

Billy M. Britt

North American Ministries Fund

Giving Your Life Away

The invitation to follow Christ comes with the joyful obligation and opportunity to give our lives away for the glory of God and the good of others. In responding to God's goodness and grace, we experience a call to use our gifts, talents, and time to partner in Christ's ongoing work in the world. How that gets lived out varies from person to person, and collectively the mix of gifts and callings blend together in a way that reflects the ministry and message of Jesus.

Among Friends, whether in the pastoral or unprogrammed traditions, there are ones who carry a particular burden for our fellowships' health, growth, and faithfulness. Since our Meetings and churches are vital to nurturing faith-filled Friends, we are blessed to have servant-leaders who commit their lives to strengthen and deepen our life together.

Billy Britt—A Life Offered in Service of Friends

At nineteen years of age, Billy Britt received his call to ministry. Over the next few years, as public ministry and preaching opportunities opened up, he pursued training that would prepare him for a lifetime of pastoral service and leadership among Friends.

Around the time he was recorded as a Quaker minister, Billy began a twenty-year career as a pastor, serving three different congregations. In his early years, Billy found support and care from strong and faithful mentors. These formative relationships inspired him to mentor others later, encouraging and drawing out their God-given gifts. Through his pastoral care and leadership, Billy modeled humility, active listening, and a passionate desire to see people's lives changed by Christ. He committed himself to build faithful and growing congregations, where the reality of God's love, grace, and truth was revealed through the witness of Friends communities.

This passion for the church's well-being led to an opportunity to serve as Yearly Meeting Superintendent for North Carolina Yearly Meeting for the next twenty years of his ministry. Billy's creativity and desire to see others engaged in service launched several new and expanded outreach programs. Through his holistic commitment to the gospel, Friends were encouraged to deepen their spiritual lives, share their faith, and minister in ways that revealed God's peace and justice to those most in need. Above all, Billy worked to deepen the spirit of unity and shared ministry among those he served.



Dad often said that he grew from being a shy farm boy to a confident, outspoken leader by listening and responding to the Holy Spirit. He humbly used his own life example to motivate others. He was a builder—he wanted memberships to grow, the number of changed lives to grow, the number of people entering Christian ministry to grow, and the number of churches in our Yearly Meeting to increase.

—Joy Reavis, Billy's daughter

**Friends
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friendsunitedmeeting.org

Current North American Ministry Projects

Stoking the Fire—Through our annual retreat and ongoing emphasis, FUM seeks to (re)kindle the spiritual hunger and passion for faithfulness among interested Friends. Through our shared focus on the Living Christ, we experience a transforming unity and community of faith.

Flourishing Friends—Walking alongside Meetings and churches that feel stuck or in decline, *Flourishing Friends* encourages congregations to dive deep into their missional identity and address the barriers and blocks they face. Leaders address adaptive changes and introduce healthy approaches to formation, fruitfulness, faithfulness, and function. We hope to add ongoing coaching and learning communities to help Friends continue in the work of flourishing.

Unleashing the Power—Beginning as an occasional weekend workshop on practical resources in congregational life—clerking, conflict resolution, treasurer training, etc.—this program will expand to regular virtual gatherings. By engaging with Friends across the country, we plan to address topics that feel most urgent and utilize gifted leaders from around the FUM community as instructors and facilitators.

African Friends in North America—African Quakers in the diaspora (living outside their original homeland) are settling in Canada and the US and forming Friends congregations in increasing numbers. Often, these fellowships are not connected to existing Yearly Meetings or Associations because of distance or cultural differences. FUM is deepening our connections with these groups and building a network of shared ministry and support.

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After twenty years of pastoral ministry and twenty years as Superintendent, Billy returned to the local church as an interim minister—for another twenty years. Guiding seven different congregations through the challenges of pastoral transitions, he provided invaluable service by helping Friends during loss, grief, change, and discernment. During these days, Billy authored two books featuring stories of pastoral ministers and Quaker superintendents. He continued serving the Yearly Meeting in various volunteer capacities and helped found a school to train pastors and future leaders among Friends.

In the tradition of so many other faithful Friends, Billy provides a great example of giving away a life for the glory of God and the good of others. Alongside his devoted wife, Viola, and loving family, Billy invested his time, energy, gifts, and resources to help Quakers throughout North America be more vibrant, faithful, growing, and united.

FUM and the Future of Friends in North America

The challenges facing Friends in North America are different today than in 1949, when Billy Britt first heard a call to ministry. Several Yearly Meetings and Associations are now divided by conflict and a lack of unity. Membership and worship attendance for Meetings and churches is generally in decline. In many regions, there are fewer resources, support, and training available for Meetings and churches and for those interested in pursuing a call to ministry.

FUM's focus on energizing, equipping, and connecting Friends has been increasingly drawn to North America for several years now. Even as we continue our work of leadership development, communication, holistic evangelism, and building partnerships around the globe, we recognize that North America is a *primary mission field*.

In our divided culture, many people seek a beloved community to find a home and a sense of belonging. Though many in our culture no longer describe themselves as “religious,” a yearning for an authentic and transforming spiritual experience is what many seek. Finding ways to engage in meaningful service would ease the struggle to find hope and meaning. Though these

are challenging days for the church, FUM believes the dynamic message and life Friends offer are just what the world needs.

