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# SAYMA

## Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting & Association

### FWCC WORLD PLENARY: THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

*by Michael Galovic, Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting*

Last January several of us from SAYMA attended the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) World Plenary in Pisac, Peru. It was a rich experience and we were honored to represent our Yearly Meeting at such an event.

Several important conversations occurred during the Plenary. Decisions were made about climate action. This resulted in the minute presented to SAYMA Yearly Meeting last June. We also discussed the challenges of meeting every four years. In the World gathering in Kenya 4 years ago, the Triennials were changed to Quadrennials. This year in Peru, the discussion centered on how such world gatherings drained leadership and environmental resources. The decision was made to hold such gatherings at least every 10 years, with the hope of having the next one 6 -8 years from now. It seems a good idea for Friends around the world as well as Friends in Yearly Meetings to take such decisions seriously. Meetings are now held via teleconference or Skype to alleviate the resource drain of travel. FWCC expects to increase its use of electronic means of communication, and also to focus energies on projects done with smaller groups so that the work of FWCC continues despite the longer length of time between world meetings.

Personally I found great benefit in the small conversations and workshops. I was part of an informal “breakfast club” who shared a meal together every morning during the 10-day event. It was a chance to talk intimately with Friends around North America and the World. As those of you who attend yearly meeting

know, such mealtime conversations can enrich and enliven one’s feeling of belonging and participation in the Quaker community.

One of the most memorable moments for me in this last SAYMA Yearly Meeting was the rope exercise during the Friday plenary. This is where we stood in a circle and were given a visual representation of white privilege among the members of the SAYMA community. This type of activity is noticeably absent in FWCC world events. My breakfast club gatherings had a lot of conversation about how we’ve benefitted from such direct participation in diversity-awareness/building exercises. Examples were given from the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), Couples Enrichment, and other groups that we’ve been a part of through the years. I hope that FWCC can move in the direction of including direct conversations about difference and privilege in all levels of its infrastructure.

However, getting Friends from all the Quaker traditions to show up has been a major challenge for FWCC. For instance, there is little participation from North American Evangelical Friends. One workshop I attended in Peru was on Convergent Friends. It was facilitated by Wes Daniels who is Max Carter’s replacement at Guilford College. (Max did a Yearly Meeting plenary a few years ago. I found Wes to be a dynamic, academic young Friend—maybe a future plenary presenter?? )

The Convergent Friend Movement has a strong base in the FWCC Section of the Americas. Wes briefly describes it as “Friends who seek to hold together both

tradition and mission . . . synonymous with bringing different Friends together for dialogue, experimentation of worship, and renewal.”

Interestingly, the workshop had about 25 – 30 participants—none of whom were people of color. This could partly be explained by the observation that the Peru Plenary had a strong North American/ white people’s presence. It stands in contrast to the Kenya World Gathering which had two-times more participants with a strongly evangelical and Kenyan Friend’s presence.

In a Quaker-Speak Video, the current clerk of the FWCC Section of the Americas, Benigno Sanchez-Eppler, says following about the experience of FWCC:

*The Quakerism I find in my monthly meeting is good. It’s mine, but it is not everything that Quakerism offers. When you read early Friends, you can see how my monthly meeting is an heir to early Friends. But you can also see how early Friends would have been foreign and uncomfortable in my monthly meeting—and vice versa. This is true for all branches of Quakerism—even conservative. When I go outside my monthly meeting, I get those parts of early Friends that my monthly meeting isn’t doing any more.*

The USA (and the world) is so deeply divided among political and religious lines: could FWCC be a vehicle to practice much needed cross-religious-tradition conversation? I sure hope so. I’d be interested in your thoughts on how to enhance the safe and welcoming space within FWCC for such a Spirit-led experience to happen.



## NEWS OF MEETINGS

Compiled by Errol Hess. <errol@kitenet.net>

To make sure that your meeting’s news is included in this compilation, please add Errol to your newsletter’s e-mail distribution list, and he will make sure to highlight events from your meeting, too!

**ATHENS:** Moved to new rental meeting space in March.

**ATLANTA:** AVP workshops, February-May. 25 attended Spiritual Nurturing Group Forum.

**BEREA:** Letter writing targeting state lawmakers to eliminate the death penalty. Began first hour discussion of "The New Jim Crow." Active in Quaker Committee on Kentucky Legislation. M&N is conducting a membership review, getting feedback from membership about what is working and what needs change.

