

**SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES OF THE
337TH ANNUAL SESSION
OF
BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING
OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
FROSTBURG, MARYLAND

Y2008-09 Sheila Bach, Langley Hill, presented the report of the Faith and Practice revision committee. Packets have been prepared for each meeting containing the proposed new text for advices, queries, and “voices”—quotations old and new. Each meeting is asked to make copies for their members and encourage careful consideration of this packet. The text is also available on the Baltimore Yearly Meeting website. Sheila Bach introduced and thanked the members of the committee, who have worked together on this task for many years.

Y2008-11 Elizabeth “Betsy” Meyer, Sandy Spring, presented the report of Interim Meeting.

Interim Meeting Report to Baltimore Yearly Meeting
August 2008

The Interim Meeting acts for the Yearly Meeting when necessary in the intervals between sessions. At this time, Interim Meeting is reporting such actions to the Yearly Meeting.

Actions at Interim Meeting held Tenth Month 20, 2007, in Washington, DC:

Stewardship and Finance Committee presented revised apportionments which were approved.

A Development Subcommittee of the Stewardship and Finance Committee brought forth a report on the needs of Baltimore Yearly Meeting for a development program. Friends approved a committee description for the Development Subcommittee. In addition, Friends approved the hiring of a development director, contingent upon a job description approved by Supervisory Committee and the identification of funds by Trustees and Stewardship and Finance to support the role.

Friends approved the Peace and Social Concerns Committee’s proposal that Baltimore Yearly Meeting join the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.

Actions at Interim Meeting held Third Month 29, 2008, in Williamsburg, VA:

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee recommended that Baltimore Yearly Meeting make a contribution to the Kenya Relief Fund which will support both humanitarian relief and Alternatives to violence programs in Kenya. Friends approved a contribution from BYM of \$9,000 – the amount of undesignated funds in this year’s budget.

At the recommendation of the Stewardship and Finance Committee, Friends granted permission for a one-time use of the BYM mailing list by Friends Wilderness Center for an information and fund-raising letter.

Actions at Interim Meeting held Sixth Month 21, 2008, in Annapolis, MD:

Friends approved the recommendation of our Friends World Committee for Consultation-Section of the Americas representatives that Baltimore Yearly Meeting issue an invitation for FWCC-Section of the Americas to hold an annual meeting in the BYM area between 2010 and 2012.

Friends approved asking BYM committees (especially Nominating, Stewardship and Finance, Trustees, Advancement and Outreach, and Ministry and Pastoral Care Committees) to consider the implications of taking schools under BYM’s care and to report to Ministry and Pastoral Care by June 2009, Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee is asked to bring a recommendation to annual session in 2009.

Friends approved naming Mary Lord (Adelphi) as a BYM delegate to an ecumenical peace conference sponsored by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church to be held January 13-17, 2009.

In addition, at all three meetings, the Nominating Committee informed us of resignations from committees and other positions and brought forth nomination which were approved. At Spring and Summer Interim Meetings, Friends approved endorsing various travel minutes.

Y2008-22 Clerk Howard Fullerton summarized the responses received from our local meetings on the question of whether Baltimore Yearly Meeting should stay retain its membership in Friends United Meeting. Of the twenty-two meetings that sent responses, nine called for greater engagement with FUM; five could not reach unity; seven recommended retaining our membership but withholding or re-channeling our financial contributions; and one recommended dissociating from FUM while remaining in dialogue. These responses do not determine what we should do as a corporate body, but they may provide helpful guidance.

Friends prayerfully considered the question of our continuing relationship with Friends United Meeting. We heard of a transforming experience in a worship-sharing group at the recent Triennial where Kenyan and North American Friends confronted the hurt of discrimination and unexpectedly found themselves drawn together in love. We were reminded that we need to find a way to love even those who are intolerant, and that staying in relationship is the only way to change hearts. We also heard the deep hurt of those who feel wounded and alienated by the FUM employment policy.

Y2008-31 Byron Sandford, Friends Meeting of Washington, presented the report of the Trustees. Work in ongoing to correct a long history of bookkeeping errors and to ensure that all our future financial transactions are transparent and accurately recorded. A final report on the reconciliation of past errors will come to Interim Meeting.

