

**Epistle from the Annual Gathering of the Jamaica Yearly Meeting (JYM) in Session
Of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
August 21 to 24, 2025**

To all Friends everywhere,

We send loving greetings from the Jamaica Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) 84th Annual Session, held August 21 to 24, 2025 at the Swift Purcell Multipurpose Centre near Highgate, Jamaica.

Our theme was “Revive us to serve” and the session provided a platform for Friends to react to the scripture Psalm 85:6 “*Wilt thou not revive us again: That thy people may rejoice in thee?*” The issue concerning spiritual and numerical growth and its related challenges is current for our Jamaica Yearly Meeting and the aim of this session was to engage participants in reflection and deliberations on this issue that would result in follow up activity.

Friends who gathered on these days considered this session a remarkable and maybe an historic session. Our Yearly Meeting presiding clerk David Abrikian, with the help of many others, worked hard preparing to ensure that this achieved set objectives. We welcomed attendees and the desire was expressed to see a revived Jamaica Yearly Meeting. All were inspired by the presence of Kelly Kellum executive Secretary of Friends United Meeting, Evan Welkin the General Secretary of Friends World Consultation Committee, and Brent McKinney of North Carolina Yearly Meeting, a strong supporter of the JYM. Their sharing of the experiences of Quakers around the world and their commitment to support our quest for the growth of our Yearly Meeting brought a spirit of global unity to our Quaker family. The session planners made every effort to lift the spirit of peace and revival for the duration of the session. Friends could sense that deep desire once more, to reflect upon the workings of our Worldwide Quaker organization, and that bond of friendship that has been formed over the 84 years of our existence here in Jamaica.

A panel discussion session allowed a wide range of Friends to share on the theme from their reservoir of experiences at living the Quaker spirituality in various regions of Jamaica and the world. Presenters highlighted the challenges encountered in fulfilling the demands of the Great Commandment, of successfully living the Quaker social testimonies (SPICES), of effective church worship and operations, and of energizing youths to serve in a dynamic global environment. Other presentations allowed Friends to ponder and respond positively to issues relating to violence prevention against women and children in Jamaica. Dr. Elizabeth Ward from the University of the West Indies implored the gathering not to be a passive bystander but to be proactive and to use whatever means available in our Monthly Meetings and school community environment to help in the effort to minimize violence.

The presentations of Kelly Kellum and Evan Welkin met the expectations of those gathered. Kelly Kellum outlined a gist of the worldwide FUM mission, including leadership training, development, holistic evangelism, and global participation, and we were challenged to emulate best practices as we watched related video clippings. Evan Welkin introduced Quaker Connect, an ongoing FWCC outreach program, and he assured the gathering that Jamaica Yearly Meeting was not alone as we collectively examined how we witnessed and built bridges between us.

Friends were both impressed and elated as linkages and effective networking over many years with the Jamaica Yearly Meeting were revealed.

The gathering felt a sense of gratitude for the steadfast ministry of many Jamaican Friends, some who sadly, could not be present due to age-related ailments, and the reality of being either home bound, or having passed. Their familiar voices, laughter, and the quiet strengths they contributed, and still contribute on behalf of the Jamaica Yearly, remained alive as we listened to the Memorials lecture.

The reports from the Monthly Meetings and Affiliated Institutions revealed the strengths and weakness in our operation as a Yearly Meeting, and the call for an urgent response from all Friends present was loud and clear. Some personalized strategies employed to enhance the sustainability of Monthly Meetings were applauded, and in some cases keeping the doors of meeting houses open with low membership and minimal resources was a challenge that had been persistently met. Other challenges faced by of Monthly Meetings included a lack of interest on the part of invited individuals, a plethora of other faith gatherings in surrounding communities, and the strong influence and attraction of the traditional Pentecostal style of worship. There is also an opinion expressed at times by others, that we are a country club or a legacy society, which negatively impacts any effort of ecumenical activity in our operations.

In accordance with the general call included in the theme, three definitive initiatives were proposed and agreed for follow-up implementation, with a team of volunteers formed for each one.

One of these followed the report from the single Quaker high school in Jamaica, Happy Grove School. The aim in this case was to have a greater Quaker participation in the school, whereby the team of volunteers would offer student Young Friends the opportunity to recommit themselves and to share values and beliefs related to their Quaker upbringing. The team would also become more involved in trying to address some of the behavioral issues and challenges at the school.

Another initiative was to formulate and implement a mission to Belize, with a view to helping to strengthen their developing Quaker community in its growing stages.

A third initiative was to develop a strategy and plan to meaningfully involve more young persons in Quaker Monthly Meetings in the island.

This epistle attempts to weave together the various insights gained at the sessions of this annual gathering, and it is hoped that as we strive for spiritual and numerical growth in the Jamaica Yearly Meeting, it will be a useful reference.

In God's love, we trust,

Edwin S. Coleman, (Bobby)

Recording Clerk

Jamaica Yearly Meeting in Session - 2025

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)