

Letter to FUM.....

Dear Friends of Friends United Meeting;

In our time together at Yearly Meeting, August 3 – 11, 2007 in Windsor, Nova Scotia, Canadian Friends laboured over our relationship with FUM, especially in light of the recent reaffirmation of the Richmond Declaration of Faith, made at the meeting in Kenya in February 2007, and the continuing employment policy that excludes many of us from service within FUM. Our valuing of community with Friends of different traditions and of the work of FUM programs throughout the world is tempered by our difficulties with processes and issues such as these.

When, in the 1980's, there was interest among some yearly meetings that FUM reaffirm the Richmond Declaration of Faith, our yearly meeting was quite clear that we did not agree. Our position has not changed, and we very much regret that the document was affirmed without full consideration by the constituent yearly meetings. From reading the FUM general board minutes, and reports of those present, it seems clear that unity was not reached. We question why it was felt necessary to affirm this document as a statement of faith for FUM when there was clear disagreement from some representatives. Our understanding of right ordering is that this should have been referred back to member yearly meetings for further study and seasoning.

We were distressed by reports of the message delivered as the devotional by Andrew Kurima, clerk of Uganda Yearly Meeting, prior to these deliberations. He quoted Romans 1:8-32, saying that homosexuals and even those who support them are worthy of death. Although in his later letter of apology he said that he was referring to spiritual death, we find these remarks hateful and completely unacceptable. We need to let you know that based on these remarks, every Friend in Canadian Yearly Meeting would be “deserving of death”, spiritual or otherwise, because we view homosexuality as being no more intrinsically good or evil than heterosexuality. Openly gay and lesbian Friends serve in positions of responsibility and respect within CYM. We ask that a clear statement be made by FUM condemning all acts of violence towards homosexuals or their allies, particularly because such violence exists and is acceptable within some countries where FUM has membership and projects.

Canadian Friends continue to be much exercised by the continuing policy of FUM that implicitly excludes Friends in committed gay relationships from service as employees of FUM. We believe this is in direct opposition to our Quaker Testimony of the equality of all people and, as well, that this policy is not in agreement with the Spirit of Christ. While FUM's employment policy is limited to employees and volunteers, such a statement validates attitudes of intolerance that can lead to violence towards gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered and queer persons.

Due to our concerns, we have decided to designate our financial contribution to FUM for 2008 to a specific project, rather than to the general fund. We are also appointing a committee to review the involvement and participation of CYM in FUM.

As members of the FUM family, we feel appreciative of the great work that Friends of FUM have done in many countries, and of the efforts to carry out this work in a spirit of partnership. We continue to desire unity and community among all Friends, and look forward to a time when hurtful issues that divide us are resolved. We invite Friends among FUM into further dialogue about biblical interpretation and Quaker process.

In the living Spirit of Christ,

Beverly Shepard,
Presiding Clerk
Canadian Yearly Meeting.