

MINUTES OF SIXTH MONTH 19, 2004

DEER CREEK MONTHLY MEETING

I2004-14 *Opening.* Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Interim Meeting gathered on 6/19/2004 at the Deer Creek Meeting House in Darlington, MD with 80 Friends from 30 Meetings attending. The Clerk opened vocal ministry of the Meeting by reading words of William Penn:

William Penn on the cross of Christ

The cross of Christ is a figure of speech borrowed from the wooden cross where Christ submitted to the will of God. ... It may justly be termed the instrument of our wholly dying to the world and being made conformable to the will of God....

Where does this cross appear and where is it to be taken up? Within....in our hearts....

And how is the cross to be daily borne? The way, like the cross, is spiritual. The soul must submit to the will of God.... God's will is manifested by the light of Christ in our consciences....

The cross of Christ is that spirit and power in us which is not of us, but of God....

The way of taking up the cross is ... an entire resignation of soul to the discoveries and requirings of the cross.

The work of the cross of Christ in us is self-denial.

William Penn, "No Cross, No Crown," 1669, 1682, the quotes are from *No Cross, No Crown*, Ron Selleck, ed., [Friends United Press, Richmond, IN, 1981]; pages 19-22, further edited June 19, 2004 by Michael Cronin for inclusiveness and continuity.

A Friend was moved to offer the witness of feeling present, and needing God's guidance.

The Clerk thanked Deer Creek Friends for their hospitality, with appreciation as well, for this beautiful spot for Interim Meeting's work.

I2004-15 *Ministry and Pastoral Care.* Rosalind Zuses, Co-Clerk of the Committee, read a travel minute for Betsy Meyer, for her visitation to Indiana Yearly Meeting on behalf of Friends World Committee for Consultation. Friends **ENDORSED** this minute.

SANDY SPRING MONTHLY MEETING
SANDY SPRING, MARYLAND

Sixth Month 6, 2004

Elizabeth F. (“Betsy”) Meyer, a beloved member of this Meeting, has opened her leading to travel to the annual sessions of Indiana Yearly Meeting in Seventh Month 2004 as a visitor on behalf of Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas.

This Meeting unites with Betsy’s leading. We trust that you will benefit as we have from sharing her insights and faith. We commend her to your Christian care and hospitality.

APPROVED and MINUTED at our meeting for business held Sixth Month 6, 2004.

Steven Colgate, Clerk

ENDORSED at Baltimore Yearly Meeting Interim Meeting held Sixth Month 19, 2004.

Michael Cronin, Clerk of Interim Meeting

I2004-16 *Friends United Meeting Concern.* Rosalind Zuses, Co-Clerk of the Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee (M&PC), reviewed the process through which several documents had been prepared following Interim Meeting of 3/04 for consideration at the current Interim Meeting. A surprising development was the lengthy discussion of our concern by the FUM General Board with the three BYM representatives [Howard Fullerton, Rich Liversidge, and Walt Fry] on 6/12/04, and their laboring to prepare a response from the Board to our concerns for Friends and gender diversity.

- A. In consultation with members of Stewardship and Finance Committee, the Ad Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity, and Young Friends, a seven-step action plan was brought forward.

