

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

In 2021, Friends United Meeting has adopted the theme of “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.

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 to reinvasion 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. 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.

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).

Season of Service and Generosity

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the priorities and ministries of FUM for nearly eighteen months. 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 year 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.

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.

A Season to Energize and Equip Friends

In the coming year, 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. John Muhanji also has a new ministry focus to oversee new leadership development, fundraising, and mission mobilization initiatives among African Friends. 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 committing 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.

A Season of Hope and Light

My father and I are very different. He is mechanically minded, I am not. He works on cars and motors, I don’t. When I was child my job to hold the flashlight while my father worked in dark places. In many ways, my work has not changed as God continues to call FUM to shine Christ’s hope and light in the world. Thank you for your partnership in this vital work.