

**Friends Church of North Carolina
Annual Sessions
August 8-9, 2025
Quaker Lake Camp**

Annual Session started at 2:00 PM Friday afternoon. Presiding clerk, Roger Holt, welcomed all.

Devotions/Prayer: Roger Holt; spoke on Psalm 150—the Praise psalm. Do you praise him enough? Ginger Holt lead with song: *“Be thou My Vision”*

Announcements:

Roger Holt made a few announcements before the rest of the business meeting proceeded: He gave thanks to Monica Williams and the rest of the program committee for putting everything together for this year’s Annual Sessions.

He reminded all Meetings that the Annual Statistical Report is due at the end of this month.

The memorial service will be held Saturday afternoon. If your Meeting has Memorials, make sure your information is correct in the pamphlet and let David Briles know today if any corrections need to be made before the service on Saturday.

Donations this weekend will be taken for the following: Quaker Lake Camp; Baltimore Friends; Youth Commission International.

The Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC) will meet briefly this afternoon at 4:30pm in Heather Varner’s office.

Roll call: Recording Clerk, Christine Blamer, conducted the roll call. There were 65 Friends representing 20 Meetings and 9 visitor(s) present.

Regrets: Etta Florence Winslow; Heather Varner; Geraldine Brannon

Reading/Approval of Minutes from Representative Body Meeting, March 29, 2025:

These were posted on the FCNC website for view prior this Meeting and also emailed. Therefore they were not read aloud. Roger Holt asked if there were any corrections needed to the minutes. There were a few corrections. Corrected Minutes were then approved by the Body.

Superintendent Report: Mike Wall

Schedules a visit with a different Meeting once a month to talk to the pastors and encourage them. Currently eight churches need pastors.

New developments: Andy Garner new pastor at Science Hill.

Hugh Spaulding pastor at South Plainfield will be retiring at the end of December this year; David Hobson just retired as pastor of Rocky River at the end of June; Randy Quate resigned as pastor at Deep Creek and accepted a call at Nahunta Friends.

There are 28 Churches in FCNC plus one preparative Meeting: Baltimore Friends under the care of White Plains Friends; and one Latino group: Odra Nuevo under the care of

Deep Creek Friends. A few statistics: Every Sunday approximately 1413 are in attendance at our FCNC churches. That equates to an average attendance of 50/ Sunday in each Meeting. However, looking more closely at where the attendance lies, 31% is in 3 churches. At least 10 of our churches have Bi-Vocational pastors which means they cannot give full-time to the ministry.

Looking back... when numbers were much greater and pastors were being raised up in our churches. The Minutes book used to have a column for how many conversions were done. Somewhere between the 1950's and the 1970's we stopped seeing conversions because we forgot about Jesus' core command...to evangelize and go and make disciples.

Today, you cannot look to your youth as the people who will fill your church in the future. Our society is mobile and the youth go to college, find a job and move away. The future is through evangelism, obeying Jesus' command to go and make disciples. We cannot continue to look back. We need to go forward with a different format. Contrary to popular belief, not all churches are struggling. The Superintendent gave an example of a large church in Iowa that is adding 500 more seats to its Worship area and last year planted three new churches. It takes Vision!

Looking back.....Last year the Superintendent spoke about his hope of Planting a different kind of Friends church in a major metropolitan area. The whole plan of how to do this was created, but in the end, they could not find a Pastor capable and willing to fill the role. In addition, it is very costly. However, the idea still exists and the Superintendent hopes someday to make it a reality.

Looking back....A graph was shown from last Annual sessions of our church membership and its slow trend downward. FCNC continues to struggle. Why? Certainly not because of lack of funds. Will God bless a church that does not use the resources He gives it? FCNC churches were compared to the Laodician church in Revelation who were lukewarm.....We lost our flame, our fire—our vision for lost souls. We need to have a plan, a vision, to reach lost souls.

Looking back...A few years ago, the Superintendent was introduced to Misael Morales, a man who said that he was lead by God to North Carolina to plant a new church. The presence of the Holy Spirit was in that meeting between Mike Wall and Misael and the sense to help Misael build that church was strong. The Faith & Practice was translated into their own language which they read and agreed that this is what they believe. Today, there are 65 Million Spanish-speaking people in the United States. 40% of children in schools are Spanish-speaking. How can we help Odra Nuevo Grow! Can we get behind that vision?

Our preparatory meeting, Baltimore Friends desperately needs its own space to worship. There are pockets of Kenyan Quakers in North Carolina who want to worship with us. Helping them could open up a whole new development in FCNC. Can we catch that Vision? According to Kelly Kellum, General Secretary of FUM, there are 500,000 Kenyan Quakers worldwide.