**MINISTRY AND PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE
PROCESS OR ACTION PLAN**

FOR FUM'S POLICY ON GENDER/SEXUAL DIVERSITY CONCERN

1. Respond immediately to FUM letter of 6/12/04 if possible. M&PC recommends to Interim Meeting a brief, loving, firm, but non-confrontational response.
2. M&PC recommends short-term funding decision to Interim Meeting; BYM to send first half of 2004-budgeted amount to FUM. Rationale: The groups that met were not in agreement and therefore cannot unite with the minutes from Stony Run and others asking that BYM funding be stopped; the budget for 2004 was approved at Annual Sessions 2003 and we cannot disrespect that decision; to stop funds without prior notice to FUM would be punitive. Note on the minutes from Monthly Meetings: as the budget is approved by BYM as a whole, only the Yearly Meeting can decide on whether to reduce funding to FUM, a Monthly Meeting recommending that its part be withheld will only result in other monthly meetings having to pick up that portion unless the Yearly Meeting decides to withhold it as well.
3. M&PC recommends that Interim Meeting charge a representative group (3 from each) of M&PC, Ad Hoc Committee for Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns, and Stewardship and Finance Committee, with representative from Young Friends, to meet to bring a recommendation to Annual Session as to the second half of 2004 budgeted funding (which can be discussed by those who approved it), and a recommendation for the 2005 budget. Recommend Lauri Perman clerk if she is willing, and someone to record other than those involved in the discussion.
4. Intervisitation begins for listening and getting to know other yearly meetings within FUM only. Suggestion is that Advancement and Outreach Committee takes intervisitation on as a concern.
5. The representative group makes a recommendation to Annual Session; it makes a decision about funding FUM during this period (if/when we can agree to one).
6. M&PC, with help from many others, be responsible for editing an information packet for inter-visitation and discernment within BYM monthly meetings and with the rest of FUM.

**INFORMATION PACKET FOR
GENDER/SEXUAL DIVERSITY DISCUSSION IN FUM**

- a. A background and time line of the events since 2002 Triennial leading to this concern
- b. Relevant parts of *Faith & Practices*, BYM and others, including the Christian Faith of Friends being distributed by FUM for discussion among its membership
- c. Minutes from monthly meetings on this issue
- d. Personnel policies of FUM and some constituent yearly meetings on the issue of discrimination against any groups/individuals
- e. The proposed epistle from BYM

7. Intervisitation begins to engage in dialogue with monthly and yearly meetings within FUM on the issue of the FUM personnel policy and the Friends of gender and sexual diversity issue in general.

In response to a question of a Friend, Georgia Fuller said the expanded committee which had met in the morning session 6/19 had considered the above steps to be an outline, for the Yearly Meeting to pursue as Way opens. Friends APPROVED proceeding in this manner.

B. Rosalind Zuses read:

**FUM GENERAL BOARD RESPONSE
TO BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING**

12 June 2004

To the members of Baltimore Yearly Meeting:

We the members of the General Board of Friends United Meeting, gathered on June 12, 2004, labored long to hear and to take to our hearts your concerns and your sufferings. We affirm our commitment to be in and to stay in true relationship with you around this concern of gender diversity. We could not reach clarity at this time about how to proceed, but we do affirm that God's spirit works through every individual. And we affirm our faith that God can and will lead us forward in the Light. We are committed to listening deeply together, to sharing openly together, and waiting together until such a time as way opens to move us forward in community. Until that time, we trust that God will continue to lead us in ministry together.

Following this, she read the draft response proposed by the working group facilitated by M&PC this morning. She reminded Friends that this response is not intended to be the beginning of the discussion between BYM and FUM's constituent Meetings.

DRAFT REPLY TO THE 6/12/2004 LETTER FROM FUM GENERAL BOARD

To the Members of the General Board of Friends United Meeting

We at Baltimore Yearly Meeting thank you for your considered and prayerful message of Sixth Month 12, 2004 regarding our concern of gender and sexual diversity. Your message to us is welcome. We are encouraged to hear from our representatives to your Board of the possibility of increased hospitality (including more intervisitation).

We at Baltimore Yearly Meeting value being in community with a Quaker organization that reflects a great breadth of practices and beliefs among Friends. For us, the way forward is through the way FUM's policies and practices reflect the diversity of FUM's full membership. There is a wide span of understanding of God's Will throughout FUM, and the diverse gifts of all need to be recognized and used for God's work.

