative that we also look critically at population if we are to survive climate crisis as a species. 8 billion people is too many people to live sustain-ably on this planet without big changes to our comfort and expectation. In time maybe, we could support that many people, but we would have to live very frugally to do so.

For me this begs the question: "How will you live?" In our "Advices and Queries" we are told that "a simple lifestyle, freely chosen, is a source of strength." For me, like many people my age and younger, I am questioning if I should limit the number of children I have, or even opt out altogether. My greatest responsibility is to

God and the world. I may not have grand-children to justify my response to the climate crisis, but I feel I must still ask myself “what does love require?” And the answer I keep returning to is that given the depth of the crisis with all the political inaction, I can best serve future generations by opting out of my part in their propagation. Quakers are meant to take principled stands, and this might be the correct one for this age, at least for me. Someone has to.  
*Jason Evans, Brighton Meeting*

## **Breeding Grounds**

Since the preview of the play to a small audience on 8<sup>th</sup> June, it has toured to Stroud, Leeds, Gloucester, Barnstaple, New Earswick, near York, Lancaster, Bewdley, Friends House Euston, Kingston, Alresford and Guildford with great success. Next are Kendal and Kirkby Stephen - and more next year. For a performance near you, email Fran at [fworpe@btinternet.com](mailto:fworpe@btinternet.com).

Here are some of the comments received:

*“A very funny, interesting and thought provoking play. Let's hope that the future of our planet survives the onslaught. If everyone plays their part, there is hope”*

*“Such a complex issue, the future of our planet. Cannot boil it down to a limited number of ‘causes’ and ‘solutions’, so your play prompted us to think deeper and further about our own”*

*“A bringing together of the strands of areas of concern. It also delivered a jolt – posing the question: Am I doing enough? Have I become complacent?”*

*“We need to be patterns and examples, not authoritarians and neo-colonialist bullies”*

*“thoroughly enjoyed your and David's performances. A well written, relevant and topical piece that is conversationally*

*generative and thought-provoking. Lifting the rocks of life to expose emotive issues that need to be discussed. Bravo!"*

*"The play brought out the emotional element of the issues in our lives as we try to live sustainably, and the changes we need to make in family size, air miles, dealing with rubbish, pollution etc."*

See John Lampen's review in 'The Friend', 1<sup>st</sup> July (titled 'Difficult Conversations').

**Coercion is rife in the world of population. This can't be denied.**

Let me give some examples.

Nearly 50% of women cannot choose when to have sex, or whether they can use contraception or access services like abortion (safe or unsafe). In spite of over 70% of Americans supporting availability of abortion, the

Supreme Court has overruled Roe v Wade, the judgement that established the right to abortion. Some of the judges who made this decision have stated that they seek to make same sex marriages illegal, and possibly also contraception. Some right-wing politicians in Britain have expressed admiration for this.

Other countries are doing likewise, particularly Poland. In Malta, abortion is illegal under any circumstances. Some countries are trying to increase fertility by financial means, for economic reasons.

Some countries have cultures that remove the right of women to make decisions about their fertility. MSI Reproductive Services has many stories of women asking for contraceptives that cannot be detected by their men, and of women having sub-cutaneous implants being cut out by their menfolk. In such places, brutality to women is commonplace. Poverty often

dictates that girls are married as early as ten years old, some becoming pregnant before their bodies are able to properly sustain them.

Others are ruled by religious dogma. In the early days of the WHO, the Vatican, being a member state, tried to destroy the organisation because it recognised contraception as a human need. Catholics in the developed world largely reject this attitude of the Church, but in less developed countries, such as the Philippines, the church has a grip on the government, and can threaten excommunication.

In the USA extreme right-wing Protestants are as bad, and so are some, but not all, Muslim states, and doubtless there are other religion inspired examples. The Pope's gently expressed view that being childless is selfish, could be described as moral blackmail. It is certainly coercive.