**CELO:** Friends approved a member's traveling ministry. Held a croning ceremony.

**CHARLESTON:** Men's Shelter Superbowl Dinner fed 60-70. Outreach efforts continue. Census reported 20 members and attenders, including 3 from Greenbrier Worship Group.

**COLUMBIA:** Five new apple trees were planted on the meetinghouse grounds. Peace and Social Concerns committee activities include Food Not Bombs, Harvest Hope Food Bank, Prison Visitation and Support, and Women in Black. Friends

are considering building a picnic shelter covered in solar panels. Meeting is considering a request to provide garden space for refugees. Hosted Palmetto Friends Gathering. A peace pole requested by Hiroshima Vigil Committee approved. Approved electronic participation in second hour programs, on a case by case basis.

**COOKEVILLE:** Meeting activities include Peace Project, roadway cleanup, retreat, prison ministry, outreach, high school witness. Friends contribute to meeting a dime a gallon for their gasoline use. Meeting supports Copal AA school in Guatemala.

**GREENVILLE:** January talk on community ecology.

**MEMPHIS:** House & Grounds committee works to increase visibility. AVP use of meetinghouse approved.

**WEST KNOXVILLE:** Contributed toward Riverside Catholic Worker purchase of film "White Like Me." Meeting schedule changed to 10:30. FGC Development Committee will meet at WKFM in September.

### Submissions wanted!

The deadline for submissions for the next *Southern Appalachian Friend* is December 1, 2016. Please send articles, stories, poems, or artwork to Beth Ensign, SAF editor: [h.e.ensign@gmail.com](mailto:h.e.ensign@gmail.com) OR 173 Flora Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30307.

# GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION AMONG FRIENDS

*Gheeta McGahey, Celo Friends Meeting*

I recently had the privilege of attending the 319<sup>th</sup> sessions of North Carolina Yearly Meeting August 12-14. I traveled there, to quote from my travel minute, “with a concern for living sustainably in the context of deepening connections among diverse groups of Friends.” I found Friends open and friendly, ready to share in fellowship. I think I may have found an elder to travel with me to NCYM monthly meetings to share this concern laid on me with monthly meetings in North Carolina Yearly Meeting.

I found the program was completely full with one concern, the future of their yearly meeting and how to continue to carry out their calling as Quakers. It was a difficult time for the faithful Friends who were gathered there. They acknowledged that “the challenge of bridging their differences had become an increasingly daunting task” and that the weight of this challenge was sapping energy from the many good works of the yearly meeting.

Unlike the Hicksites and Orthodox in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in the early 1800s as described in *Quakers in Conflict* by Larry Ingle, they approached each other with respect and love. I could feel each person being rooted in their measure of the Light of Christ and searching for that Light in each other. They spoke and listened. They prayed and sang. They broke bread together. The clerks and executive committee were true servants of the meeting, searching for the will of the meeting without trying to wield power or hold on to their personal interpretation of what needed to happen. They faithfully

attempted to record the sense of the meeting, hearing all voices.

The yearly meeting decided that over the next three months each monthly meeting will chose to join one of two associations under North Carolina Yearly Meeting, the difference between the two being the basis of faith. The basis of faith for one “is for each monthly meeting to have *autonomy* to interpret and apply scripture as it determines.” The basis for the other “is for each monthly meeting to interpret and apply scripture under the *authority* of the Faith and Practice of NCYM (subordinate to the yearly meeting).” The quarters will be realigned into the new associations.

Watching the process of discernment over the two days left me deeply humbled. These Friends have been able to do what our troubled nation so needs – to talk together, listen profoundly, and then find a way that is appropriate conduct of disciples of Christ. Can each of us reach out to our neighbors, those we experience as “others” in our community, to approach solutions “after the manner of Friends”? Those gathered together were allowing themselves to be searched by the Light of Christ, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” As I follow the call to minister about our responsibility for stewardship of Earth’s resources, these North Carolina Friends have taught me that change takes time and trust that the Spirit of God will continue renewing the Divine Covenant.

