

Wednesday Morning

7.5 Epistle

We heard the epistle from Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative.

“God spoke to us through his servants. He has invested in us as a miracle. If we are faithful, we can see ourselves that way. God warned us that the enemy uses deception, distraction, discouragement and division. Of these, the most dangerous is division. We were also cautioned about pride, arrogance and self-centeredness. But all these dangers are dissolved when we look *inward*. It is through the inward search that we will find Him and His cross. Inwardly, we find the strength to pick up that cross and carry it..

...Given the contentious climate in our country, Ministry and Oversight agreed to write a letter encouraging our nation to return to the ways of Christ. It was difficult to find wording that did not add to the country's divisiveness but instead promote the loving care of all humankind. When hope seemed to totally escape them, a Friend rose to propose language that united them and our Lord's hand became evident.”

We also heard a quote from Toni Morrison, whose death was announced yesterday.

“The conventional wisdom of the Tower of Babel story is that the collapse was a misfortune. That it was the distraction, or the weight of many languages that precipitated the tower's failed architecture. That one monolithic language would have expedited the building and heaven would have been reached. Whose heaven, she wonders? And what kind? Perhaps the achievement of Paradise was premature, a little hasty if no one could take the time to understand other languages, other views, other narratives period. Had they, the heaven they imagined might have been found at their feet. Complicated, demanding, yes, but a view of heaven as life; not heaven as post-life.”

7.xx The clerk extended apologies to the body for failing to recognize Marian Baker in the discussion about FUM on Tuesday afternoon. The clerk read excerpts from a letter from Marian: “Our theme is Provoke one another to love.” As one in New England who has been amazingly blessed by God to travel widely within in our yearly meeting, within other FUM meetings across North and Latin America, and within East Africa, I have a different

experience and viewpoint than many of you. I was one of your representatives on the FUM Board when the original personnel policy was approved. ... Through United Society of Friends Women I have also experienced the pain of many women who belong to other FUM meetings that have split over the issue. I know the pain that has been caused when Americans go to Kenya or Uganda and assume we know more than the Friends we are visiting in such a different culture. In countries where one is dealing with fundamental issues like, "do we have any source of safe water?" ... Let us not try to control others with our money. Let [us] not judge and condemn others. May we humbly reach out in love, willing to listen with both North American fellow members of FUM as well as with African members of FUM.

Even more important is willingness to reach out to other FUM YM's to ask to pray deeply together and to seek God's will together and serve God in these issues, rather than serve our human desires. Let us reach out in humble love towards every human.

I will continue to hold you all in Christ's Light throughout Wednesday.

Marian Baker"

7.6 FUM Withholding Mechanism

The clerks brought back a draft proposed minute addressing the FUM withholding mechanism.

The clerks sense of the meeting is that the body accepted the following minute.

"NEYM is not in unity to further extend the withholding mechanism. The mechanism was established by Minute 2009-54, which specifies that "this process is to be in force until September 30, 2010, unless explicitly extended by the YM in its Sessions next year." It was extended several times, most recently in Minute 2014-69, which extended "...the FUM financial withholding policy for the next five years, to be re-assessed no later than NEYM Sessions in August of 2019." Without unity on the floor of 2019 Sessions to extend it further, the mechanism ends.

Out of respect for the discernment of meetings that have approved budgets which incorporate the withholding mechanism, and in order to afford monthly meetings the time to incorporate this change into their annual budget discernment, we set the date for the expiration of this mechanism for October 1, 2020. "

A number of Friends stood aside from this minute. Others were unable to unite with it.

The reading clerks presented a draft minute of exercise regarding the FUM withholding policy. After much discussion, the body did not approve. The clerks will continue to labor, and will bring a revised minute of exercise tomorrow morning.

7.7 Unity Agenda

Friends approved the unity agenda which includes accepting the reports from staff, boards, committees, representatives and other groups from NEYM; accepting the memorial minutes and time sensitive statements.

The Unity Agenda also includes approving the revised committee purposes procedures and composition, approving YM clerks nominations, approving authorization to make edits and corrections to the minutes, approving the nominations brought to the body by the Nominating Committee, and approving the bank resolutions.

7.8 Final Budget Approval

Friends approved the FY'20 budget as proposed by the Finance Committee. .

7.9 Clerking Structures Working Group

The Clerking Structures Working Group returned to us with several concrete proposals for discernment, all of which the body approved, as follows.

Endorsing the report and the detailed recommendations moving the recommendations in the report forward to the appropriate parties for implementation.

The Yearly Meeting holds an ongoing commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. We strive to nurture the gifts of all; to create pathways to leadership that are accessible to everyone; and to extend opportunities that will foster a broad exchange of diverse ideas and perspectives. We commit to supporting the leadership development of all Friends, without tokenizing them, regardless of economic background, education, race, age, gender, sexuality, or disability.

The Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator should give a progress report at 2020 Sessions. This will increase transparency & accountability, as well as help us keep up momentum even when we encounter obstacles. This will also help us remain accountable to our intentions even when changes take longer than one year.

The overall responsibility for responding to the concerns raised in the report rests with Permanent Board. We expect significant work to happen between annual Sessions. Because

Permanent Board interfaces with other working groups & committees, this will help ensure that changes made are integrated with other changes happening across NEYM.

As possible within budgetary constraints, the Finance Committee, Treasurer, and Yearly Meeting Secretary shall ensure funding for the recommendations and incorporate these changes into planning for future budgets.

We ask Ministry & Counsel to offer support to Permanent Board in creating a working group charged with exploring & naming how NEYM currently supports ministry & spiritual life. This working group will identify where support for ministry and spiritual life currently happens and where gaps exist, and then offer recommendations for structures, practices and manageable leadership roles that would best serve the current needs of Friends.

During the triennial review of committee purposes & procedures, Coordinating & Advisory shall pay careful attention to how committee structures can best facilitate effectiveness in the work of NEYM. In our current organizational culture it is often very hard for us to lay things down, and much easier to say “yes” to new things. We therefore end up with more structures and projects that we can responsibly maintain. We need to learn to let things go.

7.10 Faith & Practice Revision Committee

We returned to consideration of the paper “Dying, Death, and Bereavement,” which is brought before us for preliminary approval.

Friends approved.