

Responses to Queries for PFF YM June 2012

6/15/2012

Queries (sent out January, 2012)

- Does this proposal speak to the condition/interest of your meeting/worship group?
- Is this a PFF service that would help strengthen and deepen the spirit & life of your meeting?
- Is your meeting interested in participating in the development of a yearly meeting should we be led to proceed in this way?

Meetings for whom the proposal clearly speaks to their condition and are interested in participating in development of a yearly meeting

- Charlotte
- Raleigh
- Rockingham with some reservation due to human resources
- Upstate worship group

Meetings who are currently undecided but have concerns and are still exploring YM affiliation for for whom PFF may be a possibility.

- Salem

Meetings for whom the proposal on YM affiliation does not speak to their condition but continue to be supportive of PFF as a fellowship;

- Chapel Hill
- Davidson (interested in the future of PFF and are concerned about PFF losing its ability to be a space for diversity of Friends if moving toward a yearly meeting.)
- Durham: content with current relationship to PFF; supportive of individuals and other meetings proceeding with yearly meeting explorations
- Fayetteville
- Wilkes

Meetings for whom we are awaiting reports

- New Garden

Other meetings we've not heard from

- Friendship
- Spring

Monthly Meeting and Worship Group responses to the PFF Queries on Yearly Meeting Affiliation

CHAPEL HILL FRIENDS

At the May 20th 2012 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, attenders and members of Chapel Hill Friends Meeting were in unity in approving the following minute:

Members of Chapel Hill Friends Meeting have benefited greatly from being a part of Piedmont Friends Fellowship over the years. We plan to continue to participate and support PFF, but we are not led at this time to participate in the development of PFF as a Yearly Meeting.

I hope this helps you and your committee as you discern whether to have PFF become a Yearly Meeting.

In peace,
Carolyn White
Clerk, Chapel Hill Friends Meeting

CHARLOTTE FRIENDS

Responses to the Piedmont Friends Fellowship Yearly Meeting Proposal Queries
Derived From Responses at CFM Forum on 15 April 2012 (20 CFM Friends Present)
Presented and Recommended to Meeting by Ministry and Counsel on 6 May 2012
Approved by Meeting at its May meeting, 2012 to be forwarded to PFF

In late 2009 Charlotte Friends Meeting responded to queries from PFF regarding whether PFF should study the possibility of becoming a yearly meeting. Our responses were positive, but guarded in places. We mentioned the “painful split” we had had from NCYM, and voiced concerns about a yearly meeting “imposing policies . . . with which we do not agree.” Two and a half years later, our responses to the current queries were made with much more positive energy, more clearly affirming our support of PFF in taking this direction.

- Does this proposal speak to the condition/interest of your meeting/worship group?

Yes, this proposal from PFF speaks to the condition of our meeting. We like the inclusiveness of proposing a yearly meeting and association, and believe an organization with different levels of membership status can work, just as monthly meetings work with both members and attenders. Also, we like the idea of having a yearly meeting to support and contribute to our growth as a meeting.

- Is this a PFF service that would help strengthen and deepen the spirit & life of your meeting?

Yes, we think this service would be beneficial to our meeting. We realize that participating with the breadth of perspectives found in a Piedmont yearly meeting will be challenging at times, but we believe it will be the kind of positive challenge that leads to growth, rather than a challenge that tears down. We feel it would be positive for our meeting to be part of the process and dialogue of a yearly meeting.

- Is your meeting interested in participating in the development of a yearly meeting should we be led to proceed in this way?

Yes, Charlotte Friends recognize that as one of the larger meetings not now affiliated with a yearly meeting, we may need to carry a large piece of the work associated with developing a yearly meeting, and we have some concern about having the time and energy this would require. This is work that will build an important support for the justice work and community building work in our meeting and with the larger body of Friends in this region; for that reason we hope we would find the needed energy.

DAVIDSON FRIENDS

Marian and all committee members,

Thank you for the work you have done. At Davidson we have discussed your questions in Business Meeting and have not come to a clear conclusion. As a Meeting, we do have a clear sense that we value our connections to Piedmont Friends Fellowship and Friends General Conference. Those who have served as PFF representatives have learned about Quaker process and been enriched by working with other meetings. Over time, various people in our Meeting have attended annual gatherings and workshops. While as a Meeting we have been less active in attending PFF events, we remain interested in and hold caring for the work and future of PFF. We are clear that we wish to maintain a relationship with PFF but are not clear on what form that might take in the future. Some of us feel a strong concern that a fundamental shift in PFF could diminish its ability to be a space where Friends from very different traditions gather, others of us see new energy and find a desire to participate more. We lack of clarity as a community on whether or not to encourage PFF to pursue Yearly Meeting status and this keeps us from making any further statements.

