

Changing the world, one stitch at a time

Alison Maitland and **Linda Murgatroyd** of The Loving Earth Project explain



Cornfields "... these fields buzz with rich life and colour...I will do what I can to support more sustainable agriculture"
See the Loving Earth website to view a gallery of all panels, with a description and pledge written by the maker of each.

(lovingearth-project.uk)

How can we help people to move from powerlessness to purpose in the face of climate change? The Loving Earth Project addresses the anxiety and helplessness that many people experience by inviting them to focus on just one precious thing that is threatened by climate

breakdown and to explore what they can do in response. Using creative and reflective or prayerful activities helps people engage more deeply with the challenges and can empower them to take action. Participants of all ages and skill levels can make a textile panel (30x30cm) in any style



Chocolate and chimpanzees: "the destruction of rainforest for cocoa growing feeds the chocolate habits of millions of people around the world."
(lovingearth-project.uk)

to join a travelling and online exhibition that is inspiring people to live more sustainably. People of various faiths and none, from across Britain and overseas, have become involved in this Quaker-led craft project over the past two years.

Over 200 panels have so far been created. These depict a rich diversity of personal connections and concerns, with striking depictions of polar bears, bees, ocean life, trees and landscapes, as well as toxic air, flooding, wildfires and plastic waste. Each image is accompanied by a short text explaining their choice and an action they are taking. One text reads simply: "I have decided to give up red meat. I understand that forest land is being destroyed in order to graze cattle for beef. It's a small step but at least I can do my bit." Other people are re-wilding their garden, changing their buying or travel habits, campaigning for policy changes, joining conservation projects or just starting by finding out more. This is helping many people to shift from being worried, but passive, to becoming part of the solution. Love is at the root of anger, fear and sadness about climate breakdown. It can empower us if we engage with it creatively.

Our initial impetus was to engage people who have continued with "business as usual" while becoming increasingly anxious about climate change. The project creates spaces to explore uncomfortable truths about the climate crisis, and what love might require, whatever our starting point. It's also fun and a way to share positive initiatives, and why people have taken them.

After this first step, some contributors have felt confident enough to take further action. One woman, concerned about cars parked with their engines running at a local beach in Ayrshire, created hundreds of cards saying "My Air, Your Air, Ayr's Air" and handed them to drivers. They smiled, got the point and turned off their engines.

Groups of panels are already on display and the organisers hope the panels can be exhibited in events surrounding the COP26 United Nations climate change talks in Glasgow in November, and elsewhere.

Everyone is welcome to participate in the project and to send their textile squares to join the collection. People can also respond to the project's questions (see box above) using words or images. More information, a photo gallery of panels, and resources for panel-makers are available at lovingearth-project.uk. Photos of some of the panels can be seen throughout this issue and on the front cover. ■



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Linda Murgatroyd is clerk of the Quaker Arts Network. She edited *Ways to Kiss the Earth: Quaker artists explore sustainability* (available from <http://quakerarts.net/resources/>) and is a member of Wandsworth Quaker meeting.

The Loving Earth Project asks participants to creatively explore the following:

Consider a place, a person or another thing that you love:

How will climate change or environmental breakdown affect them?

What action is needed to reduce the risk of harm to them?

How can you help to make this happen?