

Committee of Latin American Friends (COAL)
Report to the 2010 Section of the Americas Annual Meeting

Several events have taken place in the COAL region, since the last Annual Meeting of the Section of the America, of FWCC:

First, two workshops for potential writers, conducted by Harold and Nancy Thomas from Northwest Yearly Meeting, were held in Peru and Bolivia. The Peru workshop was celebrated in Ilave September 10-13 at the George Fox School with an attendance of 27 people. The general theme was Narrative Literature, and sub-themes amongst others were: The Deep Roots of Friends; Literature in the Life and History of Friends; What is Narrative?; and Principles for a Good Writer. The same theme and sub-themes were also considered in Santa Cruz, Bolivia where 17 Friends gathered to work during a series of Saturdays to cover all the material.

It is important to highlight what Nancy Thomas says of how the workshops worked, as well as the purpose of the workshops:

We began by talking with the participants about narrative, its nature, its universal appeal, and its specific cultural importance. Why do we need to remember and pass on our stories? How do we express them in a compelling way? In a culturally appropriate way? How do we help each other to do this?

We also included a focus on Quaker values and some of the fascinating history of Quakers and literature. We noted that while most of Quaker writings have come from the global North and West, we can take inspiration from this history and step up now to take our turn. It's time to hear from Friends in Africa, Asia, and, of course, Latin America.

The fact that the workshops are backed up by a specific project provided further motivation. We hope to publish selected stories in a book, or perhaps a series of books, tentatively entitled, Fire from the South: The Faith and Life of Latin American Friends. We want to include narratives from Central America, Mexico, and Hispanics in North America. The primary purposes are internal: a book in Spanish to help unite Latin American Friends, help them identify their particular characteristics and callings as part of the larger Quaker and Christian movement, and, of course, to pass the stories on to the next generations. The secondary purposes are for English-speaking Quakers. Participants in the workshops are encouraging us to look beyond a Quaker readership for the book, further expanding the purposes.

Friend Benigno Sánchez-Eppler from New England Yearly Meeting along with Brian Drayton from the same yearly meeting, acting as his elder companion, did a two week visit to Peru and Bolivia. The main purpose of this trip was to participate in an Annual Youth Conference of Peruvian Friends (November 6-8) which would be attended also by Bolivian young Friends. The audience was around 200. Themes were suggested by the youth and amongst others were: The Role of Youth in the Church; How to Make Decisions in the Church in the Manner of Friends; The Role of the Church in a Post-modern World; and Friends and Sacraments. This was followed by a visit to several yearly meetings in Bolivia from 11-14 November, 2009, where similar themes were considered. Young Friends in South America already are hoping to have another meeting in 2011 to include youth from both countries and beyond.

Other workshops are planned for this coming year; the first of these was scheduled for February 2010 near Chiquimula, Guatemala, just prior to our Annual Meeting. Twenty-three Friends from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras have already registered for this workshop. The Thomases will also lead this workshop and it will continue with the theme of the last few years which has been training for writers.

A second workshop is planned this summer for translators and will be held at Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City, with participation from Friends from different YM and countries who already have some experience with translation. The participants are already working on the translation of the book *Reasons for Hope* by John Punshon and the workshop will be used as a time for revision and editing of this as well as an opportunity for learning more. We trust this book will be of great help to many groups in Latin America and beyond. Conductors will be Benigno Sanchez- Eppler and Susan Furry from New England Yearly Meeting.

Two issues of the e-newsletter *En Pocas Palabras* were sent out and we continue to use this way of communication and exchange of news and concerns for Latin American yearly meetings as well as including news of general interest from the Section and other Sections.

The Executive Secretary of COAL continues to participate in the Steering Committee of the Historic Peace Churches Conference planned for November 28-December 03, 2010 in the Dominican Republic. Skype- conferencing every two weeks has been the way we have been working satisfactorily. Aminda Posada de Arévalo is the other Friend from Latin America on this committee, and although her participation has been limited in the last few months due to illness and travel, she is now an active participant. We hope the representation in this conference will be as inclusive as possible in terms of age, gender and theological background. Invitations are ready to be sent to the list of potential participants who have been selected from a variety of backgrounds and for their work in their own countries. We trust other funds will be raised to have a larger participation of Friends, as well as for other expenses of the conference, including some publication after it.

