

We begin with portions of the Meeting's 2008 Minute Against Discrimination.

"Friends believe that there is that of God in everyone. Early Friends' testimony of equality led them to reject discrimination on the basis of gender, and in later years, on the basis of race. In this spirit, and after years of discussion, worship sharing, and discernment, Wellesley Friends Meeting approved two minutes: the first welcomed gays and lesbians to the Meeting and agreed to care for those who had been married under the care of other Meetings; the second affirmed that the Meeting will joyfully take under its care the marriage of couples cleared for marriage "regardless of gender.""

"Because of our strong witness against discrimination, we are deeply disturbed by the personnel policy of Friends United Meeting which discriminates against gays and lesbians.... It is our experience that God calls us to service regardless of our sexual orientation. The injustice and cruelty of this policy has shaken us and spiritually wounded many in our own community whom we hold dear."

Our community remains in unity with this minute.

Our threshing sessions this fall have highlighted our deep love for the Wellesley Meeting Community and for each other, as well as our shared desire to respect the diverse witnesses held within our Meeting. The process has been blessed with a spirit of openness and forbearance. Listening deeply to one another as we speak about strongly held spiritual convictions has strengthened the fabric of our community, as we acknowledge and tenderly hold the ways in which we differ.

Some members of our Meeting find the relationship with FUM to be essential to our spiritual life, a life-giving connection to the world-wide community of Friends. Nonetheless, these same Friends are united in opposition to the personnel policy.

The NEYM withholding policy provided a tangible way to recognize that the personnel policy is deeply hurtful and falls short of the Quaker revelation that there is that of God in every individual, and including those who find love outside of marriage as defined by the FUM policy. For some, it is critical to continue to bear witness against the personnel policy in a material way.

Withholding has, at times, been misunderstood. It is not intended as financial leverage, but rather as a witness of Faith and Conscience. For many Wellesley Friends, loss of the withholding policy could force them to choose between their gay and lesbian family members and Friends testimonies, on the one hand, and their financial support of and engagement with NEYM.

Our Meeting bears wounds caused by schism. We mourn the loss of members and attenders who were unable to remain a part of our Meeting because of NEYM's relationship to FUM. We are deeply concerned that the termination of the withholding mechanism could result in the loss of more members of our faith community if no alternative solution is found. While individual Friends can choose not to support NEYM at all when they contribute to Wellesley Meeting, we are all diminished by the alienation of Wellesley Friends from the wider Quaker world.

We took faith during the era of the NEYM withholding policy that there was a commitment by NEYM to hold the FUM personnel policy in the Light and work unceasingly to reach a broader unity on that of God in all Friends, gay and straight. With the non-renewal of the withholding policy, we fear that we will lose the fundamental Truth that our LGBTQ brothers and sisters are created and loved as they are, and God does not expect or want them to be other than they were created to be.

We are united in supporting vigorous engagement with FUM about the personnel policy. We pray for a wider understanding throughout New England of the importance of a means to tangibly bear witness against the policy. We seek a way to accommodate this tangible witness, insufficient as it is.