

# Baltimore Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends  
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October 20, 2007

Dear Friends,

A few years ago, Baltimore Yearly Meeting asked our Monthly Meetings to discuss the yearly meeting's financial contributions to Friends United Meeting. At last Annual Session, our representatives to the FUM General Board raised new issues about our membership in FUM. Rachel Stacy and John Smallwood closed their report with these words:

It is difficult to send money to an organization with the dysfunctional aspects described [in their report]. On the other hand, it is also difficult to remain within FUM, advocating change, but not to contribute financially... It is difficult to participate in an organization with the corporate governance problems and the spiritual direction which FUM exhibits. The path that the FUM leadership is presently traveling does not seem to lead to our inclusion.

It is also difficult to sever ties with part of our history [for example with Ramallah Friends School in Palestine and Lugulu Hospital in Africa]. We have members who are committed Christians... We have members to whom FUM's mission statement deeply resonates. To separate from FUM, may leave such members without avenues of expression, fellowship and nurture. The care and development of all BYM members must be considered.

While both of us are united in our assessment of FUM... Rachel feels it is time for BYM to depart from this damaged organization. John is willing to continue another year, only with BYM's clear mandate to do so and to advocate serious FUM corporate reform. He is not hopeful of change, but feels a tug of common history with orthodox Friends. As Thomas Hamm said at the FUM Board retreat, **separations in Quaker history have rarely brought the peace and tranquility that some had expected.**

During consideration of this issue at last Annual Session, we reminded ourselves as a yearly meeting that:

- We need to witness to the truths we hold as Quakers even in cultures where those truths are unwelcome.
- Most Quakers are to be found in Africa, and that we cut ourselves off from a major part of the body of Quakerism when we refuse to support the work of Friends United Meeting.
- Justice without mercy is merely vengeance, and that we need to stay grounded in compassion and the desire for unity as we seek our way forward.
- Conflict resolution skills and approaches may be helpful in healing the divisions among us.
- We should not only listen to each other, but listen for what God's will is for us.
- We may need simply to wait with open hearts until such guidance comes, even though the wait seems long.

Friends at Annual Session AGREED we all need to listen deeply and prayerfully to each other, so that we can return to consideration of this issue next August with new Light.

As was said of the 1968 merger the two Baltimore Yearly Meetings—Orthodox and Hicksite—how

we relate to FUM and FGC (Friends General Conference) defines our yearly meeting. Decisions on these affiliations should be guided by our Monthly Meetings. To support your discernment of these concerns, we have included the information listed below.

Please forward your guidance by Tuesday, April 1, 2008 so that we might compile individual meeting and worship group responses and return them all for your further consideration.

*Howard Fullerton*  
Clerk

Enclosed:

Report of the BYM-FUM General Board Members, with cover letter to clerk of FUM  
BYM General Secretary's report  
Tom Hamm's Brief History of FUM  
FUM Mission Statement  
Queries  
Link to Johan Maurer's blog

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October 7, 2007

Brent McKinney  
Presiding Clerk  
Friends United Meeting  
101 Quaker Hill Road  
Richmond, IN 47374-1926

Dear Brent McKinney:

This letter transmits a copy of the report given during our Yearly Meeting by our General Board members Rachel Stacy and John Smallwood. The report stunned those present. The Yearly Meeting asked that you receive a copy of the report. (I understand that the BYM office quickly forwarded a copy of the report to the FUM office in Richmond.) The report concludes with these words:

It is difficult to send money to an organization with the dysfunctional aspects described above. On the other hand, it is also difficult to remain within FUM, advocating change, but not to contribute financially. It is difficult to remain a part of an organization which exhibits so little concern for our own BYM history and suggestions for policy and direction. It is difficult to participate in an organization with the corporate governance problems and the spiritual direction which FUM exhibits. The path that the FUM leadership is presently traveling does not seem to lead to our inclusion. It is also difficult to sever ties with part of our history.

However, it is also essential to acknowledge that BYM is a consolidated, not united, yearly meeting. We have members who are committed Christians sympathetic to orthodox and conservative Friends. We have members to whom FUM's mission statement deeply resonates. To separate from FUM, may leave such members without avenues of expression, fellowship and nurture. The care and development of all BYM members must be considered.

While both of us are united in our assessment of FUM, we each reach slightly different conclusions. Rachel feels it is time for BYM to depart from this damaged organization. John is willing to continue another year, only with BYM's clear mandate to do so and to advocate serious FUM corporate reform. He is not hopeful of change, but feels a tug of common history with orthodox Friends. As Thomas Hamm said at the FUM Board retreat, **separations in Quaker history have rarely brought the peace and tranquility that some had expected.** [*Emphasis in the original.*]

We now know John and Rachel were not aware of the Board approval of assuming responsibility for the Kaimosi Hospital. John Smallwood also points out that as FUM goes forward, it continues to confront major decisions that impact directly on people's lives, both physical and spiritual.

