

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for turning your attention to some complicated questions for both your head and your heart. The packet of materials that follows is meant to inform your effort and organize it, whatever your degree of past involvement with Quaker history and politics.

On two Sundays, January 20 and 27, at 9:30 am, in the Music Room of the SAM Building, Bethesda Friends Meeting (BFM) begins an effort to respond to a request received last fall from Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) (see “BYM Letter to Monthly Meetings,” contained in **G\_BYM-Compilation.pdf**). BYM Clerk Howard Fullerton asked us and BYM’s 41 other constituent meetings, to collectively guide BYM by stating how we see our future relationship with Friends United Meeting (FUM).

Friends United Meeting, based in Richmond, Ind., may seem to some an unlikely alliance for BYM. Many of its meetings are programmed, with the ministers, music and missionaries common to most Protestant churches. FUM is also Christ-centered in its beliefs, and conservative in doctrine and practice on issues such as unmarried sex and same-sex marriage (for more information on Friends United Meeting, see Hamm’s “FUM and Its Identity,” in **C\_Hamm\_FUM-Identity.pdf**. An interesting Wikipedia article, “Homosexuality and Quakerism” on the range of Quaker attitudes toward homosexuality is copied in **K\_Homosexuality&Quakerism.pdf**).

BYM, which is a member of both FUM and the more liberal Friends General Conference (FGC), must now find a position that reconciles its membership in FUM with developments deeply disturbing to its FGC side. (For a concise timeline of events, see “A Brief Chronology of Events,” in **B\_Chronology\_BYM-FUM.pdf**. For an abbreviated history of how BYM became a part of FUM, see “A Short History of BYM,” in **D\_Short\_History\_BYM.pdf**).

Bethesda Friends Meeting minuted our concern over the FUM Personnel Policy in June of 2004 (see “FUM Policy Concern Minute,” in **I\_FUM\_Policy\_Concern\_Minute.pdf**). Also in June of 2004, BYM wrote a letter to “Friends Everywhere” (see “BYM Letter to Friends,” in **J\_BYM\_Letter-to-Friends.pdf**).

FUM's membership includes Kenya Yearly Meeting and Uganda Yearly Meeting, which constitute the largest Quaker community in the world. This reflects a century of dedicated FUM “global ministry” work in Africa. As in other Christian religions (such as Anglican and Roman Catholicism), the African Yearly Meetings are more conservative than their North American counterparts. They are especially outspoken when it comes to same-gender marriage. (For more on FUM’s foreign missions and FUM’s most recent controversy over homosexuality, see the “NYYM Report,” in **F\_NYYM\_Report.pdf** and a report to BYM by “John Smallwood and Rachel Stacy” in **H\_Smallwood-Stacy\_Report.pdf**. For more on the Bible and homosexuality, see Resources listed on the previous page.)

FUM—of which we have been an integral and important part—is also beset by considerable financial and management challenges (see the “Memorandum” by Liversidge and Smallwood,” in **E\_FUMReportOct2007.pdf**, and “Smallwood and Stacey,” in **H\_Smallwood-**

**Stacy\_Report.pdf**). BYM representatives who recently toured a FUM-funded hospital in Kenya that had been turned over to local Quakers, found it to be corrupted and functioning poorly (more details in Smallwood and Stacy, **H\_Smallwood-Stacy\_Report.pdf**, and the NYYM Report, **F\_NYYM\_Report.pdf**).

In addition, BYM representatives to the FUM General Board reported in August that Quaker process was not sufficiently utilized in decision-making—though in October, they also reported that the General Board is functioning with more care (“NYYM report,” **F\_NYYM\_Report.pdf**; and “Smallwood/ Stacey,” **H\_Smallwood-Stacy\_Report.pdf**, also details these issues).

FUM, which very recently took back management responsibility for the troubled hospital in Kaimosi, Kenya, is seeking federal aid in running it and other missions. In part, this is because FUM does not have enough money of its own to keep them operating or delivering quality care. BYM's current practice of withholding funds from FUM makes this fiscal challenge all the greater.

Possible helpful web-sites are included in “Resources,” listed on **<http://www.bethesdafriends.org/fum-background.html>**. If you know of other helpful sites, please bring them to BFM's attention at either session.

This is an issue that may require struggle to resolve but we will make the struggle together in love and with love. NYYM has devised queries that might be helpful (See the end of **F\_NYYM\_Report.pdf**). In answering these queries, and other queries which we at BFM may devise, we may want to keep in mind Isaac Penington's definition of a Quaker religious community: *“our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.”*<sup>1</sup>

Housekeeping details: The Meeting Clerks have asked that people who expect to participate in the February business meeting where these concerns will be taken up formally, attend the January 20 and January 27 sessions if possible. The first will clarify facts in the matters; the second will be a session of “worship sharing”: a time when all who would speak will have a chance to do so without further comment or discussion. In light of the compressed time and the ardor of our views, the information packet includes Pat Loring's observation on worship sharing (see “Guidelines for Worship Sharing,” in **L\_Guidelines\_Worship-Sharing.pdf**) to which we will try to adhere, especially at the January 27 session. If you miss either or both of those sessions, please take time to review the document package.

ARE plans to tape the January 20 and January 27 sessions. ARE also will e-mail all attendees with responses to questions left pending at the end of the sessions. If necessary, ARE will arrange additional sessions following the February business meeting.

Frank Greve, Co-clerk, Adult Religious Education (ARE)

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<sup>1</sup> Quaker Faith & Practice, 2nd ed. (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995), 10.01.