

## Piedmont Friends-Yearly Meeting & Fellowship

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Report: Friends World Committee on Consultation 2024

Sally Bo Nani: (I see You). This was the greeting as the Friends World Committee for Consultation met in Plenary session in Johannesburg South Africa August 5<sup>th</sup> through August 12<sup>th</sup>. There were @ 500 attendees with all sessions held on line and in person. Approximately 50% of the attendees participated through each channel. There was a COVID outbreak on-site and several conference participants did not come at the last instant or took part only from their rooms. The Gathering was attended by representatives from 53 countries around the world. Over 50 hubs were set up to link Friends from so many time zones and countries. With the time difference our meetings were from 11 pm to 6 am EST.

The theme of Umutu wove through all sessions. It was defined as “I am because we are. Every person is worthy.” After a roll call answered by representatives from 95 yearly Meetings and an additional 30 isolated monthly Meetings and / or wider Quaker organization. We moved into a daily series of worship, presentations, committee reports, and music.

The music was wonderful! There were multiple groups using multiple part harmonies, percussion, and dance as introductions or interludes. Think Paul Simon’s Graceland: The African Concert; Under African Skies sprung to life in front of your eyes! The rhythms stayed with us as we moved into worship and group work.

Everything was done in English, Spanish, and Swahili; so there were pauses for translation. However, this provided time for careful reflection before speaking. Like Yearly Meetings we had reports on the progress, projects, and collaborative efforts from AFSC, FCNL the Mennonite Central Committee, Quaker United Nations Office, and the Sections of Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. There was always a time for questions.

One of the most striking to me was that multiple African Countries and refugee programs asked repeatedly for the AFSC to expand their conflict resolution training programs into more countries. The behind the scenes work of the QUNO and policy efforts of FCNL were also commented on very positively by Yearly Meetings from other parts of the world.

A physician, practicing for decades in Africa, showed how they use the principals of togetherness and prayer to encourage appropriate hand washing around the world. Apply soap bring your hands together, intertwine the fingers, then rub the backs, link the hands, surround the thumbs, and open up into the palms upward to God. It’s felt like a secret handshake with one’s self and different than just singing Happy Birthday while washing.

We also broke off into smaller work and study groups each day. Mine had Friends from Moscow, Japan, India, Bolivia, and New Zealand. Many perspectives were shared but there was much reference to the Testimonies from Friends around the world.

Finally, there was a general epistle compiled recalling George Fox’s Vision that : A great people would be gathered” and we find that we are still here. Reminding ourselves to be valiant and faithful as we imagine a better world.

I appreciate the opportunity to represent the PFYMF.  
Respectfully Submitted.  
Sam Dempsey, Salem Creek