## BUYING QUAKER BOOKS

Friend Peter wanted to gift a thick Quaker volume to Friend Joshua. The book was published in London by British Quakers, but it was listed for sale on-line at Ye Olde (American) Quaker Bookshop. The posting said the paperback version was out of stock. Even though frugal Friend Peter preferred the cheaper paper version, he chose to buy the hardback so the book would arrive by Christmas. An email confirmed the order. After waiting, with no sign of arrival before Christmas, Friend Peter eventually called Ye Olde Quaker Books. Friendly, warm bookseller Jonathan noted that the hard cover book was on backorder, but now there were paper copies ready to send. The book would not arrive for Christmas, but Jonathan agreed to send the book directly to Friend Joshua’s home address. Further, Jonathan would give a credit to the charge account to make up for the cost difference. In due time, the paperback book did arrive at Friend Joshua’s home, and for a few brief days, a credit did appear on Friend Peter’s charge account. But before long, the credit disappeared from the account. Peter, tired of the hassles, chose to ignore the overcharge.

Three months later, what should arrive in Friend Peter’s mail, but a copy of the hardcover book, with a note apologizing for the delay. Friend Peter wished to right the account, for now, 3 months later, he had received two copies of the book, one paper, one hard back, but had paid only for one hardback. He called several times, only to discover that the bookstore was open just a few hours per week. Finally he did get through to book seller Hannah. Peter explained the situation briefly, where upon Hannah said to call back when Jonathan was on duty. Exasperated, Friend Peter insisted that Hannah address the problem NOW. As Peter and Hannah discussed equitable solutions, Hannah eventually proposed giving the hardcover book to the local Friends Meeting and dropping all discussion of sending books or paying more. Peter and Hannah found this an acceptable solution, and the Meeting graciously accepted the gift for the Meeting library.

Moral of the story: Quakers have a testimony of integrity but not efficiency. For efficiency, try Amazon.com. -- *Denny Fernald, [joannferald@yahoo.com](mailto:joannferald@yahoo.com) 704-307-5820*



## SAYMA MEETINGS AND WORSHIP GROUPS

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Aiken Worship Group	South Carolina	(803) 640-9650
Asheville Friends Meeting	North Carolina	(828) 423-0714
Athens Friends Meeting	Georgia	(706) 309-0310
Atlanta Friends Meeting	Georgia	(404) 377-2474
Berea Friends Meeting	Kentucky	(859) 344-0406
Big Stone Gap Worship Group		(276) 546-5884 <a href="mailto:suekobak@roadrunner.com">suekobak@roadrunner.com</a>
Birmingham Friends Meeting	Alabama	(205) 592-0570
Boone Friends Meeting	North Carolina	(828) 263-0001
Brevard Friends Meeting	North Carolina	(828) 698-2862
Canton Worship Group	Georgia	(770) 720-4669
Celo Monthly Meeting	Burnsville NC	(828) 675-4456
Charleston Friends Meeting	West Virginia	(304) 756-3033
Chattanooga Friends Meeting	Tennessee	(423) 629-2580
Columbia Friends Meeting	South Carolina	(803) 780-4197
Cookeville Monthly Meeting	Tennessee	(931) 268-2592, (931) 268-9889
Crossville Friends Meeting	Tennessee	(931) 484-9033
Foxfire Friends Meeting of Holston Valley	Johnson City TN	(423) 202-8661
Greenbriar Valley Worship Group	Lewisburg, WV	(304)832-6020 <a href="mailto:wd.bouldin@gmail.com">wd.bouldin@gmail.com</a>
Greenville Friends Meeting	South Carolina	(864) 246-6852
Huntsville Area Friends Meeting	Alabama	(931) 484-9033
Macon Worship Group.	Georgia	(478) 227-8892 <a href="mailto:maconquakers@gmail.com">maconquakers@gmail.com</a>
Memphis Friends Meeting	Tennessee	<a href="mailto:mfm@memphisfriendsmeeting.com">mfm@memphisfriendsmeeting.com</a>
Nashville Friends Meeting	Tennessee	(615) 329-2640
Oxford Quaker Meeting	Mississippi	(662) 473-0230
Sewanee Worship Group	Tennessee	(931) 598-5031
Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting	Black Mountain NC	(828) 669-0832
West Knoxville Friends Meeting	Knoxville TN	(865) 694-0036

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### SAYMA

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