

Pacific Yearly Meeting Friends Peace Teams Representative Report to Annual Session 2021

SUMMARY

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) seeks resources from the Yearly Meeting in terms of volunteers and modest annual financial support. Can the Yearly Meeting see its way forward to an annual budgeted item of support? Founded in 1993 by North American Yearly Meetings, including PacYM, the various peace ministries and projects work throughout the world in the U.S.

REPORT

Friends Peace Teams is a Spirit-led organization working to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict around the world to create programs for peace building, healing and reconciliation. I am finishing my first year as PacYM Representative during a year of the pandemic that has not led Friends Peace Teams to cut back on its peace ministries. I have been joined by Susan Hopkins of Grass Valley and long-time FPT former Representative Gay Howard of Central Coast. Both have been active with the Friendly Book Collaborative (explore the various projects at <https://friendspeaceteams.org/about/>). FPT seeks more volunteers who might help out in Indonesia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya, Rwanda, Lebanon, Philippines, Chechnya, Nepal, Korea (Jeju Island), and Malaysia. Not to speak of work in the U.S.

I began my service by joining the Working Towards Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (Aug 10 - Oct 26, 2020), a Six-Part Webinar Series co-sponsored by Pendle Hill, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Decolonizing Quakers, and Friends Peace Teams/Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples. These were powerful workshops with several hundred participants. This led me to join the Toward Right Relationship Advisory Committee (only three of us) besides attending the FPT Council monthly meetings. FPT, like many Quaker bodies in the U.S., is engaging in anti-racism and decolonizing work this year (and going forward).

Friends should consider subscribing to the TRR Newsletter, the recent one focusing on Secretary of the Interior Haaland's work to identify the names of the Boarding School children buried at various sites. See <https://friendspeaceteams.org/trr/#trrnews> to subscribe to this monthly newsletter.

I wish to relate one story among many of the work FPT does. In Chechnya (Russia) they work with schools who are dealing with trauma from the wars around the world and formerly in Chechnya. One boy who recently returned from Syria with his family, spoke only Arabic but read English. Trying to integrate into a Chechen school class as an "outsider," he participated in FPT school exercises that allowed him to read the class Russian-language story in English. This relaxed him enough to begin speaking halting Russian later in class. <https://friendspeaceteams.org/pog-in-schools-in-chechnya/>

Whether its reading stories for use in classes around the world, or assisting AVP workshops in a Colombia with growing conflict, or helping with hurricane relief efforts in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, there is much to do. I, myself, would love to see Toward Right Relationship with Indigenous People workshops be developed for our own Yearly Meeting's relationships with indigenous in Nevada, California, Hawaii, Guatemala, and Mexico. A long-term project, but possible with PacYM support.

Thank you for supporting me as your representative.

Stephen McNeil (Strawberry Creek)

FPT Spring 2021 Epistle (a video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpstz2piIo8>