

Joyce Johnson Rouse:

Crooning for the Earth in Nashville and Beyond

By Linda Bryant

Joyce Johnson Rouse is not only a familiar face at the Nashville Friends Meeting, she's a familiar voice.

A singer-songwriter based in a town where tunesmiths practically flow through the water pipes,

Year after year, she's been a melodic spark for the Nashville Friends Meeting. The strongest example of this can be seen during December when she leads caroling in the community and is the main force behind popular Christmas Eve services.

Rouse changed the way she was doing music a decade ago

Songs can be powerful tools to nurture and encourage both action and a depth of understanding about important ideas.

Rouse is distinctive not only because she's a practicing Quaker, but because she uses her music to raise awareness about the ecology and the environment.

Rouse's musical career is a ministry to the earth, not just in Nashville, but also all over the globe.

Still, when she's not touring in the United States or Europe, Rouse is often in front of the old piano at Nashville's Meeting House leading Friends in pre-meeting hymns, sing-a-longs and chants.

after receiving leadings that inspired her to use her music to educate people about the environment.

She began performing under the name of **Earth Mama**, and even trademarked the name as a performing artist.

Of course, she pens songs with varying themes, but they almost always have a central message that all things are connected, that if we find that still small voice of God inside our actions will be tipped towards justice, love, reconciliation and right action.

Edmund Davis, who attends Nashville Friends Meeting, likens Rouse to a creature of the sea.

"She possesses a purity of heart and vision that comes through in the songs," Davis said.

"Her joy reminds me of a dolphin at play. Singing seems to come as easy to her as squeals of delight come to a dolphin."

Quaker practice, with its devotion to silence and opening as a quiet channel for messages that are meant for others, is a powerful songwriting tool, Rouse believes.

"I'm just an instrument through which the music plays," she says. "The creative spirit

moves me to draw from everything I hear and see."

More and more, Rouse's sweet, strong voice can be heard beyond the small Nashville Friends Meeting, which on a peak Sunday is attended by about fifty worshippers.

With over eighty recordings bearing her writer credits, she has had songs recorded by Maureen McGovern, Marie Osmond, Jennifer McCarter and the McCarter Sisters, Wild Rose, Jana Stanfield, Lindy Gravelle and others.

Her songs have been featured in movies and on syndicated environmental and activist radio programs around the world, and used extensively in educational venues and by international environmental and peace organizations such as the Food