Discerning whether there is tension between God's Will as recorded in the Bible and continuing revelation as Friends' way to the Truth is often a challenge. We feel that the best way to understand the fullness of God's Truth is to include all Friends in the search. BYM commits itself to continue to labor faithfully to seek God's Will for all of us around the concern of gender and sexual diversity. We remain in community with the rest of FUM as we seek a Truth about discrimination against people of different sexual orientations that will include all of us. We are currently working on an epistle of greater depth and breadth.

Friends had many editing suggestions, which varied widely. Some Friends wished to remove sentences that other Friends considered crucial; others found tender spots where language differences were important. The motion of the sense of the Meeting was towards a simpler, shorter version of the initial draft presented. One Friend described the sense of tension between those desiring the pastoral approach and those desiring the prophetic approach. Many felt this was still the time for a pastoral approach, while others felt it was time to move forward in a prophetic way. Friends were able to APPROVE that the committee would craft the final version based on editing suggestions agreed to at Interim Meeting, and DIRECTED that the letter go to all FUM General Board members and staff.

C. Friends moved to consideration of M & PC's short-term funding recommendation to Interim Meeting: that BYM send the first half of our 2004-budgeted apportionment to FUM, with the second half payment to be consid-

ered at annual sessions. Since the 2004 budget was approved by Friends attending annual sessions, it was felt that the same body should have the opportunity to reconsider this allocation. One Friend remarked that ‘we should send our money because we want to, not because we feel we have to’ because of budgeting decisions. However Friends seemed to reach general agreement that not to send our apportionment at this time would be punitive, and not in the spirit of the response BYM had just received from the FUM General Board. When it became apparent that the Spirit was leading Friends toward approval of the recommendation, Jane Megginson agreed to stand aside in order to allow the matter to go forward. Interim Meeting APPROVED that the first half of our Budgeted 2004 commitment to FUM be paid by June 30, and sent with a letter from the Interim Meeting Clerk expressing the “crisis of conscience” that has been engendered within BYM by FUM’s policy for employment and volunteers.

- D. Rosalind Zuses read the draft epistle to Friends, asking for prayerful consideration, and that representatives to Interim Meeting take the epistle back to their Monthly Meetings for distribution and active consideration at Annual Session. [See Draft Epistle at the end of these June Interim Meeting Minutes]

Friends APPROVED proceeding in this manner with the epistle.

Interim Meeting Clerk Michael Cronin thanked Ministry and Pastoral Committee for their work, and added thanks for the effective work of the Co-Clerk of that Committee. Rosalind will be stepping down as Co-Clerk of M&PC to begin service as Clerk of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting. She will continue to work with Mand PC on this issue.

I2004-17 Stewardship & Finance. Clerk Marion Ballard laid before Friends for consideration the proposal of Stewardship & Finance Committee to reduce the current amount budgeted for BYM to send to FUM from approximately \$17,400 to \$1,000, with an additional \$7,000 set aside in support of intervisitation under the weight of our concern for the right place of sexuality, specifically homosexual relationships, in the Religious Society of Friends. The Committee felt led to recommend withholding funds as a matter of conscience, but wished to ‘remain at the table’ by not withdrawing all support, since BYM was one of the founding Meetings of FUM. Once again, the wide diversity of Friends’ understanding of God’s will for BYM was apparent. Friends struggled with the sense of violation felt from the FUM General Board and staff, and the best way to proceed effectively, without force, in love, and with integrity in our spiritual witness against discrimination. Some felt such a drastic cut in our financial support was an insult, and not likely to foster achievement of our goal of interaction and persuasion. Others were opposed to paying for discrimination ‘in our name’.

Howard Fullerton spoke as a member of the FUM Finance Committee, as well as a BYM member, offering his knowledge of the context of our fiscal support. We have a modest effect on their budget; they are ‘scraping for funds’; neither Iowa nor New England Yearly Meetings budget support for FUM. Our concern is not widely discussed in FUM, and pastoral visits are needed to change this pattern. After the warning of a Friend to take care not to think this[engagement] can be done easily, Marion promised to take what she’d heard back to the committee for its labors before annual sessions.

