



Friends World News

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Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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FWCC

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About the Friends World Committee for Consultation

The purpose of the Friends World Committee for Consultation is to encourage fellowship among all the branches of the Religious Society of Friends. The Quaker community circles the globe, spanning a rich diversity of regional cultures, beliefs and styles of worship. FWCC programs unite Friends around the world through Spirit-led fellowship.

Our work with the Quaker United Nations Offices, both by appointing members to their governing committees and by providing consultative status, offers a means to engage Quakers in world affairs. Our consultation extends to those of other faiths through work with the World Council of Churches and Christian World Communions.

Our Mission

Answering God's call to universal love, FWCC brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world. (Approved 2006)

History

In 1937, after years of concerned work to reconnect a fragmented Quaker world, the Second World Conference of Friends created the FWCC "to act in a consultative capacity to promote better understanding among Friends the world over." Today, Friends from yearly meetings and groups in 75 nations continue this work. Around the world there are four cooperating, autonomous FWCC Sections serving Africa, the Americas, Asia and the West Pacific, and Europe and the Middle East. FWCC's World Office is in London.

FWCC World Office

The world office is based at Friends House in London, England. It serves four main roles:

- Organise world gatherings, including triennial meetings and consultations of Quakers world-wide.
- Support and maintain contact with the work of the four FWCC sections and the Quaker United Nations Offices.
- Coordinate the International Membership programme, which joins isolated Friends and worship groups to the wider Quaker community.
- Promote an understanding of the world-wide character of the Society of Friends, through conferences, staff travel, correspondence and publications, and through ecumenical and interfaith work on behalf of Friends.

Further information about FWCC and its activities can be obtained from the World Office or the Section Offices, whose addresses are on the back cover of Friends World News. Contributions to the work of FWCC are always welcome and can be sent to any of the offices.

Friends World News

Friends World News, the bulletin of FWCC, is published twice yearly. If you wish to receive a personal copy, please contact the World Office (or the Section of the Americas if you live in North America). There is no set subscription fee, but a donation would be welcome. Please send to the World Office anything you would like considered for publication in Friends World News – articles, letters, news, photographs and other illustrations, about the activities and religious witness of Friends. All materials received will be acknowledged although the editor cannot make any commitment to publish. Please say if you wish photographs or other materials to be returned.

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Cover photograph: Jordans Quaker Meeting House, photograph by David Botwinik.

Thank you for your donations to FWCC, past, present and future.

- Together we are building a strong and vital Religious Society of Friends.
- Together we are strengthening the worldwide network of Friends.
- Together we are bringing our Quaker message to the world.

Please give generously to support the world family of Friends.

Please consider FWCC in your will.

For more about FWCC please visit our website:

fwcc.world

Hold to God's Unchanging Hand

We have a simple Quaker faith, and we live in a complicated world.

As we struggle to understand the complications of this past year, encouraged by the season of Advent and the New Year to reflect on our lives, I find myself returning over and over to the comfort of my faith. I am, as ever, very grateful to be a Quaker, willing myself to come ever closer to God.

As millions of human beings are displaced and as too many parts of the world seems to be moving inexorably toward exclusion, our work remains much the same. No matter who holds political office, no matter where the outbreak of violence occurs, Quakers continue to teach peaceful solutions to conflict, to challenge structural inequality, and to promote life-giving choices. On a particularly news-dreary morning, I was at The Hague, Netherlands, and I walked to the beach only to find the waves continued in their rhythmic pattern under the same bright sun. Life goes on, and God remains.

I admire the Quaker dogged determination to press for what we imagine as fair and loving. I gain strength from this obstinate and courageous spirit. I imagine being a Friend during either of the World Wars - and realize we wake up with the same resolve to work for peace and justice.

From where do we get our dogged determination to carry on? Psalm 121 says, 'I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.' He makes my yoke easy, my burden light. The Bible is full of the reminder that God is the bread of life, that all who believe in him are forever changed. We have the opportunity *every single day* to live more fully into this promise.

We know the value of our sacred community. The Eternal Now to which Thomas Kelly speaks, is just that — it is the present moment infused with God and all that is precious and sacred and loving, eternal in the sense of forever, no matter what the world encounters. In this sense, we have a simple faith. A faith that has spoken for 350 years through the winds of change, through the fog of world wars, and through the present uncertainty. Our certainty lies in God.

"Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time. And it makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the helm. And when our little day is done we lie down quietly in peace, for all is well."

— Thomas Kelly,
A Testament of Devotion



FWCC General Secretary Gretchen Castle had an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican in Rome, 12 October 2016.

I take heart from Theresa Thomason singing: *Hold to his hand, God's unchanging hand. Build your hopes on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hand.*

When we find our peace, when we live from the Center, when we walk with God, we have hope and courage for the coming days. Pope Francis said to me, 'Will you pray for me?' I said, 'I will.' I welcome your prayers for FWCC, for Quakers throughout the world, for those who are suffering, and for all of humanity. I will pray for you.

With hope and appreciation,

Gretchen Castle
GENERAL SECRETARY
FWCC WORLD OFFICE

Governance Changes

The World Office has a new Constitution. It was approved at the World Plenary Meeting in Pisac, Peru last January and came into effect on 1 January 2017.

As well as changes to the frequency of Plenary Meetings, which now must be held at least every ten years but preferably once every six to eight years, a slightly revised governance structure has been put in place.

Rather than having separate clerks for the Central Executive Committee (CEC) and World Plenary Meetings, there is now one FWCC Clerk, supported by two Assistant Clerks. The new FWCC Clerk is Simon C. Lamb of Ireland YM. The Assistant Clerks are Elizabeth Cazden (New England YM) and Ramón Gonzalez-Longoria (Cuba YM). The Clerk and Assistant Clerks will work as a team, clerking both the CEC meetings and Plenary Meetings.

There have also been changes to the CEC membership as Friends' terms have come to an end. John Fitzgerald (Ireland YM), Cristela Martinez (El Salvador YM), and Dorothy Selebwa (Kakamega YM) all ended their service on 31 December 2016. New members at large are Myron Guachalla Montano (Bolivia Central YM) and Nalini Titus (Bhopal YM). There will be one further at large appointment from the Africa Section.

The FWCC Nominating Committee will be appointed by Section Executive Committees, two per Section, with the clerk appointed by the CEC. We are grateful for those who served on the Nominating Committee: John Norris clerk (Indiana YM), Emma Condori-Mamani (Bolivia Santidad YM), Elizabeth Duke (Aotearoa/New Zealand YM), Bronwyn Harwood (Britain YM), Henry Mukwanja (East Africa YM North), Mary Goreti Mutsami (Kakamega YM).

Other Friends who have completed their service include Foote Lunde (Ohio Valley and Wilmington YMs) clerk International Finance Committee, Seineke Martin (Australia YM) QUNO-NY, Justis Mudavadi (Nairobi YM) QUNO-Geneva, Oliver Kisaka (Nairobi YM) QUNO-New York, and Chris Lawson, clerk Staff Advisory Group.

We are grateful for the faithful service of all these Friends as well as those who continue to serve.

Building a sustainable future for FWCC

Treasurer's News

This past year has been one of consolidation and refocusing, looking at how we can build on past successes and improve good practice to ensure that FWCC is sustainable at all levels.

We ran a successful World Plenary in Peru in early 2016 with nearly a third of the delegates being Young Adult Friends. We were only just short of our \$100,000 travel fund goal, which enabled Friends from all over the world to be with us, although fewer people came from the more affluent parts of the world than we had expected and last minute costs arose from visa delays. We made an appeal for more funds, but the World Plenary cost us about £45,000 more than planned. While we received generous support from Yearly Meetings, individuals and Trusts, we will need to draw from our reserves for some of this. We are also considering how we organise and budget for future World events to make them both financially and environmentally sustainable.

While we had planned for our accounts in 2015 to roughly be in balance, after the audit our general fund had decreased by £32,000, mainly due to an increase in the amount we owe the Pensions Trust after they had a revaluation. Accounting regulations mean that we had to recognise the full amount of the increase in the 2015 accounts; we will pay it back over 10 years. Our aim for 2017 is to increase our general fund back to its target level.

We are considering ways in which a generous legacy we received at the beginning of 2015 could be used to achieve financial and organisational sustainability for FWCC as a whole. We are also looking at how the Young Adult Friends Fund could support the increased involvement of, and communication between, Young Adult Friends.

