

Advance Report

FWCC Committee
Summer Sessions 2016

“The purpose of the **Friends World Committee for Consultation** is to encourage fellowship among all the branches of the Religious Society of Friends.”

A FWCC world plenary is a joyful family reunion of the Religious Society of Friends. We come together and share our different ways of worship, our leadings, our concerns, our lives, and our spirit. We deepen our own faith by coming to understand it as one bough in the branching faith of Quakerism. What can you expect from a world-wide FWCC gathering?

Expect to be transformed. Expect to be challenged. Expect to be inspired.

Also: expect to be frustrated, dismayed, anguished, filled with joy, fulfilled with friendship, content in the gathered Spirit, questioning others, listening to others, questioning yourself, and listening to the inner light. While listening to the beliefs and values of others, expect to simultaneously question and strengthen your own beliefs. Unexpectedly, experience that of your inner God well up, flow as living water and become tears.

This year, New York Yearly Meeting sent four official representatives to the 2016 World Plenary Meeting (formerly known as the *FWCC Triennial*). Other NYYM members attended in the open positions. There were 320 Friends representing 77 yearly meetings from 37 countries. The spoken messages and other communication were translated into Spanish, French and English. The site of the gathering was Pisac, Peru, in the sacred valley of the Incas high in the Andes mountains. Between the people, the place and the Spirit that covered the gathering, we felt the transformation and awe in each of us.

Several of the NYYM representatives felt their personal leadings defined and strengthened by the experience. Two of the formal “consultations” that happened there spoke most strongly to our representatives. The Consultation on Sustaining Life on Earth was facilitated by members of the Quaker United Nations Office. One NYYM Friend wrote:

In gathering with people who shared my deepest hopes for the health of the planet, I found my calling to work for the environment strengthened. ... An openness to the possibility of radical change inspired me to believe that we can and will take meaningful action.

We must take action that moves us out of our comfort zones. This kind of action is challenging but realigns us spiritually. The sense of doing what is right brings energy and renewal. I saw this kind of action modeled over and over again in the people who met in Peru. In sharing our visions and experiences we are made stronger and can work together across the globe to support our beautiful planet.

The minute from the consultation calls on every yearly meeting to take two concrete actions on sustainability within the next 12 months. I look forward to supporting NYYM in taking up the call.

The consultation on developing leadership and ministry focused on three areas that also correlate to the NYYM priorities:

- consideration of a World Gathering of Young Friends.
- communication among Young Friends worldwide.
- Alternatives to the t the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage, focused on young adults.

NYYM sent a balanced mix of experienced representatives, Friend under 35, and first time participants. We will continue to seek young adults who are interested in experiencing fellowship with other types of Quakers and offer them the opportunity to share fellowship and Spirit through the FWCC activities. We find that it deepens our own spiritual experience and awareness. Explaining our beliefs and theologies to Friends of other theological backgrounds, cultures, and languages, and the listening openly to them in return, only helps us understand ourselves better.

These thoughts are from the epistle of the 2016 World Plenary Meeting:

As Quakers our faith is inseparable from our concern to care for all life on earth. We are reminded of the Kabarak call for Peace and Eco-Justice and the need to redouble our efforts now. We call on Friends everywhere to take practical actions to sustain life on Earth. ...

We learn from each other's ways of connecting with God; each offering of worship held within it the opportunity for the Spirit to move and speak and sing. Sharing worship in this way enables us to recognise that we must both listen to, and speak to God.

The presence of so many young adult Friends among us has been a blessing. We heard their moving testimony and experienced their inspirational leadership. As we go back to our churches and meetings we must allow this ministry and leadership to flourish.

We are different. We came together as a diverse collection of Friends. We were challenged by our differences. This challenge is not always comfortable but it is one we welcome.

We are one. We are one in the spirit of God which does not wash away or hide our differences, but allows us to celebrate them and enables us to move beyond the spiritual boundaries that may separate us. We are able to do this by coming together in worship where, while its form may be unfamiliar, God was present throughout. Through listening deeply and tenderly to each other and to God we reached a place where we can hear and sense where the words come from even when we may not understand the tongue they are spoken in.

We are Friends. In making the choice to come together and be willing to share deeply, pray boldly, and listen lovingly together, we seek to move beyond our differences, see beyond our labels and find ways to connect with each other.

A full report from the World Plenary will be presented to the NYYM at the 2016 summer sessions.

The next meeting of the Friends World Committee for Consultation- Section of the Americas will be March 23-26, 2017, near Pittsburgh PA.

Members of the FWCC committee are available to speak to monthly and regional meetings about our experiences and opportunities through FWCC. The FWCC committee normally meets at Fall, Spring and summer sessions. Everyone is invited.