

The Issue of FGC Affiliation as Recorded in PYM Minutes and Reports 2014-2019

(through May 1, 2019)

This is a complete record of all references to the issue of whether to affiliate with Friends General Conference (FGC) that I could find in Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM) minutes and reports since 2014. It includes both Representative Committee meetings (RepCom) and Annual Sessions (AS). For the most part the issue has been carried by the Ministry and Oversight Committee of PYM (M&O), though in a few cases other committees and officeholders have referenced the issue. See the [PYM Minutes](#) page for the complete minutes packets these are extracted from. I would be grateful to be notified if I have missed any references.

--- George Mills, PYM Secretariat Clerk, May 2, 2019

RepCom 2014: M&O Report to RepCom 2014:

Affiliation with Friends General Conference

Because this is a recurrent issue within our Yearly Meeting, Ministry and Oversight gave consideration to the potential benefits and drawbacks of Pacific Yearly Meeting formally affiliating with Friends General Conference. Ministry and Oversight does not bring a recommendation to the Yearly Meeting at this time, however we ask representatives to take the following question to their Monthly Meetings: Are there stirrings in your Meeting to join Friends General Conference (FGC)?

...

3.- We ask, are there stirrings in our Monthly Meetings to join Friends General Conference (FGC)? Is this something that Monthly Meetings would like Ministry and Oversight to give further consideration to and possibly bring a recommendation to the Yearly Meeting at the 2014 Annual Session?

AS 2014: M&O Report to AS 2014:

Affiliation with Friends General Conference

Because this is a recurrent issue within our Yearly Meeting, Ministry and Oversight gave consideration to the potential benefits and drawbacks of Pacific Yearly Meeting formally affiliating with Friends General Conference. Ministry and Oversight would like to hear from Monthly Meetings: Are there stirrings for Pacific Yearly Meeting to join Friends General Conference (FGC)?

RepCom 2015: no mention (?)

AS 2015: no mention (?)

RepCom 2016: M&O Report to RepCom 2016:

Several of Pacific Yearly Meeting's constituent Meetings either have explored or are exploring affiliation with Friends General Conference. As a result, we are considering whether to recommend that Pacific Yearly Meeting formally affiliate with Friends General Conference.

RepCom 2016: Plenary Minutes

20. Friends General Conference (FGC) 2018 Gathering and Affiliation: Bronwen Hillman (Mexico City), Clerk, and Joe Magruder (Berkeley), Ministry and Oversight Committee member, brought two items regarding FGC.

PYM received an invitation from FGC to bring the summer gathering to California in 2018. This is in the planning stages. FGC will be reaching out to committees and monthly meetings for planning assistance.

From the floor the comments were positive with a recognition that much effort would be required and that, possibly, some Friends may attend the FGC gathering instead of Annual Session.

Minute RC 2016.05 Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM) would welcome having FGC come to California for their 2018 Summer Gathering.

The PYM Presiding Clerk will contact the Clerk of FGC's long range planning committee regarding the invitation to have FGC in California. The Host and Planning Committees for this event will each have two members from PYM on them.

Affiliation with Friends General Conference. Bronwen raised the second item by posing a query to the gathering: What are the concerns that Ministry and Oversight (M&O) Committee needs to hear before bringing an official proposal to PYM to affiliate with FGC?

After hearing comments from the floor, M&O Committee stated that they will put together a package on this subject and will send it to monthly meetings.

From the floor the questions were asked about what it would mean to affiliate with FGC and if PYM should also affiliate with Friends United Meeting (FUM).

AS 2016: M&O Report to AS 2016:

Friends General Conference Ministry & Oversight is working on a process to bring forward a proposal for Pacific Yearly Meeting to formally affiliate with Friends General Conference. Affiliation would represent positive care for the spiritual life of Pacific Yearly Meeting and would acknowledge the fact that we are already benefiting from and contributing to Friends General Conference and its programs and services. We

heard concerns at the meeting of Representative Committee and will be preparing an information packet to be distributed to the Monthly Meetings that will include details of what affiliation would mean for Pacific Yearly Meeting. Friends carrying concerns about Pacific Yearly Meeting formally affiliating with Friends General Conference are invited to approach Ministry & Oversight to have their concerns heard. We hope to bring the formal proposal of affiliation to the 2017 meeting of Representative Committee for approval and action.

AS 2016: Plenary Minutes: *no mention, though M&O states elsewhere that “the verbal report reiterated the intention to create a package on the subject.”*

RepCom 2017: M&O Report to RepCom 2017:

The process outlined in our report to Annual Session 2016 regarding affiliation with Friends General Conference is still underway and we will report further at Annual Session 2017. We welcome any questions Friends have regarding affiliation.

