



GREETINGS TO ALL QUAKERS EVERYWHERE,

The 9th AWPS Section Gathering of FWCC, 1-7 April 2011, hosted by one of our newest affiliates, PEFIM (Philippines Evangelical Friends International Ministries), was held in the beautiful surrounds of 'Bukal ng Tipan', a conference centre overlooking Manila in the Philippines. We came from 13 countries, including 12 groups who are affiliated to FWCC, 12 other Friends groups, 3 international Friends plus some visiting enquirers. We came together to make friends, and to share a diversity of practices of worship of our God as we work toward the fulfillment of Christ's promise of living in the Kingdom of God. We shared our witness with each other through different styles of worship in the mornings, on Sunday and in the quietening epilogues.

Our theme of Faith and Action wove through our week, and we shared deeply on this theme with our small Home Groups which met regularly. Our friendships deepened here, experiences and emotions were shared and questions were explored. As each day neared the end, we were treated to the best views of the city as the sun was setting, where the silhouettes of the skyline could finally be seen. The pollution haze was transformed to spectacular colours in the sky, before the vista was lit up by the night lights. This unexpected view helped to broaden our thinking throughout the week.

As the breezes blew and kept us cool, we were led through the Book of James by Janet Scott and Paul Anderson. We learned of James, brother of Jesus, James the man of prayer, guided by the Holy Spirit. Janet encouraged us to revisit James 2:17-18. She exhorted us by saying as brothers and sisters of James we need to be part of our community, to practice acts of loving and to treat each other equally with respect. Paul Anderson emphasised that Faith without Action is dead. As a world grouping of Quakers, we are drawn to share our witness with each other and to ask 'How is God speaking to us now?'

Beside the keynote speakers, Theresa Quintos-Delos, the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process, explained the Philippine government policy for peace. Despite some reduction in conflict, those involved are conscious of the complexity of the process. We join with Friends and other groups in the Philippines in prayer for continuing resolution of the conflict. This accords with our hope for dialogue and greater understanding between groups, in an atmosphere of cooperation and transparency. We were also able to explore other moves towards peace in some Interest Groups.

We heard about the exciting development of Quaker Centres in both Australia, at Silver Wattle, and in India at the Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia. We pray that both communities further develop their programs and facilities as a means of expressing Quaker Faith and Action.

We were deeply moved by an award winning documentary by a local film maker whose passion is bringing to public notice social injustices in the Philippines. The film was about a group of disenfranchised farmers from Mindanao who carried out a 1700km walk to win back their land. Their cause was supported by the Catholic Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, and the farmers were able to overcome the legal impediments to working the land. It was heartening to see that when people take action on issues fundamental to a fruitful life, they can overcome legal and other impediments.

In small groups we grappled with the FWCC Global Change Queries. Our responses will be forwarded to the World Office for inclusion in Friends' response worldwide, as we seek a distinctly Quaker response.

We were given some hope of moving towards peace by representatives of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. They spoke of the cornerstone message of all religions – love your neighbour as yourself. We saw hope of continuing dialogue that will work towards removing misunderstanding, in order to achieve peace.

We heard from our Clerk about the progress of the Section in its 26 years, including embracing electronic advances in our work. We have welcomed Friends from the programmed and evangelical churches, and the affiliation to the FWCC of PEFIM, Mahoba and Marble Rocks in India has doubled our membership. We have confidence in our Young Friends, and we have all been encouraged that by including them in our gatherings we can nurture them into leadership roles.

We were given some hope of moving towards closer interfaith relations by representatives of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. They spoke of the cornerstone message of all religions – love your neighbour as yourself. We saw hope of continuing dialogue that will work towards removing misunderstanding, in order to achieve peace.

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Our Japanese Friends have been doing their best to help victims of the recent earthquake and tsunami by offering their meeting houses to accommodate some of those affected. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Japan, and also those in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The Gathering came to a conclusion with a heart-warming multi-cultural performance of songs, poems and stories. This expression of unity as brothers and sisters in Christ will carry us on in our endeavour to continue building our faith and action.

DILAWAR CHETSINGH

Clerk AWPS



**FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION
ASIA WEST PACIFIC SECTION INC.**