Can we catch a vision for a New Church Plant?—unlike anything we’ve ever seen before? Looking back...We used to offer pastors retirement packages and better salaries. We don’t do that now. So what draws pastors here again?

The Superintendent talked about frustration—not going anywhere, feeling stuck. We need a “fresh wind” a “rekindled spirit” a “fresh fire” he said. “I don’t want to see FCNC continue to shrink. I don’t want to see churches close. Is there risk in change?

Absolutely! I’d rather risk and fail and go bankrupt then come to a point where money is all that is left.” He then quoted Matthew 14:55—the treasure pearl. The moral of the story is to sell it All, Do whatever it takes to possess the Kingdom. Is FCNC sold out?

Looking back....Referenced quotes from Jay Marshall, our keynote speaker 2 years ago.... “Are we going to be a social club or the church?” Last year, Spanish speaker, Samuel Vasquez said “God will provide if we obey and reach out.”

God does things in a Big Way. Examples were given of the amount of stars and galaxies there are; how God provided quail in desert for the Israelites...3 feet deep and as far as a day’s walk in any direction.

Change your attitude—sell it All! And get the treasure! We are clinging to our identity while we are drifting away from our calling.

Looking forward: Six things:

1—Get behind Odre Nuevo; 2—Get behind Baltimore friends; 3—Raise up pastors; 4—PRAY that God will help us plant new churches in population centers; 5—Change our mindset—seek to save Lost souls; 6—Make a Plan. Every church to make a plan for Evangelism. That’s our calling; that’s our purpose.

Ministry & Counsel: Tommy Sluder

On May 17th an informal meeting of Ministry & Counsel members, pastors, and Elders from the Meetings “Gathered and had Conversation.” Seventy members attended.

Discussion revolved around answering four questions:

What do we Agree with?

What do we want to Adapt?

What do we want to Adopt

What do we want to Abandon?

Two things came out of this meeting:

1) Need for leadership with vision and

2) increased effective communication.

A second meeting was held in July and was an official M & C gathering. Fifty people came to discuss next steps. Tommy quoted Proverbs 16:9: “In his heart, man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” It comes down to leadership with a vision. We need an overarching vision, and leadership that can see the plan for the next year(s) to the next generation.

If you Google “Quaker” you get a lot of versions of who we are which can be confusing to anyone looking up “quaker” to see what we believe. Sounds like an “identity” crisis. Does FCNC have that? Can we tell somebody what we believe?

M&C is charged with the Spiritual condition of its body. Question to ask: Are we Quaker Christians or are we Christian Quakers? Which comes first in our Spiritual

condition? We need leadership with a vision, and, we need effective communication both internally and externally to the world because people are confused about who the denomination of Quakers really are. These are the questions FCNC M & C are looking at. All meetings should be asking the same questions of themselves and checking the Spiritual condition of its Meeting.

Recording Committee:

Rodney Kirby was approved at FCNC Ministry & Counsel to be a recorded pastor. Presiding Clerk, Roger Holt presented for recommendation Rodney Kirby before Annual Sessions body for approval. Several positive comments were made about him. He was approved to be a Recorded Minister in FCNC.

Outreach Commission Report: Brent McKinney

The Oversight Commission is under oversight by the Representative Body. Its purposes are: assists in the organization, spiritual life, and financial needs of new meetings, existing meetings, and small meetings. Gives support with grants for a new building, salary for the minister, and program needs. Offers financial assistance to students studying in the area of Christian vocations. Promote evangelism efforts in local meetings, and, be concerned with the growth of the meetings.

The Outreach Commission provides oversight for three major funds: Evangelism; Vocations Funds (Barker funds and General funds); and Church Extension funds.

Church Extension Funds: Spent a total of \$31,174 (Intern Coordinator \$20,000; Southern Quarter—Thomasville Friends \$10,000; As a note, Harmony Grove no longer needs funds and are standing on their own. Mileage Reimbursement: \$1174—to Rusty Parsons (a visiting pastor) for visiting meetings. Available balance: \$224,813. This fund grows about \$60-70,000/year. Brent went through the procedures and application steps for administration of the church extension funds.