We are grateful that the UK and Irish Trusts have continued to provide us with a steady level of grants. Britain Yearly Meeting has agreed to increase its grant to us to take account of the increased pension deficit and changes in our administration. We are also working with them to explore ways that the faith and practice of Friends around the world could be more widely shared. This might include more use of video and other technologies.

While the underlying gap between our income and our expenditure is increasing as less funding is available from the Americas, we are exploring ways in which we can turn this situation around. We asked Michael Wajda, who has extensive experience of successful fundraising amongst Friends, to help the World Office improve income streams around the world.

Michael's advice is also being used by the four sections as we increasingly work together to build a sustainable future. We are planning to increase efficiencies and make further savings in the operation of the World Office, including working more closely with EMES. Indeed, we are increasingly working as one organisation, the World Office and the four sections tackling the challenges we face cooperatively in new and innovative ways, taking advantage of technology and the increased Young Adult Friend contributions to our work.

FWCC's Central Executive Committee and its staff are working hard to build a sustainable organisation, both financially and in the ways we carry out our work. We face times when Quaker values and beliefs are being increasingly tested and we thank you for your continued support as we face our challenges and celebrate our successes.

Alastair Reid

FWCC TREASURER



A strong peace message surrounds the Ramallah Friends Meetinghouse.

Good Ecumenical Partners

by Gretchen Castle, General Secretary, FWCC World Office

Shaking hands with Pope Francis in Rome recently, I told him I was there on behalf of Quakers worldwide. His face lit up with recognition. He clearly knows of us, of our presence and concern for the world and our commitment to building peace.

He asked me to pray for him. Wow! His presence was so strong it made my head buzz. I pray for him every day.

On that one day, after he spoke with our group of General Secretaries from other world Christian offices about ecumenism, he appeared to hundreds in Saint Peter's Square, which he does every week. Consider the thousands of people he meets. Consider the influence he has. Consider how he, as the people's Pope, builds such a strong sense of connectivity and value in the role of the Church.

I shook his hand again two weeks later in Lund Sweden. As an ecumenical partner, FWCC was invited to witness a celebration of the reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. That is the best news I have heard all year, and the experience was one of immense hope for the role of the church. (Cardinal Koch said to me, "Didn't I just see you in Rome recently?")

As your emissary, I bring a Friends' presence to world religious events, and I share with you the importance of our presence.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

— *Romans 12:4-5*

This connectivity – being of one body, belonging to each other – draws each of us into contact with 'all the others'. As Friends we need each other, we need to know we work together for God's purposes in the world. We are best when our piece of work locally contributes to what Friends are doing around the world. We are best when our Quaker sense of living a compassionate and loving life is shared by others around the world. It lifts us and gives us hope. It is the work of FWCC to gather this collective awareness and to engender a deep sense of belonging. God needs our hands and our feet, and we need each other.

There is no time like the present to value how connected we are to the Spirit and to one another.

One might describe FWCC work as doing ecumenical work within our Quaker community as well as doing world level ecumenical and interfaith work.



Representatives of the Christian World Communions Conference of General Secretaries meet with Pope Francis at the Vatican in Rome, 12 October 2016. FWCC General Secretary Gretchen Castle is fourth on the right of Pope Francis (centre). Janet Scott, Britain Yearly Meeting, is second from the left.

It is one thing to feel connected to Friends around the world, it is yet another to feel connected to other Christians in ecumenical unity, and of course, there is potential unity with all people of faith in a delightfully colourful interfaith network.

It is no wonder that I especially like these definitions of ecumenical:

1. worldwide or general in extent, influence, or application
2. of, relating to, or representing the whole of a body of churches
3. promoting or tending toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation

I have the great privilege of representing Friends at the world level in ecumenical work. And I have the privilege of hearing about the volume of work Friends are doing ecumenically at local levels. It is equally profound work.

I meet annually with the Christian World Communions Conference of General Secretaries. About 35 of us gather, most of whom are either General Secretaries of world offices or are appointed by their communion to do ecumenical work. Of the General Secretaries, I am the only woman (a witness to Quaker inclusivity and empowerment of women, something I can usefully articulate in this group). We gather with no agenda and no real notes, other than the commitment to report on our communions, ask questions,

and draw out themes. It is a uniquely safe place where leaders interact and support each other. We come from all over the world and include main stream churches, orthodox, catholic, historic peace churches, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, etc.