From our minutes:

During consideration of this issue, we were reminded that we need to witness to the truths we hold as Quakers even in cultures where those truths are unwelcome. We were reminded that most Quakers are to be found in Africa, and that we cut ourselves off from the body of Quakerism when we refuse to support the work of Friends United Meeting. We were reminded that justice without mercy is merely vengeance, and that we need to stay grounded in compassion and the desire for unity as we seek our way forward. We were reminded that conflict resolution skills and approaches may be helpful in healing the divisions among us. We were reminded that we should not only listen to each other, but listen for what God's will is for us. We were reminded that we may need simply to wait with open hearts until such guidance comes, even though the wait seems long.

We will also be forwarding a copy of the report to our constituent Monthly Meetings, asking for guidance. John Smallwood will present this report to the General Board. I am also attaching the report of our General Secretary, Riley Robinson. We have not been able to reach a decision on corporately funding FUM; we will attempt to reach unity soon. Most of the funds we would have sent are sitting in escrow awaiting a decision.

On behalf of Baltimore Yearly Meeting

Howard Fullerton  
*Presiding Clerk*

***Report to BYM Concerning FUM***  
***By John Smallwood & Rachel Stacy***  
***BYM Reps to FUM***  
***August 2007***

The events of this past year have raised serious questions concerning FUM's direction and the continued participation of BYM in this organization. **Now, we believe, is the time for BYM to make some decisions.** What is BYM's vision for its future relationship with FUM? What is our understanding of the Divine calling for FUM? What role should BYM, as a YM or individuals, to play in this calling?

We have attended FUM Board meetings in Richmond, IN (Oct. 2006), Kakamega, Kenya (Feb. 2007), and Plainfield, IN (July 2007). We also participated in a FUM Board tour in Kenya and Uganda, and a Board Retreat in Plainfield, IN. These experiences have left us deeply troubled by FUM's present course.

We must begin, however, with **our deep appreciation for the work and effort of the FUM staff.** They are admirable in their dedication and commitment to service. They work mightily in situations which demand too much and supply too little support. The problems we see reside not with the staff, but with the inconsistency of corporate vision with corporate resources. We believe the staff is placed in situations not likely to succeed.

Corporate Governance & Direction. The FUM Board adopted a sophisticated Strategic Plan in February. Goals of this plan were developed in Board focus groups meeting in 2006. The plan is thorough, and, if followed, can offer an opportunity for reform at FUM. Unfortunately, we have doubts that this will be the case. **The FUM decision making process is very centered in the Presiding Clerk and a few other Board members. This process feels to us to be closed to new thoughts and persons.** We say this while acknowledging that it is the same leadership which has adopted the Strategic Plan. The General Board is not always informed of key decisions until after their completion. **We see a failure of the present leadership to use the broad experiential and spiritual talents of the General Board,** which itself seems to acquiesce to this narrow leadership approach. Some recent decisions reflect questionable wisdom. For example, the FUM Executive Committee agreed to assume the management of the deteriorating Kaimosi Hospital in Kenya. This an endeavor entails grave responsibility and demands complex skills. Just this month, it was just reported to the FUM Board that hospital administrative staff corruption and inattention by the Kenyan Supervisory Board has opened serious financial and legal liability for FUM. Also, preventable deaths have occurred at this hospital since it has come under FUM Management. This raises, to us, questions of moral culpability by FUM. Clearly more thought, expertise and experience was needed to structure this effort to save a failing hospital. This pattern of setting goals, raising expectations, beyond the skills and resources of FUM occurs in other projects and can lead to tragic consequences. The key problem we see is corporate governance. Thus, while the Strategic Plan has

potential to open FUM to reform, we do not see a desire in the present leadership for the radical changes which are necessary.

Financial Soundness. **Serious financial shortcomings continue to plague FUM.** We see this as a warning sign that FUM is not doing things well. After drastic personnel cuts, heroic efforts of the present staff, the cutting back on Quaker Life and closing of the Book Store, the budget for Richmond seems to be met. But this comes with a cost. Some important functions, such as the North American Ministries are being covered only part time. **Of great concern to us is FUM's inability to raise enough funds for its overseas staff.** Overseas staff people, like the Principals of the Ramallah Friends School and the Friends Theological College, and Field Staff in the African Ministries Office, must continually travel back to the US to raise money for their own sustenance. Despite these staff efforts away from their demanding, overseas work, inadequate funds are being raised. Major mission efforts have been initiated by FUM in the Turkana and Samburu regions in Kenya and FUM has been unable to raise funds to adequately sustain these missions. Even if FUM is awarded US Government grants to rebuild decayed infrastructure in Kenya, this US taxpayer money will only disguise the eroding financial base of the organization. Here too the problem resides in corporate governance.

