

FWCC report to SAYMA - 2016

The Friends' World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) held a world plenary meeting in Pisac, Peru in late January. Three hundred and twenty eight Friends from thirty eight countries met for the ten-day event. Those at the gathering helped conduct the business of FWCC, participated in consultations and shared daily silent worship, programmed worship, and meals. The event organizers sought to include equal representation from every Yearly Meeting around the world and they went to great effort to provide translation between English, Spanish and French.

Several meaningful workshops were available, such as those on AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project), hands-on art, Biblically-inspired affordable housing initiatives, Godly play, and the Convergent Friends Movement. Friends were also able to go deeper in personal sharing by participating in a home group that met several times throughout the course of the gathering.

Significant decisions were made at the meetings for worship with attention to business. Approval was made for FWCC to hold future world plenary meetings no longer than every ten years, with expressed intent on the next one being held around seven years from now. This is a change from the previous decision to hold meetings every four years. The decision to lengthen the interval between gatherings is an attempt to reduce the carbon footprint from travel and free up the FWCC Central Executive Committee from the extensive time needed for event planning to focus on other work. Other topics were discussed as well.

The FWCC world business meetings heard from the four consultations held at the gathering. A World Young Adult Friends Committee was formed out of the leadings of a consultation on youth and a video was presented that encapsulated discussions made in the consultation on living ministry. The consultation on the environment culminated in the approval at business meeting of a minute that outlines several actions on the environment to which the FWCC Central Executive Committee commits itself, as well as several actions that FWCC asks of Yearly Meetings. FWCC urges SAYMA to follow the action points enumerated in that document. The Section of the Americas held several business meetings at the event as well.

The three SAYMA representatives in attendance at the gathering reflected on their experiences at the gathering. All agree that it was an invaluable experience to meet and and get to know other Friends from around the world, and to contribute to a global Quaker worship and dialogue. Indeed, a ten-day conference gave plenty of opportunities to share personal stories with one another. All enjoyed the mountainous setting in Pisac as well. The representatives shared concerns with one another about the leadership of the FWCC organization, particularly noting in meetings for worship with attention to business the palpable tension that seemed to exist in between the clerking table and those on the floor.

These tensions were seen in discussions during meetings for worship with attention to business and in private discussions throughout the week. Some sensed that there should have been proportionally more emphasis placed on the leadings of Friends during the gathering. Most of the time spent in business meetings was directed toward review of updates to the constitution-- a document required by British law--and very little time given to what came out of the four consultations. It was also widely noted that with more emphasis placed on the consultations, the consultations could have been facilitated with more effective attention placed on outcomes. These observations were made with the loving desire for FWCC to grow and to reflect Friend's reaction to the changing nature of the world.

Matt Riley enjoyed his time immensely at the gathering, and left with the desire to see FWCC take on more of the external leadings of Friends. He became centrally involved in the drafting of the minute on the environment, and networked with other Friends on this topic. He witnessed FWCC working to encourage involvement from Young Friends and believes that FWCC has room to grow in this area. His favorite part of the gathering was forming close connections with certain Friends from New Zealand, Scandinavia, Great Britain, Kenya and the United States. He also enjoyed seeing familiar faces from section meetings in Mexico City and Indiana.

Michael Galovic engaged in regular conversations with Friends where Plenary themes and Plenary business were discussed. In such meetings, he had the chance to explore his leading on how FWCC can be a repository for much needed interfaith dialogue. Much of the world is deeply divided; we are told there are irreconcilable differences between ethnic, religious and political groups. In this regard FWCC has an advantage of being a place where a wide diversity of religious practice and experience reside--all within the confines of the Quaker tradition. Michael discovered that friends came together around the need for tools to safely hold such dialogue. In other activities, Michael continued his active participation in meetings of the Communications Program Group of the Section of the Americas.

Kelsey McNicholas found great richness in cross theological conversations, the Sacred Valley setting, and the faith of other conference attendees. She particularly carries with her one conversation with a Young Adult pastor from Honduras about grey areas and what injustices in the world mean for our understanding of God. Kelsey served on the facing bench as an elder for two sessions of Meeting For Worship With Attention To Business. She also became an informal eldering presence during during the rich, grounded, and transformational meetings of Young Adult Friends and was asked to continue formerly serving as an elder for a newly formed World YAF Committee. Kelsey spent quite a bit of time representing Quaker Voluntary Service, a Wider Quaker Organization birthed within SAYMA. International Quakers are extremely interested in the program.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt, Michael, and Kelsey
SAYMA Representatives to FWCC
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