Vocations:

-Barker fund: For pastors. Total spent this past year \$5449 (Continuing education: \$4799; Ministers Association \$650) Available: \$63,732

-General funds: (an education fund/loan program). Available funds: \$15,505

Evangelism funds: This past year spent \$3000 (Friends Campus Ministries \$1000; FCNC Program Committee \$2000). Available funds of \$14,976

Vocations - General funds are for those planning to enter ministry. Brent presented before the Body an applicant who doesn't quite fit the usual parameters of the fund guidelines (but still falls within the guidelines under Provision 9) and is submitting for approval Gilbert Imbayi, pastor at our preparatory meeting, Baltimore Friends. Gilbert Imbayi has already completed his education at Barclay but has a balance due of approximately of \$13,000 and is requesting help in paying off his balance to Barclay College. After much discussion, the following was set before the Body by Presiding Clerk, Roger Holt for approval..... *Would friends approve that we allow the Outreach Commission to provide funds to Barclay college to pay off Gilbert Imbayu's indebtedness and allow 2 years of his previous service to count toward the repayment of the loan?* This was Approved. It was also Approved to put out a basket for Love Offerings for Gilbert to help him pay off the remaining amount of his loan to FCNC.

Revitalization Committee: Mike Fulp

Started 4-5 years ago to help some of our Monthly meetings to “revitalize.” The purpose is to help Meetings see what their mission and vision is for the community they are in. And then help them devise a way to go forward with that vision.

What is your mission/vision for your church?

Mike posed many questions to think about to see if your Meeting/Church needs revitalization. He mentioned Harmony Grove as a success story.

Revitalization is not there to Take over your church but to help you, advise you, to find out what you want to do and help you get there.

Quaker House: Wayne finger:

Quaker House is a manifestation of the Friends’ Peace Testimony. Quaker House provides counseling and support to service members who are questioning their role in the military; educates them, their families, and the public about military issues; and advocates for a more peaceful world.

Quaker Lake Camp: Virtual video of Heather Varner

Theme this summer was “More like Jesus” A video of highlights was shown.

Heather announced the upcoming Pumpkin Fall Festival October 18th.

Help support Quaker Lake Camp. Some of the money goes toward helping to support those families/kids that cannot afford to pay.

Friday’s business session ended at 4:30pm

Evening Activities

Evening activities included Worship from Baltimore Friends; Intergenerational Worship from our Young Friends, and Speaker, Troy Thornburg, Director of Operations from Youth Commission International.

Saturday, August 9, 2025

Presiding Clerk, Roger Holt started the meeting at 9:00am. Opened with song: “*Open My Eyes That I May See*”

Roger Holt announced that Harold Salmons is in the hospital this morning. Keep him in prayer.

Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC)—Erin Mintmier

Erin introduced Kelly Kellum, General Secretary from FUM who spoke via zoom. He spoke of the many FUM missions that are supported through Yearly Meetings.

However, FUM has noticed a 30% drop in Givings and they were \$200,000 shy of their budget. Kelly went on the road and raised \$130,000 still leaving them short \$70,000.

Kelly was then able to take some questions about our missions. Erin Mintmier (AOC) asked for approval from the Body to send \$25,000 out of General Funds to FUM to help cover the shortfall. General Funds currently has a balance of \$325,000. The Body Approved.

The idea of changing the Annual Sessions dates in 2026 to November 6-7 was brought up for discussion. By doing this, it may help with more youth participation in Annual Sessions. August is a month of starting school and sports which may be a factor in why there is less involvement. We can try it, and if we don't like it, it can be changed back. Much discussion ensued. Presiding Clerk Roger Holt set the proposal before the Rep Body to ask for approval of moving Annual Sessions next year to November 6-7 and if we don't like it, we can move it back to August. The Body approved.

FUM North American and Caribbean Ministries: Michael Sherman, Coordinator

Read a letter from Kelly Kellum—a letter of “thank you” for our support of FUM. He read from Hebrews 10:22-25 and referenced the different verses through his presentation relating them to the various programs and groups under FUM NA-C ministries. FUM sponsors a program called “Flourishing Friends”—Conversations about what is God calling us to do, regardless of size. He talked about African Friends/Latino Friends North America—so many immigrants coming from different countries (different Friends) coming to America—having the conversations to work together, to spur one another on to advance the Gospel. Talked about “Stoking the Fire” a retreat held on Pentecost weekend every year. It is the opportunity to gather with other people across North America who are experiencing a “call of God” in their life. To help them “stoke the fire” within them, the passion.—just as what happened on that first Pentecost. NA-C Ministries is also working on “Looking Forward” initiatives to connect Friends through Nurture, Cultivate, Support, Connect, Equip, and Energize—to grow and build future leadership especially among young Friends.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC): Rausie Hobson

Four sections to FWCC—we are the FWCC-Section of the Americas. It was held in Arizona this past March.