Inclusiveness Restricted: Personnel Policy. At every meeting this year, there was a struggle about FUM's identity. These conflicts were prompted by the discomfort of BYM and other consolidated YMs with the FUM personnel policy and its general approach to gay people. In Kenya, discussion of the FUM personnel policy and the acceptance of gay people were vigorously suppressed in the Identity Group meetings. John attended all the meetings of this group and personally raised these issues for consideration. Many East African Board members present were aware that these issues would arise and several took a forceful lead in stating their fervent belief that homosexual behavior was contrary to Biblical authority and improper. The vocabulary and tones of these comments were harsh and hurtful. Christian compassion, forgiveness and invitation to God's community did not seem present. A few Kenyan Board members tried to suggest further study, but these comments were quickly overwhelmed by strong statements of theological correctness from others. The only North Americans to protest such views were those representatives of the east coast consolidated yearly meetings. While not expressing themselves as harshly as the East Africans, a significant group of the North American Board members share similar views. With these entrenched views of homosexuality, **there will be no change in the FUM personnel policy in the near future.**

Inclusiveness Restricted: theology. There is a forceful minority on the FUM North American Board that believes that a clearer theological foundation will strengthen FUM. At the identity group meetings in Kenya and at the Board meeting, these North American Friends from the Midwest acted and raised a request to reaffirm the Richmond Declaration. This request did not apparently arise from any recent study or analysis of the Richmond Declaration. Many East African Board members immediately supported this step. It was not clearly stated why this step was necessary at this moment. Several North American Friends from the consolidated yearly meetings strongly expressed the discomfort such a move would have in their yearly meetings. At least one Kenyan Friend suggested further time for reflection. These clear indicators of spiritual caution were ignored by the Presiding Clerk. At the Board meeting, the Clerk declared the sense of the meeting to reaffirm the Declaration, giving those who were not united the opportunity to be recorded as standing aside. This decision places BYM in a challenged position. BYM has been a part of FUM from the beginning, but has never affirmed the Richmond Declaration. We believe the FUM leadership is making a mistake. **The drive for theological homogeneity will not strengthen FUM, but more likely it will sap it of spiritual vitality.** In the July retreat, after hearing historian Thomas Hamm's lecture on the checkered history of the Richmond Declaration, the Board seemed to change course a bit and simply affirmed its 1992 mission statement:

*“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.”*

Our Closing Thoughts. It is difficult to send money to an organization with the dysfunctional aspects described above. On the other hand, it is also difficult to remain within FUM, advocating change, but not to contribute financially. It is difficult to remain a part of an organization which exhibits so little concern for our own BYM history and suggestions for policy and direction. It is difficult to participate in an organization with the corporate governance problems and the spiritual direction which FUM exhibits. The path that the FUM leadership is presently traveling does not seem to lead to our inclusion. It is also difficult to sever ties with part of our history. However, it is also essential to acknowledge that BYM is a consolidated, not united, yearly meeting. We have members who are committed Christians sympathetic to orthodox and conservative Friends. We have members to whom FUM's mission statement deeply resonates. To separate from FUM, may leave such members without avenues of expression, fellowship and nurture. The care and development of all BYM members must be considered.

While both of us are united in our assessment of FUM, we each reach slightly different conclusions. Rachel feels it is time for BYM to depart from this damaged organization. John is willing to continue another year, only with BYM's clear mandate to do so and to advocate serious FUM corporate reform. He is not hopeful of change, but feels a tug of common history with orthodox Friends. As Thomas Hamm said at the FUM Board retreat, **separations in Quaker history have rarely brought the peace and tranquility that some had expected.**

Rachel feels the dysfunctionality of FUM is so great that she cannot continue as a BYM representative. See her attached resignation letter. John is willing continue as a BYM representative, only if BYM seriously grapples with its participation with FUM and indicates its desire to have representatives take part in FUM.

We are sad to have to submit such a report. We have tried to be faithful to the insights God has given us.

RACHEL STACY & JOHN SMALLWOOD

Annual Report  
Baltimore Yearly Meeting General Secretary

“Nurturing the Seeds of Baltimore Yearly Meeting”

A few weeks ago, I was sitting in Plainfield, Indiana at the Friends United Meeting Board Identity Retreat. The advent of my presence at this event had come up rather suddenly. I'd been asked to go by a board member from Baltimore Yearly Meeting. I'd had a while to speculate that it might happen, given up on it entirely, and then been invited at what was for me the last possible moment. It was not a logical decision; it was not a sensible decision - there was simply no time to go. It jarred my sense of family life, not with some deep spiritual crisis, but because while I was in Plainfield, I would miss my partner's birthday, feel a bit eclipsed by his near-simultaneous business trip to London, and neglect my duties as co-care person for his dog. I simply felt moved to go in a way that went beyond words. It just felt like the next step. There was, too, the inescapable overlay of memory that in almost every summer of my childhood I flew to Ohio or Indiana for an extended stay with my relatives. Over the years I had learned about famed Midwestern qualities of pragmatism and predictability, but also of the less famous Midwestern nonconformity that, when cultivated, may grow like the tree that slowly takes apart the concrete pavement. I also came to know about my forebears there, even things about my parents back home in the East, the kind of things that only relatives can tell you.

During the retreat, one co-facilitator spoke of her deeply fundamentalist upbringing and the collection of circumstances that brought her to her first semester at Earlham College - and very quickly to tears, surrounded by people she didn't know, and doubted that she would ever know well.