In spite of being one of the smallest communions, I delight in the awareness that many of our issues are so much the same: challenges of being a global organization, hosting world conferences, dealing with tightening visa restrictions, growth among evangelicals in the global south, and differing beliefs about homosexuality. As Quakers we are fortunate to be clear about the equal footing of women in the church, and I see the benefit of being smaller with a relatively flat structure. This allows us to consider change in a more organic way without the expectation to reach global agreement on local practices. I consider this a great strength, allowing the winds of God to move around and through us more easily.

What is ecumenical work? Borrowing some of the key points from one of my evangelical colleagues, Thomas Ryan, I offer this:

1. *To pray regularly for the unity of the Church* – to pray is to invite change, change in our own hearts.
2. *To be rooted in a particular Christian tradition and to work for its renewal* – to know the tradition well and present its beliefs coherently, helping the church be faithful to its calling.



Janet Scott, Britain Yearly Meeting, converses with General Secretaries from other world offices at a world ecumenical event in Amersfoort, Netherlands.

3. *To be fascinated with what is different* – peeping out of our provincial perspectives and enlarging ourselves to think globally and to trust differences within our communities.
4. *To be willing to learn and listen* – to engage in dialogue and take time to understand.
5. *To cultivate historical consciousness* – to appreciate the church's journey and place in time, such that the current church is not God, but God at work.
6. *To work with others* – reducing judgement and fear and division.
7. *To admit to the holy unrest of our failure to live consistently with our message* – rather seek to discover what the Spirit is asking of us and do it.
8. *To be open to God's will for the church and for our own tradition within the world context.*
9. *To be alert to the presence of God in the lives of others* – God and the Church do not have a single mission; the Church serves the advancement of the Kingdom but God's activity is not limited to the Church.
10. *To have Biblical patience* – like Christ, we might have to suffer for unity, seeking out healing, understanding, and forgiveness . . . and be open to the mystery. Everyone is in favour of Christian unity. Some are even willing to work for it, but few are willing to suffer for it.

“In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.”

— From the Message of
His Holiness Pope Francis
for the Celebration of the
Fiftieth World Day of Peace,
1 January 2017

On my desk I have a beautifully printed copy of the message from Pope Francis for the celebration of the 50th World Day of Peace. He talks about respect for ‘deepest dignity’ and making active non-violence a way of life. As Friends, we might feel he is speaking our language. In fact, he is speaking the language of the faithful, and unlike many church leaders, he speaks emphatically to all humanity. I am preparing a response, from Friends as your FWCC General Secretary which will appear on the FWCC World Office web site. We can embrace this message, and his encyclical on Climate change, in a way that brings us to a very useful ecumenical connectivity – being of one body.

Sharing the Good News

Section of the Americas

The **FWCC Section of the Americas** has partnered with the producers of *QuakerSpeak* to produce videos with more global themes.

QuakerSpeak is a Quaker YouTube channel which *interviews Friends of all different backgrounds* and asks them the core questions of our faith. *QuakerSpeak* interviews are personal and intimate. They seek to give viewers worldwide an experience that is entertaining, informative, inspiring, challenging, inviting, unifying and collaborative.

So far, seven videos have resulted from this partnership, and they can be found here: tinyurl.com/fwccqs. You might want to view *How Many Quakers Are There in the World?* with Gretchen Castle, FWCC General Secretary of FWCC.

The December *QuakerSpeak* – FWCC partnership video focuses on the work that started with the Kabarak Call and led to our sustainability minute from the 2016 World Plenary in Pisac, Peru.

The Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice was approved on April 24, 2012 at the Sixth World Conference Friends, held at Kabarak University near Nakuru, Kenya. It was the culmination of the FWCC World Consultation on Global Change which was held in 2010 and 2011.

In January 2016, the FWCC World Plenary Meeting approved the Pisac Sustainability Minute proposed by the Consultation on Sustaining Life on Earth. “This FWCC Plenary Meeting also asks all Yearly Meetings to initiate at least two concrete actions on sustainability within the next 12 months. These may build on existing projects of individuals or monthly meetings or they may be new initiatives. We ask that they encourage Young Friends to play key roles. We ask that meetings minute the progress and results, so as to share them with FWCC and Quaker meetings.”