RepCom 2017: Unity with Nature Report to RepCom 2017:

There is a move afoot to join FGC, which if agreed to, will have a cost. I hope if we join FGC, it won't be at the expense of defunding committees or getting rid of needed Reps to other Quaker organizations.

AS 2017: M&O Report to AS 2017

Friends General Conference (FGC) Affiliation

For several years, Ministry & Oversight Committee has considered affiliation with Friends General Conference (FGC). After a lengthy discernment process, including listening to feedback from Friends from across the Yearly Meeting, M&O united in proposing that the Yearly Meeting approve the following minute at Annual Session 2017: *Pacific Yearly Meeting will commence the process of seeking affiliation with Friends General Conference.* The committee circulated the minute and information on affiliation, including a [PYM-FGC Frequently Asked Questions](#) and [Benefits of Affiliation document](#), with PYM committees and officers, and Monthly Meeting clerks.

Given the response and feedback we have received regarding this proposed minute, the M&O Committee is in active discernment as to whether we will bring the minute for approval this year or hold it over for another year. We have heard the feedback on the proposal to affiliate with FGC and continue to believe that affiliation is where Spirit is leading the Yearly Meeting. We may not have provided enough time for Monthly Meetings to address Friends' enthusiasm, questions and concerns regarding affiliation. Most of the concerns we have heard were with M&O process, not with the actual question of affiliation. We recognise that it would be helpful to include with the proposal to affiliate a suggested budget for how to fund our relationship to FGC. We do

not anticipate it changing significantly from what is currently spent at the Yearly Meeting level as we already send one observer to FGC Central Committee each year and would likely propose doing the same in the future.

AS 2017: Plenary III Minutes

Fourth, the committee presents the topic of possible affiliation with FGC. There will be occasion for discussion of this during the week. The committee has sensed a shift in the community's feeling about this, and this has been affirmed in the feedback the committee has received recently. This consideration is ongoing and monthly meetings are asked to review this matter and offer their responses to the committee by the end of this calendar year.

RepCom 2018: M&O Report to RepCom 2018

We encourage all Meetings to consider the additional information (found here: [Additional Information about FGC Affiliation and a Request for Monthly Meetings to Season](#)) that we circulated at the start of February 2018 regarding potential affiliation with Friends General Conference (FGC) and to come to Annual Session 2018 ready to discern the question of affiliation. We note that FGC is currently focusing its energies in areas we see are critical to the health of Pacific Yearly Meeting including racism, spiritual deepening, religious education, and how to become more welcoming Meetings.

RepCom 2018: Plenary Minutes

11. Ministry and Oversight Committee

Sally Kingsland, Co-Clerk of Ministry and Oversight, reported to us. [See Attachment 6]. ... She spoke to us about the discernment surrounding the possibility of affiliation with Friends General Conference, and encouraged meetings to be in touch with M&O to contribute to this discernment process. ...

In comments following, questions were raised about the discernment process regarding FGC affiliation. A number of specific requests for additional information were made. These have to do with our own process of discernment, and with structural, programmatic, and financial aspects of the organization. They included the following:

1. What was the M&O process in discerning the recommendation to affiliate?
2. Can meetings be provided with FGC budget summaries 2012 to the present?
3. How has laying down Stewardship affected: supporters [major donors lost], annual budget, potential bequests? What is the replacement program? Is it functioning?
4. Can we see a list of programs initiated and laid down in the past 10 years? What additional programs are being considered for laying down? Ministry on Racism, Bookstore, Quaker Press, Quaker Cloud?

5. FGC Yearly Meetings have not always been consulted before programs are initiated—has communication been improved, are there new policies?
6. FGC current structure has been called too large and unwieldy—is there a plan to change it?
7. What is the Beanite stance on affiliation?

Sally responded to some of these questions regarding the committee's process and the organization's condition. She encouraged us to see how affiliation might serve as a step toward improving and strengthening the FGC organization.

After worship, the Clerk noted that this question of affiliation with FGC has come to us before, and been with us for some time. The question has challenged us. We will continue to discern with patience as we seek a way forward, and will take the time needed in this process. A number of Friends then spoke on the issue, reflecting a diversity of views. Ministry and Oversight was asked to gather the fruits of this discussion and make them available to our meetings. We are reminded that M&O requests that comments on this topic be submitted to them by April 29th.

After RepCom 2018, M&O submitted the above list of questions to FGC and posted an update in the form of three web documents, including FGC's responses to the questions:

- [FGC Affiliation Consideration Updates](#)
- [FGC Responses to Pacific YM Questions April 2018](#)
- [M&O Process for Discerning Possible Affiliation with FGC since 2014](#)

AS 2018: M&O Report to AS 2018

Friends General Conference (FGC) Affiliation

So far we have summarized information from 18 monthly meetings and 12 were largely in favor of affiliating with remainder neutral or not reporting any sense of the meeting. Young Adult Friends are also in favor. We are following up to ensure that we include reports from all meetings. A full report will be posted at the M&O Annual Session reports page at least a week before annual session begins.