The written report is as follows:

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Trustees Report 2008 Annual Sessions

The Trustees were faced this year with the need to reconcile all investment accounts and have an accurate figure in each account. By correcting the inadequate record keeping of the past, we can then create a firm figure for our current and future bookkeeping. We found that for several years, when funds were expended, they were not deducted from their accounts, that interest was added to accounts when none was earned and that designated expenditures were improperly credited to other accounts. Initially we were faced with our records being short over \$400,000. Through detailed examination of records, through reconciling expenditures to their proper accounts and to correct applications of interest earned, our funds imbalance has been significantly reduced. We hope to have these accounts to accurately reflect their true value and to establish procedures so that this type of book keeping ends.

Based on this experience, the Trustees, working with the Treasurer and Finance Committee will develop procedures and guidelines for financial management of BYM. We have received the draft of the 2007 FY audit. We will use the management letter to further improve our financial management of BYM funds. Our financial position improved over the year with assets increasing and liabilities decreasing. Working with the staff, we continue to support the efforts to implement sound fiscal management procedures.

We also found that the signatures on the investment accounts had not been updated since the accounts were opened, in some cases back into the 1980s. We have written to each of the investment accounts and have notified them of the current officers. We approved a minute that all accounts will be updated with the change of Treasurer, Clerk of Trustees and two other designated trustees. We have also updated the operational accounts.

The Trustees worked with the Camp Property Committee on conveyance of a parcel of land. We met with the Educational Funding Resources Committee to forgive some student loans. We worked with the ad-hoc Development Committee as they sought clarity on a staff position. We designated a member of the Trustees to serve on a committee to oversee the Yearly Meeting office property.

At the March Interim meeting I reported that Baltimore Yearly Meeting was named as a beneficiary in a will. Later in the spring we engaged an estate attorney to represent BYM and to serve as our advocate to the courts.

This process continues. The Trustees and BYM officers are comfortable with the steps taken and feel that we, as stewards of the Yearly Meeting, are satisfied that we have proceeded prudently and with due caution.

Byron Sandford, clerk

Y2008-45 William (Bill) Mims, Langley Hill, presented the report of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee. He noted that there is no shortage of urgent work to be done in the world, but we can take courage from the ongoing work in places like Kenya.

The Committee has been asked to appoint delegates to an ecumenical Peace Gathering in Philadelphia in January 2009, sponsored by Friends, Brethren and Mennonites. The Committee proposes the following Friends to serve as delegates:

J.E. McNeil, Friends Meeting of Washington
Elizabeth (Libby) Garvey, Friends Meeting of Washington
William (Bill) Mims, Langley Hill

Friends approved these names.

A Young Adult Friend is being sought to join this delegation, and another delegate may also be named. These names will be brought to Interim Meeting in October.

The last day of the gathering—a Saturday—will be open to the public. This will provide an opportunity for the delegates to report, and for the larger group to plan for action. Mary Lord, who was named by Interim Meeting as our original delegate to the gathering is now serving on the committee planning the Saturday program.

Y2008-46 William (Bill) Mims presented a minute prepared by the Peace and Social Concerns Committee on the danger of war with Iran, and a draft letter conveying these concerns, to be sent on behalf of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, if Friends approve:

Friends agreed to reflect on this letter and to return to consideration of it at a future session.

On behalf of the Committee, William (Bill) Mims asked Friends to settle into worship, to hold in the Light those who are working for peace in East Africa, and to reflect on the query: “How is my life planting the seeds of peace?”

Friends shared a time of deep worship.

Y2008-54 Katherine Smith read a minute affirming the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee for Oversight of the Fishertown Friends Meeting, as follows:

Baltimore Yearly Meeting received a request in June 2008 from Centre Quarter asking for assistance with issues brought forward by Fishertown Monthly Meeting. Specifically, Fishertown has too few members to function as a monthly meeting with a concern for business.

In response to this request, Baltimore Yearly Meeting affirmed the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Oversight of Fishertown Friends Monthly Meeting at annual sessions, August 2008.

The Committee exists to assure Centre Quarter that Quaker practice, together with the requirements set forth by Pennsylvania regarding property, will be followed.

The Committee will report to Centre Quarter and to Baltimore Yearly Meeting—at annual sessions or Interim meeting—as necessary. It will be laid down when Centre Quarter is prepared to resume oversight.

As of June 2008, Fishertown Friends’ accounts are in good order and are sufficient to cover anticipated costs. Thus no Yearly Meeting funds are required.