Therefore, I was unprepared for a later occasion when, after some open and searching sharing exercises, she asked us all to consider a quotation from “one of my Wiccan friends.” I just thought, Oh no! You did not just say that! I could only wonder what might happen next in a room where the span of beliefs seemed to be stretching us all to the limit. It was one of those times when I feel like I've found the Quaker equivalent of surfing. I also realized that I had gone from wondering if I would be able to take it as she began her first story, to wondering if some others in the room would be able to take this new piece. Had I been tricked into actually feeling empathy for people different from myself? What I do know is that from then on I felt an electric tingle – a thrill in the air. I must admit that it may have partly been the habitual drama I experience when listening to people trying to talk about lesbian and gay issues without saying the words, but truthfully I was realizing that, despite my fears of being isolated, I was excited by a diversity of people in the room that challenged the assumptions of some Quaker groups who think of themselves as diverse.

Perhaps you are wondering why I am telling you this for my annual oral report. Could it be that this is somewhat emblematic of how my first year as General Secretary has felt? Perhaps. I could have given you the list of tasks completed that I have given to Supervisory Committee. That can be supplied. But maybe this experience actually tells you more. Some of you may be Quaker surfers, too.

As we moved into the subsequent FUM board meeting after the retreat, I listened with rapt attention to fascinating, irresistible, frightening problems. I did suggest to myself that I might only be able to feel this kind of excitement for the problems of an organization whose staff I could never be on! But in truth I saw some people investing themselves and their resources in a race to heal a beloved, flawed organization and the people it serves. I had my reservations about how FUM does its work. But in what I gathered was a sign of a changing FUM, the Africa Ministries Representative, who had come from his native Kenya, spoke in painful, unflinching detail about the problems facing African Friends, and then gave his own view on the situation that we'd been sometimes talking around in the retreat: “When you send someone to us, we do not ask about all of the details of their life. We are just glad that they are there to help us.”

So back to the retreat. I was sitting in Plainfield, listening to Friends from many Yearly Meetings share deeply and differently. I was hearing historian Thomas Hamm talk about the unique history of Friends United Meeting, of the Richmond declaration of faith never having taken root in Baltimore Yearly Meeting (Orthodox), and reading from old minutes of assorted Yearly Meetings that challenged our assumptions about the “liberalness” or the “Christianness” or the “Easternness” or the “Midwesternness” of our Yearly Meetings over the decades. To that end, he circulated old leatherbound copies of books of Discipline for Indiana, New England, New York, and Baltimore Yearly Meetings, all dated from the 1870s.

Friends’ words, Friends’ Spirit – what is it that we have in common? I found myself wondering – what is it about my Yearly Meeting? What makes us who we are? What had made, and makes, us as a Yearly Meeting less likely to draw that historic line in the sand with other Friends? Is there a cultural DNA that an organization carries?

So when the small old volumes came around, I had an idea of where I wanted to look. When I had moved to the Mid-Atlantic region years ago, I’d gradually realized the presence of the legacy of civil war. Both Baltimore Yearly Meetings straddled the Mason-Dixon line. We straddled the Potomac River. We encompassed both of the capitals of a divided, warring nation. The places we live, the highway signs, and even the occasional summertime Civil War reenactment we pass as we drive to Yearly Meeting each year, still remind us that there is, and was, nowhere to escape the reality of what happened. The names are always with us: Gettysburg, Antietam, Manassas, and even at our past meeting places, Winchester and Chambersburg. Both “Northern” and “Southern,” we meet each other, united in many ways in community and concerns. In those old books that passed through our hands, under the topics of peace and slavery, the other Yearly Meetings had perhaps one to three paragraphs, clearly describing war and slavery as undesirable and forbidden. But New York, New England, and the Midwest had not seen the results of civil war and slavery the way Baltimore had. In BYM’s volume those two sections went on for pages. I felt like I had been handed an old family photo album. The results of years of suffering and survival – of Friends hiding horses and draft-age men in the Virginia swamps to prevent either from being taken by the military, of meeting in homes when Meeting Houses were taken over by soldiers, of traveling to assist others over dangerous roads, were here on display. Here were instructions for what ought not to be done with horses, wagons, businesses, land, money, and lives. Here was recorded the witness to the long, horrible march to nowhere. Friends’ resistance to the fighting, and the choice to nurture instead, had gone deep, had sunken in and were here to stay. The tree of our Yearly Meeting had in fact pushed the crushing pavement of war aside. The written legacy from our forebears transmitted the best of their experience and revelation, codified in the language of their day. I wondered - How shall we translate it into our time? Maybe this old wound is still too fresh for our Yearly Meeting to forget. Maybe gift of our forebears is still fresh enough to remember and to rejuvenate.

One more word from Thomas Hamm. Not all of the fighting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century took place outside of the Religious Society of Friends. He said that Friends’ 19<sup>th</sup> century experiment in Hicksite-Orthodox division, which had split our own Yearly Meeting for more than a century, hadn’t worked any more than the Civil War had cured prejudice. He didn’t claim to have either the preventative or cure for Friends then or now, but he said that instead of leading to a healthy resolution or to mended hearts, or to some greater witness through the work of the Society, the great division had led to even more divisions within.

