

May, in Richmond, Indiana, God revealed to us that we are called to reach across the scattered branches of Friends, as God once again gathers a great people in the name of Jesus.

As the Young Adult Friends movement comes alive in our generation, it is helpful to understand that God has been at work among Young Adult Friends for a very long time. For almost a century, Quaker young people have been key in doing the crucial work of cross-fertilization that keeps the Religious Society of Friends vibrant, diverse, balanced, and grounded in God. Perhaps God sees fit to use young people in this way because so many of us are newly convinced of the Truth; we have not had time to cool down, to become lukewarm, to forget about the urgency of the call that God has for us. We know what God asks of us: Everything. Our whole life. We know how big this is. Are we ready to live up to the Light that has been granted us? Are we willing to be transformed by our encounter with God and with other Friends of Truth? Are we willing to be stretched by Friends who think very differently from us?

Most importantly: Are we ready for the challenges that God will give us when we are brought together in love and truth? The Holy Spirit is not moving among Friends just so that young adults can have entertaining gatherings. God is preparing us for action. We cannot expect to go to YAF gatherings, Yearly Meeting, or Meeting for Worship and have our lives remain the same. God is calling us out of “business as usual”. Are we willing to have our lives radically changed, both as individuals and as a religious community? God wants to shake us up. If we are faithful to the voice of the Spirit, God will unite us in love and send us out into the world to announce and embody the righteousness and justice of Christ. Unity in the Spirit is just the beginning. We are united so that we may be used for God’s purposes. Are we ready? Are we listening?

An Open Letter On Friends’ United Meeting Affiliation

By Kody Gabriel Hersh, Miami MM (SEYM)

At our annual sessions in the spring of 2006, my Yearly Meeting, Southeastern, wrestled for the second year in a row with the issue of our membership in Friends United Meeting. The body of about 150 Friends who were gathered there laboured late into the night on our last evening together, struggling for a unity that evaded us. As midnight approached, only a few Friends left to go to bed. Most stayed, yawning but intently focused. We are fierce, we SEYM Friends, and we are passionate. We have a burning thirst for justice, and a deep love and respect for our LGBTQ members. We also have a broad theological spectrum among us as individuals, and an equally deep love and respect for those - mostly Christian-identified Friends who draw support, sustenance, and affirmation from our FUM affiliation.

We finally crafted a minute that was cautiously and wearily approved in the wee hours of the morning. It stated that we would lay down our formal membership in Friends United Meeting for a discernment period of two years. At the end of those two years, if we did not find unity to rejoin, our affiliation would be permanently laid down. That was two years ago, which means that at this April’s annual sessions, we will revisit the issue once again, and presumably make a more or less final decision.

To say that this has been weighing on me doesn’t quite communicate the extent of my preoccupation. I have been worried, frightened, frustrated, and deeply concerned about this issue for the entirety of the past two years. Then, last week, the presiding clerk of FUM’s general board circulated a letter he had received from the superintendents of five large, fairly conservative FUM-affiliated yearly meetings in the United States, referring to “current undercurrents (in FUM) that erode unity and undercut important ministry”, and requesting that the board form an immediate, specific plan for confronting those issues. Since reading that letter, I have all but stopped sleeping.