

CONNECTIONS

in Friends United Meeting



February 2021

Nakivale Friends Church Established in Ugandan Refugee Camp

(This article contains graphic descriptions of war.) Nakivale Refugee Settlement Camp is located in southern Uganda, on the Tanzanian border. The camp was established in 1958, and is managed by the Ugandan government, with participation from elected members of the refugee population. Settlement camps are considered “security installations,” and are highly guarded due to the numbers of asylum-seekers among the refugees.

The journey to establishing a Friends Meeting in Nakivale’s Settlement Camp began when Erias Kabura, a Burundi refugee, contacted Friends Church Uganda’s leadership, clerk Paul Kuloba and General Secretary Alfred Wasike, to request help in creating a Nakivale Friends Meeting.

Paul and Alfred presented a proposal for creating a Nakivale church to the Friends Church Uganda Executive and General Boards. Three years of discussion, discernment, and prayer led to approval by the Friends Church Uganda board and by the government of Uganda, and Nakivale Friends Meeting was established.

Erias Kabura envisioned Nakivale Friends as a place where refugees from various countries could learn about church planting, spiritual disciplines, and Bible storytelling. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as of November 2020, Nakivale hosted refugees from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Southern Sudan. For this reason, it was necessary to seek clearance from various Ugandan government officials to enter the sprawling camp and begin this missionary journey.



Women gather and sit and chat in Nakivale refugee settlement, southwest Uganda. Photo by Journalists for Transparency.

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The first meeting of Nakivale Friends was held on December 5, 2020. It was an historic event—not only to Erias, but also to everyone who attended the Meeting’s opening ceremony, many of whom had trekked to Nakivale from far and wide, including various war-torn East African locations. Ninety-eight adults and thirteen children were in attendance, with much singing and dancing provided by the women and children. Paul Kuloba built his sermon around the “great commissioning” of Matthew 28, while Alfred Wasike discussed the history and current state of Quakers in Africa.

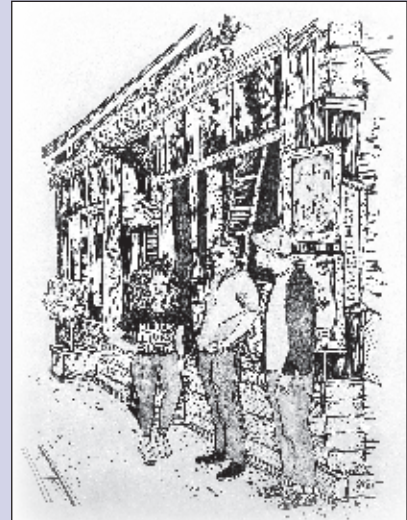
Refugee testimonies were the highlight of the first meeting. Most refugees have experienced difficult circumstances, yet still have a profound appreciation for God’s provision. Refugee life is unstable and filled with uncertainties, and even the simplest daily needs may not be met. Many refugees have only temporary housing, and they don’t know if they’ll ever be able to return home because of the terrifying experiences they left behind.

A sixty-two-year-old refugee woman told this story at the meeting: “I came here twenty-two years ago. I fled from Gitega one night. Drunken government militia members came to my home. They killed my husband. They raped me and my three teenaged daughters for ten consecutive days. They forced my sixteen-year-old son to rape first me, and then his sister. Then they killed him with a sledgehammer.

“One night, when the militia was asleep in our sitting room, we sneaked out and walked to Nakivale through Tanzania. We feared to go through Rwanda for fear of being captured. The walk took two weeks. Two of my daughters died in the park [Biharamulo Game Reserve, in northern Tanzania]. We were infected with a very serious sexually-transmitted disease. My other daughter and I were lucky to get to Uganda, where we received medical treatment. It is very comfortable here at Nakivale. Having a church here makes it even better, and from the clerk’s sermon, we feel encouraged.”

The displacement of millions of Africans is tragic, and their experiences are harrowing. Despite this, these refugees believe that God did not turn a blind eye to them. They believe that He is working through their lives. With an indomitable human spirit, they look forward to what the future holds.

—Alfred Wasike, General Secretary, Friends Church Uganda



2020 Western Yearly Meeting Lecture

Friends United Press Partners with Western Yearly Meeting to Publish Colin Saxton Lecture

Friends United Press is happy to announce our latest publication, the 2020 Western Yearly Meeting lecture, *2020 Vision: Children of Light in the Neighborhood*. Published in partnership with Western Yearly Meeting, the booklet contains both the text of Colin Saxton’s lecture as well as a study guide and discussion questions. We believe the lecture and study guide can be useful for any congregation wanting to reflect intentionally on how they interact with the larger world around them. *2020 Vision* sells for \$5 and can be [purchased online](#) at the FUM Bookstore—or e-mail info@fum.org for more information.

