

To members of BYM, to LMs and AMs within BYM

Dear Friends

We are your current representatives serving on the international group that binds Quakers together worldwide. Its title 'Friends World Committee for Consultation' (FWCC) reflects the fact that while all our national Quaker bodies are independent and autonomous, we gain enormously from 'consulting' to share our interpretations of what being a Quaker means today. A completely new level of common understanding can emerge when we meet each other in person, deepening our spiritual understanding.

FWCC has a significant presence internationally. We are keen to raise the profile of its work here at home, among Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting. FWCC's World Office gives us Quaker representation at the world level, through the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and in other UN capacities. Our consultative status at the UN, for example, is awarded through FWCC and FWCC gives us observer status at the World Council of Churches and at the General Secretaries Meeting of the Christian World Communions. All these links are important in making the Quaker presence count worldwide. At the other end of the scale, FWCC's four Sections play a crucial role in supporting very small meetings and nurturing entirely new ones, in Estonia, Georgia and elsewhere. By spreading Friends' ideals and ways of living, it helps to sustain and develop the life-giving and liberating message of Quakerism.

We need more funds if we are to succeed in keeping Quakerism healthy worldwide and in bringing it to the attention of people who would love to know about it. So we are appealing to you and your meeting to contribute to FWCC's work this year.

FWCC's World Office is based in London in Friends House. Its grand title actually covers a staff of one full time (Gretchen Castle) and four part time staff people operating from a small room and gaining support and companionship from those of our own Yearly Meeting who work in the same building and share Gretchen's Quaker commitment. This tiny office is the hub of communications for all four 'Sections' of the Quaker World - Africa, the Americas, Asia-West Pacific, Europe & Middle East. It was FWCC that organised the sixth World Conference of Friends, held in Kenya in 2012, bringing Friends from all over the world together. World Conferences are very rare events indeed, but representatives of Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) meet annually and some of us were able to be in Strasbourg last year to share with Friends from Hungary, Sweden, France, Belgium and all parts of Europe. As BYM representatives to FWCC, we will continue to nurture and strengthen the personal links made there, building on the understanding that grows through such meetings.

It is hard for us in Britain to appreciate the isolation of many Friends in our worldwide family. In some European countries for example, there may be a single worship group, consisting of a handful of Friends, holding regular meeting for worship by telephone conference and hoping to get together in person perhaps a couple of times a year. For Friends in Nepal, a sense of community comes almost entirely from international contacts. It is part of FWCC's remit to nurture and sustain that sense of community across the world, working closely with Section Secretaries. Our own Section Secretary, Marisa Johnson, is based in Cambridge but manages to know European Friends from Tbilisi, Georgia to Ireland and from Estonia to the Middle East. They really value that central contact. When emergencies arise in small Yearly Meetings around the world, FWCC is quick to respond, and British Friends, with others, have proved very generous in responding to specific crisis appeals.

But of course, the funding needs for FWCC itself are continuous. It works hard to secure funds from trusts (it has a long history of support from the JRCT) but it also needs our active support as Britain Yearly Meeting Friends who can both see the vast scope of the task and can appreciate it first hand - because we actually know the core team who is doing it - what it requires of our dedicated staff.

So we are appealing to you - to individual members of BYM, to all our Local Meetings and our Area Meetings - to see what you can personally or corporately contribute in 2015 to keep this work active. We ask you to prioritize your support of Quakers by contributing to FWCC. You can donate by taking a collection, sending a check by mail, giving online via www.fwccworld.org or www.emes.org, or setting up a standing order.

As FWCC representatives, we would be glad to come and show your Area, Regional or Local meeting something of the current work, to bring alive its reality. Do contact us via the Recording Clerk's Office at Friends House (Helen Griffiths: heleng@quaker.org.uk).

We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your support.

In Friendship,

Anne Bennett	Lincolnshire AM
Ann Floyd	Chilterns AM
Alick Munro	Kingston & Wandsworth AM
Lee Taylor	Luton & Leighton AM
Barbara Windle	York AM

BYM's representatives to FWCC and members of BYM's Quaker World Relations Committee

Why Friends World Committee for Consultation needs your support

- ❖ It is FWCC that gives all of us – Quakers in Britain and elsewhere – our international standing and voice. Consultative status at the United Nations comes entirely through FWCC, as does our observer status with the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies.
- ❖ FWCC's engagement with the Quaker United Nations Office allows us to make a difference behind the scenes at the UN on matters of great importance to us, such as the protocol on Child Soldiers which was agreed by the UN.
- ❖ FWCC links us to Yearly Meetings across the world, through the four world Sections. We belong to the Europe and Middle East Section and have personal links through our Section Secretary, Marisa Johnson, our representatives, and through individuals and concerned meetings, to Friends from Estonia to Ramallah, from Ireland to Tbilisi.
- ❖ Many of these groups are tiny. They value the contact with larger Quaker communities. We need the inspiration of seeing how they cope with circumstances so different than ours.
- ❖ A tiny staff at the World Office and in the Sections succeeds amazingly in keeping alive the sense that we are a worldwide family.
- ❖ Please help this work continue by contributing what you can and considering including FWCC in your will.

For more information about this work, contact:

- ***Gretchen Castle, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends House, London (gretchenc@friendsworldoffice.org) www.fwccworld.org***
- ***Marisa Johnson, Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC (emes@fwcc.quaker.org) www.fwccemes.org***
- ***BYM representatives to FWCC, via the Recording Clerk's Office in Friends House (Helen Griffiths heleng@quaker.org.uk): Barbara Windle, Alick Munro, Anne Bennett, Lee Taylor, Ann Floyd***

A brief description of FWCC that can be read out:

Answering God's call to universal love, Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world. Through various means, FWCC is connecting Friends, crossing cultures, and changing lives across our many differences and within our spiritual unity. FWCC provides a Quaker voice at the world level through its global ecumenical participation and its worldwide representation on the Quaker United Nations Committees in New York and Geneva. FWCC works both vertically serving Friends at the world level and horizontally, supporting Friends through the four Section offices. FWCC connects us as Friends in our work, in our worship, and in our lives.

Please give generously to support this important Quaker work. Many thanks!