

Friends United Meeting
A Season of Hope and Light
Triennial 2021
General Secretary Report
Kelly Kellum

Friends,

I am humbled and grateful to serve as the General Secretary of Friends United Meeting. This triennial report allows me to reflect on FUM's work and challenges during the last triennium and prayerfully consider how FUM is being called to embody our mission and ministry priorities for the next three years. This is not the triennial reunion we envisioned when the Representative Body left our gathering in Wichita, Kansas, four years ago. At that time, we looked forward to our next gathering in July 2020, in person, in Kenya. We did not envision a virtual triennial, a year late, with Friends gathering by video conference or telephone. Neither did we envision the disruptions, griefs, and stresses of a global pandemic. This season is teaching Friends to hold plans lightly, adapt to shifting conditions, embrace new technologies and opportunities, and rely on God's faithfulness.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." These ancient words remind us of the natural order and changing circumstances of life. Friends United Meeting is experiencing several significant seasonal changes.

Season of Transition

During the last three years nearly every program and department of FUM has adjusted to multiple staff changes and transitions:

- Kristna Evens resigned as the Manager of Friends United Press.
- Barbara Smith retired as our Finance Manager.
- Candi Young left her position at Belize Friends School.
- Ben Snyder, Coordinator of North American Ministries, and Julie Rudd, Media Specialist, left FUM to focus on their pastoral callings.
- Andy Albertini, RFS Advancement Officer, resigned to become the director of a nonprofit in Dallas.
- Ken Saina was released from his position as the Finance Manager at the Africa Ministries Office.
- Sammy Letoole, Samburu Mission Director, resigned to accept an appointment to a position in the county government.
- Eden Grace resigned in December 2020, after sixteen years of service as FUM Field Staff and Director of Global Ministries.
- Adrian Moody will be leaving his position as Head of Ramallah Friends School on June 30, 2021.

- This summer, John Moru will leave his work as the Director of Turkana Friends Mission.
- Next March, Africa Programme Officers Katrina and Shawn McConaughy will return to the United States, where Shawn will become the Superintendent for Western Yearly Meeting.

These transitions are challenging Friends United Meeting to reenvision staffing responsibilities, restructure departments, and welcome new team members.

In the Finance Department, Kira Young was hired as Financial Services Manager, and then promoted to serve as FUM's Financial Services Director. Kira oversees the financial operations of FUM, specifically charged to simplify FUM's accounting and reporting procedures, manage financial records and implement financial control, collaborate with other directors and department heads, and oversee the implementation of the multi-year budget. Emonse Muhindi joined the Africa Ministries Office (AMO) staff as the Operations Manager. He works closely with AMO staff and Kira to oversee the daily operations of the office, including financial management.

Communications Department. In May 2019, FUM expanded Shari Veach's responsibilities to include serving as the Interim Press and Bookstore Manager. This allowed FUM to continue press and bookstore operations as we marked Friends United Press's fifty years of service. Additionally this triennium, FUM worked to expand our communications and social media presence with African Friends. Kate Gunza, of the Africa Ministries Office, was promoted into a new position as the Communications and Events Coordinator. She is actively working to expand FUM's Whatsapp, Facebook, and Telegram Groups.

Global Ministries Department. Eden Grace's departure created a significant void in our global ministries programs. To provide more support and oversight for these programs, FUM formed the new Global Ministries (GM) team. Colin Saxton returned to FUM to oversee North American engagement. He oversees leadership and spiritual formation among North American Friends, as well as development programs. Karla Jay was hired to serve as the coordinator of the Global Ministries team, and provide administrative support for field staff and team directors, including Kira Young (GM finance), Colin Saxton (GM fundraising), and myself (GM programs and personnel). Among Project Partner personnel, FUM is pleased to welcome Frank Tench, Principal of Belize Friends School; Rania Maayeh, the incoming head of Ramallah Friends School; Daniel Lentirangoi, the new Director of Samburu Friends Mission, and Peter Lotenga, appointed to be the Director of Turkana Friends Mission.

During the coming weeks, FUM will finalize staffing plans to ensure Shawn and Katrina's vital work among Friends in East Africa continues, as they plan to leave in less than a year.

It remains my joy to support the work and ministries of FUM's amazing, dedicated, and highly gifted staff team.

Season of Service and Generosity

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the priorities and ministries of FUM for nearly eighteen months. At the beginning of this triennium, FUM did not anticipate a singular crisis that would impact every Yearly Meeting, association, project partner, and program of FUM. Local Meetings and churches are adopting new ways of gathering, schools are responding by innovating new educational platforms, and stay-at-home orders are changing how many of us work. For nearly a year, most Richmond staff worked remotely from their homes.

The pandemic compounds the disparities and vulnerabilities experienced by people in the communities we serve. Getry Agizah, Programme Coordinator for the Friends Church Peace Team, offers pastoral care and support for young girls who are victims of sexual assault. Oscar Mmbali and Nikki Holland, FUM's staff in Belize City, deliver food parcels with love to families on the South Side, a community experiencing an unemployment rate of 68%. Adrian Moody, Head of Ramallah Friends School, is working tirelessly to ensure that the school continues to offer a world-class Quaker education despite Covid restrictions, school closures, and military occupation.

