

Secretary's Note:

To the best of my ability I have replicated these excerpts from Southeastern Yearly Meeting Minutes as typed, including the punctuation and formatting.

—Lyn Cope 24 January 2009

MINUTES

SOUTHEASTERN YEARLY MEETING
Of the
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

April 12-14, 1963

OPENING SESSION

The first annual session of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting, at Lake Byrd Lodge, Avon Park, was held April 12 to 14, 1963.

Following luncheon at 12:30 the session opened at 1:30 with a period of silent worship and the reading of Luke 8, with Edwin C. Bertsche, Clerk, presiding.

April 3, 4, 5, 6, 1969

CONCERNS FROM THE FLOOR Jan deHartog (Sarasota) spoke movingly of our unique condition as a young Yearly Meeting and stressed that we should "join the sheltering arms" of both Friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference.

MINUTE # 134 -Affiliation. Recognizing the unique possibilities inherent in our being a young Yearly Meeting we are asking the Representative Board to explore the opportunities and the

obligations involved in our joining simultaneously both Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting. The findings are to be circulated among the Meetings and action on in the manner prescribed in our Faith and Practice for changes therein. If we consider diligently there is a possibility of a decision at our 1970 sessions of Yearly Meeting.

March 26, 27, 28, 29, 1970

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION

Harold V. Smuck, Secretary of the Board of Missions of Friends United Meeting, spoke of FUM as an "unapologetically Christian group" with a broad range of fellowship and strong emphasis on reaching out beyond itself. He told of two new projects: an office to work with conscientious objectors, and a trade training program in partnership with East Africa Yearly Meeting and the Christian Council of Kenya, among nomads on the northern frontier of Kenya. Turning then to SEYM's consideration of dual membership in FUM and FGC, he pointed out that FUM is seeking to be a fellowship of Friends; in our membership in FUM here would probably be problems but there would also be sharing in many ways.

Paul S. Goulding, Assistant Secretary of Friends General Conference, characterized the scope of FGC as a "spinning off" of concerns under separate auspices such as Friends Journal, Pendle Hill, and AFSC. He described the organization of FGC and the work of the standing committees...

Consideration of Affiliation with FGC and FUM Caroline N. Jacob summarized the history of SEYM from the first Meetings organized under Friends World Committee through development of the All-Florida Friends Conference to the present, pointing out that at each step in our growth there have been reluctances to be overcome. At last year's annual sessions the question of whether we are to remain independent or belong to the two main currents of American Quaker thought and action came up with particular force. Sue Greenleaf reported on the letters sent out to all Friends, and on the responses to them. At the time of the January Representative Board meeting there still was not a clear feeling

on the question, with five Meetings approving dual affiliation, one disapproving and three uncertain. Since that time one of the uncertain Meetings has approved the move and another will approve if this is the sense of the Yearly Meeting. A number of Friends spoke in favor of our joining both of these larger organizations but it was clear that the Yearly Meeting was not ready to make this move in unity. A Minute expressing this position was proposed to be considered at the Sunday morning session and the Yearly Meeting agreed to consider the matter carefully in the intervening time.

SUNDAY MORNING

MINUTE # 144

Friends gathered at the Southeastern Yearly Meeting find themselves desirous of joining with Friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference to further the growth and unity of Friends and Friends' influence, to repay to some extent the warm help and assistance we have received from both bodies and to give our Young Friends a pattern of unity to follow and to develop further.

We understand there is hesitation and objection to this move within the membership of our yearly Meeting, although these views were not voiced in detail in the discussions here at this session.

We therefore request of Charles D. Smith and Jan deHartog, J. Morris Trimmer and Ruth Linn Fraser, and others so moved, that they seek opportunities in the near future to understand the objections existing in our Yearly Meeting to this move and to make clear the position of this body, under God's guidance to help us as a whole Yearly Meeting to move, at His pace, in love and tenderness toward the future.

Should we achieve unity in this matter as a result of such consultation and conference without need of further action by the Yearly Meeting we ask both Friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference to allow our Yearly Meeting to become a member of their respective bodies.

April 8, 9, 10, 11, 1971

SATURDAY MORNING

BUSINESS SESSION

The clerk introduced the question of our Yearly Meeting affiliating with the two larger bodies of Friends which we had discussed in prior meetings, summarizing our thinking in regard to the advantages of such affiliation and in regard to the importance of refraining from such a move until the entire Yearly Meeting is ready to move in unity.