I2004-18 *Ad Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns.* Bonnie Stockslager presented the report in the absence of Lauri Perman, who intended to be holding Interim Meeting in the Light with her husband and Ron Mattson, whom they were with in Minnesota.

The Committee has appreciated being a part of consideration of these concerns and expects to continue to be included.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns lays this before the June 19, 2004 Interim Meeting:

We recognize that many Friends are struggling with the concerns of conscience around matters of personal financial support and membership in Friends United Meeting.

We ask Yearly Meeting to devise a process by which they may remain true to Friends Testimony of integrity.

We further urge all Friends everywhere to suspend judgment long enough to replace fear with faith.

I2004-19 *Indian Affairs.* Clerk Flossie Fullerton announced that the two Navajo visitors who had planned to come to Annual Sessions to participate in workshop 15 would not be doing so, since they will come for the 9/21 opening of the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian.

I2004-20 *Manual of Procedure Committee.* Clerk Howard Fullerton presented the report of the Committee.

MANUAL OF PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

This section, prepared and approved by the Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee, replaces the descriptions of the Ministry and Counsel and the Committee for the Nurture and Recognition of Ministry to implement the merger of the committees approved by the Yearly Meeting in session in 2002.

MINISTRY AND PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

The Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee consists of approximately twelve members nominated by the Nominating Committee and appointed by the Yearly Meeting. Also, each Monthly Meeting is requested to designate one of its members under a concern for ministry or pastoral care to participate in the meetings and responsibilities of the Committee. Any member of the Yearly Meeting with a concern for ministry or pastoral care is welcome at the Committee's meetings.

The Committee is concerned with deepening the spiritual life of Baltimore Yearly Meeting and of its constituent Monthly Meetings. The Committee carries an active concern for calling forth and nurturing the gifts of the Spirit in the Yearly Meeting. The Committee encourages and supports Monthly Meetings as they recognize, publicly affirm, and practically support those individuals who exercise their gifts in faithful ministry and service.

The Committee supports and assists Monthly Meetings in fostering community and recognizing and addressing the needs of individuals within their Meetings. Committee members are expected to visit a variety of Monthly Meetings throughout the year. Monthly Meeting committees will be encouraged to invite these visits. Monthly Meeting committees that deal with ministry and pastoral care are encouraged to invite these visits.

The Committee supports and assists the Yearly Meeting with programs, retreats, workshops, activities at Annual Sessions, and other activities as needed. The Clerk of the Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee serves as a member of the Program Committee.

The Committee advises Monthly Meetings on the preparation of the Annual Report of the Spiritual State of the Monthly Meeting in accordance with the guidelines in *our Faith and Practice*. The Committee receives the approved reports and incorporates them, with concerns and information about events in the Yearly Meeting, into a Spiritual State of the Yearly Meeting Report to be presented at Annual Sessions to the Yearly Meeting.

The Committee considers requests for Yearly Meeting endorsement of minutes of support for members traveling in the ministry outside our Yearly Meeting. Such minutes usually are prepared by the Monthly Meeting in which the Friend holds membership and then endorsed by the Yearly Meeting. (See *Faith and Practice of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends*, Part II Practices and Procedures, B The Monthly Meeting, 5 Visiting Among Friends, sub-

sections b Minutes for Spiritual Service and, c Endorsements.) If there is clearness to proceed, the Committee brings a recommendation to the Yearly Meeting or Interim Meeting for this minute. Minutes endorsed by the Yearly Meeting should be returned to the Yearly Meeting. Ordinarily, the endorsement is for one year.

The Committee maintains the *Guidelines for Embracing the Ministry of Friends* and supports Monthly Meeting Committees of Oversight for these Friends.

As the need arises, the Committee explains to Friends the historical Quaker practice of recording members in the ministry and the Committee maintains a current list of all recorded ministers within the Yearly Meeting.

