

Charlottesville Friends Meeting
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
1104 Forest Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903
(434) 971-8859

December 9, 2006

Sylvia Graves, General Secretary
Friends United Meeting
101 Quaker Hill Drive
Richmond, IN 47374-1926

Dear Sylvia Graves:

We read on the FUM website about your appointment as FUM's new General Secretary. We thank you for taking up this task and wish you strength, wisdom, and joy in your work there.

We write to inform you that our monthly meeting has continued its deliberations over how to maintain and express our relationship with Friends United Meeting. This issue came up once again at our recent Twelfth-month Meeting for Worship with a concern for Business, and (once again) at the point where we were considering budgetary matters. For many years our meeting had a line item in the budget that designated a donation to go directly to FUM. But in recent years our meeting became united in feeling uneasy about giving monetary support to a body that we see as engaging in unsupportable discrimination against gay men and lesbians, even those in longterm and loving couple relationships, based solely on the fact of their sexual orientation. At the same time, though, we continue to value our link with FUM and to yearn for the restoration of a strong, Spirit-led relationship with FUM; and so we have continued to wrestle with this issue.

In 2005, instead of sending you a monetary contribution we used the same amount of money to compile a small package of educational/inspirational materials about homosexuality, Biblical interpretation, and Friends' practice, that we sent to you in early April of that year. In early 2006 we deferred a final decision on what to do in our 2006 budget regarding the FUM line-item; and we considered that question last First-day alongside the question of how to deal with this item in our 2007 budget. After some discussion and a period of worship as we tried to discern a Godly outcome we found a rich unity around a decision that:

- (1) We would continue to work to maintain a good relationship with FUM;
- (2) We would inform you that we cannot feel clear to provide financial support to FUM until the personnel policy that we consider discriminatory is revoked;

- (3) We would tell you of our disappointment that, though we have sent you a short follow-up query on the matter, we have received no acknowledgement at all from FUM regarding the package we sent you in April 2005;
- (4) We long to have deeper communication with FUM; and
- (5) Because of our desire to continue to get to know other FUM Friends more deeply, we will re-designate that item in our 2006 and 2007 budgets as being for "FUM Intervisitiation" instead of a donation to FUM.

The meeting also warmly endorsed a suggestion that we invite FUM to send a representative to visit us in order to describe the breadth of FUM's programs to us and to keep the lines of communication open between us, so we are happy hereby to extend this invitation.

During the academic year we have a one-hour discussion program each First-day, scheduled between our two worship sessions and drawing participants from both. So one good option would be for your representative to come and lead that "Connections" discussion some First-day that is convenient to you and to our Program Committee, and to participate in one or both of our worship sessions that day, too. We will be happy to offer hospitality in connection with that visit.

Just one final note. We see from the account of your October 2006 General Board Meeting, as posted on your website, that the Board had approved the draft of a letter to be sent "to all people who had sent communications regarding the sexual ethics position of the FUM personnel policy", as well a version to be sent to all pastors and clerks. We were glad to see in that description of the letter that it "acknowledged that FUM was hearing the pain from those who wrote." Now, we await the text of the whole letter with interest, and hope it can help us all progress to the desired deeper levels of communication.

In the Light--

Helena Cobban and Anne McKeithen
Co-Clerks, Charlottesville Friends Meeting

Cc: Lauri Perman, Presiding Clerk, Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Riley Robinson, General Secretary, Baltimore Yearly Meeting