One monthly meeting, feeling that this dual affiliation is a testimony which should be made for the sake of Young Friends, suggested that other meetings sharing this feeling might make this testimony on a monthly meeting basis.

A deep and tender discussion among representatives present resulted in Friends' unity with the following minute:

MINUTE #149

Friends gathered at Southeastern Yearly Meeting find themselves desirous of joining with friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference to further the growth and unity of Friends and Friend's influence, to repay to some extent the warm help and assistance we have received from both bodies and to give our Young Friends a pattern of unity to follow and to develop further.

We have sought understanding and unity in this matter throughout our Yearly Meeting and find that the loving consideration and gentle selfless[n]ess of the Miami Monthly Meeting in wishing the Yearly Meeting to move ahead in this matter without them, releases us to proceed toward consummation.

We therefore ask and petition Friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference to accept Southeastern Yearly Meeting, with the exception of Miami, as a member of their respective bodies.

March 30, 31, April 1, 2, 1972

FRIDAY MORNING
OPENING SESSION

In regard to the status of our request for affiliation with FUM and FGC, the clerk and secretary had reported that the FUM General Board meeting would be held in about two weeks. If the guidelines for membership are not approved at this time there may be a delay until the triennial sessions in July. At our request FGC is hold back on the follow through of their approval until we can move forward with both bodies at the same time.

April 19-22, 1973

OPENING SESSION FRIDAY MORNING

The treasurer reminded the Yearly Meeting that our assessments to FGC and FUM is collected by the Monthly Meetings and forwarded by the Yearly Meeting treasurer to those bodies, and is not part of the Yearly Meeting budget or expenses. He raised a question regarding the amount each Monthly Meeting, thus affiliated, is assessed, this being \$2.25 for each member, adult and juvenile, resident and non-resident. This full amount has been received from some Meetings but not from all. The treasurer asked for guidance on the question of whether the Yearly Meeting is expected to make up the difference between expected and actual assessments.

MINUTE #168

The Yearly Meeting feels that it is the responsibility of each Monthly Meeting to pay its full assessment for FGC-FUM

affiliation, and hopes that it is possible for the Meeting to meet this commitment.

March 23-26, 1978

MINUTE 78 YM 5

...It was noted that SEYM's annual contributions to FUM and FGC have been included in the basic budget for 1978-1979

MINUTE 78 YM 17

...The clerk was asked to include a note concern [sic] the change in that FUM and FGC annual contributions are not included in the whole SEYM budget and meeting contributions to SEYM should reflect this change.

YBM MINUTES, Third Month 23-27, 2005

Attachment 8: Letter of Concern

Re: FUM's Discriminatory Personnel Policy

The St. Petersburg Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

130 Nineteenth Avenue Southeast

St. Petersburg, Florida 33705

13th Third Month 2005

The St. Petersburg Meeting unites with the deep concern expressed by several Yearly Meetings regarding Friends United Meeting (FUM)'s minute 88-GB-52 which supports a personnel policy that is discriminatory towards gays and lesbians. We affirm the statement made by Pacific Yearly Meeting and "...believe that it is not in keeping with Friend¹s testimonies to deny marriage to same gender couples and at the same time refuse them full participation because they are not married." We further unite with FGC "that our experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with respect to sexual orientation or gender identity."

St. Petersburg Meeting does not want to maintain affiliation in order to labor with FUM regarding this concern. Our experience of this struggle over years of time has shown no difference in FUM's long standing policies. We asked ourselves in our Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, how can we, with any integrity, continue to be part of FUM and perpetuate this form of violence and hate? While we affirm much of the good work done in the world by FUM, we question how much of the Spirit is quenched when a Quaker witness and practice does not reflect the loving example of Jesus.

Our Yearly Meeting is affiliated, but not in relationship with FUM. Many in the Yearly Meeting

are not even aware that we are dually affiliated with FUM and FGC, or what that means. Are Friends in SEYM even aware of the need to labor with FUM over this issue, and are we prepared to fully support our lesbian and gay members and attenders? If way is not clear to sever affiliation with FUM, St. Petersburg Meeting asks where is our testimony of integrity?

Right now Southeastern Yearly Meeting gives \$1,200 per year to FUM, (\$1300 is requested for next year) and sets aside additional funds for travel to the FUM Triennial should they be requested. There are many ways we could spend this money that would benefit our Yearly Meeting. We encourage SEYM to consider using that money in ways that promote our spiritual growth and enable more Friends to attend more Quaker gatherings.