We know that we want to retain a connection to PFF but at this moment cannot say what that might look like in the future.

In love,

Jan Blodgett
Clerk, Davidson Meeting

DURHAM FRIENDS

REPLIES to PFF QUERIES from DURHAM MEETING 5/13/2012

PFF Query #1: Does this proposal speak to the condition/interest of your meeting/worship group?

Durham Response: Durham Meeting is a large meeting with varied interests and needs. While some of our members may be interested in such a yearly meeting, there is unity that, as a whole, the PFF yearly meeting proposal does not speak to our condition or interest at this time. Durham Meeting is a member of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) and many of our yearly meeting needs are met through this long-time association. There is no unity within our meeting to seek to change that relationship under the present circumstances.

PFF Query #2: Is this a PFF service that would help strengthen and deepen the spirit & life of your meeting?

Durham Response: Durham Meeting is content with the current relationship we have enjoyed with PFF for over 40 years. It has brought us many benefits and blessings both through our associations with nearby meetings and their members and with the access to the many programs of Friends General Conference. Most recently we have explored adopting the "Faith and Play" First Day School program which FGC has prepared, and our members have actively participated in many other FGC programs including the annual Gathering. A PFF yearly meeting would not significantly change or strengthen the spirit and life in our meeting in that we already enjoy those benefits.

PFF Query #3: Is your meeting interested in participating in the development of a yearly meeting should we be led to proceed in this way?

Durham Response: As a meeting commitment, Durham Meeting would not be interested in participating in the development of a PFF yearly meeting. However, we recognize that individual Friends from our meeting may have personal interest in following such a project as members of PFF. We understand that there are several meetings in North Carolina and nearby that have no present yearly meeting affiliation and might wish to affiliate with a yearly meeting which had membership in FGC and other unique features, and we are supportive of that need being met on behalf of those meetings.

FAYETTEVILLE FRIENDS

At Fayetteville Friends Meeting's monthly Business meeting held on 6th Day of 5th Month with Anne Ashford Clerking and Bob Cooper, Susan Lees and Wendy Mitchener in attendance the last set of queries sent out concerning PFF becoming a Yearly Meeting and Association were answered and minuted as follows:

Does this proposal speak to the condition or interest of our meeting? "We like our affiliation as it is". Is this a PFF service that would help strengthen and deepen the spirit & life of your meeting? "It is possible a Yearly Meeting would enriched PFF and therefore so also our meeting". Is our meeting interested in participating in the development of a yearly meeting should we be led to proceed in this way? "No" A comment was made that everyone attending had also attended the week before at a presentation by John Hunter and no one has objected to others forming a Yearly Meeting.

FRIENDSHIP FRIENDS (No Report)

NEW GARDEN (Pending)

RALEIGH FRIENDS

Raleigh Friends' Response to the PFF Ad Hoc Committee Proposal on PFF Becoming a Yearly Meeting- At our Second Hour Discussion this First-day (25 March 2012), friends came up with the following:

Thank you for your consideration. Raleigh Friends approve of this idea of proceeding with Quaker process and would like friends to continue on developing Piedmont Friends as a Yearly Meeting.

We appreciate the use of Quaker process, the desire for inclusiveness, and of utilizing the existing structure of PFF. Since we already do a lot of yearly meeting-like activities, it would seem logical to formalize the relationship.

We appreciate the idea of keeping things simple.

We feel enthusiastic and ready to take on the challenges of forming this new organization.

Raleigh Friends would also like to add a note of our appreciation to the Ad Hoc Committee for their work on this issue.

ROCKINGHAM FRIENDS

Dear Friends,

Rockingham County Friends Meeting expresses its appreciation to the ad hoc committee for making available the information packet. It was quite helpful. We are definitely interested in maintaining our affiliation with PFF and foresee the possibility of an increased participation by our members. The option of PFF as yearly meeting/association has appeal as our needs are still unclear as to which type affiliation we might wish to pursue. Our response to the third question: Some of us may be willing to take on a limited role if PFF chooses to develop as a yearly meeting.

In the Light,
Harry Welker, Clerk

SALEM FRIENDS

Hi Marion,

Attached and pasted below are the minutes from the called meeting that Salem Friends held to discuss the PFF proposal. Salem Friends have approved these minutes, and felt it was important to include the summary of our general discussion. We would appreciate having that summary included in the compilation.