Move to page 8 the following text from page 9, to make it clearer that this is a function of Interim Meeting Change the Interim Meeting date the ad hoc naming committee is selected to reflect actual practice. Call the ad hoc committee the ad hoc naming committee. The sentence about members of the Search Committee becoming members of Interim Meeting is recommended to be dropped because every member of the Yearly Meeting is a member of Interim Meeting:

On Spring Yearly Meeting Day, Interim Meeting appoints from the floor an ad hoc Naming Committee of two Friends to nominate Friends for appointment to fill the vacancies on the Search Committee. This ad hoc Naming Committee serves for one year or until a new ad hoc committee is appointed. The Naming Committee usually presents its recommendations to Interim Meeting on Summer Yearly Meeting Day. At any time the Naming Committee may present to Interim Meeting nominations to fill vacancies on the Search Committee that occur during the year.

Modify the first paragraph of the Search Committee (p. 9):

The Search Committee is composed of six persons nominated by an ad hoc Naming Committee and appointed by Interim Meeting, two appointed each year to serve a term of three years. No person may serve for more than six consecutive years. The Committee may not co-opt additional members.

The Youth Programs Committee (p. 37) needs to make a change to its description. As part of their revised job description the Coordinators of the Junior Young Friends program are now ex officio members of the committee. The new Co-Clerks of the committee (Ted Heck and Betsy Tobin) are aware of this.

The Youth Programs Committee consists of eight to ten adults nominated by the Nominating Committee and appointed by the Yearly Meeting. Other members are the Young Friends Conference Clerks, the Young Friends Yearly Meeting Program Planners and two Young Friends appointed by the Young Friends Conference Business Meeting. The regional youth coordinators, the Yearly Meeting YouthQuake representative, the Coordinator(s) of Junior Young Friends, and the Youth Secretary are ex officio members.

These proposed changes give the purpose of the AFSC and the FCNL, based on their web sites. These additions will provide some information to the Nominating Committee and to prospective appointees. The ASFC statement is on page 48 and FCNL's is on page 49 of the current:

V. REPRESENTATIVE TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

The American Friends Service Committee carries out service, development, social justice, and peace programs throughout the world. Founded by Quakers in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors with an opportunity to aid civilian war victims, AFSC's work attracts the support and partnership of people of many races, religions, and cultures. AFSC's work is based on the Quaker belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.

The AFSC is directed by the American Friends Service Committee Corporation, through a Board of Directors elected by the Corporation from among its members. The Corporation members all must be members of the Religious Society of Friends. AFSC is staffed by Quakers and other people of faith who share the Friends' desire for peace and social justice. Further information is available at the AFSC web site.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting may appoint five persons to the Corporation of the American Friends Service Committee. These persons are nominated by the Nominating Committee and appointed by the Yearly Meeting, not all in one year, to serve each for three years. Those persons are expected to participate in meetings of the Corporation, usually held in Philadelphia.

The Middle-Atlantic Region of the AFSC works throughout New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia on issues related to youth, criminal justice, economic justice, social justice and peace building. Baltimore Yearly Meeting also appoints one person to serve on the Executive Committee of the Middle-Atlantic Region. The Regional Office is located in Baltimore.

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is a public interest lobby founded in 1943 by members of the Religious Society of Friends. FCNL seeks to bring the concerns, experiences and testimonies of Friends to bear on policy decisions in the nation's capital. People of many religious backgrounds participate in this work. FCNL's staff and volunteers work with a nationwide network of thousands of people to advocate social and economic justice, peace, and good government.

FCNL is governed by a General Committee of 240 Friends, two-thirds of whom are appointed by 26 of the U.S. Yearly Meetings and seven national Friends' organizations; the other third is appointed by the General Committee. All members of the General Committee must be members of the Religious Society of Friends and U. S. citizens. The General Committee meets each November to conduct business. This includes establishing legislative policy and priorities. An Executive Committee and several other Committees guide the program and administration of FCNL between Annual Meetings. Further information is available at the FCNL web site.

