

Friends Church of North Carolina (FCNC)
Epistle to All
August 13-14, 2021

Dear Friends,

We, the members of the Friends Church of North Carolina (FCNC) attending the 2021 Annual Sessions, send our greetings and best wishes to our sister yearly meetings and organizations. We were very thankful to be meeting in person this time at Quaker Lake and virtually, despite the Covid 19 pandemic ravaging our world. We rejoiced being again able to see Friends and acquaintances, and thankful we could also worship and conduct worship for business. Roll call indicated that 20 of the 28 member meetings of FCNC were able to send representatives in person or virtually.

In listening to reports from both the Committee on Clerks and the Nominating Committee we realize that there is much to be done and sometimes it seems few do the work. Remarkably most of the committees have enough willing volunteers to begin this work. In Superintendent Mike Wall's report we were challenged to be "fishermen" just as were Jesus' disciples. They all became Christ's fishermen, receiving their training during Pentecost. So we should be stepping forward to fill the roles and jobs to be done within the Friends Church of North Carolina.

We finished the first evening in worship with songs by Bob Spencer on the guitar and an inspiring forward looking, challenging message by Ron Bryan, Friends United Meeting Clerk. "It doesn't help to argue about the faith. Communication will probably happen when you are honest, genuine and share your own story. Your story will speak to other people."

On Saturday morning we appropriately began in worship with Tommy Sluder and morning praise. We then returned to listen to reports from committees within the yearly meeting and beyond.

Coming from this year's work of the FCNC Administrative Oversight committee, and approved during these sessions, we accepted the proposed changes to Faith and Practice concerning the yearly meeting committees. Also, one copy per monthly meeting of a directory listing each meeting, address, contact information was distributed. Remembering the past, it was approved to form a committee to plan for a celebration in 2022 of 350 years of Quakerism in North Carolina. And looking to the future, the renewal of a yearly meeting internship program was approved, giving experience to future church leaders. We heard of the activities done and planned by the Ministers Association; that the Young Adult Committee has a beach trip planned, and that Beulah Gullion is the new Friends Campus Ministry coordinator working with college groups in Greensboro, NC State University (Raleigh) and expanding to others. There is much hope for the future.

Jenny Gullion, FCNC's Social Media Coordinator, announced the development of a monthly E-News Letter that will be available to all interested. It will include recent and upcoming activities, what we believe statements, social media tips, etc. Jenny also manages the yearly meeting FaceBook pages.

Missions has always been a strong interest of the members of FCNC. The yearly meeting financially supports work Friends United Meeting does in Belize, Africa, Ramallah and Jamaica. We are proud to be personally involved in these areas. Connections and financial assistance is also given for the work in Matamoros, Mexico area where the village pastor Hilda Martinez leads their own meeting mission work to the island, Isla

Fantasia. The FCNC Missions Committee once again had a silent auction fund raiser during these yearly meeting sessions.

Members of the FCNC are interested in work done through many organizations affiliated with Quakers. This yearly meeting we heard from Katy Moran about Kaleo Academy and Barclay College, from Kindra Bradley about Quaker House in Fayetteville, NC, and Friends Homes updates from Brent McKinney. Gwen Erickson sent information about Quaker Archives of Guilford College. Heather Varner met with us, live, virtually telling us about the successful camping program this summer at Quaker Lake (where FCNC is meeting). There were also displays from a few other organizations. FCNC Literature Committee had books for sale; NC USFW had the USFWI 2021-22 reading list books for sale.

Annual Sessions is a time for cherishing the memories of those who have died. Each meeting within each quarter holds dear the memories of those no longer with us. These names were respectfully read and then honored with “Amazing Grace” beautifully sung by Gloria Simmons.

Worship is also a time to celebrate: we took time to celebrate the recording of these pastors who have completed their studies for recording. Recommended by the Recording Committee and approved during these annual sessions were Patrick Mitchell See, Gloria Rose Simmons and Charles Thomas Sluder. We also rejoice that there are three others continuing with their quest to be recorded. We honored Rusty Parsons for his more than forty years as a pastor and the retirement of Ben Hurley and his fifty years of pastoral work.

Workshops by Karla Jay and Ron Bryan gave us an opportunity to learn more about Friends United Meeting and their activities in the US, Belize, Ramallah (Palestine) and Kenya. We learned of their potential and how we can become involved. Jenny Gullion, FCNC Social Media Specialist, led a workshop that advised and illustrated tips about the use of social media. This workshop is pertinent for our meetings, many who are now using this media more as an outreach to all, and not just to those “for whom there is no other way” to be a part of a meeting for worship.

Friends Church of North Carolina (FCNC) concluded these annual sessions with a cookout hosted by the NC Quaker Men and followed by vespers music by about 20 youth from around the yearly meeting singing a collection from the Quaker Lake Camp songbook. Ron Bryan’s closing message used stories: his own life story, from George Fox, Stephen Crisp, and others. “Speak as if you are speaking the very word of God. If we practice our faith, hang onto the hope, and putting it into motion we will meet the challenge of hope for the future.” Our hope is in the Lord.

Friends Church of North Carolina is alive, striving with hope to fulfill His work as was the theme for these annual sessions “My Hope is in the Lord”, Colossians 1:5

Rausie Hobson, Rocky River Friends, Western Quarterly Meeting

Brenda McKinney, Clerk, Friends Church of North Carolina