This triennium, FUM is experiencing the creativity and generosity of our community. Responding to the need for remote learning, friends of Ramallah Friends School donated 125 laptops for teachers, and Friends Theological College launched its new e-learning program. FUM established the Solidarity Fund, and African Friends formed a collaboration of FUM, Friends Church Kenya, and FWCC–Africa to respond to the humanitarian and spiritual needs of vulnerable communities. Friends gave generously, and FUM distributed \$96,000 for PPEs for Friends medical work, flood relief, feeding programs, teachers' support, hospital expenses, funeral expenses, and other emergency needs. We are thankful for the generosity of all those who have enabled FUM to connect the global family of Friends and serve vulnerable communities.

Season of New Connections

FUM continues its commitment to connecting the global community of Friends to resources that enhance the spiritual life and identity of Friends. This triennium, the Communications team launched a new website. While this site continues to be built, <https://www.friendsunitedmeeting.org/> features staff pages, a new giving platform, a governance page for board members, contact information for member Yearly Meetings and Associations, field staff pages, and a news blog. More and more churches and groups are discovering FUM through the internet. This includes a group from southern Tanzania who

found us online, and another group who call themselves Friends United Meeting Haiti. FUM's website is a front door to our ministry and a tool for outreach.

Additionally, FUM has expanded the production of our weekly E-news. This email newsletter is released on Wednesdays, containing highlights from member Yearly Meetings and Associations, field staff updates, program activities, job postings, and much more. The editorial team includes staff members from both the AMO and Richmond offices. Please sign up to receive FUM's E-news.

Quaker Life continues to be an important publication for FUM. In this triennium, each issue of *Quaker Life* focused on a single theme of spiritual life. Recent issues have included the topics Hope, Joy, Mercy, Crisis, Peace, Abide, and Light; Community is the theme for the summer 2021 issue. Friends are invited to write Biblical reflections, life experiences, and wisdom around each theme.

One of the ways FUM is keeping Friends connected is through prayer. Currently, FUM is hosting monthly international prayer gatherings on Zoom and WhatsApp to learn how we can pray for our fellow members. Ron Bryan, presiding clerk of FUM writes, "It is powerful praying as a global community, to listen to the cares and concerns of people from around the world, and pray together with one voice."

A Season for Sustainability and Growth

At its meeting in March 2019, the FUM General Board discussed the fact that no Board committee had a designated responsibility for the long-term financial welfare of Friends United Meeting. The Long Range Financial Planning Task Group was formed to look at FUM's long-term financial welfare and make recommendations regarding ways to strengthen that welfare. Members of this group include the Clerk and Assistant Clerk–Africa; one representative each from the Finance Committee, Advancement Committee, and Trustees; and the General Secretary. The final report of this group is found in the documents hosted on Box.

Among the Task Force recommendations approved by the General Board is the adoption of a new sustainability policy. The mission of Friends United Meeting is to "energize and equip Friends through the power of the Holy Spirit to gather people into fellowships where Jesus Christ is known, loved, and obeyed as Teacher and Lord." To encourage long-term financial dependence is not a strong model of energizing and equipping Friends. Rather, FUM hopes to support the development of long-term financial sustainability in all of our ministries. This will mean coming alongside local leadership of ministries to help those ministries become increasingly sustainable over time. This absolutely does not imply a diminishing of our spiritual partnership with any given ministry. Rather, we believe that a genuine spiritual *partnership* is one in which neither party is dependent on the other.

Sustainability will look different for different ministries. Some ministries will be best served by developing endowments; others will be best served by developing a local

business that generates income; others may have yet a different path to sustainment. During the coming triennium, Friends will learn about the appointment and work of the new Sustainability Committee, and the job description for a new, standing Sustainability Committee.

A Season to Energize and Equip Friends

In the coming triennium, FUM will expand our commitment to energize and equip Friends. In January 2021, we welcomed Colin Saxton back to FUM as the Director of North American Ministries. He is launching a series of new ministries to support the spiritual health of North American Friends. Through his work with Everence and the Lake Institute, he will provide stewardship and generosity resources for Yearly Meetings and local congregations. Over Pentecost weekend (May 21-23) this year, FUM hosted Stoking the Fire, a “virtual” spiritual retreat for Friends eager to deepen their relationships with God. In the coming triennium, you will learn about other workshops, renewal opportunities, and resources to support North American Meetings and churches, and Yearly Meetings and Associations.

John Muhanji also has a new ministry focus. While he continues to serve as the Director of African Ministries, other staff members are now overseeing the daily operations of the office. This frees John up to focus on leadership development, fundraising, and mission mobilization among African Friends. Recently, John participated in the Transformational Leadership Conference hosted by Friends Theological College. He is working to equip the new African Missions Committee, which is planning a significant missions conference this year. This year, you will learn about new outreach strategies and leadership opportunities to support the ministries of our African Yearly Meetings and churches.

Spiritually equipped leaders and energized Meetings and churches are God-given pathways for the hope and light of Christ to transform lives and change the world. This is why Friends United Meeting is making a commitment to serve our members in new ways. This is a season of new life for Friends United Meeting, and it is exciting to prayerfully anticipate the possibilities that will spring forth.

During these sessions, John and Colin will expand on FUM’s vision to energize and equip Friends.

A Season of Hope and Light

In 2021, Friends United Meeting has adopted the theme “Hope and Light” to reflect the spiritual message we want to convey to our FUM members and the world. The Scriptures remind us, **“God is light, and in him, there is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)** The people of the world continue to experience the multiple stresses of global pandemic, racial tension, political division, financial inequality, war and violence, and environmental disruption—yet, as a community, FUM affirms a life-giving hope that light will overcome the shadows of darkness and despair. We witness this through the amazing work being done by the

members, staff, and ministry partners of Friends United Meeting. This is a season of hope and light.