The six Yearly Meeting representatives to the Friends Committee on National Legislation are nominated by the Nominating Committee and appointed by the Yearly Meeting, two each year for three-year terms.

One Friend had a clarifying comment about the American Friends Service Committee, which will be given to Howard before Annual Session. Another Friend mentioned that the Volunteer Service Subcommittee has not existed for some time. Friends APPROVED forwarding the report to Annual Session for consideration.

I2004-21 Search Committee. Clerk Ann Marie Moriarty presented the report for first reading of nominations:

Presiding Clerk	Lauri Perman, State College
Supervisory Committee	Meg Boyd Meyer, Baltimore Stony Run for 2nd 2-year term
	Gretchen Hall, Alexandria for 2nd 2-year term
Nominating Committee	Class of '07 Barbara Thomas, Annapolis Marjorie Scott, Baltimore Stony Run Cariadne Burchard, Baltimore Stony Run Catherine Tunis, Herndon

Friends APPROVED the first reading for forwarding to Annual Session.

Ann Marie also notified Friends of a change due to marriage and a move:

From Dorothea Musgrave, Friends Meeting of Washington to Dorothea Musgrave Malsbary, Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting

Finally, she raised the issue of the tension between skills needed for clerking Supervisory Committee and those needed for clerking at Interim Meeting. Current practice is to have the same person preside over both, although the skills that serve these bodies best do not necessarily overlap. Search Committee asked Friends to consider allowing Supervisory Committee to name its own Clerk from its constituent members. The matter was laid over for seasoning, to be taken up at a later time, preferably at annual sessions.

I2004-22 Peace and Social Concerns. J.E. McNeil, for the Committee presented a letter for Interim Meeting to consider forwarding to BYM Annual Session for consideration. Friends APPROVED sending the letter to all Monthly Meetings in BYM and forwarding the letter for annual session action.

EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ABOUT EROSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on this country on September 11, 2001, the Congress, under pressure and without due consideration, passed the Uniting and Strengthening America by providing Appropriate Tools Required to intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA PATRIOT Act). Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends believes that the Act:

- grossly infringes on the civil liberties of all residents of the United States by allowing government access to business, medical, library, bookstore and computer records, and maintaining surveillance with complete secrecy.
- subverts the system of checks and balances by giving the Executive Branch overly broad discretionary powers, and by severely limiting the Judicial Branch's autonomy and authority for searches.

The original Act is due to expire in 2005. However, on April 19, 2004, President Bush urged Congress not only to make the USA Patriot Act permanent, but to expand its provisions considerably.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting believes that the USA PATRIOT ACT represents a climate of fear and distrust on the part of our government, putting it at odds with the citizens it was created to represent and protect from intrusive, arbitrary action. Our country needs to look beyond the emotions that enable the Act, and to move forward with wisdom and a spirit that encourages peace, freedom, and true security.

Affirming its belief in the testimonies of the Religions Society of Friends (Quakers) of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, and Equality, Baltimore Yearly Meeting urges the United States government to rescind those provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act which threaten the civil liberties of Americans. We also urge the Congress not to renew or extend this Act without careful consideration of protection of the liberties of all United States residents which are the foundation of this country.

Several Peace and Social Concerns announcements followed:

- A copy of an open letter to President George Bush is available. This letter was sent from Friends in the Washington D.C. area, highlighting the harmful effects on local governments as the result of increased military spending.
- Friends Meeting of Washington urges Friends to participate in a program 9/17 considering reinstatement of the draft, and a draft counselor training 9/18. Details are available in flyers, and through FMW.
- Sharon Stout, of Adelphi Friends Meeting, asked Friends to join in support of a letter crafted by Adelphi Friends which deplored 'acts of aggression, oppression, humiliation, and torture in Iraq and elsewhere', which she read aloud to Interim Meeting. The hope is to have this published as a paid open letter in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries, in several languages.