The comparison of these two times is not so hard to make. Once again we are in a war over economic dominance and, most specifically, a resource of energy that is a cheap commodity for some and a crushingly, tragically costly burden for others. Wherever people are divided or demoralized, dominance by an outsider is possible. Once again, some Friends are feeling the pain much more than others. But this time it’s global. Our Friends in Africa are not sitting on any known mineral reserves, but are not immune from the continental crossfire. This time, we in BYM do not, at least for now, ourselves experience this day-to-day trauma.

So this history may be one explanation why we were, and are, reluctant to deliberately set up something that feels like an exclusionary boundary. What kind of Yearly Meeting are we? What kind will we be in the future?

Here's one view: On my way out of the office the other night at dusk, I saw someone unloading one of our camp vehicles. He was returning from working at our Teen Adventure program. He spoke of the beauty of his summer, and of the satisfaction of being a part of a well-run program. He also talked about the next step in his summer, traveling to a conference on environmentally friendly ways of building. He admonished me: "You really need to design for this from the ground up. There's a limit to what you can do with older structures. Most of all, though, everyone just needs to get used to using less energy."

Here's another: an openly gay man, hired as General Secretary, apparently the first ever in any Yearly Meeting, being well supported as he meets with Friends who may be uncomfortable with his situation. This is possible in a Yearly Meeting that says clearly and firmly and lovingly that if we diminish or devalue the Light of anyone, we know that we risk sacrificing our own Light as well.

And one more: Early one morning this week during Annual Session, I was walking along the sidewalk and was greeted by a Friend I had known for a long time (and perhaps a little too well) with, "How is your mental health this morning?" At that moment I realized that this is the kind of flawed and beautiful Yearly Meeting where we can sometimes ask that of each other, know that it is meant in love, and know that being a Friend of Truth can really require us to face the flaws, the wounds, and perhaps the beauty, in ourselves.

These are the flowers that grow from the seeds planted by our forebears, all in the cause of the love of truth and the truth of love. We do appreciate and depend on the beauty of the gifts in our garden, which in turn nurture us. We perform hard toil of our own to try to maintain what we have, that it may bloom anew.

We know some of the seeds that we are led to plant now. How can we best cross-pollinate and share with other Friends for the good of all?

- Riley Robinson

Friends United Meeting and Its Identity:  
An Interpretative History  
by  
Thomas D. Hamm  
Earlham College and  
Indiana Yearly Meeting

Probably no Quaker entity has had a history so characterized by difference and controversy as Friends United Meeting (FUM), which was for its first sixty years the Five Years Meeting of Friends. This reflects the organization's birth in the late nineteenth century, at a time when Friends were undergoing radical change and were debating how to adapt Quakerism to the times.

The roots of difference go back to the 1820s, when the Hicksite Separation divided North American Friends. Even the nature of the issues at hand is an issue, as both sides saw themselves as upholding traditional Christian Quakerism against false Friends corrupted by outside influences, be they Presbyterian or Unitarian. The 40 percent or so who became known as Hicksites embarked on a path that, after considerable controversy, would move them into identification with liberal Christianity after 1870. The 60 percent who became known as Orthodox shared a view of the infallibility of Scripture and divinity of Christ similar to that of other evangelical Protestants.

Between 1840 and 1860 Orthodox Friends experienced a new round of divisions that took their names from leading Friends. The majority of Orthodox Friends who were comfortable moving closer to the dominant evangelical Christian culture of the United States at this time became known as Gurneyites. The primitivist opponents of such accommodation became known as Wilburites and were the forerunners of present-day Conservative Friends.

Gurneyite acculturation took a radical turn after 1870, as meetings from New England to North Carolina to Ohio and Indiana west to Oregon became swept up in a wave of revivalism. This movement, which drew largely on Wesleyan holiness doctrines, produced a revolution. Traditional ideas of plainness and worship were discarded as music and, eventually, pastoral ministry, became the norm. (Baltimore, the smallest, was the one Gurneyite yearly meeting largely unaffected.) The revivals also brought in thousands of converts and expanded Quakerism into new areas. Most Gurneyite Friends gave up the idea of Friends as a "peculiar people" and began to define their community as the larger one of evangelical Protestants.

These changes did not come without controversy. They produced separations of more conservative Friends, who eventually united with the Wilburites. In several Gurneyite yearly meetings, especially New England, New York, Western, and Indiana, an influential group of weighty Friends remained who tried to moderate the changes. They were especially resistant to attempts, after 1879, to introduce outward observance of the ordinances into Quaker worship. It was to take stock and consider the impact of all of these innovations that representatives of the Gurneyite yearly meetings, with observers from London, Dublin, and Philadelphia yearly meetings, met in Richmond, Indiana, in the fall of 1887.