St. Petersburg Meeting is having trouble finding clearness on sending money to SEYM that will be sent to FUM.

We urge SEYM to consider carefully our role in relationship with FUM and the subsequent complicity in bigotry and oppression by supporting FUM with funds and through affiliation.

MINUTE: 05YM19

SEYM approves the letter to FUM with much gratitude.

Attachment 9: Letter to All Friends in Friends United Meeting

To All Friends in Friends United Meeting,

Greetings we offer in the Spirit of the Eternal Christ revealed to us in the Fourth Gospel. Some refer to this book as "the Quaker Gospel" and we find comfort in leadings that emerge from its study.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting acknowledges the challenges faced by Friends United Meeting General Board as it discerns policy, given the diversity of the affiliated Yearly Meetings. We also admonish ourselves for neglecting to fulfill our responsibility to be in full relationship, given the absence of Southeastern Yearly Meeting representatives in many of your meetings.

It is with a deep sense of mission that we offer you our testimony of peace with justice. We request that you worshipfully hear our concern regarding the Friends United Meeting Personnel Policy (Minute 88-GB-52), which limits leadership service to certain heterosexuals, or celibate homosexuals.

We encourage you to consider the clear contradiction concerning civil and sexual rights in the above-referenced document as specified in Par "A" versus Parts "B" & "C." We, the members of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, affirm that the Light, which guides us, does so across all domains, not splitting into two disparate beams for secular and sacred arenas. We hold that our beliefs, to be wholly true for us, must apply at all times in all realms, in every conscious and unconscious corner of our being and our behavior.

We are led by "The Comforter" as we seek your understanding and responsible social action. Guided by John 16:12, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," we recognize that not all affiliated Yearly Meetings are prepared to accept the following revelation of the Holy Spirit:

There is that of God in everyone and instruments of God include diverse Friends, some of whom are subject to ongoing oppressive prejudice and discriminatory personnel practices, as a consequence of being gay, lesbian or heterosexual that does not limit sexual activity to that within traditional marriage."

We are united with Friends United Meeting in obedience to the mandate of John 15:12, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

We offer our love as you struggle with how best to respond to this concern, shared by many at Baltimore Yearly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, and many other Friends' organizations. We are committed to witness peace with justice and pray that members of Friends United Meeting will find a way open to change its personnel policy to be inclusive of all Friends that have demonstrated spiritual gifts.

In Christ,
Southeastern Yearly Meeting in Annual Sessions March 2005

YBM MINUTES Fourth Month 12-16, 2006

[Page 10]

Phoebe Andersen reported as an SEYM representative to Friends United Meeting (FUM). Phoebe movingly explained how her participation in the FUM Triennial and General Board sessions were interesting and "a growth experience that stretched my faith." Phoebe noted FUM's programs in Africa and Belize. She also told of the increasing independence of FUM's African Quaker office.

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Discernment on the Relationship of Southeastern Yearly Meeting and Friends United Meeting (FUM) was undertaken in a search for unity and in our Quaker resolve to be faithful to our testimonies, to be steadfast in the Light, and loving in the expression of our intentions.

Susan Taylor, YM clerk, undertook an explanation of how—in good Quaker order—this special session would approach the vexing issue of SEYM's continued affiliation with the Friends United Meeting. Since the 2005 YM, information has been distributed to meetings, including the history of the FUM policy. [See Attachment 4] Each meeting was requested to discern whether or not SEYM should remain affiliated with FUM.

Meeting positions were included in the Documents in Advance or made available at the YM gathering. With regard to SEYM's affiliation with FUM, Friends spoke and listened as the Spirit ledeach to do. Action by the YM was held over for consideration at the final plenary. [Page 15]

[Pages 17-18]

The 2006 Yearly Meeting of SEYM is unable to find unity in our affiliation with Friends United Meeting (FUM). An Ad hoc committee was appointed to compose a minute of grave concern that could reflect the sense of the meeting. After discussion and amendment, the following two minutes were approved:

06YM14

Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) offers this minute of grave concern, reflective of our struggle

with the issue our affiliation with Friends United Meeting.

We are united in our strong opposition to the policy contained in FUM minute 88GB-52; on the grounds it violates the Quaker testimony of Equality. [Attachment 4: FUM minute 88GB-52 with background]

This FUM policy causes profound pain in our members and to our community.

