



# *Interview with Aric Clark*

March 2007

**Q. What years and where did you study with Friends World?**

A. Fall 1999	Southampton, New York
Spring 2000	Lisboa, Portugal
Fall 2000 – Spring 2001	London, UK
Hiatus	
Fall 2002 – Spring 2003	CRC (Taiwan, Thailand, Italy, Greece & Turkey)
Fall 2003 – Spring 2004	Edinburgh, UK.

**Q. What was your favorite center and why?**

A. Well, as you can see I chose to study away from the FW centers a good part of my time in the program. The only actual center's I visited was the old Southampton campus and the old London, Highgate campus. My experiences in every place were amazing, but the CRC program as a whole really takes the cake for being the most transformative aspect of a FW education.

**Q. What is your most memorable single experience while on the CRC Program?**

A. One fall afternoon in Taiwan, on our field trip down the eastern side of the island we stopped at a massive temple for a brief visit. Unbeknownst to any of our organizers it was the day of a major pilgrimage festival for the deity of this particular temple. All of the deities of the nearby temples were processing up the path with firecrackers, drummers, costumed dancers, priests and mediums flagellating themselves to encourage a trance, rice cakes, incense... the experience was overwhelming. Several in our group were appalled by the violence of the flagellators, others were mesmerized by the music and dancing. I felt that I had quite suddenly been plunged through the membrane between this world and a very alternate dimension.

**Q. What are you doing now?**

A. I am 2/3 of the way finished with a Masters of Divinity degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary. I am pursuing ordination in the Presbyterian Church USA where I hope to be involved in ecumenical partnerships with other churches and indeed interreligious dialogue with other traditions entirely.

**Q. How did CRC help you to achieve your goals?**

**A.** Quite frankly, I received my call to ministry partly through my experiences on CRC. It was the immersion in religious communities with committed practitioners from traditions very different than my previous experiences that prompted me to explore my own commitments more closely. A deep admiration for the faith of the other is still a guiding force in my own adventures in faith. Beyond the motivational and transformational aspects of the program it also equipped me with a variety of tools that I am helpless NOT to employ in pretty much every interaction I have on a daily basis. The Bay Area is a very culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse community – I am always finding it relevant to attempt a gestalt switch.

**Q. What advice do you have for current and prospective students?**

**A.** Never make the mistake of believing that education is primarily about content or communication of information. Education is about transformation. To discover what you have learned and whether it is worthwhile ask yourself “who have I become?” rather than “what do I know?”