The Richmond conference had two lasting consequences. One was the conclusion that it would be useful to produce a common declaration of faith. There was precedent, going back to the seventeenth century. Orthodox Friends had published such a statement in 1830, and all of the participating yearly meetings by 1887 had such declarations in their Disciplines. The resulting statement, although under the care of a large committee, was largely the work of Joseph Bevan Braithwaite of London Yearly Meeting. The conference proceedings make it clear that the declaration was intended to be a statement of conclusions that the participating yearly meetings had already reached and that it would not supersede any yearly meeting statement. Afterwards, all

but one of the participating American yearly meetings accepted or endorsed it, with provisos that it was not to be considered a creed or replace their own faith statements. The exception was Ohio, which considered it insufficiently evangelical. Significantly in London Yearly Meeting, an influential minority considered it insensitive to Quaker distinctiveness and blocked endorsement.

The second consequence came from a proposal offered by William Nicholson, the clerk of Kansas Yearly Meeting, to form a triennial conference of yearly meetings with ultimate authority and legislative powers over the participating yearly meetings. Nicholson argued that it would bring “unification, compactness, strength, solidity, power of resistance, and an effective wielding of our forces.” Many Friends hailed the proposal; others, widely divergent in theology, saw it as “revolutionary and anti-Quaker.” The yearly meetings did agree to subsequent conferences in 1892 and 1897. At the latter, delegates agreed to draft a Uniform Discipline that would form the basis for a Five Years Meeting of Friends in America. By 1901, all of the American Gurneyite yearly meetings except Ohio had accepted it. Ohio again rejected the statement as insufficiently evangelical. The first sessions of the Five Years Meeting were held in 1902.

As it emerged in 1902, the Five Years Meeting was not as strong as William Nicholson had envisioned. The Uniform Discipline did bring change, most notably common organizational structures and the abolition of birthright membership. Provision was made for the establishment of a variety of boards, of which the most consequential would be that on foreign missions. But the Five Years Meeting did not have the power to lay down or sanction a yearly meeting, other than through expulsion. And since 1887, new issues had emerged.

Since 1887, Gurneyite Friends had seen dramatic change. The most important was the emergence of Rufus Jones (1863-1948). A lifelong member of New England Yearly Meeting, Jones had gone to Philadelphia in 1893 to teach at Haverford College and edit the *Friends' Review*, which was the organ of Philadelphia Gurneyites skeptical of the revival. A year later, Jones negotiated a merger with the Midwestern Gurneyite weekly, the *Christian Worker*, and formed the *American Friend*. Jones used its pages to advocate formation of the Five Years Meeting under a Uniform Discipline. (The 1901 version was largely the work of Jones and James Wood, the long-time clerk of New York Yearly Meeting. Jones wrote the “Essential Truths” section.) Jones had also become the leader of a small but extremely influential group of Gurneyite Friends, largely associated with Haverford, Wilmington, Guilford, Earlham, Whittier, and Pacific colleges, who embraced modernist Protestantism—the Social Gospel, postmillennialism, critical study of the Bible. These modernist Friends, while emphatically Christian, were skeptical of revivalism, emphasized the love and example of the life of Christ over salvation through His Blood, and stressed progressive or continuing revelation. They also believed that the revival had eroded too many Quaker distinctive doctrines, especially the Inner Light. By 1902, their influence was such that they could prevent the incorporation of the Richmond Declaration in the Uniform Discipline. Instead, each yearly meeting was left to decide its status.

Modernism would be the center of conflict in the Five Years Meeting from its formation, and the bureaucracies and sessions of the Five Years Meeting itself would provide new settings for that conflict. While the *American Friend* was its organ, the journal's ownership was with a small group of Philadelphia Friends. While Jones published numerous articles by holiness and strongly evangelical Friends, the appearance of *any* liberal work was an issue. Attempts to censure Jones and liberal Friends at the 1907 sessions of the Five Years Meeting failed, but by 1912 the perception of crisis was acute. This led to two significant actions. The first was structural. The Five Years Meeting assumed ownership of the *American Friend* and moved it to Richmond, Indiana. The second was adoption of a statement in the 1912 sessions on the status of the Richmond Declaration:

The Five Years Meeting, having been requested in Minutes from Western, Kansas, and California Yearly Meetings to take some action that will interpret the clause in the Uniform Discipline referring to the Richmond Declaration of Faith, decides that these documents are historic statements of belief, approved

by the Five Years Meeting in 1902, as expressed in the clause of Discipline referred to and approved again at this time, 1912, but they are not to be regarded as constituting a creed.

These actions did not end the controversy, as the divide between modernists of the Jones persuasion and their opponents widened between 1912 and 1922. Both sides drew on outside influences: Friends who identified with the emerging fundamentalist movement in American Protestantism founded bible colleges as alternatives to schools like Earlham and supported their own publications, such as *The Gospel Minister* and *The Evangelical Friend*. A particular grievance was the appointment in 1917 of Walter C. Woodward, an articulate modernist, as executive secretary of the Five Years Meeting and editor of the *American Friend*. Modernists continued to embrace similar movements in other denominations.

