

Friends Church of North Carolina Annual Sessions, 8/9-10/2024
Quaker Lake Camp and Conference Center, Guilford County, Climax, NC
Epistle to Friends Everywhere

To Friends Everywhere,

Friends Church of North Carolina met August 9-10, 2024, at Quaker Lake Camp, with 22 meetings represented. Our seventh annual sessions, this was the third where joyful pockets of reunion and fellowship could be heard in at least three languages.

Our superintendent, **Mike Wall**, presented some sobering statistics about dwindling membership, trends that indicate some monthly meetings will not exist as soon as 2035. We have the same Savior we've always had, but the church model is changing, whether it be through technology or building congregations in more populated areas. When George Fox saw a great people to be gathered, none of them were Quakers — Quakers hadn't been invented, yet. Mike challenged us to find God's vision for each local meeting, as well as for our greater group.

We were encouraged by the ministry and missions reports, given by enthusiastic servants of Christ. Missions that we support are growing and need more space, from East Africa to Belize. Members of FCNC-affiliated and preparatory meetings, **Odre Nuevo** in Yadkin County (Spanish-speaking) and **Baltimore Friends** (Kenyan immigrants), infuse fresh vitality into our group. Quaker Lake had more campers than last year. Two of our young people attended Kaleo Academy for young leaders at Barclay College. Several pastors are under care of the Recording Committee.

Our guest speaker, **Samuel Vasquez** of *Iglesia Evangelica Amigos de Mexico* (North Mexico Yearly Meeting), shared the story of his call to be a pastor in a small, rural town. Every place, job, and situation had its lessons to prepare him for his life's work. His children have grown and now serve the Lord in other cities far away, but God has sent new people to serve in the church. Samuel said, "**When you're doing what the Lord wants you to do, the Lord provides everything.**"

At the memorial service, **Georgianne Hartline** shared that the stones that were on the tables remind us how past members have had a ripple effect like pebbles thrown into a pond, and how we need to make our ripple effects on others around us. Workshop speakers continued the challenge, from reaching young fathers with activities outside of "church" to examining our traditions through the lens of our mission.

Music lifted our spirits. One of the lyrics was, "***I can't ... but I know a Man who can.***"

As some congregations are shrinking, it can be tempting to shrink our view, grasping for whatever is "ours." But we have an awesome Lord and we need to share Him with the world. It is in looking outward, beyond ourselves, that our vision grows and God replenishes us from His endless vision and uncountable blessings.

*Prepared by Elizabeth Saunders, Southern Quarter.
Read and Approved 8/10/2024, at FCNC Annual Sessions, Climax, NC, **Roger Holt**, Clerk*

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