

# **BUILDING THE FUTURE AS WAY OPENS: REFLECTING ON OUR 2025 SECTION MEETING (Section of the Americas)**

From March 20–23, 2025, 145 Friends gathered in Scottsdale, Arizona and 30 more connected online for the FWCC Section of the Americas Meeting. We came from all across the Americas and beyond, including the largest Latin America delegation in recent memory. Friends traveled from their homes in Bolivia, Canada, Jamaica, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Peru, the United Kingdom, and the United States—to be together in the Spirit and celebrate our diversity in fellowship. The theme of our gathering, *“Building the Future as Way Opens,”* was drawn from Isaiah 43:19: *“Look, I am doing something new! Now it emerges; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the desert and rivers in the wasteland.”*

And we truly saw something new emerge among us.

Throughout our time together, worship set the heartbeat of our days. Each morning began with early worship—quiet, grounded, Spirit-led. **We experienced rich and diverse forms of worship led by Latin American Friends, Conservative Friends, and Young Adult Friends. Each voice, each style, was a reminder of how our varied spiritual practices all seek and serve the same Divine source.**

Bible study sessions opened the scriptures in new ways, inviting us to listen with fresh ears and softened hearts. Home groups offered a space to reflect, laugh, and share stories across languages and backgrounds. In these small circles, we grew in our understanding of one another—not just intellectually, but spiritually and as members of a greater community.

In addition to worship and fellowship, we came together in workshops and business sessions, exploring how FWCC can live more deeply into its calling. After a successful campaign “Becoming the Quakers the World Needs”, we feel some fatigue on committees and in our fundraising efforts as transition, new programs and reorganization require more new energy.

We saw progress on new programming made possible by the campaign. We shared a **beta version of our Digital Quaker Glossary, an evolution of a collaborative tool for making Quaker terms and vocabulary accessible to all in English and Spanish.** We look forward to the next phase of this project, supporting our active Bilingual Services team to develop a certified interpretation and translation program. **We also announced new partnerships on our digital map, offering a single source to find Friends’ projects as well as meetings, churches and worship groups around the world.** Our Quaker Connect program launched in the days leading up to the Section Meeting and apprentices from meetings across the Section joined our gathering for the first time with new perspective and enthusiasm for what is possible in the Society of Friends. To witness their excitement and growing connection was to witness the future unfolding before our eyes.

**Young Adult Friends brought great energy to the gathering, not only in their worship leadership but also in their fellowship.** They explored the desert gardens together, shared meals and laughter, and took part in a service project for a local Friends meeting—**offering their hands and hearts in service as part of a first-of-its-kind pre-conference gathering for young people across the Section.**

Evan Welkin, our new Executive Secretary, introduced himself and set his personal experience within our gathering theme and what is unfolding in the Section. Joined by FWCC General Secretary Tim Gee, they both invited us to trust God and in each other as an unknown path unfolds before us in a time of uncertainty and great possibility. Our plenary speakers, Ana

Gabriela Castañeda Aguilera and Debbie Humphries, built on this theme and reminded us of examples from scripture and our own lives when we are invited to do new things: how do we respond? We are excited that Ana and Debbie's remarks will be printed for distribution soon.

We are, as ever, a community of Friends seeking unity across languages, cultures, and traditions. This gathering gave us the opportunity to treasure our diversity and to celebrate our shared commitment to God's leading among us. There were long conversations over meals, joyful singing in multiple languages, and celebration over the work we are doing throughout the Section. Embracing Friends from across the globe, not just physically but spiritually, helped us find new ways to speak, to listen, to walk forward together.

The Spirit is doing something new among us. We came away from this gathering excited about projects that inspire and unite us, energized by the possibilities that lie ahead. We are also clear-eyed about the clear and present challenges in the world around us today. As we return to our home countries and meetings, may we continue to walk forward in faith, trusting that the road will open, and rivers will flow, even in the wasteland.

As Ana Gabriela shared powerfully with us during her evening plenaries: "Sometimes, it's the very act of stepping into the unknown that prepares us in ways we never imagined." Like the road in the desert or the river in the wasteland, this gathering reminded us that new paths are revealed when we walk forward in faith, trusting the unknown. We are all grateful for every person who made this gathering possible and for each Friend who took that leap. Together, we are building the future—as way opens.