New Endowment Empowers Belize Friends Ministries

The generosity and passion of Friends United Meeting member Wayne Carter (Plainfield Friends, Western Yearly Meeting) will enable FUM to better live out our shared mission “to energize and equip Friends through the power of the Holy Spirit to gather people into fellowships where Jesus Christ is known, loved, and obeyed as Teacher and Lord.” Thanks to the Carters, FUM is delighted to announce the establishment of the Carter Belize Fund.

This new, endowed fund aims to build our capacity to empower, expand, and multiply Friends congregations within Belize. In particular, the Carter Belize Fund will support ongoing programs and specific new projects designed to initiate, launch, and develop congregational ministries. Through these ministries, individuals will be nurtured in a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. Vital, sustainable, and faithful fellowships of Friends will proclaim and demonstrate the Good News in their communities.

As a longtime leader and minister within FUM, Wayne carries a deep concern and passionate interest for the faithful witness of Friends. During a time when FUM was re-evaluating our work in Belize, Wayne joined with others to help discern a vision for our work there, including a much stronger commitment to evangelism and church planting. Wayne describes his interest in launching the endowed fund by saying, “While serving on the recent FUM Belize Task Group, I could feel the excitement of participating in drafting plans for the expansion of Friends ministries to and among the people of Belize. Now, perhaps the resources God has provided can give financial support to strengthen and grow the Friends Church in Belize.”

These funds come at a crucial time as FUM field staff Oscar Mmbali and Nikki Holland are nurturing a growing congregation in Belize City, especially among young people. Two adult members are expressing a possible call to pastoral ministry, and we are looking at a variety of ways to offer mentoring and training for them. This emphasis on identifying, training, and supporting effective pastoral and congregational leadership is central to the Carter Belize Fund’s focus. Over the coming year, the FUM staff will give strategic thought to how these funds will establish a thriving and sustainable church planting and outreach effort.

The Carter Belize Fund is open for others who share a concern to establish, empower, and expand Friends churches in Belize. If you would like to consider a contribution to this fund or explore creative ways to connect the resources God has entrusted to you to ministries you care most deeply about, please contact Colin Saxton (colinsa@fum.org), FUM’s Advancement Officer and Director of North American Ministries. Contributions to the Carter Belize Fund may also be made directly to the FUM office by mail or online at <https://donorbox.org/carter-belize-fund>.

Friends like Wayne Carter and his wife Kay, whose faithful generosity enables and inspires us to carry out Christ’s work in the world, make the work and witness of FUM possible. We thank the Carters and all of you who are partners in this good work.



Kaykab Garden Buzzes

At Ramallah Friends School, we believe in supporting our environment and in sustainability. As part of our 150th Anniversary celebrations, we decided to plant 150 trees through our forestation program. The trees were planted by members of the RFS community, and the project was well-supported and hugely successful. Our environment committee continues looking for different ways to promote environmental sustainability to the RFS community.

The Kaykab Garden campus of Ramallah Friends School has long been a center for environmental educational stewardship. Situated across the road from the upper campus, the Kaykab is an open public garden—a green space planted with Palestinian native trees and plants. From 2002 to 2009, with help from Germany, children from all around Ramallah flocked to Kaykab Garden to learn what a “greener” world would look like. However, once that wonderful project had finished—leaving the Kaykab without funding—the garden fell into decline.

Now, Ramallah Friends School is bringing Kaykab Garden back to life—this time with help from busy, buzzy new friends. We have moved six beehives into the Kaykab, housing them a safe distance from the main pathways of the garden but still close to the blossoms loved by bees.

Kaykab Beekeeping gives children of all ages in our school community the chance to conduct student-led learning. Under the watchful eyes of teachers, they experience sustainable environmental practices firsthand by studying the beehives, learning about how bees pollinate, and understanding about our complex—and vulnerable—Palestinian ecosystem. All while making honey.

Our Kaykab Beekeeping Project contributes to both our RFS and Ramallah/Al Bireh communities. By hosting a thriving bee community, we are doing our part to help reverse the global drop in bee populations (and to prevent resulting environmental problems). Our bees give back to us as well, by producing honey that we harvest sustainably. Sales of the honey will raise funds to help plant and care for our beautiful garden campus in the heart of Ramallah and Al Bireh cities.

The beehives arrived in May 2020. We started with three single-story hives, but soon extended two of those hives into two stories, and then extended those to six hives. In August 2020, the first batch of honey was harvested. Honey extraction took place at Grant House, in the Head of School’s kitchen on the Upper Campus. The honey harvest took place during school closure, due to Covid-19—so unfortunately, no students could attend—but the administrative staff were excited to witness the process. Sixteen kilos of honey were separated, and the honey sold out within days.



