

## **A “Brief” Chronology of the Recent History of Baltimore Yearly Meeting and Friends United Meeting.**

**1968** – Two Baltimore Yearly Meetings, one Orthodox (which held to the infallibility of Scripture and the divinity of Christ ) and the other Hicksite (which identified with liberal Christianity after 1870) joined together as a “consolidated” yearly meeting, ending an almost 150-year separation of the two branches of Quakerism within BYM. The Orthodox were founding members of Friends United Meeting while the Hicksites identified with Friends General Conference.

**1988** – In response to the application of a gay man to serve as a volunteer in the FUM Quaker Volunteer Witness (QVW) program, the FUM General Board approved a minute stating in part: “We affirm the civil rights of all people to secular employment, education and health care without regard to their sexual orientation...We recognize that there is diversity among us on issues of sexuality. For purposes 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.” [As FUM was then constituted, BYM had one representative and there is no record of that our representative objecting to this minute. It has been assumed that the BYM representative united with this minute.]

The QVW program was subsequently laid down in part over the application of the personnel policy to openly gay volunteers to the program. The policy was later extended to FUM staff and other volunteers but is not enforceable on the personnel policies of FUM's 15 constituent yearly meetings.

**1991** – The FUM General Board circulated an “Organizational Personnel Policy Manual” which stated in part: “Friends United Meeting affirms the civil rights of all people. Staff and volunteer appointments are made without regard to sexual orientation. It is expected that sexual intercourse should be confined to marriage, understood to be confined to one man and one woman.”

**1992** – FUM's General Board adopted a mission statement that FUM's mission is “to energize Friends through the power of the Holy Spirit to gather people into fellowship where Jesus Christ is known, loved, and obeyed as teacher and Lord.”

**2002-2003**—BYM began an internal debate concerning its financial relationship with FUM. Only half of the money apportioned to BYM was forwarded in 2003. The rest was placed in an escrow account.

**2004** – Baltimore Yearly Meeting at its annual session approved a minute titled “FUM Policy Concern” stating in part that the FUM personnel policy “effectively bars from staff and leadership positions those Friends who cannot sign, abide by and enforce a policy of discrimination against any person in a sexual relationship outside the bond of marriage, defined in the policy as between one man and one woman. Our Gay and Lesbian Friends are particularly affected by this policy. We believe the basic Gospel teaching that Christ is “the true Light that enlightens every person who has come into the world (John 1:9).” ...We have seen the Light of Christ in our Friends who are not heterosexual, and to this truth we do bear witness. Baltimore Yearly Meeting has been greatly enriched over the years by the Spirit-guided leadership of many Friends who could not be hired nor hold leadership volunteer positions with this policy...We believe that a policy that requires staff and volunteers to have the endorsement of their Meeting or Church would be a more accurate measure of their character and more in keeping with how God would have us treat each other in Christian love. In spite of the pain this issue has caused, we do not wish to break community with Friends United Meeting. We believe that we share common ground. We unite with FUM in affirming that all intimate relationships should be grounded in love, respect and discipline as a reflection of God's love.”

**2004** – BYM at its July annual session business meeting approved a budget in which \$17,400 initially

earmarked as BYM's annual contribution to FUM be renamed "undesigned," allowing the funds to be included in the budget but not forwarded to FUM. The business meeting also approved including in the budget funding of \$7,000 for a newly established program of "intervisitation" to underwrite the expenses incurred by BYM Friends who visited other yearly meetings and monthly meetings within FUM. (The implicit if not explicit intent of these visiting Friends is to discuss with other FUM meetings the BYM's position as stated in the 2004 minute that gay and lesbian Friends have much to contribute and should not be discriminated against because of their sexuality)

**2004** – Bethesda Friends Meeting at its July business meeting approved a minute stating: "Bethesda Friends Meeting has learned of the FUM personnel policy which discriminates against applicants for staff and volunteer positions on the basis of sexual orientation or behavior. Our Meeting strongly disagrees with this policy because it fails to recognize the varieties of responsible, loving, spiritually enriching relationships that exist in our meetings and communities, and is counter to our belief that there is that of God in every person. We recognize that this policy does reflect beliefs strongly held by many in FUM leadership positions. We support the initiatives being taken by BYM to open a dialog and labor with others in FUM and on the General Board of FUM to seek together a way to transcend this conflict and to find a new way to respond to the concerns of all about this important issue."

