

# Patapsco Friends Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends  
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**To: Howard Fullerton, Clerk, Baltimore Yearly Meeting**

## **Proposal to Seek Mediation with the Friends United Meeting Leadership**

Patapsco Friends Meeting proposes that mediation be sought to address the differences among Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM), the other dually affiliated yearly meetings, and the leadership of Friends United Meeting (FUM). These groups have much in common, such as the testimonies, the focus on the light within, and seeking that of God in each person. There are also differences on some important issues, such as the FUM personnel policy. These differences should be dealt with in order to maintain a continuing connection.

A process is needed to allow for a meaningful conversation among the various groups which both respects each group's viewpoints and also supports each group in listening and in considering the others' needs and interests. Using mediation does not guarantee a solution, but it does offer the opportunity to try to seek common ground and to resolve the issues in dispute.

The BYM *Faith and Practice* states, "While Quakers believe that a seed of God is in every human being, it is sometimes easier to believe this of persons at a distance than it is of those near at hand. This is particularly true when the need arises to address contentious issues. A meeting community should always seek to consider openly matters of issue, seeking a loving resolution of conflict, rather than to preserve a semblance of community by ignoring issues."

In the pamphlet, "Parable and Transforming Power Among Friends," Judy Brutz writes, "Compassion requires that we be able to relate interpersonally in life-affirming ways, that we be able to listen, do effective problem-solving, and be creative and loving in dealing with conflicts."

Mediation is a process in which a neutral third party, a mediator, assists the parties in the dispute to talk together, to seek to understand each other's views, to uncover underlying issues, to consider possible options, and if possible, to reach an agreement which is satisfactory to all parties. We propose that a mediator be chosen from outside the Society of Friends, and that the mediator be someone who has had experience with religious values conflicts. The mediator would need to be acceptable to all sides.

Just as we try to help others outside the Society of Friends to resolve conflicts, let us also try to resolve the conflicts within the Society of Friends. We urge Baltimore Yearly Meeting to contact the other dually affiliated Yearly Meetings and the leadership of FUM to propose mediation.

**Approved at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, July 6, 2008**

**Terry Griffith, Clerk, Patapsco Monthly Meeting of Friends**