

## **BEING SALT AND LIGHT: BRINGING FWCC TO WHERE FRIENDS ARE A PROPOSAL FOR THE SECTION OF THE AMERICAS–2010**

In August 2012 one thousand Friends will gather in Kenya for the 6<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Friends, with the theme of "Being Salt and Light: Friends Living the Kingdom of God in a Broken World," based on Matthew 5:13-16. The planners of the World Conference hope that between now and August 2012 there will be many opportunities for Friends to consider and reflect on the theme, both individually and in groups.

The Executive Committee of the Section of Americas proposes a concerted effort to engage the greatest number of Friends in this once-in-generation opportunity to connect with the wider world of Friends through a series of local events over the next two years using the World Conference theme. These local gatherings would involve many more Friends in worship, conversation, and discussion than would be able to go to the World Conference. Additionally, they would bring together Friends across theological and other boundaries. They will be planned with varying formats and will take place at selected locations throughout the Americas.

These events will be designed to cover not only their direct costs, but to contribute to FWCC's operating costs. Our best estimate of a reasonable budget shows that holding 12-15 local events in Fiscal Year 2011 can bring us to a break-even position. The two key differences in the proposed FY 2011 alternate budget, when compared to the "business as usual" budget are:

- 1) Reallocation of staff time to do more program work (i.e. the local events)
- 2) Generation of income from local events.

Bringing the World Conference theme "to where Friends are" offers us the opportunity to follow new paths and consider different ways of being as an organization. We hope to draw a new generation of people into FWCC, by 1) raising consciousness among Friends about their interconnectedness and the themes and discussions of the upcoming World Conference; 2) studying the same study materials and sharing thoughts, personal experiences, and prayer with a diversity of Quakers; and 3) using the internet, social networking sites and other technology to the fullest to communicate, and engage persons who have not previously been involved in FWCC activities.

### **THE ORIGINS OF THIS PROPOSAL**

In October 2009, the Finance Committee considered ways to involve many more Friends in the activities of FWCC in order increase its vitality, visibility, and fund-raising capability. This led to a proposal to emphasize local FWCC events. They minuted: "*This could provide spiritual nurture for Friends – a focus on empowering us to do God's work in the world. Each such consultation should bring diverse Friends together.*"

The following month, the Executive Committee, staff, and others met in a strategic planning retreat to consider how to move Friends World Committee Section of Americas forward as a vibrant, sustainable, and relevant organization in the years to come. They considered the results of an online survey and ideas generated from a focus group of Friends in their 20s

and 30s. Two common themes among the responses emerged from the survey and our discussions:

- Confirmation that Friends World Committee for Consultation's purpose is "to facilitate communication and understanding among the various branches of Friends."
- FWCC is called to organize local events to facilitate a dialog about what our faith and our testimonies lead us to do in mending a broken world, and to make these gatherings accessible to all Friends – to "bring FWCC to where Friends are."

Following the strategic planning retreat the Executive Committee approved bringing a proposal to the 2010 Annual Meeting that the Section focus its priority on local gatherings around the theme of the upcoming 2012 World Conference of Friends. The intention is to foster local cooperative encounters which will provide rich opportunities for spiritual transformation and understanding across cultures, traditions and generations. An ad hoc group was set up to make plans and decisions, in order to move forward this concept.

During the initial conversations of the ad hoc group it was noted that the World Office is sponsoring an initiative entitled *Mending the World: A Broken Covenant? Friends' responses to Global Change*. These gatherings will seek, in part, what is distinctly Quaker about global change concerns and initiatives. As these plans develop, those carrying out the proposal will consider how our efforts to "bring FWCC to where Friends are" might also relate to the global change initiative.

## **IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES ON GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE**

### **Governance**

In order to free up time and resources to plan this series of local events, changes need to happen in the ways in which the Section will do its work over the next two years. Section staff is experienced in designing and planning events, and these skills would be needed to plan multiple events over a relatively short period.

We propose holding a modified (shorter) annual meeting during the third week of March 2011 at Friends Center, Philadelphia, to carry out essential governance. This would mean holding a two-day business meeting for decision making (e.g. meetings of committees and groups, consideration of budget, and approval of the naming and nominating reports.) The bylaws indicate that a quorum of 15% of the number of representatives would have to be present.

During the time between the 2010 Annual Meeting and the 2012 Annual Meeting, the Finance and Executive Committees would meet face-to-face only once each year, rather than twice a year, thereby freeing up staff time needed for the logistics of these meetings. The Nominating Committee would meet face-to-face once in the fall. All other business of committees and groups would be carried out electronically and by conference call.

## **Human Resources**

### **(a) Volunteers**

A plan for engaging Friends at various levels of activity is needed to make this program happen. We anticipate a need for a **Salt and Light Working Group** that will assist staff in making decisions such as where, when and how each gathering will be held. The composition of this group would reflect the diversity of the membership of FWCC. As with any working group, names will be proposed by staff and members of the Executive Committee in consultation with the Nominating Committee and then the members will be approved by the Executive Committee. This working group would help ensure that gatherings take place. Members of this working group would serve as liaison for the next 'level' of Friends involved: the local arrangements committees.

**Local arrangements committees** will need to be formed for each gathering (or group of gatherings, if within close proximity) to be held. For the most part, the local arrangements committees will deal with logistics, e.g. taking on specific tasks to implement each individual gathering or event on the day(s) it is taking place. Their work will be clearly defined.

The expertise and experience of those who have planned regional gatherings will be valuable in designing these local events.

### **(b) Staff**

The involvement of staff is critical to the implementation of this proposal. In consultation with the Steering Working Group, staff will design and plan gatherings, including event finances, communications, and making arrangements for local and international speakers. Staff will develop a manual to guide local arrangements committees in their work.

### **(c) Speakers**

When feasible, visitors from other parts of the Section of Americas and from other sections of FWCC will be invited to speak and to share experiences at the local events.

## **Finance**

While the plans to bring FWCC to where Friends are were made for program reasons, they also have positive financial implications for the Section, as will be seen by the two alternative budget scenarios.

The two regional gatherings held in 2009 (Northeast and Lower Great Lakes / Midwest) have shown that it is possible for local events to cover both direct costs and make a contribution towards FWCC's operating expenses.

### **Minute to be considered**

Friends World Committee for Consultation – Section of Americas will “bring FWCC to where Friends are” in a series of local events based on the 2012 World Conference theme of *Being Salt and Light: Friends Living the Kingdom in a Broken World*. These events will begin in the fall of 2010 and continue through early 2012. In order to concentrate staff and committee resources on the local events, the Section’s annual meeting in March 2011 will take place at Friends Center in Philadelphia and last for only two days. During this time committees and groups will hold meetings and the business mandated by the bylaws will be carried out.

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