**2005** – The BYM Interim Meeting in June approved a minute stating in part that "Baltimore Yearly Meeting has labored long, hard and prayerfully in our search for unity about making financial contributions to Friends United Meeting in light of our disunity with ... the FUM General Board's [1988 minute personnel policy] and its implementation....We now affirm that we in Baltimore Yearly Meeting feel led by God to make our customary contribution of \$17,400 to Friends United Meeting for the 2005 budget year as a Restricted Contribution. We ask that these funds be used solely to fund a new FUM program of yearly meeting intervisitation, beginning with the North American Yearly Meetings. We ask that they not be used for administrative fees or FUM overhead costs, but only for the direct costs of the intervisitation program."

BYM subsequently was told by FUM that FUM could not accept funds restricted for a program purpose that FUM itself had not established. In light of this, an ad hoc committee was appointed to bring a recommendation to address BYM's obligation as a constituent member of FUM to make a financial contribution to FUM, but the committee has not reported and to date.

**2006** – At the July annual session money was put into an "undesigned" account for the 2007 budget with a note that it was to be considered part of BYM's contribution to FUM when the yearly meeting decided how to handle the money that it usually apportioned to FUM. The account is now a little more than \$35,000.

BYM has not forwarded any financial contributions to FUM since the 2005 check, restricted for the purpose of intervisitation, was returned. It continues, however, to appoint three BYM representatives to the FUM General Board. These BYM representatives have participated actively in the work of the General Board, assuming leadership in key committees of the board.

**2007** – At the BYM annual session in August a report from two of BYM's representatives to FUM called on BYM to "make some decisions" with regard to its relationship to FUM. The report cites the continuing discord over the FUM personnel policy but said other serious problems related to corporate governance and organizational direction led the representative to question whether BYM should continue in relationship with FUM. The report stated in part: "In Kenya [at the FUM Triennial in February 2007], discussion of the FUM personnel policy and the acceptance of gay people were vigorously suppressed in the Identity Group meetings.... 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,*" the authors conclude.

On the matter of corporate governance and direction the BYM representatives' report stated in part: "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.... 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."

The report also raised concern about the financial soundness of FUM, stating in part: "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."

The report concluded in saying: "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."

The business meeting accepted the two representatives' report and agreed that before it could take any implementing action on the report it would ask monthly meetings within BYM to consider the issue of the YM's relationship with FUM and report back to the YM by April 2008. It is in response to this request from BYM that BFM initiated these January 2008 forums.

**October 2007** – At the BYM Fall Interim Meeting day the BYM representatives reported on a minute approved by the FUM General Board in response to the inflammatory statements made by some African Friends at the February Triennial in Kenya. That minute by the FUM General Board stated: "Allegations that Friends United Meeting (FUM) is hostile to homosexuals and their allies and that FUM condones physical and emotional violence against homosexuals and their allies have been circulated among Friends and on the Internet. The General Board of FUM/Richmond, this 13<sup>th</sup> day, 10<sup>th</sup> month, 2007, is clear that God loves all persons and that hostility toward any person is not consistent with the Christian Gospel. In particular this General Board condemns the threat of physical or emotional violence against any person."

In the same report to the October BYM Interim Meeting, the BYM representatives to FUM reported on their observations that at a FUM General Board meeting earlier that month they saw evidence that the board was taking steps to improve its decision-making and governance. They recommended that BYM delegates take part at the next FUM Triennial in the summer of 2007 in the nominating process for leadership positions. BYM does intend to send a full slate of delegates to the Triennial.