It is with great joy that we have seen the publication of a Wider Quaker Fellowship Spanish mailing containing the fruits of the earlier writers training workshops held in Central America. We trust other similar publications, both electronic and print, will bring more of these writings to the wider audience of Friends both in Spanish and English.

This Annual Meeting COAL will meet only as Executive Committee. For this, special attention is being given to the visa issue for the Peruvian Friend member of said committee. We trust that he will be granted the visa this time and attend the Section's Annual Meeting. We also expect some visitation will be done by the three visiting Friends, members of the Executive Committee of COAL.

We pray that Annual Meeting will be guided by the Spirit and that with renewed energy and vision we will continue the unique work and mission FWCC fulfills amongst Friends and beyond Friends circles.

In God's Peace,

Loida E. Fernández G.
Executive Secretary of COAL
January 28, 2010.



Report to Section of the Americas FWCC World Office February 2010

The World Office is presently focussed primarily on three activities: 1) its finances; 2) the 2012 World Conference; and 3) the Global Change Clusters/Consultation initiative. Each of these activities touches the life of the Section. Ongoing is our usual work of international membership, international visits, Quaker UN work, and communications work.

1) Financially, donations are down and we have cut expenses where possible. Fortunately, we have a healthy amount in reserves to cover this year's expected modest deficit. However, with the economic climate as it is, we already know that donations from the Section of the Americas which we receive a year delayed will be down in the next two years. We are in a time of fundraising not only for ongoing office expenses but primarily for the World Conference travel and accommodation fund. Your help is needed. Ideas include sponsoring someone from another country, holding local fundraisers, making special appeals. We are working with the Section on this. Jonathan Vogel-Borne of New England YM is the Treasurer for the World Conference.

2) The theme of the Sixth World Conference of Friends is *Being Salt and Light: Friends Living the Kingdom of God in a Broken World*. We hope this theme will appeal to those interested in theology as well as social action. The dates are 21-28 August in Kenya and we plan on 1000 Friends attending. Yearly meetings are being asked to name a number of delegates based on their size. Letters have gone out to yearly meetings advising them of the number of places allocated. [Please bear in mind that there will also be open places for which people can apply directly to FWCC; the actual number of those spaces will depend upon how many are appointed by their yearly meetings.]

Each yearly meeting is asked to decide who can attend as one of their delegates and provide us with that information by the end of 2010. After the World Office receives the names, FWCC will send them the registration forms. FWCC reps can help with this publicity.

Advance study materials will include on-line study courses as well as the usual study booklet. We are hoping to engage more people in this conference to broaden our sense of community. The course participants can be from anywhere or just part of one meeting or area. The medium offers great flexibility. Website will be www.saltandlight2012.org.

3) Friends' Responses to Global Change: Mending a Broken World – this is the formal name of our Global Change initiative. Its purpose is three fold: a) to provide space to hear the voices of Friends we have not heard from; b) to identify the spiritual grounding for our responses to this large issue; c) to discern if there is a Quaker distinctive in response and if so, to articulate it.

Led by an international Global Change Steering Committee, it is clerked by Marge Abbott of North Pacific YM and is now benefitting from new part-time staff, Samuel Mahaffy [samuel@fwccglobalchange.org] who is based in Washington State, USA. The primary facet is setting up local 'cluster' meetings to address six queries. The process for setting up cluster meetings has been sent to yearly meetings and reps. The general idea is to encourage this discussion as broadly as possible, to encourage groups of up to 30 people to gather for a day, to discuss the queries and to respond in writing and by video so responses can be aired on the web. We also plan to have on-line groups.

I know from my travels in India, Kenya, and Latin America that there is great interest in those areas, but to date there are no groups or organisations such as we have available to use in Europe and in North America. FWCC hopes to bring those people together so we can hear their voices.

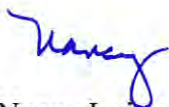
This process will conclude with a small consultation of less than 100 people drawn from participants, theologians and experts to prepare a paper that can be distributed world-wide and discussed at the World Conference in 2012. Website is www.fwccglobalchange.org.