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee are:

Byron Sandford, Friends Meeting of Washington, Clerk of Trustees
Howard Fullerton, Sandy Spring, Presiding Clerk, BYM
Lamar Matthew, Baltimore-Stony Run, Listening Committee & Co-Convener
Katherine Smith, Maury River, Listening Committee & Co-Convener

Walt Fry, West Branch

Peggy Fry, West Branch

Friends APPROVED this minute.

Y2008-55 Katherine Smith presented a report from the Fishertown Friends Oversight Committee.

Report to BYM Annual Sessions
Ad Hoc Committee for the Oversight of Fishertown Friends
August 8, 2008

The Committee met with all members present; and with guests Susan Williams, Clerk of Centre Quarter, and Jerry Williams, a member of Fishertown Friends Monthly Meeting.

It was acknowledged that, prior to this meeting today, Howard Fullerton, Presiding Clerk of the Yearly Meeting, had asked Katherine Smith (Listening Committee) to meet with Fishertown Friends and the Clerk of Centre Quarter. Arrangements for this were made, invitations were sent to all, including Walt and Peggy Fry. This meeting was duly held on June 29th. Notes from this meeting were circulated to all present; and also to Howard Fullerton and Byron Sandford.

Our time today was spent hearing more background, then turning to current needs.

At present, Fishertown has seven members, only two of whom are still able to be active in any way in the affairs of the Meeting. One of these two is critically ill. This same member is the only Trustee of record. There is no Treasurer. Meetings for business have not been held prior to June 2008. Any business conducted appeared to be the results of phone conversations.

After discussion it was agreed that the Committee would ask Centre Quarter to appoint Jerry Miller as a second Trustee. The Quarter would also appoint a Treasurer for Fishertown.

Walt Fry will seek advice as to the local necessities of the way forward.

Katherine Smith
Co-Convener

Friends APPROVED recommending to Centre Quarter that Jerry Miller be named as a second Trustee for Fishertown Friends.

Y2008-58 Annalee Flower Horne, Takoma Park, read a minute of concern from the Young Adult Friends:

We, the Young Adult Friends of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, are led to speak to the question of same-sex marriage in our yearly meeting. We have found that the value of a relationship is not determined by gender, but by the presence of mutual love and respect. As a group, our members are in many different places with regard to the formation of long-term partnerships. While some of us are just starting to form these relationships, others are already deeply committed.

We have felt great joy in seeing members of our community marry under the care of their meetings, and we strive to provide ongoing support for these relationships. However, it grieves us that discussion of same-sex marriage is so painful to many Friends within our yearly meeting, and that not all marriages are equally recognized by the monthly meetings in BYM. We wish to work together with Friends to find unity on this living issue. We trust that with good process and in God's time, we will.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Young Adult Friends, August 2007

This minute was included in last year's Young Adult Friends epistle, and is now being presented to the Yearly Meeting for consideration.

Friends agreed to forward this minute to Interim Meeting for consideration.

Y2008-60 Clerk Howard Fullerton asked us to turn our attention to the question of our membership in Friends United Meeting. He expressed his sense, based on our consideration on Wednesday, that the Yearly Meeting is not prepared to

unite around a decision to withdraw from FUM. He noted that FUM is changing as a result of internal struggles between modernists and fundamentalists that have deep historic roots, and that we do not know what the future may hold.

Howard Fullerton proposed that we might express acceptance of our continuing membership in Friends United Meeting, despite the difficulties it poses, by noting that many of us feel called to stay in relationship with Friends United Meeting in patient witness to our experience of God's all-inclusive love.

Friends UNITED with this minute.

Y2008-61 Katherine Smith, Maury River, presented the report of the Committee of Four Committees for a second reading.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Committee of Four Committees

At Interim Meeting in March of 2004, the Committee on Ministry and Pastoral Care was asked to develop recommendations regarding Baltimore Yearly Meeting's financial contribution to Friends United Meeting, in consultation with Stewardship and Finance and the Ad Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns (minute I2004-2). This group became known among us as the "Committee of Four Committees" after Advancement and Outreach was added, at their request, in July 2004.

Regular meetings were held during the ensuing year, and unity was reached around a proposal to send the funds withheld from FUM in 2004 and 2005 as a Restricted Contribution, to be used to promote intervisitation and communication among Friends. This proposal was approved at Interim Meeting in June 2005 (Minute I2005-55). Friends United Meeting, however, returned the contribution, citing a policy of not accepting restricted funds for projects that did not have the prior approval of the General Board.

