

# **Committee of Latin American Friends (COAL) Report:**

## **Work Completed during 2020 to the Present**

One of the greatest blessings that we have experienced during 2020 was being in quarantine due to the pandemic which has battered the whole world. There are many lessons learned and positive experiences that we can glean and share with satisfaction. The fact is, under the old normal, electronic communications did not have the same impact that they do today. Overnight, as if by magic, information and messages began to flow in an incredible way among the larger Quaker family! FWCC-COAL has enjoyed many blessings originating from the pandemic that we wish to share. We now can say that we are grateful to God for each circumstance that allows us to live, because it always brings teachings, learning, and hope for a new dawn.

### **2020 COAL Report**

On February 9th, 2020, we actively began our work. The last face-to-face meeting for the COAL-Central America, Cuba, and Mexico region was held before the quarantine, and there were moments in which we were able to shape new plans to accomplish in 2020! Regretfully all these plans were cut short, but new ones arose that have had marvelous results.

In South America, the representatives of COAL also began 2020 with in-person meetings with representatives. These were a great blessing.

### **What have we accomplished during the Pandemic?**

Everyone has felt a deep need to connect and be in communication with each other. Motivated by this, we have maintained open communication with other representatives of the various FWCC programs, with the Yearly and Monthly Meetings, with youth groups, etc. with excellent results.

- **Our first accomplishment was a meeting of representatives in which we were able to have about 25 people connected via the Zoom platform.** It was an emotional moment and a time of spiritual support that we all needed in that moment. This activity gave rise to the rest of the meetings that were held.

- **First Youth Conference:** Through the leadership and the platform of the Traveling Ministry Corps we initiated the First COAL Latin American Youth Conference. Around 90 young people were able to enjoy this historic event which benefitted their spiritual lives!
- **Better Communication and Contacts with affiliated and unaffiliated Yearly Meetings.**  
Now more than ever we have achieved the best communication and the best contacts with the different affiliated and unaffiliated yearly meetings of the region! The work of FWCC, its purpose, and its mission have been recognized by many people from Friends' churches in Latin America. The most important point to highlight is that FWCC continues to fulfill its mission: Connecting Friends, Crossing Cultural Barriers, and Changing Lives.
- **The opportunity to connect Friends of the affiliated and unaffiliated yearly meetings.** The Friends Church of Indianapolis took the initiative to begin the Friends Church on Zoom project, in which Friends from Bolivia, Peru, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, and Guatemala have participated and through this FWCC has been able to fulfill its roll in connecting Friends. During the programmed worship services, the following have had the opportunity to share the message and praise: Cuba Yearly Meeting, Peru and Bolivia Yearly Meeting, Honduras Yearly Meeting, Guatemala Holiness Friends Yearly Meeting of Chiquimula. It has been a blessing to be part of this project. Subsequently, a good group of these same countries participated in a training about "Musical Harmony" directed by Jonatan Pinto, member of the National Friends Church of Guatemala. It pleases us to know that Friends always communicate, connect, and build with each other, overcoming every type of barrier. And it is even more gratifying to know that FWCC through COAL continues to fulfill its mission.
- **COAL Monthly Newsletter:** We have had the opportunity to include spiritual reflections on topics related to "Faith in the Midst of Adversity." We had reflections written by representatives of our affiliated yearly meetings and by Friends from unaffiliated yearly meetings. During confinement, these reflections provided spiritual support for all of our readers.
- **Second Latin American Youth Conference was held June 20, 2020.**  
This meeting was successful thanks to God's blessing. We had the participation of more than 200 young people from approximately 10 countries (Cuba, El Salvador, United States, Bolivia, Peru, Honduras, Guatemala, Argentina, Brazil, Nicaragua, and Mexico). They praised and glorified the name of God, as well as meeting each other and spending time together, making connections that create a sense of community with a shared heritage.

- **Leaders of the Traveling Ministry Corps—Committed and Spiritually-Gifted (Members from the different meetings of COAL):** The Traveling Ministry Corps has worked with perseverance, responsibility, and dedication. As well as their ministries, they have taken on the leadership of the organization of online events that include the publicity information that we use to promote the activities: such as posters, video editing, and all the materials that one can use to best develop each activity. We have been blessed that we can count on a committed team.
- **Latin American Women's Conference "Bendecidas para Bendecir / Blessed to Bless Others."**  
This meeting resulted in an incredible online assembly. Approximately 300 women connected to enjoy the event (Cuba, El Salvador, United States, Bolivia, Peru, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Mexico). It was an extraordinary experience to have for the first time the opportunity to gather together with sisters from the different women's groups of Latin America, sharing the same feeling; in worship, praise, and in each activity that was planned for their spiritual benefit.
- **The Latin American Children's Conference "Brilla para Cristo / Shine for Christ."** We think that children also need to be included in these projects, to bring them spiritual blessings and the opportunity to meet other children from around Latin American and thus to develop the future leadership of FWCC. This project was headed by members the Christian education groups of the Yearly Meeting of El Salvador and the Traveling Ministry Corps. It took place July 18, 2020.  
This was FWCC's first experience with programming for children. It was a well-attended conference. More than 300 children connected. Some of them were in groups of 10, 8, 5, or 15 children around each device. Children from around 10 Latin American countries and the U.S. participated, and they were from both affiliated and unaffiliated meetings. (Guatemala, Venezuela, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, Bolivia, and Mexico) It was a blessing to share with each one of them. And for the children it was an unforgettable experience.

### 2021 Activities

- **The First Latin American Men's Conference "Valientes / The Brave"**  
This conference took place January 30, 2021, with the participation of around 35 brothers from different yearly meetings such as: El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, and the USA. We also had the opportunity to include brothers from Venezuela. With this event we concluded the first round of conferences. They allowed us to remain united despite the distance, and we gave ourselves the chance to reach more Quaker families, churches, and yearly meetings.
- **Fund-raising Project for those suffering from the Hurricanes Eta and Iota**

In December 2020, a consciousness-raising process began to seek support for those affected by the Hurricanes Eta and Iota, which hit Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. These countries were devastated; many people were left without homes, belongings, and in precarious health conditions because of the flooding as well as the pandemic. During the months of December and January, FWCC-Section of the Americas-COAL, the World Office, and the other Sections promoted through informative newsletters the raising of funds that would be channeled through the yearly meetings in the Central American region. Currently, the project is the process of delivering the funds to the different meetings, which have a structure to distribute the funds, benefitting affected families. We give thanks to each donor that contributed for these families. May God bless their lives and reward them with blessings! We will soon make available a detailed report about this project.

### **Online COAL Meetings of Representatives**

1. **On January 16th the first COAL representatives meeting of 2021 was held.**  
Approximately 25 representatives took part in the meeting. The goal of the meeting was to provide a general orientation to the Section Meeting and welcome the new representatives.
2. **The second meeting took place on February 20<sup>th</sup>** with the goals to motivate representatives to register for the Section Meeting, establish work plans by regions, and set the calendar for 2021 activities.
3. **The third meeting took place on March 6th** with the goal to take care of pending issues from previous meetings as well as the coordination of each region.

It has been a true privilege to be more united and connected during this time of the pandemic. Nothing has stopped our work. God has accompanied us on each one of our projects. This has given us the hope to continue until we could see each other face to face. Our bonds of love continue strengthening our relationships, our Quaker communities, and our spiritual lives.