These tensions came to a head at the 1922 sessions of the Five Years Meeting. At issue was the qualifying clause in the 1912 minute that the Richmond Declaration and other statements were “not to be regarded as constituting a creed.” Critics saw it as nullifying the documents, and there had been threats of separation unless change took place. Accordingly, the Business Committee, with Rufus Jones at its head, recommended eliminating the clause as “widely misunderstood,” and submitted the following statement, which the Five Years Meeting embraced:

We recognize with profound sorrow that there is in the world today a great drift of religious unsettlement, unconcern, and unbelief. We desire at this time to call our own membership to a deeper religious life, a greater consecration of heart and will to God and a more positive loyalty to the faith for which so many of our forerunners suffered and died. We wish to reaffirm the statements and declarations of faith contained in our Uniform Discipline, viz., “The Essential Truths,” “The Declaration of Faith” issued by the Richmond Conference in 1887 and ‘George Fox’s Letter to the Governor of Barbados’ and we urge upon all our membership to refresh their minds by a careful reading of these documents which gather up and express the central truths for which we stand, now as in the past. But we would further remind our membership that our Christian faith involves more than the adoption and profession of written statements however precious they may be. It stands and lives only in free personal loyalty and devotion to a living Christ and in an inward experience of His spiritual presence and power in the soul, making the facts of our religion as real and as capable of being soundly tested as are the facts of the physical universe. May Friends everywhere bear in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus.

As Earl Redding and Tom Bodine noted in a 1974 study, while “the official action of Five Years Meeting in 1922 was to *reaffirm* the historic doctrinal statements,” it also “set the statements in the historic perspective that doctrinal statements do not hold for Friends the same sort of authority that other churches vest in creeds.”

Because the Five Years Meeting did not use the 1922 actions as a basis to remove Walter Woodward and others whom some Friends regarded as unsound, an exodus began. Oregon Yearly Meeting withdrew entirely in 1925, and several hundred fundamentalist-leaning Friends in Indiana and Western Yearly Meetings separated to form Central Yearly Meeting between 1924 and 1926. Dissatisfied members of California Yearly Meeting left Friends entirely for the same reason around 1930, and in 1937 Kansas Yearly Meeting withdrew.

By the late 1930s, interest was growing in an extensive revision of the Uniform Discipline, “to make it comply more nearly to present-day needs.” A committee was appointed in 1940. By 1945, it had produced four drafts, the last of which the Five Years Meeting submitted to the constituent yearly meetings. Five years later, it was clear that there was no unity on any doctrinal statement. So the 1950 sessions ruled that only the sections dealing with business procedures for the Five Years Meeting would go into effect, and that it was left to yearly meetings to adapt the draft to their own needs.

Two other forces pulled at the Five Years Meeting between 1945 and 1965. One was the impetus in some areas toward union or reunion of Hicksite and Orthodox meetings. This impulse went back at least thirty years. In some localities, meetings began worshipping together even while legally separate. In others, newly founded unprogrammed meetings resisted affiliation to avoid taking sides in older splits. Invariably, however, such meetings were not evangelical in theology. New England, Canadian, and New York Yearly Meetings saw several pastoral meetings become unprogrammed or leave the yearly meeting because of what they perceived as doctrinal looseness. Formal reunion of Hicksite and Orthodox came in Canadian, New York, and Baltimore yearly meetings, affiliating them with both FGC and the Five Years Meeting. In 1960, New England Yearly Meeting affiliated with FGC as well. And in 1962, the newly formed Southeastern Yearly Meeting was founded on a dual basis. These unions brought more theologically liberal Friends into the Five Years Meeting.

The other stress came from a renewed assertiveness by strongly evangelical Friends. The first of a series of conferences, including both Friends from the independent Ohio, Oregon, and Kansas Yearly Meetings as well as many from the Five Years Meeting, was held in 1947. Increasingly, there was a perception of an alternative for pastoral Friends dissatisfied with what they saw as doctrinal vagueness and the influence of Friends from the united yearly meetings. Tensions in Nebraska Yearly Meeting were resolved only by that Five Years Meeting body setting off most of its monthly meetings into Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting, which cut all ties with the Five Years Meeting.

Still, several observers have seen the period between 1945 and 1965 as a time of progress for the Five Years Meeting, which changed its name to Friends United Meeting in 1960 and began triennial sessions. Yearly meetings outside North America, such as East Africa and Jamaica, joined. A new headquarters was built in Richmond. Friends United Press was established. Finances were generally healthy. The center seemed to hold.

By the late 1960s, however, strains were becoming apparent. One issue was FUM's membership in the National and World Council of Churches, which served as a lightning rod for many evangelicals. The influx of convinced Friends into the dual yearly meetings drawn by antiwar activism and what they perceived as the tolerance of Friends widened the theological gap with most pastoral Friends. Another issue was the rise of a universalist outlook in the unprogrammed yearly meetings, which argued that Quakerism was not necessarily Christian. These tensions led the FUM General Board to undertake a study of the status of the Richmond Declaration in 1974. It concluded that the 1922 affirmation was still in effect, but with the qualifier that Friends recognized the limitations of written statements of faith.