I2004-23 Staff Report. General Secretary Frank Massey remarked that it had been a busy few months.

1. Josh Riley, Camp Administrator, had camp staff all lined up, and they were now on their respective sites to prepare for the arrival of campers 6/26
2. Supervisory Committee has reviewed and updated BYM Personnel Policies, including the non-discrimination statement
3. Supervisory Committee is in the process of reviewing and writing policies for the camp programs as well as for the Youth Programs
4. The office staff has been trained in child safety, and will develop a manual of procedure for implementation of safety procedures
5. Staffing adjustments include:
 - Jerry and Becky Coates serve as caretakers at Catoctin
 - Laurie Wilner , bookkeeper one to two days each week
 - Hope Braveheart will begin 7/1 as full-time Youth Secretary
6. Future staffing changes:
 - Josh Riley will leave his post after 5 years to begin full time pursuit of a degree in pastoral counseling. Friends have the opportunity to express their thanks today and at annual sessions for the wonderful job Josh has done as BYM's full-time Camp Administrative Secretary
 - Jane Megginson will move from her duties as Office Manager to fill the Camp Administrative Secretary position.

Frank described Josh as having done a magnificent job, and felt the Yearly Meeting was lucky to have Jane move into that position. Both of these Friends have years of experience in our camping program, and have served it well.

7. The BYM web site will be available for posting minutes and draft documents from Interim Meeting shortly after they are received at the office.
8. Friends can save money by registering for BYM annual session by 7/9. Registration forms may be downloaded from the website. A few additional advance reports were still available in the hallway for Friends to take home from Interim Meeting.

I2004-24 Closing. The action minutes were read by the recording clerk, and approved by Friends present. The Clerk called for closing silence and worship, during which Lamar Matthew rose to give vocal ministry, thanking Friends for their tenderness and care in their labors over our differences with FUM. He remembered with gratitude being told ...it's not your issue, it's our issue.' He further remarked that this was how we tell each other that we love each other and respect each other. Lamar spoke of his hopefulness as we explore how to better serve our Friends community and our world community.

Friends arose to gather again at annual session, 7/26-8/1 in Harrisonburg.

Michael Cronin, presiding

Frances Preston Schutz, recording

[See **I2004-16 D**]

SECOND EDITED DRAFT OF THE BYM EPISTLE TO FUM

EDITED ON JUNE 18, 2004

“To Friends in FUM Everywhere,

We send greetings from Friends gathered at Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Interim Meeting Day on sixth month, nineteen. For almost two years now, we have agonized over the differences we share with many in the leadership of Friends United Meeting regarding the right place of sexuality, specifically homosexual relationships, in the Religious Society of Friends. We feel led to share our faith and hope, as well as our pain and anger, praying that our labors will be in love and that this sharing will eventually benefit Friends everywhere.

A foundation of Friends' faith and practice is that each person, regardless of differences, is created in the image of God. (Genesis 1: 27) Scripture and experience have shown us that each unique, finite person contains a unique, finite reflection of the Infinite Divine. What Friends have experienced over the years is that each time we embrace one of God's children—who is in some finite way “other” to us—we more fully embrace the image of God.

In 1968, we formalized our embrace of the “other” within BYM when our Orthodox and Hicksite meetings consolidated after 140 years of separation. We continued this process over the next 20 years while we threshed, drafted, and finally adopted BYM's unified Faith and Practice with the joyous cry, “We came! We saw! We concurred!” Under “The Life of the Spirit,” in the section entitled “Home Life; Living with Self and Others,” we affirmed our collective experience that:

Our Meeting communities now include persons living alone, two-parent families, single-parent families, married and unmarried couples, homosexual and heterosexual couples, single adults or extended families sharing a household, and larger communal groups. At present Friends are divided on the wisdom or rightness of some of these relationships.