FTC Celebrates Faculty Accomplishments

Friends Theological College recently celebrated the accomplishments of two faculty members who received their doctorate degrees. Dr. Rodgers Wekesi is FTC's Academic Dean. He completed a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Masinde Muliro University in Kakamega. Dr. Simon Khaemba serves as the Administrator of FTC's Nairobi campus. He received a Ph.D. in Christian Education from African International University in Nairobi.

On 8 January 2021, FTC honored Rodgers and Simon during a historic and colorful ceremony. The graduates were accompanied by their family members. Due to the Covid pandemic, the celebration was limited to FTC staff, faculty, and students.

During the ceremony, Dr. Robert Wafula urged other faculty members to attain their doctorates in hopes that FTC will roll out a master's degree program within five years. He also challenged the students at the ceremony to work hard in their studies. "Education makes you a lot more knowledgeable and a lot less gullible," he said. "To be gullible is to believe or accept anything. Education forces us to question every issue and not to accept anything on face value."

"Less than 2% of the world's population has a doctorate," Wafula continued. "This makes having a Ph.D. very rare, therefore be encouraged to use your understanding to pursue higher education."

Rodgers Wekesi spoke about his educational journey that began in 2000, when he enrolled for his Diploma in Theology at FTC. He says, "This journey is not for the faint-hearted. It needs a lot of resilience. I never contemplated that FTC was the genesis of the long and great journey that has culminated into this event." He urged the Board of Management to support the master's program, and pledged to help strengthen FTC as a center of theological and professional learning excellence.

Simon Khaemba recalled, "The journey had both blessings and challenges. There were times I felt alone since most of my colleagues dropped out of the program. And it was challenging finding the resources to fund my education." Simon, who also is a pastor at the Friends International Centre in Nairobi, pledged to contribute knowledge in the body of Christ and the Quaker Church.

After the motivational speeches, Dr. Robert Wafula invited the attendees to a luncheon to mark the day.



January Prayer Focus: Belize

In 2020, we asked members of the Friends United Meeting global community to spend some time in prayer for each Yearly Meeting of FUM. In 2021, we are asking members to spend some time in prayer for FUM's various ministries. Each month we'll tell the story of a different ministry or project, and pass along some prayer requests of Friends involved in the work. In January, we are focusing on Belize Friends Ministries.

FUM's ministries in Belize started about thirty years ago with Sadie Vernon, the first Belizean Quaker. She began a school for boys in Belize City who had not been able to succeed in traditional schools. About ten years ago, the school began accepting girls as well, and it is now a school for youth who need another chance to pass the primary school exams necessary for acceptance at high schools and trade schools in Belize. At Belize Friends School, we focus on the whole child, caring for the educational, mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of our students.

In 2015, the FUM community discerned a need for a church and a community center. Since then, the church has grown to include about twenty-five or thirty members, mostly teenaged boys committed to finishing high school and staying out of trouble. The community center facilitates community education and service projects; most recently it has run a food relief program to help alleviate the extreme effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in our community.

We need a lot of prayer here in Belize. In general, we are always grateful for the steps our youth take to transform their lives, and we need constant prayer to sustain their efforts. This year, we have been grateful that the Covid-19 virus has so far spared our immediate community. Please join us in prayer that this will continue to be our situation. We have been affected by the economic impact of the pandemic, however. Many of our community members struggle to find work; I have concerns that our church youth, who are currently working so hard to graduate high school, will achieve this triumph—only to enter a heavily depressed workforce that will render them unable to help support their families. So please pray that God will prepare and equip them in advance for exactly the jobs that will be available for them upon their graduation; and that God will provide work for our members who are already adults.

For Belize Friends School, please pray that our students will continue to engage in their studies, even



though we are not meeting in person. Pray that they will be safe in their homes, both from the virus and from sometimes unstable family situations. Pray that our teachers will remain creative and motivated, even when they cannot see their students. Pray that in this unusual situation, learning and connection will happen.

For the church, you may pray that we can remain connected throughout the time of social distancing. Pray that our members take adequate measures against infection, and that each of us can feed our families or be fed (in the case of our many children and youth). Pray that the strict enforcement of safety protocols does not damage our relationships.

For the community center, please pray that our feeding program will remain funded and that we will continue to have the staffing and energy to maintain our assembly and distribution work. You may pray that we will be able to adjust to changing social distancing laws and closures. And you may pray that our community will continue to engage in helping us spread the food boxes to the homes that most need them in our community.

Please also pray for our staff here in Belize. This work is very difficult and draining in the best of times—and these are not the best of times. We are struggling with exhaustion; we need strength, energy, and consistent rest to sustain us so we can continue to do our work together.

