

Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas Report to Annual Sessions 2014

Let the Living Water Flow!

The Friends World Committee is the association of Quaker yearly meetings across all the branches of Friends, around the world. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is affiliated through the Section of the Americas, which stretches from Alaska to Bolivia. PYM names Representatives to the Section, and the Section offices are located at Friends Center in Philadelphia.

Living Water Consultations

“Let the Living Water Flow!” was the theme for our recent series of regional conferences offering training for Representatives and other interested Friends in skills needed for thriving Quaker meetings in the 21st century. Philadelphia YM Friends attended three out of the four conferences, in California, Bolivia, North Carolina, and El Salvador. Over 400 Friends from over 40 yearly meetings participated. One participant commented on the “unanticipated ways people can find their way to unity with each other across seemingly irreconcilable differences in theology and 'conviction'. In some ways we accomplished this in spite of ourselves. This is wonderfully encouraging.” The new Living Water Study Book in English and Spanish is available online as a free download. More details are at fwccamericas.org/events/2014-Consultations.shtml.

All four conferences offered workshops for Friends to develop our intercultural communication skills for intra-Quaker dialogue and our everyday lives, and for supporting Quaker leadership in the 21st century. The two North American workshops on *Quaker Leadership for the 21st Century* were led by students in the Quaker leadership programs at Guilford College and George Fox University.

The workshops on *Conflict Transformation* were led by members of the New York Yearly Meeting Committee on Conflict Transformation. Given that many monthly meetings are troubled by tensions among members, these workshops explored commonly-arising incidents and shared insights into how they can be acknowledged, how they can be addressed, and how the Meeting can use conflict as an opportunity for advancement and transformation.

The workshops on *Intercultural Communications* explored the challenge of communicating when each party brings a different background to the conversation. They considered the significance of the Incarnation, conflict mediation tools, and the art

of listening across social, ethnic or linguistic boundaries. They built practical skills for communication grounded in self-awareness – a manner of listening and speaking that nourishes that of God in all of us.

Service, locally and globally, was another workshop topic. The 2012 Kabarak Call for Peace and Eco-Justice from the 6th World Conference of Friends reminds us that "we must become careful stewards of all life...a light in the darkness of greed and destruction...we are called to see what Love can do – for the earth and all peoples." In North Carolina, Friends reviewed the Kabarak Call and then learned about the efforts of the Friends Emergency Material Assistance Program (FEMAP) and how it helps in emergencies and issues relating to long term deprivation. They assembled hygiene, infant care and school supply kits while exploring how to join with North Carolina Friends Disaster Service or how to replicate FEMAP at home. In California, participants learned about Sacramento Friends Church's ministry of foot washing with the homeless – why and how it is done, and how it is received – and practiced foot washing with one another. They reflected on attitudes about giving and receiving such a personal service, a reminder of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Tyla Heaton (Co-pastor, Sacramento Friends Community Church) and Kylin Navarro (Co-clerk, Pacific YM Young Adult Friends and former FWCC Quaker Youth Pilgrim), with support from Alyssa Nelson (Pacific YM Youth Program Coordinator), led this exploration of the do's and don'ts of service, the servant-leadership approach, and local-global connections through the Kabarak Call.

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage

As PYM meets for Annual Sessions, a Young Friend from Philadelphia is one of the 26 teens from the US, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, and Hungary, who are traveling through Peru and Bolivia in the traditional month-long spiritual and historical exploration. Five years ago, Young Adult Friends in Bolivia and Peru took the initiative and invited the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (QYP) to come to South America for the first time. More than ever before, the QYP planning committee includes older and younger Friends, Friends United Meeting, Friends General Conference, and Evangelical Friends from North and South America. At the same time, this has required an enormous investment of time and money. The committee has been meeting by Skype almost every other week for the last year, working bilingually in Spanish and English. Taking such a diverse group of Pilgrims and Leaders to the Andes, well beyond the traditional boundaries of the Pilgrimage, is a vivid example of how the Friends World Committee brings together the whole world of Friends, especially young people.

Wider Quaker Fellowship/Voices of Friends

The website and pamphlet series are both a service to seekers and a resource for individual reading and group discussions for Friends meetings. www.voicesoffriends.org also offers a comprehensive directory of Quaker meetings and churches in North America for seekers and traveling Friends.

Staff Changes

Perhaps the most visible change in the Section of the Americas was the resignation of Louise Salinas, Associate Secretary, after 12 years of dedicated service. We miss her and wish her well in her new job and her continued service to Fallsington Meeting and Philadelphia YM. As a volunteer, she is still Assistant Clerk of the International Planning Committee for the 2016 FWCC International Representatives Meeting in Arequipa, Peru.

Future Planning

As part of a strategic planning process, the Section of the Americas staff and volunteers are asking, "What does the Religious Society of Friends need from a world committee?" The PYM committee has begun asking themselves this important question and more input is welcome. New program directions will be presented this fall for approval by the Section-wide meeting of Representatives in March 2015 near Mexico City. All Friends are welcome to attend.

More information on all these programs is available at www.fwccamericas.org.

Questions about this report should be directed to:

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