As an affirmation of who we are, the Marriage and commitment section of our Faith and Practice defines marriage as a union between a couple before God, and deliberately does not define what constitutes a couple in terms of gender.

Our experience in SEYM has been that spiritual gifts are distributed by how Friends are called and their faithfulness to that call, not by marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

At this time, we find we are not in unity to disaffiliate with FUM. We are also not in unity to remain affiliated with FUM. We encourage Friends in SEYM and FUM to maintain and expand Friendly communications as they are led. We urge the FUM Board to reopen the discernment regarding personnel policy minute 88GB-52.

Our process of discernment with regard to SEYM's relationship to Friends United Meeting is ongoing. We will revisit this at our next Yearly Meeting.

Seeking the best means to broadcast SEYM's position the subsequent minute was approved.

06YM15

SEYM will send minute 06YM14 to the Clerk of FUM, the general secretary of the FUM, all yearly meetings, worldwide, and monthly meetings in North and Central America.

Friends considered the wording of minute 06YM14 tender, appropriate, grateful, and letting "our Light show." Prior to unity, the minute was amended in discussion, to emphasize how "Our experience in SEYM has been that spiritual gifts are distributed by how Friends are called and their faithfulness to that call, not by marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity." Other Friends spoke of other considerations that should be considered concerning any lasting SEYM affiliation with FUM; i.e., FUM's religious declarations and use of hired ministers.

Attachment 4: FUM General Board Minute 88 GB 52:

- (a) We affirm the civil rights of all people to secular employment, housing, education and health care without regard to their sexual orientation. In particular, we condemn violence, whether verbal or physical, against homosexuals, and call for their full protection under the civil rights laws.
- (b) We reaffirm our traditional testimonies of peace, simplicity, truth speaking, gender and racial equality, personal integrity, fidelity, chastity and community. We recognize that there is diversity among us on issues of sexuality. For the purpose of our corporate life together, we affirm our traditional testimony that sexual intercourse should be confined to the bonds of marriage, which we understand to be between one man and one woman.
- (c) The lifestyle of volunteers under appointment to Quaker Volunteer Witness, regardless of their sexual orientation, should be in accordance with these testimonies.

According to the same minute, the General Board also approved adding the following

statement:

These policies are based on Friends beliefs as interpreted by Friends United Meeting since its beginning. In March 1991, the General Board Executive Committee approved (91 GBEX 18) circulation of an "Organizational and Personnel Policy Manual." It took the QVW policy and extended it as follows:

Friends United Meeting holds to the traditional Friends testimonies of peace (nonviolence), simplicity, truth speaking, community, gender and racial equality, chastity, and fidelity in marriage. It is expected that the lifestyle of all staff and volunteer appointees of Friends United Meeting will be in accordance with these testimonies. Friends United Meeting affirms the civil rights of all people. Staff and volunteer appointments are made without regard to sexual orientation. It is expected that sexual intercourse should be confined to marriage, understood to be between one man and one woman.

The 1988 minute placed the personnel policy within the framework of traditional Friends testimonies and said that the policy applied to the corporate activities of FUM. The wording of the 1991 Personnel Manual explicitly applied the policy to all staff and volunteer appointees of FUM.

YBM MINUTES April 4- 8, 2007

07YBM15

SEYM is in unity in declaring that our Yearly Meeting has entered a period of transformation with regard to our membership in Friends United Meeting. We acknowledge great pain and struggle within our body and, as we have heard, among other members of F.U.M. as well, over this process and we strive to hold each other in love and Light as we labor.

We will work as a Yearly Meeting toward reaching unity with regard to laying down our present relationship, and toward creating new relationships as opportunities arise and as spirit leads.

To allow this process to occur, SEYM will suspend formal membership in F.U.M. for two years. During this time, our yearly meeting will make no financial contributions to F.U.M. Instead, the funds that would have gone to F.U.M. will go to support F.U.M.-related activities or outreach at the discretion or suggestion of SEYM. We will offer both financial and spiritual support to representatives to F.U.M. as our members come forward to carry out those duties. If at the end of the two-year period our membership is not in unity to renew the relationship, SEYM will permanently lay down our membership in F.U.M.

We seek to maintain a loving relationship with Friends United Meeting. We also look for opportunities to communicate with members of F.U.M. about our concerns.