

Some Background on Baltimore Yearly Meeting and Friends United Meeting

Baltimore Yearly Meeting split into Orthodox and Hicksite factions in 1828. The BYM-Orthodox corresponded with other orthodox YMs (North America, London, Dublin) and also met regularly with the North American orthodox meetings. These YMs eventually formed a new organization, Five Years Meeting in 1902, the forerunner of Friends United Meeting. In 1967, our two yearly meetings approved consolidation and came together as one body in 1968. The newly consolidated BYM thus gained status as a founding member of FUM.

Not everyone was happy about the reunification/consolidation movements within the east coast meetings (New England, New York, Baltimore). Mid-western YMs felt that these new, larger, combined YMs would dwarf them and change the nature of FUM. Three small orthodox meetings in Virginia left and joined NCYM-FUM because they felt their needs would not be met in the new BYM. Within BYM, some Friends did not want to affiliate with FUM and others did not want to affiliate with FGC. These Friends considered us a consolidated YM, not a united YM. For this reason our membership statistics and contributions to these larger organizations were kept separately, with some monthly meetings belonging only to FUM, some belonging only to FGC and some splitting their membership.

Origins of the FUM Personnel Policy and BYM's Recent Relationship to FUM

Circa 1987 The director of Quaker Volunteer Witness, an FUM workcamp program in Washington, DC, refused to employ an openly gay man, sparking discussion within FUM about sexuality and sexual boundaries and an official expression of concern from BYM's representative to FUM.

1988 Baltimore Yearly Meeting's representative to the General Board of Friends United Meeting reported that Baltimore Yearly Meeting's concern, and that of many others, regarding Quaker Volunteer Witness's refusal of employment to a homosexual received serious consideration at several levels of Friends United Meeting (FUM). In the end the General Board of FUM approved statements to be incorporated into the QVW handbook which, while affirming 'the civil rights of all people' and recognizing 'that there is diversity among us on issues of sexuality,' stood behind QVW in its employment practice. The BYM representative felt that the searching discussion of this incident, in its many ramifications, represents positive movement within the Friends United Meeting structure.

POLICY ON APPOINTMENTS FOR QUAKER VOLUNTEER WITNESS, 1988-GB-52 Approved by the General Board of FRIENDS UNITED MEETING, October 24, 1988

We affirm the civil rights of all people to secular employment, housing, education and health care without regard to their sexual orientation. In particular, we condemn violence, whether verbal or physical against homosexuals, and call for their full protection under the civil rights laws.

We reaffirm our traditional testimonies of peace, simplicity, truth speaking, gender and racial equality, personal integrity and community. We recognize that there is diversity among us on issues of sexuality. For the purpose of our corporate life together, we affirm our traditional testimony that sexual intercourse should be confined to the bonds of marriage, which we understand to be between one man and one woman. The lifestyle of volunteers under appointment to Quaker Volunteer Witness, regardless of their sexual orientation, should be in accordance with these testimonies.

[Note #1-Some of us who were active in BYM at this time recall this policy—but only vaguely.]

[Note #2-This wording was interpreted differently in African countries where the major concerns were about polygamy and heterosexual promiscuity of males who had left their villages to work in cities.]

During the time period that FUM's 1988 minute on sexuality was adopted several related things happened in BYM:

- We adopted our first combined Faith and Practice. 1988
- A majority of BYM did not consider themselves members of FUM, and thus paid little attention to its work, policies, and practices.

- Our Annual Session declined to affirm a minute from BYM's Ministry and Counsel Committee that affirmed the good order followed by Homewood Friends Meeting in celebrating the first Holy Union within the YM. BYM was not united on the issue of homosexuality. 1988 or 1989?
- BYM appointed two representatives to the FUM-GB who were polar opposites in style, loyalty, and theology. This was at the least confusing to others on the General Board, if not disruptive, because it happened during the FUM "Realignment" controversy. 1990.

1991 The FUM personnel policy is extended to all FUM staff
1994-2001 discussion of homosexuality dies down

1997 Stony Run Meeting decided it would no longer report membership statistics (% belonging to FUM; % belonging to FGC). Stewardship and Finance decided to declare everyone as members of both and set amounts to be forwarded from the budget to support FUM and FGC. We fell into being a *de facto* united YM to ease the accounting burden. Our FUM reported membership thus grew and we were allotted more representatives to FUM boards and events.

1999 FUM Triennial held in Williamsburg, VA with BYM as the host yearly meeting. BYM interest and participation in FUM thus increased dramatically.

2002 BYM sends a large delegation to the FUM Triennial in Kenya. An incident draws attention to FUM's personnel policy and whether it applies to volunteers. BYM asks FUM General Board to clarify its policy about voluntary leadership.

March 2004 One Monthly Meeting within BYM asks that its money not be forwarded to FUM; a second Monthly Meeting asks that no Meetings' money be forwarded to FUM.

August 2004 A Representative Group from various BYM committees (3 each from M&PC, S&F, and GSD) made three proposals: 1) BYM continue to maintain full membership in FUM and participate in FUM activities. 2) BYM have a \$17,400 line item for FUM. Each MM to decide if the amount to FUM is sent or put in "escrow." This would also cover the last half of the 2004 budget. 3) An ad hoc Intervisitation group be convened by members of A&O, M&PC, S&F, and the Ad Hoc Committee.

The first and third recommendations were approved on the floor of BYM's Annual Sessions. The Intervisitation Group was to enable both intervisitation and traveling ministry as appropriate.

March 2005 The BYM Intervisitation Committee held its first meeting and reported to March Interim Meeting a few weeks later.]

2004-2010 Baltimore Yearly Meeting does not send a general financial contribution to FUM, but has directly supported several FUM projects.

2007 The General Board of FUM meeting in Kenya reaffirms the Richmond Declaration of Faith, the historic Orthodox Friends statement of faith which has long been an official faith statement of FUM (although member yearly meetings have never been required to adopt the Declaration, and BYM has never done so). A later "identity Retreat" of the North American Board declined to repeat this action and instead reaffirmed FUM's 1992 mission statement that FUM exists "*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.*"

Spring 2010 The General Board of FUM affirms that it is an association of Yearly Meetings rather than a denomination. This reiterates that not all YMs must adopt the Richmond Declaration of Faith.

August 2010 Baltimore Yearly Meeting approves a budget that includes a line item for FUM. BYM lays over a statement that says it will resume budgeted payments to FUM starting with the 2011 budget.

Sources for this document include work by Georgia Fuller, Howard Fullerton, and Riley Robinson. All errors are my own. --Laura Goren, September 2010