

July 20, 2010

To: Our Friends Around the World

Re: Epistle of the 198<sup>th</sup> Yearly Meeting of the Evangelical Friends Church-Eastern Region (EFC-ER), Canton, Ohio, United States of America.

Dear Friends:

The 198<sup>th</sup> Yearly Meeting of the EFC-ER was held from July 17-20, 2010 on the campus of Malone University, Canton, Ohio. The annual gathering began on Saturday with preliminary board meetings on Saturday morning, and a Hispanic worship time on Saturday afternoon, attended by approximately 200 of our Hispanic brothers and sisters. Two banquets were held in the afternoon/evening celebrating God's faithfulness in missions. Total attendance at the banquets was approximately 600.

Featured guests at both banquets were Voicu and Ana Marian, serving in their homeland of Romania in partnership with EFC-ER, and Vicki Hinshaw of Evangelical Friends Mission. Voicu and Ana's work includes teaching English, teaching woodworking, leading summer camps as an evangelical outreach, and discipling teens and young adults in the Marian's home. Vicki Hinshaw, present on behalf of Executive Director, Dr. Chuck Mylander, updated those present on the work of EFM-sponsored missions around the world, with which EFC-ER partners. Ms. Hinshaw explained the role of EFM as an umbrella organization, allowing the 6 Evangelical Friends Yearly Meetings of the United States to provide joint mission efforts, in addition to the individual missionary outreach of 3 of the Yearly Meetings. Ms. Hinshaw announced the new EFM website [www.friendsmission.org](http://www.friendsmission.org) which includes not only information about the ongoing work of EFM, but has an area for emergency needs, which links the user to the Yearly Meeting site of the YM taking the lead in meeting the specific emergent need.

Concurrent to the adult sessions, youth (FYUnited) and children's sessions of Yearly Meeting were attended by nearly 100 infants and children and over 100 teenagers and adult workers.

During the Sunday evening service, General Superintendent, Dr. John Williams, Jr. set the tone for the theme for this year's sessions which was Daring to Change, Embracing the Unchanging. Per Dr. Williams, the theme flows from Jesus' call to change; but, also from His call to build on the foundation of His unchanging word and character.

On Monday and Tuesday mornings, the days began with prayer breakfasts for the men and women, featuring Arun and Shobha Massey and Dennis and Michelle Craker as speakers.

On Monday morning, Dr. William's keynote address presented us with 5 Great Reasons to Change which included to reach people (even "outsiders"), to meet real needs of people, to connect with generations, to incarnate (or "flesh out") the Gospel, and to earn credibility in our world. He also discussed the 5 major changes impacting churches in America. These points highlighted the fact that to remain pertinent in the lives of people, the church must reach the "Millennials" (those born between 1980 and 2000), which

includes a young, unreached population numbering 70 million, and the "Baby Boomers", who begin turning 65 next year (75 million in number). These two groups now total ½ of the population of the United States. He taught us that family is a key value for both these generations and that churches that reach both of these generations will be churches that foster meaningful family relationships.

During the keynote address, Dr. Williams presented two creative ministry concepts that are currently being utilized. One, presented by Gary Wright (World Renewal Ministries), demonstrated working with leaders from existing other denominational or non-denominational works who have a heart to plant new churches, partnering with them to plant new Friends work. Gary is currently working with such a group in Brazil. The other concept was presented by a group of pastors from central Ohio. Seven small churches in central Ohio have joined together with the goal of, together, planting 10 new churches in the greater Columbus, Ohio area by the year 2020. This work is called "10 by 2020". The involved pastors of the Central Ohio churches presented a challenge to the delegation to pray, give financially, and consider God's call to serve in a church plant work.

Our Monday evening speaker, Tim Gates of New Church Specialties, made a powerful impact on the body with the following three points: The Church in America is in crisis; The Church in America has tremendous hope; and the Church in America needs healing (you have to make the church healthier, not larger). He informed us that America is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest mission field in the world (after China). He said that most churches in America lift up programs more than Christ. His summation was that the key to reaching and winning people for Christ is simply - "You have to lift up Christ."

During the memorial service on Tuesday morning, the delegation heard testimonies to the lives and influence of the following departed brothers and sisters in Christ who were pastors, pastors' wives and/or missionaries: Barbara Cattell Brantingham, Rebecca Coleman, Rev. Rendel Cosand, Rev. Robert Dye, Marjorie Myers, Olive Chase Osborne, Rev. Bill Powell, Rev. Roy Taylor, and Lelah Williams.

Our Tuesday evening service, the recording service, recognized Scott Morin (Colony Friends Church in Virginia), Gerald Baker (East Goshen Friends), and William Bertrand (Haiti) as newly recorded pastors in EFC-ER. The featured speaker of the evening was Don Golden of World Relief.

Business sessions were conducted in a spirit of unity, with ample time for fellowship and relationship building.

In the words of our general superintendent, the challenge we take back to our local churches is..... Will you join in a joyful, faithful, adventurous spirit, as we ask God to show us how He wants to change us.....to be more like Jesus.....to be more of a blessing to others.....to bring more salt and light into the tasteless and dark parts of our world.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ron Johnson  
Presiding Clerk  
Evangelical Friends Church-Eastern Region