The Committee's attention languished during 2005 and 2006, as Friends' appointments to the constituent committees changed, and Intervisitation progressed. In the fall of 2006, Katherine Smith (Maury River) agreed to serve as Clerk of the Committee of Four Committees. Details of membership were approved at Interim Meeting (I2007-5), and the Committee was charged "to recommend to Annual Sessions regarding BYM's financial contributions to FUM."

The reconstituted Committee held its first meeting, with all members present, in November 2007. At this meeting, we shared out of worship, listening deeply to each other. We were reminded that witnessing to the truth that has been opened to us is vitally important. We were challenged to keep faith with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Friends among us, and not to take any action that would seem to disavow them and thus wound our own community. We were reminded that transformation is achieved through humility, love, patience and faithfulness, not through argument and contention. We considered the question: "How can we claim to be peacemakers in the world, if we cannot make peace among ourselves?" We were reminded of the suicide rate among youth as a result of gender identity and sexual orientation concerns, and how we may serve as a lifeline to young people who are desperate for reassurance that God loves them as they are.

We are aware that many Friends within our yearly meeting have been uneasy as a matter of conscience about giving money to an organization that engages in employment discrimination. We acknowledge the pain and anger our yearly meeting experienced in 2002 as a result of the FUM personnel policy. However, we are convinced that money is not really the issue, and that an undue focus on money is getting in the way of the work and witness to which we are called. We know that many among us find a spiritual home in FUM and feel blessed by an opportunity to participate in its ministries. We acknowledge that we share responsibility for the governance of FUM and thus for the challenges it faces today. We note that Baltimore Yearly Meeting has not reached clarity on withdrawing from FUM. We feel uneasy withholding financial support from an organization with which we have had a long and loving relationship.

In the course of our deliberations we have come to see that money is a clumsy form of communication—a carnal weapon—that cannot convey the transformational power of our spiritual concern. We trust that the Holy Spirit is working among us, for purposes we do not fully understand. We know that it is the Inward Teacher who transforms hearts.

In a spirit of love and hope, we recommend the following minute:

We Friends in Baltimore Yearly Meeting, gathered for annual sessions at (place, date) agreed to direct our General Secretary to release to FUM the monies withheld since 2004, and furthermore, we ask that Stewardship & Finance Committee together with Trustees formulate a plan for paying what is owed, in installments if necessary.

Out of worship, Friends spoke to this recommendation. Despite our love and tenderness toward each other, we were unable to reach unity.

Y2008-68 Bill Mims, Langley Hill, read a revised version of the proposed letter on Iran as follows:

Dear

I greet you on behalf of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), which comprises over 45 Quaker Meetings in Pennsylvania, Maryland, The District of Columbia, Virginia, and West Virginia. We have been upholding the witness of Quakers in the Mid-Atlantic States for more than 335 years. Our witness is rooted in the testimony of peace as practiced by Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and others.

We are deeply troubled by the continuing violence in the Middle East, and by the increasingly violent rhetoric from the United States and Iran. We are writing to you because of our shared desire for a peaceful resolution of our differences with Iran.

We believe that violence grows from fear, mistrust, and disrespect. We believe, with Jesus, that peace grows from respect, compassion, justice, deep listening, and forgiveness. We call on you to promote peace by helping us all to open our ears and our hearts, by promoting honest dialogue, and by committing to working out conflicts nonviolently, including by using the conflict resolution mechanisms of the United Nations. We ask this for our own sake and for the sake of our children and grandchildren, as well as the thousands of innocent people who are killed in conflict areas. In the words of Dr. King, "If we succumb to the temptation of using violence in our struggle for justice, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and our chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos."

Because of our faith, we firmly believe that military action in the Middle East, including any potential attacks on Iran would be wrong, and would have devastating consequences immediately and for future generations. We call on you to follow the peaceful path and provide leadership through mediation and reconciliation in our nation's dealings with Iran and other nations.

On behalf of Baltimore Yearly Meeting,
Howard Fullerton, clerk

Friends APPROVED this letter with minor revisions, and agreed that it would be sent to all presidential candidates, not just those of the major parties. Friends are urged to send a copy of the letter to their own Congressional representatives. An electronic copy of the letter will be made available.

Y2008-72 Ken Stockbridge, Patapsco, and Rebecca Haines Rosenberg, Alexandria, presented a second reading of the epistle.

Friends received the report in worship. A question was raised about how the epistle characterizes our relationship with Friends United Meeting. In order to address this concern, the epistle was laid over to Interim Meeting.