Nevertheless, we recognize that there are many kinds of domestic living situations in which individuals have made long-term commitments to each other and in which a caring, sharing, supportive relationship can grow. We are all called to make our primary relationships responsible, loving, mutually enabling, and spiritually enriching.

Over our last 16 years as a consolidated Yearly Meeting, one of the paths that have led us to deeper faith has been the path toward a better understanding of God's gift of sexuality. Many of us have shared the pain of families as they wrestle with the newfound identity of a beloved member who discovers that they are not heterosexual. We have also rejoiced with lesbian and gay members who, in the process of discovering how to be good stewards of their sexuality and relationships, have revealed to us God's sustaining love in new and powerful ways. We have benefited from their hard work, good humor, and spiritual leadership as clerks of our monthly meetings, our BYM committees and our Yearly Meeting.

We believe that to reject any spiritual gifts that God has bestowed on our meetings through unique individuals is an affront to God's goodness and mercy. Yet, the recent interpretation by the FUM Executive Committee of Minute 88-GB-52, (that staff and volunteers must sign, abide by, and enforce against others a policy of discrimination against any person in a sexual relationship outside the bond of marriage between one man and one woman), confronts us with the dilemma of choosing some gifts, thereby rejecting others. This prevents most of BYM from serving in any volunteer or staff position for FUM. . We would never again be able to host our Triennial as we did in 1999.

The recent interpretation of this Minute has already proved very painful to some of our most revered and beloved leaders in BYM, from whom opportunities to share their considerable gifts of the Spirit with the wider Quaker community have been removed. This includes married and single Friends who live within the FUM policy but cannot impose it on others. Our Young Friends are deeply hurt by what they experience as rejection of those who have been important leaders and guides for them.

BYM has begun a clearness process led by the Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee to determine if we can remain in loving engagement as well as vigorous disagreement with those who uphold this policy. At the very least, we stand in full opposition to the policy itself. Additionally we feel ashamed because discrimination among Friends is being practiced in our name. Many Friends and some monthly Friends meetings in BYM feel driven by their conscience and integrity to no longer give financial support to FUM because this personnel policy violates our understanding of the uniqueness and fullness of God's good creation. We in BYM are wrestling mightily and painfully with this dilemma. This has led us to deeply consider the question: **“Must we choose between upholding our membership in FUM or upholding the integrity of our Friends’ tradition by not participating where there is discrimination against most of us?”**

We are led into deeper discernment by the following queries:

- 1) Will we allow this serious disagreement over some aspects of our understanding of God's, gifts, Purpose and Will to prevent us from seeking the continuing revelation of God's Truth together as Friends?
- 2) Can we labor together to discover if there is a single truth that God is putting before us?

At this time in our seeking, we have discerned that it is contrary to God's Will to have to choose either what God has given us through membership in FUM, or what God has given us through our members who are in relationships that FUM policy defines as unacceptable. We are led to a third way.

We are led to stand in this present tension and engage in dialogue with those who uphold the policy. We stand in this tension for all of our children and grandchildren, some of whom will discover that they do not fit neatly into a heterosexual world. In the past, Friends from other Yearly Meetings, who were struggling with their sexuality, have turned to BYM Friends for comfort, guidance, and the reassurance of God's love. For them we stand in this tension and dialogue. We will not abandon them.

We stand in dialogue with the leadership of FUM because Christ did not shun discomfort or dialogue. We are also seeking exchange with the other yearly meetings, encouraging them to join us in our search for God's Truth on this issue. We are initiating the same process throughout the monthly meetings in BYM. We have faith that through this painful struggle the Way will open and bring us to a greater unity and understanding of God's Will for us all.

In spite of the current struggle, we are grateful for this opportunity to discern our witness and come to have a fuller understanding of our faith through it.

Yours in loving faith,

Baltimore Yearly Meeting