One way **FWCC Section of the Americas** has responded to this minute is by creating a Green Investment Fund, which will invest in companies that are working responsibly towards peace and ecojustice. This new fund seeks contributions from Friends who wish to help ensure the ongoing support of the Section’s work, with assurance that their gift will be invested in a fund that is screened for



Churchill Malimo, Executive Secretary of the Africa Section, speaks at the World Plenary Meeting in Pisac Peru, January 2016.



Secretaries gather around the eternal flame outside the Peace Palace in The Hague.
Left to right: Robin Mohr, Section of the Americas; Marisa Johnson, Europe and Middle East Section;
Gretchen Castle, World Office; Ronis Chapman, Asia-WestPacific Section.

Quaker values *and* is fossil fuel free, with a portion of the portfolio specifically invested in alternative energy and green technology. To make a contribution to this new fund, please visit fwccamericas.org and click on “Donate”.

For links to resources that could help your meeting or church become more sustainable, please visit fwccamericas.org/news and click on “FWCC AND SUSTAINABILITY”. To further share the work your yearly meeting is doing, write to Harry Albright at harrya@friendsworldoffice.org. He will be posting responses on the FWCC World Office web site.

Africa Section

Plans are well underway for the **Africa Section** Triennial in Rwanda, 29 March to 2 April. Many members of the FWCC Central Executive Committee will join African Friends for worship, inspiration, and fellowship. The Committee will hold its annual meeting in Rwanda following the triennial.

The **Africa Section** has hired Cornelius Ambiah to coordinate changes in technology and to enhance the Young Adult Friends network. They plan to hold a Young Adult Friends conference in August.

Asia-West Pacific Section

Asia-West Pacific Section has been energized by its October meeting in Hong Kong, bringing Friends together from its many different countries. Invited guest Michael Wajda

from Philadelphia YM, shared his insights into developing relationships as initial work to strengthen the Section's fundraising capacity.

Michael Wajda has been working with the whole of FWCC to build on our many strengths and to develop more fundraising 'muscle'. We are exploring new collaborations, working together across the 4 Sections and the World Office.

Europe and Middle East Section

During 2016 **Europe and Middle East Section** has been able to support a number of projects around the Section with Small Grants made available through the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. One of these was a conference held by Friends in Toulouse, France, called Déclarons La Paix, which made it possible for a very small group of Friends to reach very widely in its community and bear witness to a foundational Quaker commitment. Earlier in the year, Friends from many countries joined together with ecumenical partners to stage protests outside the Eurosatory Arms Fair outside Paris, France.

The highlight of the year was the all-age gathering in July in Bonn-Venusberg, Germany, which celebrated 30 years of the Young Friends network in Europe and the Middle East.

Friends in Britain and elsewhere in Europe have been struggling with the outcome of the referendum which indicated a wish by a slender majority of British people to leave the European Union (EU). Many of us believe the EU to have been founded to prevent war among countries who had fought each other disastrously for centuries. We understand that the institutions are far from perfect, and that many people suffer economic and political disadvantage. Yet, the uncertainty that has now been created poses its own challenges.

We held a Peace and Service Consultation in Kortenberg, Belgium, in early December, which considered the theme of Shared Security. In our region we are experiencing much instability and terrible suffering in Syria, Yemen, Palestine, insecurity and attacks in Turkey, Iraq, France and Germany. A militarised understanding of "security" is gaining ground, and is being proselytised in communities and in schools. Friends want to challenge these tendencies, and advocate a "security" which recognises everyone's rights, our inter-dependence, and the needs of non-human creatures and all life forms.





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on all Friends.

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work in the world.

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or contribute through
your Section.

Section Meetings in 2017

FWCC Section of the Americas Meeting

23–26 March 2017 in Stony Point, New York, USA

For more information visit **fwccamericas.org**

FWCC Africa Section Triennial Meeting

29 March–2 April 2017 in Kigale, Rwanda

For more information, email **as@fwccafrika.org**

FWCC Europe and Middle East Section Meeting

4–7 May 2017 in Venusburg (Bonn), Germany

Limited to representatives. For more information email **emes@fwcc.quaker.org**

FWCC Asia-West Pacific Section Meeting

FWCC Asia West-Pacific Section is planning a Section Meeting for 2018

FWCC World Office

FWCC World Office welcomes invitations for the next
World Plenary Meeting in 2023



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