“Consultation” means you consult and “talk” to others.

FWCC Americas has established three new programs. 1) a Quaker Interactive Map; 2) Quaker Digital Glossary; 3) Quaker Connect. Go to the fwccamericas.org website for more information on these new programs.

Other News: Rausie Hobson

North Carolina United Society of Friends Women (NC USFW) will be meeting September 13, 2025 at Deep River Friends. All women (and men) are welcome.

QUIP—Quakers United In Publications—an international network of Quaker booksellers, authors and publishers. Formats are print, digital, videos, journals.

NCFHS: NC Friends Historical Society—Book back in print: Charity Cook—1700's Quaker woman who traveled the southeastern states and Europe ministering to Quaker meetings. The book costs \$25.

Bob & Hope Carter: SIM

Have served as Medical missionaries in East Africa and Zambia for the last 40 years. They are now teaching at Moffat Bible college in Kenya. Courses include... teaching Bible school students how to interact with young people to teach them skills that are founded and based on biblical wisdom; Other courses include: Human Sexuality and Gender Issues; Community health courses; Church and the Disabled. This is to give

students when they graduate, a tool kit and how to disciple in the community they go into after they graduate.

Hope started a program called: “Today for Tomorrow” helping kids deal with current challenging situations in their lives and how to respond to them. They need more funding to keep this program going.

**Friends International Bilingual Center, Bolivia: Emma Condori Mamani
(Introduction by Brenda McKinney)**

FIBC was established in 2016 by Young adult Friends to provide support to the Bolivian Quaker community and to do service work among Bolivians. Emma is a teacher and works intentionally with young people. Young Friends have currently been working on the Food Security Project—a project to help communities that have been affected by changing climate conditions. You can donate to FIBC online at www.centrobilingueinternacionalamigos.org/en/donaciones

Barclay College—Friends Preaching Initiative: Katy Moran—Program Director

Talked about the Friends Preaching Initiative—for active pastors and aspiring preachers with the goal to help foster compelling preaching in the Friends Church proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in more engaging and effective ways. Gives pastors more “tools” for their “tool box” in preaching and proclaiming the Gospel in more effective ways.

Scott Carter: Missions

Missions budget sheet shows all the missions FCNC supports. Funds are received in two ways: 1) from Trust Funds; 2) Fundraising efforts—from the silent auction held every Annual Sessions and through Missions Sunday-local Meetings set aside one Sunday a year for giving to the missions of FCNC.

Extra funds were allocated to Ramallah and Lugulu Hospital due to USAID cuts. Be in prayer for both of these Missions.

In Belize Friends Ministry, Oscar and Miriam Mmbali are leaving and a replacement is still being worked on. Oscar is the FUM Director In Belize

Matamoros, Mexico missions continues to develop. Hilda and Fernando Martinez are the pastors. An evangelism street program has been implemented. A closed space was obtained to hold summer school for children and to have greater reach in the community as a known location for the church. They also continue to help the people on Fantasia Island with food and supplies. They also help run a radio station on Saturdays. Being on the Missions Committee is open to anyone. They meet three times a year.

Friends Campus Ministries (FCM): Paul Routh

Paul presented the new FCM Board Rotation Schedule for 2026 and beyond. Two slots still need to be filled before the end of 2026. See Paul for more details.

Ally Hylton is the new FCM Coordinator replacing Carrie Ritter. A new Friends campus ministry was started at UNC-Chapel Hill and is currently being led by two Quaker Lake

staff. Still have campus ministries at NC State, Appalachian State, and UNC-Wilmington. Let the Board know if you have children or grandchildren going to one of these universities and they will connect with them.

FUM Triennial 2026 Update: Roger Holt, Clerk

At this time, holding Triennial 2026 is up in the air. A letter from Western Yearly Meeting (Plainfield, IN) where the Triennial was to be held was read voicing many concerns, one mainly being the financial stability of FUM. It was proposed that this Triennial could possibly held via Zoom or Online only instead of In-Person. Roger Holt will keep us updated as he knows more information.

Roger Holt ended business with prayer at 12 Noon.

Afternoon/Evening

The Afternoon activities involved:

Memorial Service for Friends who have passed away in the past year (Aug-July)

Retirement Ceremony: Hugh Spaulding; David Hobson

Recording Ceremony: Rodney Kirby

Evening activities included Worship music and then the Annual Sessions message from Michael Sherman, FUM North American-Caribbean Ministries Coordinator

Respectfully submitted,

Roger Holt, Presiding Clerk

Christine Blamer, Recording Clerk