

Report on Consultation #1 at FWCC World Plenary Meeting
Pisac, Peru, January 19 – 27, 2016
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Karen Gregorio and I attended Consultation #1 at the World Plenary Meeting in Peru in January 2016. It was described as follows:

1. Ministry and Leadership

Ministry and leadership: developing the leaders we need, encouraging living ministry, generating new ideas for a pilgrimage for Quaker youth that spans across all Sections and involves larger numbers of Friends.

How can we fully develop ministry and leadership among Young Friends?

What shape might a new youth pilgrimage take that is more inclusive and broad reaching?

What would it take to satisfy what people want from a youth pilgrimage?

The group met 3 times. There were about 60 people from all 4 Sections. A number of participants had participated over the years as pilgrims and/or leaders of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. In the last session, we discussed ideas and priorities.

The Africa Section listed their priorities for work with Young Friends: organizing work camps and exchange programs and establishing a social network. Both of these ideas could involve other Sections. They also suggested that their Section organize a Youth Core.

We worked on refining 3 main areas. The first was consideration of a World Gathering of Young Friends (WGYF). Friends acknowledged that FWCC has offered support for past World Gatherings, but it is not an FWCC program. It is run by Young Friends. There is money available and networks exist. The consultation included Friends who had participated in the 1985 or 2005 WGYF. It was recognized that organizing one of these gatherings was a “baptism by fire”. A Friend remembered the 2004 Triennial in New Zealand where a number of late night meetings of Young Friends were led by a tangible movement of the Spirit. The consultation hoped the idea could be put on the table and see what Love can do.

At the end of the World Plenary Meeting, Young Friends reported that about 60 of them had met a couple of times to explore the idea of a World Gathering of Young Friends. They agreed they were not yet ready because they felt that links within and among Sections were not strong enough. They formed a committee to support such links. They want to find out the issues and needs of Young Friends. They said they don’t know where they are going, “but we’ll get there.” They expressed confidence in their abilities, faith in the Creator to do what He wants, and asked for prayers and support.

The second area addressed by the consultation was one of communication among Young Friends worldwide. Every Section mentioned this concern. A group to explore

options was formed. It was acknowledged that young people have many ways of communicating. There is a website which is not being used and needs someone to work on it. They agreed that Young Friends need to share their experiences at the World Plenary with one another and beyond. It was suggested that Reps be aware of what is going on with Young Adults in their area and share that information on whatever format is developed.

Finally, the consultation talked about the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. The Executive Committees of both the Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) and Section of the Americas (SoA) were clear that the pilgrimage cannot continue with 16-18 year olds. We cannot take responsibility for international travel for that age group. Other ways need to be found to serve them.

The idea of a pilgrimage for over 18's from all 4 Sections was presented. Pilgrims could travel and participate in and/or organize events for 16-18 yr olds. This might take place over a number of years, and with a smaller amount of time than the traditional pilgrimage (5 weeks). The idea was more like a travelling ministry. Perhaps the YAFs travelling could visit at the time of a Section meeting. Might a World Gathering of Young Friends be connected? Could training be provided for the travelling ministers? Could these include some kind of volunteer work? Could a pilot project be tried?

Concerns were expressed that the spiritual element of "pilgrimage" be retained. While many liked the idea, it was recognized that this would be a different experience and not "replace" the pilgrimage. On the other hand, it looked like more Friends could be involved. Friends recognized that different age groups have different needs. All acknowledged the amazing changes that happened to those who have participated in QYP. However, it was clear that what we had in the past demands something we do not have to give. Sections do not have the capacity to do it nor the finances to make it accessible to all. It had already been stated that we take on the responsibility for children. After 2 years of painful searching by the QYP Committees in EMES and SoA, no way to continue had been found.

It was agreed that the above information needed to be reported, including a brief outline of the idea, the passion of those who have experienced the QYP and an explanation of the obstacles. Friends will continue to work on this and by the end of the WPM, a small ad-hoc group was set up to carry this forward. We expect to hear from them in the future.