*Roger Plenty – Nailsworth Meeting*

## QCOP Members' Evening - Eight Billion Angels

# The Guardian

**'It's a massive injustice':  
inside a film on the dangers  
of overpopulation**

*"Though shrinking population growth is important, so is the manner of getting to the aforementioned goal, Spahr maintains. Doing so ethically, he reasons, will result in a much brighter future for all."*

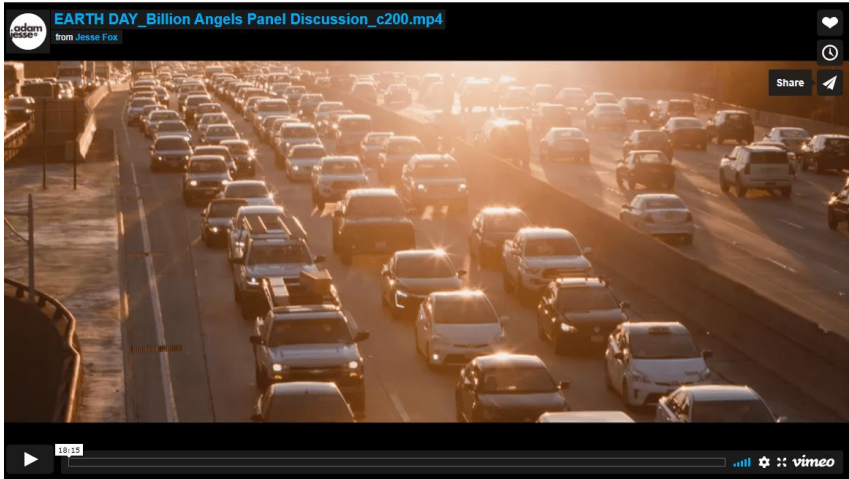
QCOP entered new territory for our September Members' Evening when we showed a full-length American film which had been on general release in 2021.

Rotten Tomatoes reviewed the film:

*8 Billion Angels explores the birth of mankind and its relentless growth and pursuit to harness, exploit, and ultimately dominate Mother*

*Earth. The film examines the evidence pointing towards a controversial and often overlooked question: are there too many people on Planet Earth?*

*And consequently, are we and all Earth's creatures destined for extinction, or do we have the will to turn the tide?*



The film examined the problems, challenges and suffering brought about by a population of eight billion, for the people of the world and for the planet itself. It is thought that on current trends this number will be reached by the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 - **It was 4 billion when I was born almost 80 years ago!!** We were joined by the film's producer, Terry

Spahr, who arranged the screening online from the USA. He is an expert on sustainability and the links between consumption and population as the primary drivers of environmental destruction. Over 50 Friends joined us and afterwards shared their questions and thoughts with Terry. The film's message fits in with a major

concern of QCOP about the suffering around the world of people, often the poorest, who have to struggle to cope with the ever-rising population.

*David Tinsley, Settle Meeting*

## **Report on Meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at The Mount School in York**

There were three presentations on the causes and consequences of resource scarcity on the well-being of our environment. The first presentation was by Paul Rogers, Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. He set out the relationships between the drivers of resource scarcity which range from climate change, gross inequalities in resources and conflicts between nations. Growing populations increase the demand for all resources aggravating the problems.

Another speaker, Digby Swift had considerable experience of working in poorer parts of the world on development projects. A recurring element in his presentation was the challenge of populations outgrowing the available resources. New infrastructure such as schools and hospitals is built at rates that is outpaced in many countries by the number of people to be served. Effective family planning must be part of any development programme. In emergencies when many people have to move to places of safety, priority is given to food, water, sanitation and shelter with contraception either neglected or supplied too late to avoid an increase in the birth rate at a time when those affected are ill equipped to manage.

I gave an account of QCOP's work to raise the profile of population issues. There is a need for Quakers to take

account of population when considering sustainability. It is a global issue with the high carbon footprint of individuals born into high income countries and the poverty affecting the lives of so many born in poorer counties. Ignoring population issues does no one any favours, so the question for Quakers in the UK is “what are we doing about it?” The session ended with a lively and generally constructive discussion of the issues.

*Martin Schweiger*

### **Support a charity**

*Individuals can help by supporting bodies working in family planning. Our nominated charity is CHASE Africa (See our spring news-letter). Please donate generously to help them carry on their work. CHASE via BACs Payment:  
Account Name: CHASE Africa  
Sort Code: 40-21-19  
Account No: 31623834  
Or via their website  
[www.chaseafrica.org.uk/donate/](http://www.chaseafrica.org.uk/donate/)*

### **Difficult Questions Over Population.**

This booklet is still available priced for £3.50 (£5 incl UK postage). Available from [jmrr57@outlook.com](mailto:jmrr57@outlook.com).

### **2023 Events Diary**

We are still planning our events for 2023 and will let members know shortly.

### **Our Newsletter**

The opinions in this newsletter are the views of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or QCOP. Editor: [jmrr57@outlook.com](mailto:jmrr57@outlook.com).

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