4) For general FWCC news, I have spent most of January this year in Peru and Bolivia where there are 7 yearly meetings, all evangelical, and 20,000-30,000 Friends. It was an intense trip, spent all at high altitude. Louise Salinas of the Section office and I found Friends were truly hungry for knowledge of their Friends heritage so they could understand what makes them Quaker. There are no longer missionaries present among them, although Northwest YM and Central YM send visitors from time to time. Their churches are losing membership in the countryside where they had been concentrated, with some growth in the cities. Mostly agricultural, the trend is toward more urban, middle class members. Despite a lot of financial poverty among them, there was a great deal of spirit and dedication to their faith.

The new edition of Friends Around the World is actually at the printers. Each yearly meeting will receive a copy and additional copies will be available for £12. It contains listings for every yearly meeting in the world that we know of. Because we are using print on demand, we will be able to update it more easily. We know that some listings need editing already because no changes were provided for some entries. We are also totally revamping our website.

The Central Executive Committee will meet in May in Nairobi, following the Africa Section Triennial in western Kenya and the annual meeting of the International Planning Committee for the World Conference. This is a continuation of its new programme of meeting in conjunction with Section meetings. Next year it will meet in Switzerland following the EMES meeting. One of the agenda items is transition planning as 2012 will see the retirement not only of the General Secretary but also completion of service for the FWCC Clerk, the Clerk of the CEC, and Treasurer. The latter two posts are normally held by people who can easily be available to the World Office, so they are often British or eastern North American. If you are interested or think of someone who might be suitable, please let me know.

With faith,



Nancy Irving
General Secretary
www.fwccworld.org

Latin American Peace Conference of Historic Peace Churches
Report to the FWCC Section of the Americas 2010 Annual Meeting

The planning and preparation for the Latin American Peace Conference of the historic peace churches is continuing. As we reported to the 2009 Annual Meeting, this will be the fourth and final such conference that takes place as a part of the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Peace and Reconciliation (DOV). The DOV is an initiative of the World Council of Churches, which asked the historic peace churches – Society of Friends, Mennonites, Church of the Brethren – to take the lead, sharing from their faith experience and practical wisdom. The previous three conferences were held in Bienenberg, Switzerland (2001), Limuru, Kenya (2004) and Solo, Indonesia (2007).

Since our 2009 annual meeting, Loida Fernandez, COAL Executive Secretary, Aminda de Arevalo, Clerk, El Salvador Yearly Meeting, and Paul Mitchell, FWCC SoA Executive Committee member, have been participating with Steering Committee representatives from the other peace churches in making preparations. During April 27-29, 2009, thirteen representatives from the three denominations met at the Loyola Manresa retreat center in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic to consider our theme and specific goals for the conference. We decided to hold the conference at this same retreat center, November 28 through December 3, 2010. Our theme, *"Hunger for Peace: Paths, Faces and Cultures,"* reflects our intention to hear the voices of persons actively engaged in the search for peace in Latin America, and to seek the participation of those who are doing active, on-the-ground peace work throughout the hemisphere.

To date we have invited 15 Friends from Latin America or who are closely involved with Latin American peace work, to attend the conference. These include Friends from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Nicaragua. We have also been working on the Conference agenda, which is designed to include formal presentations by leaders in peace work in the hemisphere, and ample opportunities for attendees to share their own personal stories. This process will lead us to considering how we can work together best in the future to promote peace.

Organizing and holding this conference in Latin America has been a financial challenge. The three denominations are working to raise the necessary money to bring in a wide range of participants and have the most meaningful possible experience. In the case of the Society of Friends, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Section of the Americas) is contributing all of the remaining money in its restricted Peace Issues account – approximately \$23,000 – to support the conference. The other two denominations have also raised substantial amounts. Additional funds are being sought, with the hope that we will be able to add to the number of invitees and have more money for publishing the papers. A special account has been opened to receive tax-deductible donations specifically directed to the Conference. It is being administered by the Church of the Brethren on behalf of the three denominations. Donations may be sent to: Latin America Peace Church Conference, Attention: Pat Marsh, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin IL 60120-1694.

Paul Mitchell
Recording Clerk,
FWCC SoA