

“United for One Name” is our 2024 Yearly Meeting theme. Christian unity is essential! It is what Jesus prayed for on the night before He was crucified. He asked “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” Unity should be the standard for the Church, a defining characteristic of the Body of Christ.

What is Christian unity? We must not confuse it with uniformity. According to the website [DifferenceBetween.com](http://DifferenceBetween.com), “The key difference between unity and uniformity is their acceptance of differences; when there is unity, people tend to tolerate and accept differences, but uniformity implies that everyone is alike, so there is no room for differences.”

John Piper wrote, ...“theological, biblical unity of conviction is important and we should pursue it, as Paul and Peter often did in their writings,” and Piper adds ...“ Peter and Paul press us toward unity of mindset, or unity of attitude set, or unity of disposition that is marked by humility, and sacrificial service, and a Christ-exalting motive for all we do.”

This requires the hard work of dying to self. There’s a familiar adage, “If it was easy, everybody would do it.” In Ephesians Paul exhorts us to, “walk worthy of the calling ... *endeavoring* to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The Greek word translated as *endeavoring* implies “to make every effort, be zealous, strain every nerve.” Jesus commands us to love one another, to embrace our differences. Christian unity reflects God’s glory to a divided world.

Totalitarian governments, cults, and “cancel culture” groups work fiercely to enforce uniformity. They tolerate one viewpoint and promote one narrative. But our God is the Creator of beauty, sound, color, and diversity. He delights in uniqueness. His fingerprint is on our very DNA. You and I are so precious to Him that He gave His Son for us. As Christians, we must do everything in our power to live in unity with our brothers and sisters and love them as Christ loves us.

While none of us will achieve perfect unity on this side of heaven, it has been a joy to observe Oversight Board members and our Directors, staff, and ministry teams vigorously pursue Christian unity as they carry out their missions. The members of the 2023-2024 Oversight Board are Scott Calhoun, Pete Fowler, Chuck Goldy, Paul Hoffman, Marva Hoopes, Gregory Miller, Debbie Reich, Dave Roudabush, Vice Chair John Ryser, and Geoff Schultz. Together we have prayed for visas to come through, miraculous finances to be provided, pulpits to be filled, and conversions to multiply. We have asked God for wisdom, strength, and direction for EFC-ER.

We are sorrowed by the withdrawal of Pelham Friends Church from Evangelical Friends-Eastern Region. In their letter of notification received in January, 2024, Ethan Kaethler, Pelham Board Chair, wrote, “While we maintain love and respect for our EFC-ER family, the realities of functioning as a church and charitable organization in 2023 push us to step away. The complications stem from being a Canadian church in an American denomination. The EFC-ER operates, organizes, and functions according to an American system — and rightly so. However, operating in Canada, Pelham Friends Church is subject to a whole different set of rules and

regulations. From the beginning of this process we have prayerfully sought to steward the leadership of this part of God's family as faithfully as possible." Let us continue to pray for our Pelham brothers and sisters. May God bless them richly in this new season of their church.

We have much to celebrate at this Yearly Meeting. What a joy and privilege it is to welcome the Taiwanese delegation! We praise God for His blessings as we celebrate 70 years of ministry with Taiwan Yearly Meeting at our "United in Partnership Banquet" with guest speaker Bob Adhi.kary

We express heartfelt thanks to Paul Hoffman and John Ryser who are stepping off the Oversight Board and we celebrate their nine years of faithful service. I want to personally commend them for their contributions of time, energy, wisdom, and passion. They have been pillars of strength and stability to us all and will be greatly missed.

We also extend deep gratitude to Pastor Rusty Savage, Director of Multiplication, for his years of ministry in the areas of church planting, international partnerships, and cross-cultural ministry since 2019. We have been blessed by Rusty's exemplary ministry. He is also the board chair for Evangelical Friends Mission providing leadership and oversight for the global ministry initiatives of Evangelical Friends Church-North America (EFC-NA). Rusty has tremendous ability to blend joyful hope, theological scholarship, compassion, and courage as he serves and leads. May God richly bless Rusty, Kara, and family as they follow His call.

It has been a year of new beginnings as Ed Walsh stepped into the role of Executive Director. He presented a Strategic Plan at the October meeting of the Board and received unanimous support. He has worked with laser-like focus on the process of equipping churches to make disciples in witnessing communities. We are pleased with the strong team Ed has assembled to be in contact with our churches. You will hear much more about Ed's actions during his report to the delegates.

Camp Gideon begins a new season of ministry under the stewardship of Malone University. This gifting to Malone will exponentially expand the impact the camp will have on hundreds of people in the years ahead. Please continue to pray for Camp Gideon and support its ministry so that many will be saved, discipled, and sent out to harvest souls for Christ's Kingdom.

We encourage all pastors, staff, and delegates to visit EFC-ER's website. Be sure to look at the Resources page for each Ministry Team. They feature informative videos and helpful tools for discipleship, training, and missions, as well as potential funding opportunities. We thank God for the faithful and faith-filled work of each Ministry Team.

Let us pull together united in mission and for one Name. There is beauty and power in unity as we see in nature. Every snowflake is unique, beautiful, and fragile. But when they unite and pile up as snow, they can shut down a city or become a powerful avalanche that crushes every obstacle in its way. (Look out, gates of hell!) When accumulated snowflakes on mountain tops feel the heat, they melt and stream down to irrigate fields and provide life-giving water for

millions of people.

Father, we want to please You and serve You. Help us to lay down our agendas, our “rights, and ” embrace the cross of living in unity. May we zealously celebrate one another this week and grow even stronger as the body of Christ. May we be a force that the gates of hell cannot resist and a people filled with living water that freely flows out giving life to those around us.

Respectfully submitted,  
Deborah Robinson  
Oversight Board Chair