

Queries Pertaining to the Relationship of SEYM to FUM and FGC

Preface

On an unsolicited basis, several members of Space Coast Monthly Meeting (SCMM) discussed ongoing concerns related to the SEYM/FUM relationship, and decided to prepare a set of queries in advance of Winter Interim Business Meeting and Yearly Meeting (YM). Some involved have participated in the SCMM and SEYM discussions that began in 2006 and continued into 2007 and 2008, and some have not. We are mindful that the minute recorded at YM pertaining to this relationship called for: continued dialogue within SEY, with other dual-affiliated YMs, and with FUM from 2007 into 2009; a cessation of formal discussions during the 2008 YM; and a decision process during the 2009 YM. These queries have been prepared in anticipation of this decision process, and efforts were made to prepare them, as a whole, without any particular perspective, decision process, or outcome in mind.

From the Book of John

13:34: A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

15:17: These things I command you, that ye love one another.

15:18: If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

From the Letters of Paul to the Colossians

3: 9-11: Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

From The Journal of George Fox, with Notes by Rufus Jones

There is a spirit which I feel, which delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong; but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations; as it bears on evil in itself, so it conceives none in thought to any other. If he be betrayed, it bears it; for its ground and spring is the mercy and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness; its life is everlasting love unfeigned. It takes its kingdom with entreaty, and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity; nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth, but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone; being forsaken. I have fellowship therein, with those who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth; who, through death obtained the resurrection, and eternal, holy life! (1963, pp. 271-273)

Statement by James Naylor before the end of his life (ca. 1656)

O friends, do not cloak and cover yourselves; there is a God that knoweth your hearts, and that will uncover you. He seeth your way. 'Wo be unto you him that covereth, but not with my Spirit, saith the Lord.' Do ye act contrary to the law, and then put it from you? Mercy and true judgment ye neglect. Look, what was spoken against such. My Savior spoke against such; 'I was sick and ye visited me not; I was hungry and ye fed me not; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; I was in prison and ye visited me not.' But they said, 'When saw we thee in prison, and did not come to thee?' 'Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these little ones, ye did it not unto me.' Friends, ye imprison them that are in the life and power of Truth, and yet profess to be the ministers of Christ; but if Christ had sent you, ye would bring out of prison, out of bondage, and receive strangers. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter; ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you. (1963, pp. 323-324)

Letter from George Fox to the Long Parliament (ca. 1658)

Queries for Worship and Business

To Members of SEYM

How are you, as a Friend, called to recognize, affirm, and follow Jesus' life and teachings?

What role do Friends' historic testimonies have in your faith and practice?

How do you perceive and respond to those who refer to themselves as Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, agnostic, non-theistic, or pagan Quakers?

How do you feel and respond when confronted with intolerance towards yourself, towards others, or towards others' beliefs?

To Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups

In what ways do members of your MM/WG have familial or other ties to FUM?

On what basis are members of your MM/WG ready to affirm or not affirm the Richmond Declaration?

What is your MM's/WG's view(s) on the relationship between discrimination by FUM on the basis of sexual preference and Friends' historic testimonies?

In what ways, if any, do members of your MM/WG relate historical efforts to improve conditions for those imprisoned (e.g., England) or banish slaveholding within the Religious Society of Friends (U.S.) to contemporary discussions of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (GLBT) matters among Friends?

For what reasons do members of your MM/WG prefer to (a) dissolve SEYM's relationship with FUM and end threshing discussions (at least for the foreseeable future), (b) maintain this relationship and continue these discussions with representatives of FUM and other Quaker organizations, or (c) pursue some other option(s), much as was arrived at during the 2007 YM?

In light of matters of tradition, conscience, and power, how is your MM/WG prepared to respond if SEYM reaches a decision to either maintain or dissolve its relationship to FUM?

To Southeastern Yearly Meeting

In light of the ongoing intensity and diversity of feeling among Friends and MMs/WGs on these matters, and the potential for divisiveness in light of the final minute from the 2007 YM, what kind of process prior to and at the 2008 YM do representatives of SEYM envision?