

Epistle
Friends World Committee for Consultation
Central Executive Committee
June 2020

To Friends Everywhere:

Greetings from the FWCC Central Executive Committee. We have held our annual meeting by a series of videoconferencing sessions spanning five days, 11-15 June 2020. While we miss the fellowship of in-person meetings, the conversations over meals and cups of tea, the sharing of sunsets and walks, we have learned new skills in electronic meeting, and are grateful for the “tech elders” who have guided us.

We gather in the midst of dual challenges: a global pandemic and associated economic crisis that has upended all our normal ways of working and being together, plus widespread, largely peaceful, popular protests throughout the world challenging long-entrenched patterns of racial and social inequities and colonial domination. The dual crisis has starkly revealed injustices that are too often hidden from those who are more privileged. Throughout the world, we have been brought into a new reality, in which many people echo the plea, “I can’t breathe.” God is giving us the gift of another chance to right so many wrongs that have gotten us to this place. We long for healing, justice, and reconciliation. These challenges resonate with work FWCC has already undertaken, to expand our use of digital communication and to address and transform historical patterns of injustice.

During these sessions we have found it difficult to make firm plans for the future, given the profound sense of uncertainty about the global economy and the pandemic. Nevertheless, we have moved forward in faith with our normal work of budgets and audited accounts, reviewing the work of FWCC’s committees and Sections, and evaluating the General Secretary. We have been heartened by reports of the creative ways Friends in each Section have found to channel resources to help bridge the digital divide, connecting Friends in ways we would have thought impossible only a few months ago. Many Friends are taking advantage of opportunities to worship online with Friends at considerable geographical distance, creating new relationships. We are planning a number of online presentations in connection with World Quaker Day, 4 October 2020, on the theme “What does it mean to be a Quaker today? Living into a faithful life in a changing world.” We have reluctantly postponed the next World Plenary Meeting for one year until July 2024, in Durban, South Africa, with a sequence of online events during 2023 to help prepare for it and engage Friends around the world.

We hold in prayer those in economic distress, those who are sick with coronavirus, and the families of the many thousands who have died. We are reminded that God knows all and understands all. We can rest in peace, trusting that God's care makes us lie down in safety. What marks us as Christ's disciples, in this time as in any other, is our love for one another. We extend our greetings and our love to Friends in whatever circumstances you may find yourselves, and look forward to connecting with you in the coming months as way may open.

Job Bikokwa (Evangelical Friends Church Kenya)	Sec Africa Section
Gretchen Castle (Philadelphia YM)	General Sec FWCC
Elizabeth Cazden (New England YM)	Assistant Clerk FWCC
Ronis Chapman (Australia YM)	Sec AWP Section
Michael Eccles (Britain YM)	Sec EMES
Myron Guachalla Montano (Bolivia Central YM)	Member at large
Fenwick Kirton-Darling (Britain YM)	Treasurer FWCC
Simon C. Lamb (Ireland YM)	Clerk FWCC
Thule Mbetete (Southern Africa YM)	Member at large
Robin Mohr (Philadelphia YM)	Sec Section of the Americas
Esther Mombo (Highlands YM)	Assistant Clerk FWCC
David Shiner (Illinois YM)	Clerk Section of the Americas
Lee Taylor (Britain YM)	Alternate, Clerk EMES
Ronald Titus (Bhopal YM)	Clerk, AWP Section
Bainito Wamalwa (East Africa YM-North)	Clerk Africa Section