

The following Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) minute was considered but not approved at BYM's Annual Sessions, August 2010. It will likely be discussed again at the October Interim Meeting in October 2010 held at Richmond Friends Meeting.

Y2010-64 Proposed Minute on FUM and Financing.

The proposed minute on FUM financing was brought up again by Howard Fullerton.

Draft Minute on FUM financing (not approved)

Our witness about gays, lesbians, and transgender people among us:

We have been given the presence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Friends who worship and labor as vital members of our Monthly Meetings and our Yearly Meeting. We testify that their presence is a gift among us. We are witnesses to the fruits of the Spirit that these, our treasured Friends, have so generously shared with us.

We stand steadfastly against any policies or actions that would diminish the innate human dignity, or malign the deep spiritual integrity, or deny the loving relationships of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Friends. We believe the moral arc of the universe—to borrow from Martin Luther King, Jr.—bends toward justice and mercy for all God's creation. In the meantime, we understand that Friends who have not shared experiences similar to ours will have difficulty with this, our testimony to the integrity of our experience and to our vision of equality, justice, and peace.

Our inability to come to unity in the past

For a number of years BYM has struggled to discern our role as a member of Friends United Meeting. In 1988, the FUM General Board, with BYM representatives present, adopted a personnel policy which set the expectation that its staff and volunteers would restrict their intimate sexual relations to marriage, understood to be between one man and one woman. Many BYM Friends find this policy, effectively excluding same-gender relationships, to be offensive and discriminatory. As a consequence, in 2004, BYM continued its membership and continued to send Board members, but withheld our contributions to FUM while we sought discernment. We felt torn: many among us find a spiritual home in FUM and feel blessed by an opportunity to participate in its ministries; at the same time, many Friends have been uneasy as a matter of conscience about financially supporting an organization that engages in employment discrimination.

Also at 2008 Annual Session, an ad hoc Committee (the Committee of Four Committees), which had carefully considered the concern, recommended that we release funds to FUM. Despite our love and tenderness toward each other, we were unable to reach unity (Y2008-63). At the end of 2008 Annual Session, many Friends felt that we had faithfully labored with the concern, and we should wait for the way to open.

Though we have not sent our general financial contributions to FUM during this time, we have tried to continue fellowship with FUM in other ways. Our Intervisitation Program, started simultaneously with our withholding of funding, has built bonds of affection among us within FUM. We continue to send dedicated and skilled BYM members to serve in positions of responsibility on the FUM General Board. We have felt led to support financially several FUM projects. The FUM Office does not receive any part of these contributions, so we feel that we are supporting the projects without paying for the personnel policy, and we are making a statement that BYM is willing to give financial support when not supporting the personnel policy. At the same time, the FUM General Board is involved in its own discernment process concerning possible reorganization. It has affirmed that FUM is an association of Yearly Meetings rather than a denomination, so there is no need for all FUM members to agree on how to be Quakers. The Spirit is moving among us, and we have faith that Divine leadings will be revealed in God's time. (For a more complete statement of our status, see Interim Minute I2010-08.)

Recent contributions to FUM projects

In 2008 (I2008-11), we contributed \$9000 to the Friends Church Peace Team Kenya to support peace initiatives. These funds came from money appropriated in 2008 for FUM, but set aside until a decision could be made. By the time the funds became available to the Peace Team, most material aid had been delivered; it appears our funds were used with others to prepare a Peace Curriculum for the many Friends High Schools in Kenya. An article on this effort appears in the July/August 2010 issue of Quaker Life.

In 2009 (I2009-28), we contributed \$20,000 to support Ann Riggs as the Principal of the Friends Theological College in Kaimosi, Kenya. These funds came in part from the annual appropriation for 2009 but set aside until a decision could be made. The remaining money came from the accumulation of funds set aside in past years but not spent. Ann has made a significant contribution to the College, which serves Friends in Yearly Meetings beyond Kenya.

This year (I2010-08), Ann Riggs was asked to continue for a further year at FTC. Again the Yearly Meeting contributed to this effort from the annual appropriation that was set aside until a decision was made. For three successive years, the Yearly Meeting supported projects of FUM, but did them in such a way that none of the administrative costs of FUM were supported. By 2009, contributions by individuals and Monthly Meetings were at the level they were in 2004.

The financial withholding and other FUM Yearly Meetings

North American Yearly Meetings of FUM do not understand how a Yearly Meeting can continue to send members to serve on the General Board of FUM while refusing to pay any administrative costs. This includes Yearly Meetings that agree with our stance against discrimination.

Our witness on the use of money

In the course of our deliberations we have come to see that money is not really the issue. We believe that an undue focus on money is getting in the way of the work we are called to, work which includes being present with lesbian and gay Friends in FUM-only yearly meetings, and engaging actively with the rest of FUM in working and witnessing for peace and equality. Money is a clumsy form of communication—a blunt weapon—that cannot convey the transformational power of our spiritual concern. We have come to trust that the Holy Spirit is working among us, for purposes that we do not yet fully understand. We know that it is not money but the Inward Teacher who transforms hearts. In the spirit of seeing our relationship with FUM, not as a problem, but as an opportunity to witness actively for peace, equality, and compassion, we approve the following action:

(It is proposed that) We will resume budgeted payments to FUM's General Fund, starting with the 2011 budget.