A Prayer for the New Year

My Loving and Faithful God,

Today, I feel like I am being pulled into the dark whirlwind of a global pandemic, political unrest, climate instability, economic disparity, and racial injustice. So, I bring my sorrowful, anxious, angry, and stubborn spirit into your presence. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

I confess I have sinned against my neighbors. I have fostered resentments, harbored hatred, deepened divisions, and promoted the spirit of violence with my words and deeds. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

I confess I have sinned against you, my Lord. Forgive me for the times when I have forsaken your ways, abandoned your truth, and misappropriated your hope. Forgive me for turning away from you, giving others the allegiance and praise that belong to you alone. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Thank you for your relentless grace that renews my life with hope, strength, and purpose.

Thank you for your limitless mercy that is working during these dark times to reconcile this frightened and fractured world to yourself.

As I await the restoration, tender me to your presence and tune my soul to hear anew the voice of the one, even Christ Jesus, who speaks to my condition.

Teach me again what it means to live as a Child of the Light, reflecting your glory and healing love.

Teach me again what it means to be a Publisher of Truth, upholding integrity and declaring a gospel of peace.

Teach me again what it means to be a Friend, abiding in Christ and heeding Christ's command.

Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Amen.

—Kelly Kellum



Save the Date for Stoking the Fire: May 21–23, 2021

The call to deepen our spiritual lives and inspire faithfulness among Friends moved FUM to launch the first *Stoking the Fire* retreat in 2015. This year, the gathering takes on a new look as we adjust to a world still fighting a pandemic.

“Hope and Light” will serve as our guiding theme as Friends gather virtually over the Pentecost weekend of May 21–23. We will kick off the retreat on Friday evening with worship and small groups, have a slate of activities on Saturday, and conclude with worship on Sunday morning.

This year, we plan to follow up the weekend retreat with a monthly online meeting and breakout groups. These Ember Groups will serve as an ongoing source of inspiration and encouragement for those of us eager to kindle new life and vitality into our home communities.

Please save these dates! Registration information is available at http://bit.ly/StF21_registration, and a complete schedule will be published soon on the [Stoking the Fire web page](#).



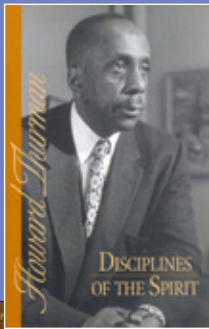
FIRST FRIENDS
Richmond · Indiana

Call for New Pastor

First Friends Meeting is calling for applications for the position of Pastor from a spiritually mature person ready to lead a congregation of about 100 Quakers.

For more information: www.ffri.org

Shop the FUM Bookstore for posters, prints, greeting cards, pamphlets, and more!



bookstore.friendsunitedmeeting.org

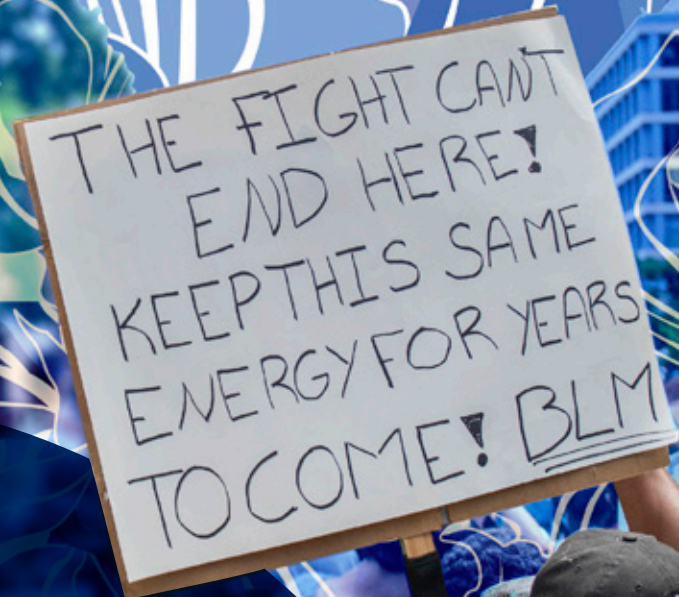
Stay connected to Friends around the world and the work that is being done in partnership by receiving news and engaging in online communities in these ways:

- Receive FUM's weekly newsletter by email
- Participate in FUM's monthly international prayer gathering
- Watch the new weekly video series, "Walking in the Way"

For more information, email: communications@friendsunitedmeeting.org

Spring Lobby Weekend

 Friends Committee on National Legislation



YOUNG ADULTS

Register now for this three-day conference and lobby for national legislation that addresses police violence.

FCNL.ORG/SLW