[Subsequently, M&O provided two additional informational documents in advance of AS 2018 which are Attachments 8 and 9 to the AS 2018 minutes. They are:

- [M&O Summary of Monthly Meeting Reflections on FGC Affiliation](#)
- [Estimating FGC Affiliation Costs 13 July 2018 \]](#)

AS 2018: Plenary III Minutes

5. First Reading of Decision/Discernment Items

The Clerk explained that this first reading of discernment items will be followed at the close of plenary by committee listening time outside the dining hall during which those wishing may share their thoughts concerning the proposals with the committees. ...

D. Ministry and Oversight: FGC Affiliation

Shan Cretin, Ministry and Oversight Committee, presented the committee's work on the matter of FGC affiliation, a step being proposed for our discernment this session. She highlighted a number of aspects of such affiliation that should help inform our decision. For M&O's summary of monthly meetings' reflections on FGC affiliation, see Attachment 8. For a report on estimating the costs of FGC affiliation see Attachment 9.

AS 2018: Plenary V Minutes

10. Friends General Conference Affiliation

Shan Cretin, Ministry and Oversight member, reported that a lively group of folks came to committee time. Friends questioned some changes in FGC over the years, but also acknowledged the value of the organization. Shan reported overhearing an observation that, in a time in which the world is becoming more divided, the act of reaching out and affiliating would feel like making a statement of wanting to be part of larger things. One question posed was what would happen to monthly meetings now separately affiliated with FGC, particularly what financial effects might result. Shan noted the difficulty in answering this, since it depends on choices made by monthly meetings. She outlined the three steps of decision before us., First, we need to decide if, as a body, we are led to affiliate with the FGC. Second, if we agree to affiliate, we also need to consider whether to affiliate with two or three representatives. Third, we need as well to decide what level of support we want to provide the organization if we affiliate.

The clerk opened the question to the gathered community and a number of Friends spoke. Some felt reservations and proposed those interested in affiliation could involve themselves independently. Some were concerned with the strain on finances and support of other affiliations. Some addressed diversity—whether affiliation would strengthen or reduce our own move to a more diverse community. Will the additional costs burden meetings of scarce resources? Are we reluctant to leave behind an identity of Beanite independence? Are we out of integrity in relying on FGC resources but not carrying part of the burden of cost and participation? In bringing this discernment period to a close, the Clerk noted a number of Friends who still carried concerns regarding this proposal, but who hadn't spoken. A further session with the committee was scheduled for later in the afternoon, and the item was carried forward to a subsequent agenda.

AS 2018: Plenary VIII Minutes

8. Friends General Conference Affiliation

Shan Cretin summarized where we are in regard to the question of whether to affiliate with FGC. Listening sessions have raised important questions, not all of which are answerable. She reminded us of the historical context—we have a long history of identity as a maverick meeting and this affiliation would be a significant step toward

another identity. Our discernment has moved away from simple “for” and “against” expressions. We are exploring different meanings this step might have. Regarding our resources, for example, some can see our wealth as a reason for holding to our self-sufficiency; others see it as a call to share and strengthen a larger community with it. A possible step is that we at this point take this question back to our monthly meetings for seasoning, since the financial elements have only recently become available. Diego tested support of the decision to affiliate with FGC, and seeing there were a number of Friends who felt unable to join in supporting such a step, he recommended returning the matter to monthly meetings. After further sharing of views, he put off the consideration of action until tomorrow, proposing that he and Shan should consult and bring a recommendation to the plenary then after consultation with concerned Friends over dinner. The meeting expressed support for this step.

AS 2018: Plenary IX (Closing Plenary) Minutes

2. Friends General Conference Affiliation

Diego spoke to us first on our process, and the responsibility we all have to listen carefully to the nature and depth of all voices as we search for our way forward. For those questioning affiliation, there is important work also—a discernment of the source of that resistance and its place in our search. A deep level of conscientious objection may call one to stand opposed to a general sense of a way forward felt by others; another sort of personal resistance may not have this weight, and joining in the support of a way forward sensed by larger community is right even with reservations. How will we now move on the matter before us? Can we use this powerful practice our community has developed as we search for unity?

In yesterday’s plenary we had asked Diego and Shan Cretin to consult and bring recommendations for a way forward in this matter, and Diego read parts of their prepared document. Then he asked us: What is God is calling us to do right now?

