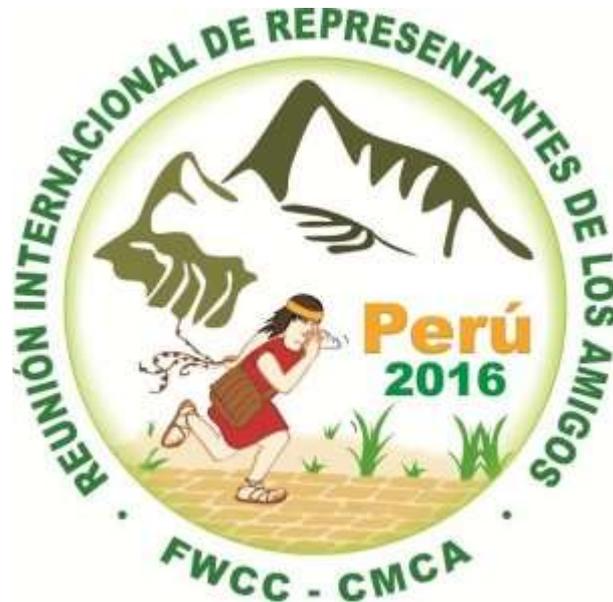


Epistle from 2016 Friends World Committee for
Consultation World Plenary
(International Representatives Meeting).



Se contenta el Corazón ensanchándose de amor; todos a una voz a Dios gracias damos.

¡Bienvenidos Amigos!

To all Friends Everywhere,

We send loving greetings to you from Pisac in the Sacred Valley of the Incas. We were blessed with both sunshine and rain. As we gathered together we lifted our eyes to the mountains and lifted our hearts to God.

From 19 to 27 January over 320 men and women from 37 countries, 77 Yearly Meetings, 8 independent Monthly Meetings, and 2 worship groups, speaking dozens of languages met to consider the theme “Living the transformation: creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (Romans 8:19).”

Our time together started in sadness at those who were delayed in their journeys or prevented from joining us – we felt a gap in our gathering the shape of God. Later,

as we were joined by Friends from Kenya and welcomed local Friends from Peru and Bolivia, we felt the full fellowship among us. We were complete.

Many of the messages shared in our worship, speaking to the theme of transformation were both moving and uplifting: we were challenged to be transformed in ways leaving us more faithful to God's purposes individually, as meetings/churches and as a World Family of Friends.

Our speakers emphasised the process of transformation. One spoke of spiritual transformation using the image of a heart transplant and what it means to be given the heart of Jesus. In this transplant of the heart we become agents of change who show the love of Christ in the world. Another image we were given was that of a seed pod. Each pod contains the past, present and future, showing us how we remain connected to our past even as we look to the future, as God gathers us into one grand story.

We heard the message that we must be open and available to God, making space in our hearts, our communities and our churches/meetings. Transformation often finds us when we're not seeking or expecting it. We must be willing to be vulnerable and open our hearts in order to undergo the change we want to see.

As we gathered we not only spoke of transformation, we invited it and created spaces for God to make it happen. Many of us experienced it while we were here. We found ourselves broken open and touched by the Living Spirit of Christ.

We are the children of God. We are who creation has been waiting for. We are called to reveal ourselves in our lives and in the work we do with our hearts and our hands. Although God can fill our hearts, God has no hands but ours to heal this broken world. We can be salt and light shining to the world and declaring the love of God.

As Quakers our faith is inseparable from our concern to care for all life on earth. We are reminded of the Kabarak call for Peace and Eco-Justice and the need to redouble our efforts now. We call on Friends everywhere to take practical actions to sustain life on Earth.

Listening together in our home groups, workshops, and consultations, where two or three languages were spoken, opened up countless opportunities to pray, sing, ask difficult questions, learn, cry and laugh together. We have hurt each other with our words when we have spoken without love but this is a human failing and we have also experienced the healing power of Christ's love.

We learn from each other's ways of connecting with God; each offering of worship held within it the opportunity for the Spirit to move and speak and sing. Sharing worship in this way enables us to recognise that we must both listen to, and speak to God.

The presence of so many young adult Friends among us has been a blessing. We heard their moving testimony and experienced their inspirational leadership. As we go back to our churches and meetings we must allow this ministry and leadership to flourish.

We are different. We came together as a diverse collection of Friends. We were challenged by our differences. This challenge is not always comfortable but it is one we welcome.

We are one. We are one in the spirit of God which does not wash away or hide our differences, but allows us to celebrate them and enables us to move beyond the spiritual boundaries that may separate us. We are able to do this by coming together in worship where, while its form may be unfamiliar, God was present throughout. Through listening deeply and tenderly to each other and to God we reached a place where we can hear and sense where the words come from even when we may not understand the tongue they are spoken in.

We are Friends. In making the choice to come together and be willing to share deeply, pray boldly, and listen lovingly together, we seek to move beyond our differences, see beyond our labels and find ways to connect with each other. The work of FWCC depends on us all. In order to continue it, we encourage Friends, meetings/churches and Yearly Meetings to contribute financially to and participate in building connections between Friends.

As we leave here we will carry the love we have received from each other and from God in our hearts.