

FWCC Traveling Ministry Corps Program Description 2019
www.fwccamericas.org/traveling-ministry.

The new FWCC Traveling Ministry Corps uses traditional Quaker practices to build 21st century skills in cross-cultural dialogue and local leadership development in both rural and urban environments. These traveling Friends share their own spiritual experience and the sense of unity that is possible across the branches of Friends. They encourage Friends to learn from one another, and following consultation and discernment with the local communities, proceed to minister through prayer, pastoral counseling and encouragement, religious education, or peace, justice and environmental concerns. These face-to-face encounters build the local community rather than drawing gifted Friends away from home.

Friends who serve in the ministry corps will visit Friends meetings and churches in yearly meetings other than their own and offer one of the following:

- Facilitate a weekend workshop on a topic of mutual interest to the meeting and the minister
- Bring a message and organize worship sharing after a weeknight potluck
- Attend a regularly scheduled worship service.
- Write a letter of encouragement and pastoral care, particularly to meetings who were just outside the travel route or who may be wary of receiving a visitor.

The FWCC Traveling Ministry Corps promotes community engagement in conflict resolution and other locally determined social, economic and environmental concerns, reduces polarization within communities and the isolation of rural and urban leaders, and improves skills in local leadership development, reflection practices and the transmission of wisdom.

The TMC program utilizes the existing network of Quaker communities throughout the Americas to recruit participants and deliver services. Members of the TMC are chosen for their ability and commitment to working with diverse participants, their demonstrated ability to connect traditional practices with contemporary concerns, and their availability to travel across the Americas to work with local communities. Local meetings identify the topics they would like to address and are responsible for housing and feeding the visiting ministers, and arranging local transportation. Yearly meetings and monthly meetings encourage local Friends with a leading to travel in the ministry to apply, and to host the ministers. We work with yearly meeting leaders to reach decision makers at the monthly meeting level and to identify meetings that would most benefit from intervisitation.

The dissension that results from polarization around issues of theology, practice and authority, and divisions by age and geography, is causing fresh wounds within and between branches of Friends in the Section of the Americas. When Quaker meetings become isolated or stagnant, welcoming a visitor for spiritual conversations can result in new openings to the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Opportunities to learn from gifted Friends of other ages, geographic regions, theological persuasions, and other aspects of diversity right within your local meeting are rare and profound. Too often, these life-changing spiritual experiences happen to Friends away from home - at a gathering or weekend conference or seminary class - leading to a heightened sense of otherness and isolation for Friends with powerful spiritual gifts and a diminished sense of the possibility for refreshment in the home meeting. Those who have been involved with FWCC know that the encounters FWCC facilitates have that "kindling power" to change lives and enhance the vibrancy of the Religious Society of Friends. A monthly meeting that invites a TMC member to come will

have a vibrant conversation that will resonate long after the visit. Friends will go deeper in their own spiritual journeys. They will become more resilient, more connected to each other, their local communities and the wider family of Friends, and more committed to our religion. However, this work requires careful discernment, regular practice and a graceful confidence in the traveling Friend. Additional funding will enable us to provide more in-depth training and support for the ministers at the beginning of their service, and to engage the host meetings in the preparation and evaluation of their service.

In 2015 we developed the initial program description for the Traveling Ministry Corps and named the first planning committee. In 2016 we began our outreach to meetings across the Americas and recruitment and selection of the first cohort of ministers. In 2017 we launched the TMC after their first training in March. The ministers visited approximately 80 meetings and churches in the first two years. In this third cohort, there are five English-speaking ministers and eight Spanish-speaking ministers from five countries. Additional funding is needed now to enable the TMC to serve more meetings in future years. Our goal is that eventually, every Quaker meeting in the Americas receives some kind of personalized communication from an FWCC traveling minister.

Ministers participate in an annual Corps retreat. These training and accountability retreats will form the sense of being a body amongst the participants, allow the coordinators to provide more even support and training, and allow for the whole program to hear reports, concerns that have arisen, and develop best practices to be implemented in the coming year.

Friends recognize the ministry gifts and callings of all Friends as ministers; regardless of age, gender, education, occupation, or status as “recorded ministers.” References to “traveling ministers” refer to Friends who are recognized by their local church, monthly meeting or yearly meeting and called to travel in ministry among Friends.

The Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas (FWCC) is the association of Quaker yearly meetings across the spectrum of Friends, from Alaska to Bolivia. In service of our vision of a thriving and integrated network of Friends from the Arctic to the Andes, woven together in a beautiful tapestry of transformative faith, learning to love, listen and witness, FWCC has refocused its work. The 2015-2023 Strategic Plan, Weaving the Tapestry is available at fwccamericas.org/about/our-work.