Sensing unity from our earlier considerations of this topic in plenaries and listening sessions, the Clerk asked for approval of affiliating with FGC. A number of Friends stood to indicate they could not join in this approval. Clerk asked if these Friends had new light to bring to the discernment or could articulate a deep and compelling sense that this was the wrong step. Friends expressed a number of reservations about this affiliation. One reason voiced for a stand against present affiliation was that since monthly meetings were not aware of previously unavailable information on costs of affiliating, we should not move ahead. Another concern raised was whether requirements for the number of PYM representatives to FGC would exceed our current policy guidelines. In addition, some fear was expressed that involvement with FGC would spread us too thin and limit energy and resources for continued involvement with other Quaker organizations, or within our own PYM community.

After further discernment, our clerk sensed the meeting was in support of affiliation and asked which Friends desired to be recorded as standing aside. The number who stood with continuing reservations that could not be set aside was sufficient to cause the Clerk to change his reading of the sense of the meeting. Noting he felt a strong movement within the yearly meeting to affiliate but also that there are a significant number still with reservations, he proposed that we continue to discern.

In considering a way forward in this discernment, our Clerk read again from the statement formulated in consultation with Shan Cretin last evening. The statement they brought to us included 1- a body of text which framed the question of affiliation, and 2- a number of draft minutes for us to consider. The first part of the material, framing the question, includes the following:

As we agreed in the last plenary, Shan and I met with Friends at supper time and received feedback. The previous plenary and listening sessions had been structured to hear questions and concerns, with inadequate time to hear from those who sense that it is time for PYM to affiliate. As we were asked to prepare a minute for this plenary, Shan and I considered what we have heard at this annual session and over the three years that Friends have been laboring with the question of whether Yearly Meeting is called to affiliate with FGC. We have heard from Friends that affiliating with FGC will bring PYM into integrity, recognizing that our yearly, quarterly, and monthly meetings as well as individual Friends make widespread use of FGC resources without sufficiently supporting FGC financially and organizationally.

In our State of the Society session it became clear that we are shrinking in numbers. Friends have stated that we desire greater diversity. We have benefited from FGC's resources with visits from Vanessa Julye over five years, Rachel Ernst Stahlhut's Spiritual Deepening interest group this year, and visits from other FGC staff. Affiliating with FGC is an opportunity to join other Friends in becoming stronger and having the support to grow and effectively welcome diversity.

Friends have also stated they are uncomfortable with the change of identity as a Beanite yearly meeting, and question how we will address the details of our financial commitment. Although we could continue with individuals voluntarily participating in FGC activities this limits who could afford to participate and loses the corporate nature of the relationship.

Our clerk read the draft minutes included in the document. He proposed an amended version of one of them, proposing that our Ministry and Oversight Committee ask monthly meetings to continue discernment in the coming year. In support of this, we approved the following:

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General Conference but did not reach unity at the 2018 sessions. Among the reasons Friends felt in support of this step was the significant benefit our meetings gain from FGC's resources and services, at little or no cost. At the same time, concerns about cost of affiliation were raised. We ask our Ministry and Oversight Committee to direct our monthly meetings to consider whether PYM should affiliate with FGC, and to ask themselves what their Meeting would be led to contribute should Pacific Yearly Meeting approve such affiliation. It is understood that responses from each monthly meeting will reflect its financial resources. Over the next year we ask monthly meetings and worship groups to consider the financial information available about affiliating with FGC regarding number of delegates and levels of additional contribution per member.

RepCom 2019: M&O Report to RepCom 2019

M&O continues to look at FGC affiliation as one possible step toward enhancing our own spiritual depth, our ability to be a voice in the world, and recognition that we are part of a larger world of Friends. We continue to gather information and ask monthly meetings to continue threshing this issue in preparation for discernment at annual session.

[M&O also submitted two additional informational documents related to FGC affiliation which were posted on the website and attached to the RepCom 2019 minutes but not presented or discussed in plenary at RepCom. They are:

- [Financial Implications of FGC Affiliation Revised 1 March 2019](#)
- [History of PYM Discernment on Affiliation with FGC 2014 to 2019](#)]

RepCom 2019: Plenary Minutes

20. Friends General Conference Central Committee Observer

The report was presented by FGC Central Committee Observer Heather Levien (Berkeley). ... Representatives are urged to recommend that their meetings review the "Financial Implications of FGC Affiliation" document on the PYM website.

[There was no further mention of FGC affiliation at RepCom 2019.]

After RepCom 2019, M&O renewed its request for meetings to further season the issue in light of additional information, and provided these documents:

- [New Document and Renewed Request for Further Seasoning on FGC Affiliation](#)
- [2019 FGC Talking Points](#)