



Visitation: A Quaker Circulatory System

The Visitation Program will provide opportunities for face to face encounters to connect Friends, cross cultures and change lives. FWCC has found that we need to take the experience of the broader Society of Friends directly to Monthly Meetings and local churches, rather than depend solely on periodic large gatherings. Friends hunger for spiritual nurture and education, to meet Quakers who can share their experience of living under the guidance of the Spirit. By bringing people together to learn about and from one another, by responding to the need to introduce Friends at the local level to the riches of our full tradition, we believe we can make an important contribution to the growth and vitality of Quakers.

There are three major components in this program. One is facilitation of traveling ministry across yearly meeting lines. Another is the organizing of gatherings that bring together a variety of Friends. The third is the organization of spiritual leadership programs and experiences across the rich variety of Friends, especially for younger Friends. There will be multiple Program Groups and Working Groups related to this program. Working groups will be small and narrowly focused, with specific, time-limited terms. Some of these Working Groups will be active for only part of the next five years, the duration of the Strategic Plan.

The Visitation Program responds to both the first and second goals of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan: “to increase understanding among Friends from different traditions, connecting Quakers of all traditions in the Americas” and “to communicate and transmit the inspiring power of our work in order to involve more Friends in FWCC’s ministry – transforming lives and faith communities through cross-branch understanding.”

Representatives and friends of FWCC are asked to seek ideas from their constituencies and be prepared to share them with the Program Groups. All are asked to engage in discernment of where we are led, starting at the Section meeting in March 2015. As with all programs, Representatives will be asked to participate in fundraising.

Traveling Ministry Corps

The Section will organize a corps of Spanish- and English-speaking (though not necessarily bilingual) Friends to travel throughout the Section, across Yearly Meeting lines and other divisions among Friends. These Friends will share their spiritual experiences, their sense of the unity that is possible across the branches of Friends, and encourage Friends to learn from one another through prayer, pastoral counseling and encouragement, religious education, or peace, justice and environmental concerns. We recognize the ministry gifts and callings of all Friends as ministers, regardless of age, gender, education, occupation or status as “recorded ministers.”

Yearly Meetings will be asked to suggest Friends who might have gifts to share. The role of Representatives and Regional Coordinators will be strengthened, enabling them to be effective liaisons between FWCC and their Yearly Meeting. In particular, they can help identify those Friends with gifts to share and provide their names to FWCC. They will also be asked to help in practical ways when traveling ministers come to their area. Young Adult Friends are and will continue to be deeply involved in the work of FWCC. We expect some of them will be Traveling Ministers. FWCC

will offer training and support for Traveling Ministers, who will probably be sent out in pairs, preferably from two different traditions of Friends. FWCC will also provide support and guidance to Meetings about receiving traveling Friends, including hosting, travel responsibilities and local publicity.

The Traveling Ministries Program Group will work on three related tasks connected with the development of the Traveling Ministry Corps: 1. recruiting and choosing traveling ministers, 2. designing and implementing training for the traveling ministers, and 3. working with Yearly and Monthly Meetings to select local meetings/churches for the traveling ministers to visit. We expect to have a scholarship fund to support travel for the Traveling Friends, so a second Working Group will consider applications and grant scholarships.

Convocations of Friends

This Convocations Program Group will work closely with staff on the preparation of the Section-wide governance meetings in 2017 and 2019. The role of the current Section Meeting Planning Program Group will be expanded to include regional gatherings in 2018 and the world-wide International Representatives Meeting to be held in the Section of the Americas in 2016. These will continue to be important opportunities for face-to-face encounters with Friends from a broad spectrum and will increasingly offer training for Representatives and other interested Friends to become Traveling Ministers and to be better bridge builders among Friends in their local communities.

Spiritual Leadership Development and Experiences for Young Friends

This program is in a new planning stage. We had expected the 2016 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage to take place in Europe. However, the European and Middle East Section has informed us that they are unable to host. This gives us the opportunity to re-envision the possibilities of what FWCC might offer younger Friends in the future. Friends at the 2015 Section Meeting as well as the 2016 International Representatives Meeting in Peru will be involved in conversations and discernment.

The Working Group for this program will envision something new and exciting based on our experience with the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage will solicit and sift through ideas and make specific recommendations. It should include Friends with experience in a pilgrimage as pilgrims, leaders and/or committee members, to remind us of the joys and challenges in the past as well as the gifts provided not only to individuals, but also to the broader Religious Society of Friends. These members also need a willingness to brainstorm how those gifts might be offered in a different format. The Working Group should include Friends who are respectful of the past, but especially excited and full of ideas about what we could develop for the future. There need to be members from all parts of the Section, including Young Adult Friends, and from as many branches of Friends as possible. Friends with experience in the World Gatherings of Young Friends or other programs like the Geneva QUNO Summer Schools would be helpful. FWCC will consult with Young Adult Friends in a variety of ways to seek their wisdom and identify a unique role or roles for FWCC, bringing together Friends across theological and geographic differences and nurturing spiritual leadership.

Do you have gifts to share and might you be led to travel in the ministry? Do you love providing a ministry of hospitality and organization? Do you have a special concern for younger Friends? Do you love exploring new ideas? Are you an implementer or a planner? All are invited to share in envisioning, creating the designs and weaving these strands of our tapestry of FWCC programs.