Partnering with our Yearly Meetings and Associations, FUM is committed to supporting and resourcing local congregations in ways that lead to their flourishing and faithfulness. We are committed to identifying and nurturing effective ministers who will serve and lead Quaker communities among pastoral fellowships. Among pastoral and unprogrammed Friends, we commit to providing training for ministers and leaders who wish to give their lives to build up and serve their faith communities and other Quaker organizations.



The Billy M. Britt Fund for North American Ministries

Believing God is calling us to more faithful work in the US and Canada, FUM announces the launch of the Billy M. Britt Fund for North American Ministries. We honor Billy for his service, inspiring example, and shared passion for a vibrant Quaker community and witness. We are grateful to the Britt family for allowing us to use his good name for this Fund as a way to renew our commitment to this work.

While many Friends lament the decline of our Quaker presence in North America, we see a great opportunity to refocus our attention in this region of the world. Building on the programs and projects already underway, we plan to develop sustainable and effective emerging ministries to support and resource our local and Yearly Meetings. Central to these efforts will be programs that resonate deeply with Billy's heart for leadership development, spiritual formation, congregational vitality, and growth.

Gifts to the Billy M. Britt Fund will be used exclusively for the operating costs of FUM's North American Ministries. If there are donors interested in establishing an endowed fund, we will be pleased to consider the best ways to structure gifts that will meet our short and long-term ministry needs.



Faithful Stewardship—Through our partnership with Everence Financial, FUM offers virtual and in-person workshops like *Cultivating Generous Congregations*. In addition, we help local and Yearly Meetings with creative giving tools and planned giving resources, and stewardship education.

Consultation and Speaking—Several of the FUM staff in North America travel extensively to provide pulpit supply, workshops, retreats, and consultation around issues and activities among Friends. When visiting the US, our field staff are available to update and inspire Friends on how Christ is at work in other places where FUM is at work.

Emerging North American Ministry Priorities

Intentional Interim Ministry Network—Pastoral transitions can be one of the most challenging times in a congregation's life together. A team of experienced interim pastors is working with FUM to design and launch an *Intentional Interim Ministry Network*. Our goal is to offer a cadre of trained and gifted pastors available to help churches/Meetings navigate these transitions and become ready to welcome a new, long-term pastor.

Call to Ministry Gathering and Network—We often hear from congregations, Yearly Meetings, and Quaker organizations that it is increasingly difficult to find qualified candidates for positions. Identifying, nurturing, and connecting those who may be

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**Emerging North American
Ministry Priorities, continued:**

sensing a call to ministry feels increasingly urgent. A small group of Friends is working on a Call to Ministry Gathering and an ongoing support network that mentors potential candidates and helps them find places for service within our community.

Latino Friends in North

America—As there are growing numbers of African diaspora congregations in North America, many Latino congregations exist within FUM. We plan to develop a better support system for these communities and deepen the network that connects these often isolated fellowships.

**North American Living Letters
Projects**

—FUM provides service and learning opportunities for Friends in many locations worldwide. We sense there are similar service and learning opportunities within North America to learn about, in which we can learn from one another.

Curriculum and Consultations

—Friends increasingly ask for curriculum, creative media, and gatherings where our understanding and experience of what it means to be Quakers in the 21st century are available. With additional resources, we would love to develop these more fully.

Reconciliation and Unity

Building—Friends in North America have undergone various splits and reconfigurations in recent years. Along the way, many local congregations are now orphaned—without a regional home to which they belong. Other Friends are wounded, grieving, and angry. Amid this division and loss, we want to explore what faithfulness requires of us regarding reconciliation. Even if organizational restoration does not occur, what are the creative and faithful ways to address the need for confession, forgiveness, and an authentic partnership in fellowship and ministry?

Billy Britt devoted his entire adult life to promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and serving the Friends Church. At the age of nineteen, Billy answered the call from God to become a Quaker minister, fulfilling his mother's dream, who named him after the famous evangelist, Billy Sunday.

Billy is an evangelist, historian, teacher, board member, pastor, and friend to pastors. For twenty years he served as the Superintendent of North Carolina Yearly Meeting, nurturing the health and growth of Friends Meetings, supporting emerging leaders, and promoting unity among Friends. As a pastor's pastor, Billy worked for the well-being of ministers who sacrificed greatly because of their love for God and dedication to the Society of Friends.

In his book, *Lest We Forget*, Billy chronicled the lives and ministry of self-supported ministers who traveled bad roads, preached in many places, and visited the sick, the elderly, and the bereaved. These women and men were the pioneering ministers who firmly planted the Society of Friends in North Carolina. Billy published their stories to inspire new generations of Friends ministers, and to ensure we did not forget their legacy and contributions to Friends.

When I was the pastoral minister of High Point Friends Meeting, I had the joy of serving as Billy's pastor. In truth, Billy and his wife, Viola, were my pastors. Their loving support, seasoned wisdom, unfailing encouragement, and ardent commitment to Christ and the Friends Church has contributed to who I am as a person, pastor, and leader. For this, I am thankful.



Therefore, it is a great honor for me to announce that Friends United Meeting is establishing the Billy M. Britt North American Ministries Fund. This fund will be used to develop flourishing Friends programs, provide vital resources to Friends leaders, and host gatherings to deepen the spiritual vitality of Friends. We establish this fund in Billy's name lest we forget his contributions to Friends, and to continue his legacy of energizing and equipping Friends leaders and Meetings in North America.

— Kelly Kellum, FUM General Secretary



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