By the late 1970s, a new issue had appeared, homosexuality. Generally, theologically liberal Friends were sympathetic to questioning traditional ideas about same-sex relationships. By the early 1980s, some monthly meetings with FUM affiliation were conducting same-sex unions. For others within FUM, this was an affirmation of evil and it proved extremely divisive. In 1984, for example, California Yearly Meeting threatened to withdraw as host for triennial sessions if the subject was even raised. In 1988, FUM put in place a regulation that limited employment to persons who refrained from sexual relationships outside of heterosexual marriage, which outraged many Friends.

These differences were apparent at the FUM triennial in 1987 in Greensboro, North Carolina. Southwest Yearly Meeting (it had changed its name from California) had asked the session to reaffirm the Richmond Declaration. After long debate, it was clear that there was not unity to do so, but as a compromise, the meeting endorsed what became known as the "Two O'clock Minute," which affirmed FUM's Christian identity. But tensions remained.

The response of Steve Main, then the FUM General Secretary, was to propose what became known as "Realignment." It asked, essentially, that the yearly meetings dually affiliated with FUM and FGC leave the

former for the latter, and that the pastoral yearly meetings in FUM join with Evangelical Friends International in a new relationship. The FUM General Board condemned the idea, largely because Friends in Indiana, Western, Wilmington, and North Carolina recognized that many of their members would resist such a stark choice. But the General Board did commit itself to further work on issues of morality and doctrine. These meetings in 1991 and 1992 were often tense, but produced the mission statement that FUM still uses. As is often the case with compromises, it did not suit everyone. Southwest Yearly Meeting withdrew in 1993, while more liberal Friends criticized the statement as failing to reflect the range of views within FUM.

From the point of view of this historian of Quakerism, the past two decades have reflected tensions that were inevitable in an organization that has necessarily tried to embrace the full range of American Quakerism. At the extremes, Friends who see FGC or EFI as the best embodiment of the faith and practice of Friends have tried to nudge FUM as a body in their direction, not surprisingly drawing resistance. Much of FUM's appeal has rested on a sense that it represents a middle way between two extremes. But as the extremes have widened, with many EFI Friends holding on to only the most tenuous Quaker identity and many FGC Friends discarding the Christian basis of Quakerism as narrow and exclusionary, the task has become correspondingly difficult. Probably the most important development of the last decade has been the increasing role of Kenyan Friends, who now make up a majority of FUM's members. Their centrality to the 2007 reaffirmation of the Richmond Declaration may signal a fundamental turning point in FUM identity.

### A Bibliography

I have drawn largely on two documents, both unpublished. One is the report on the status of the Richmond Declaration compiled by Earl Redding and Thomas Bodine in 1974 for the use of the 1975 Triennial sessions. A useful summary appeared as "Friends . . . One in the Spirit" in *Quaker Life* in October 1974. The second is a 1992 compilation by Harold Smuck, "Friends United Meeting, Past and Present." It includes a time line summarizing developments in organization, faith, missions, social concerns, evangelism, publishing, pastoral leadership, ecumenicalism, and cities.

For changes in the nineteenth century, an overview is my own *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Indiana University Press, 1988). Mark Minear's *Richmond 1887* (1987) is a good account of the Richmond Conference. The proceedings of the 1887 conference, including the speeches and remarks of the delegates/representatives, were published, as were those of the 1892, 1897, 1902, and 1907. From 1912 to date, only minutes have been published.

For a modernist view of developments in the first half of the twentieth century, see Rufus Jones *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years* (1934) and Elbert Russell, *Quaker: An Autobiography* (1956). For the evangelical view, see Edward Mott, *The Friends Church in the Light of Its Recent History* (1930) and *Sixty Years of Gospel Ministry* (1948).

Resources for FUM history since 1950 are less accessible and involve reading the Triennial minutes and the *American Friend* and *Quaker Life*. Especially useful is the September 1984 issue of the latter, which is devoted to "The Quaker Search for Identity." For the issues in the Realignment controversy, most of which are still current, see the 1991 Pendle Hill publication *Realignment: Nine Views among Friends*.

## **Mission Statement**

Friends United Meeting commits itself 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.

## **Queries from Riley Robinson, BYM General Secretary given during Annual Session, Wednesday, August 1, 2007**

Riley Robinson, General Secretary, challenged us to reframe the questions we are asking about our relationship with FUM, and suggested the following queries:

- 1) If we want to support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people in the Religious Society of Friends, in America and elsewhere, how can we best do that?
- 2) If we want to have meaningful relationships with other parts of the Religious Society of Friends, how can we best do that?
- 3) If we want to be of service to and in relationship with Friends in other countries, particularly Africa, how can we best do that?
- 4) How can these goals be pursued in a harmonious way?

He urged us not define Friends in FUM as somehow outside of our circle of responsibility.

## **Link to Johan Maurer's blog on FUM:**

This is a discussion of the report by the BYM members of the FUM General Board by a past General Secretary of FUM.

<http://johanpdx.blogspot.com/2007/09/what-is-really-wrong-with-fum-part-two.html>