In peace,
Lisa Gould

Salem Friends Meeting 22 April 2012

Called Meeting for worship with a concern for business, on the topic of a request from Piedmont Friends Fellowship (PFF), asking us to consider the proposal for PFF to become a yearly meeting & association

In attendance: Melrose Buchanan, John Cardarelli, Christina Connell, Dick Connell, Dee Edelman, Lisa Gould, Gary Hornsby, and Meg Zulick.

Salem Friends' response

1. Does this proposal speak to the condition/interest of your meeting/worship group?

This proposal speaks to our condition, in the sense that we are seeking a wider circle(s) of Friends with whom to associate. Whether or not we choose to affiliate with PFF as our yearly meeting or as a member of the association, we see the value of an FGC-affiliated yearly meeting in our region.

2. Is this a PFF service that would help strengthen and deepen the spirit & life of your meeting?

Salem Friends feel that joining a yearly meeting would strengthen and deepen us, and we are currently in a process of discernment of how to affiliate, and do not feel in a rush to do so.

3. Is your meeting interested in participating in the development of a yearly meeting should we be led to proceed in this way?

Salem Friends Meeting has the energy and desire to participate in a yearly meeting. We are undecided on how to affiliate at this time, and we are inclined to make a decision that would lead toward unity among North Carolina Friends.

General discussion

Salem Friends focused on the third paragraph of the PFF Yearly Meeting Proposal's Introduction, especially on the phrase "...a determination that whatever comes out of our current deliberation should ultimately be a force for unity among Friends in the region." We are aware of the spiritual growth and nurture that can come with being associated with the wider body of Friends, and the importance of a *Faith & Practice* and youth programs. But there is unease at several levels.

Many fear that the formation of yet another yearly meeting in North Carolina would further fragment North Carolina Friends. This is a time when we should seek spiritual unity in the Society of Friends, so that we can move forward strongly to face the challenges of our times. The development of a yearly meeting and its associated activities (such as creating a *Faith & Practice*) would be very challenging—but not unprecedented—given the diversity of meetings that currently associate with Piedmont Friends Fellowship; however, several Salem Friends were enthusiastic about rising to this challenge. Still, concern remains: if PFF tries to be all things to all people, will it end up being pabulum?

Some Salem Friends feel that Friends General Conference welcomes all types of Friends; they are less sure that NCYM(C) does so. Many Friends in our meeting are Universalists, and they question if they might be tolerated but marginalized in NCYM(C). Other Friends with more NCYM(C) experience feel this would not be the case, but understand this concern. There is also concern over NCYM(C)'s adamant rejection of pastoral meetings, and the refusal of NCYM(C) to join FGC because of its inclusive nature.

SPRING FRIENDS (Not certain we will receive a written report)

UPSTATE WORSHIP GROUP (under care of Charlotte Friends)

Our small Meeting, Upstate Friends, has already held a forum on this and all reactions were completely positive on all counts. The five in attendance united in the fact that we'd like to have a Yearly Meeting affiliation and that it seemed to be a "natural progression" for PFF, that it would provide a more effective witness for liberal Quakerism, and that attenders at Upstate would see the value in supporting a Yearly Meeting more readily than "an association" which at least one Upstate Friend describes as "just a social gathering".

Hope this is helpful....
Doris Wilson

WILKES FRIENDS

Wilkes Friends met last week to discuss & reflect on the 3 queries. I am attempting to translate the sense of the Meeting into writing.

Due to our small size & rural location, almost all of our energy is going toward sustaining the monthly Meeting at this time, integrating new attenders & to local projects to benefit Wilkes Co people & meet their needs as no one else here is addressing many of these problems. Additionally we are coping with caring for elderly parents, relationship difficulties, lost or endangered jobs, health problems, etc. The fact that we do not presently have children or young Friends attending like we used to is probably part of the reason we do not see a definite need for Yearly Meeting status.

That said there is interest in being more active in PFF & attending more Reps Meetings as way opens. The move from Quaker Lake to Chapel Hill for PFF yearly gathering has made it harder for us to attend though we understand & I imagine it is convenient for many of the larger Meetings. Wilkes Co is just off the beaten path!

The sense of the Meeting seems to be that PFF is structure enough for right now since we are not really taking advantage of what PFF presently offers.

We do not really crave more structure & basically we value simplicity & less organization. We feel that PFF in its present form has the potential to fulfill the goals of the proposal to nurture a diverse range of beliefs, provide an affiliation with FGC & provide support for a liberal Quaker theology & these goals are important to us. We would appreciate a body that could speak our minds to the media on current events, but we're not sure PFF could not fill the role & we issue statements on our own in the media as well.

Some of the newer members who don't have Quaker background would like more exposure to Quaker process in a larger body. Other attenders are members of other Monthly or Yearly Meetings or have long experience in Quaker ways & process & are