

**Conclusions and Recommendations**  
**From the Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C'nR)**  
**Final Report to Canadian Yearly Meeting 2007**

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# **Conclusions and Recommendations**

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### **Final Report to Canadian Yearly Meeting 2007**

#### **1. Introduction:**

The Consultation and Renewal Working Group (hereafter referred to as C'nR) was formed by a minute of Canadian Yearly Meeting 2004 to conduct a listening project to examine and recommend ways to foster the corporate spiritual life and structure of Canadian Yearly Meeting (hereafter referred to as CYM). We began our work in January 2005 and this is our final report to CYM 2007. It should be read in conjunction with the following reports, available at [www.quaker.ca](http://www.quaker.ca) under the Consultation and Renewal Working Group:

*1) Summary of Interviews of Yearly Meeting Clerks and Representatives to Other Bodies*

*2) Reflections on the State of Society Reports 2003 & 2004*

*3) Responses to the C'nR Queries and Thoughts on Canadian Yearly Meeting Gleaned from the C'nR Consultations with Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups*

*4) Reflections on Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM) Structure*

*5) Friends and Electronic Media*

Reading these reports will help greatly with understanding the rationale for the recommendations made here.

The working group is Marilyn Manzer - clerk (Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting), Michael Miller (New Brunswick MM), Caroline Balderston Parry (Ottawa MM), David McKay (Toronto MM), Kwame Barko (Winnipeg Allowed Meeting), Lesley Robertson (Vernon MM) and Gale Wills (Vancouver Island MM).

We began by reviewing the State of the Society reports and reports of previous groups that looked at revitalization and restructuring. Then we conducted 46 interviews of clerks and past clerks of CYM committees and CYM representatives to outside bodies. Following this we met for two days and designed 8 queries to help frame our consultations with Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups. We met with 54 active Meetings and Worship Groups in CYM during the fall, winter and spring of 2005-06. We asked Meetings to tell us what is important to them and we did not necessarily focus on our queries. As Meetings are markedly different from one another and each of the C'nR members who visited had different styles, there was no attempt at consistency in these consultations. Some lasted for several sessions – some only for an hour. We also received a few individual submissions. We reminded those who have been feeling disconnected from the Yearly Meeting that Canadian Yearly Meeting is all of us – and we invited every member and attender of every Monthly Meeting and Worship Group to participate in this process. The means are as important as the results.

In June 2006 we met for three days to compile the results of our consultations and interviews and drafted an interim report and recommendations to CYM. We asked all Meetings and Worship Groups and Yearly Meeting Committees to seriously consider this report and respond to us by March 1, 2007. We met again in March and have written this final report, taking into consideration the many responses to the interim report, some of which were detailed and extensive.

We wish to express our thanks and appreciation to the following people who helped us in major ways with our work: Carol Bradley, Stephanie Deakin, Sarah Dick, Kathleen Hertzberg, Pamela Leach, Colleen MacKay, Keith McGowan, Edith Miller, Judith Monroe, Sabra Peil, Lynne Phillips, Linnea Rowlatt, Beverly Shepard, Margaret Slavin, Susan Stevenson, and also a special thank you to all those who helped set up our consultations with local meetings and helped with food and lodging for our C'nR meetings.

We also sincerely thank all those who attended our consultations. Many of you braved terrible winter weather and long drives and we very much appreciated the risks you took in your open and honest sharing in these group meetings. Furthermore we thank those who agreed to be interviewed about your service to Canadian Yearly Meeting and those who took the time to write to us with your thoughts and ideas. We have been deeply moved by the spirit-led participation of all of you in this process. Thank you.

Before entering into the body of this report, we wish to discuss a few ongoing unresolved tensions that became apparent during this process.

One of these is the question of whether CYM should be divided. We found little appetite for separation in the foreseeable future, with the exception of one Monthly Meeting that nevertheless seems open to remaining in CYM with some changes to our structure and process. If any Monthly Meeting or group of Monthly Meetings were in unity to leave CYM, it would be a local decision that CYM would have to accept. In both east and west, the thinking is that if Yearly Meeting could occur closer to home, there would be more local participation and local membership would increase. We heard many Friends say that environmental concerns and rising costs may eventually force the division of CYM. C'nR is suggesting that we prepare for that time by strengthening our regional meetings. We believe it is important to confront our contradictory views on this question.

Canadian Friends who participate in Yearly Meeting tend to be deeply rewarded on many levels. There is a strong love of the fellowship we experience and the opportunities to gather with Friends from across Canada. However, there also seems to be a collective wisdom that it makes financial and environmental sense to organize ourselves more in regions and do less on a national basis. This contradiction has been with us for many years and its resolution is growing in urgency. However, as concern for the environmental cost of travel grows, and more Friends are beginning to decline attending national gatherings and committees, there is a simultaneous unwillingness to strengthen the current regional structures so that they may take on more responsibilities. We are at a loss on how to make recommendations on this question. Our attempt to do so in our interim report brought many responses indicating that participation rates in regional gatherings are generally low and there is a strong reluctance to take on business at that level. At the same time, there are concerns that creating new regional bodies would only complicate our organization and add unnecessary cost. We think that this tension between needing less travel and the unwillingness to create more organizational support structures locally must be resolved. We simply cannot have it both ways.

Many Friends think that CYM has too few members to do all the activities and participate in all the organizations in which we are currently involved. There is some feeling that we are "stretched too thin". In our interim report we tried to address this by suggesting some areas where we might cut back. There was vigorous opposition to those suggestions. We think we have not addressed it now, and if it is a problem, it remains so. Our hope is that the Quaker Education Program that we recommended

would serve to revitalize Meetings and inspire new active membership.

Another tension arises from conflicting perceptions of the role of Yearly Meeting (including Representative Meeting), resulting in confusion and misunderstanding. Some Friends see Yearly Meeting as a central body with an overall responsibility to act on behalf of Canadian Friends, or to promote certain activities. Others see Canadian Yearly Meeting in session and Representative Meeting primarily as supportive to Yearly Meeting as a whole, and see local Meetings as the place where most of our social witness takes place. Canadian Friends Service Committee and our participation in social witness with other national faith communities are obvious exceptions, but housekeeping is regarded as the main role of CYM and Representative Meeting, with emphasis on providing the means for communication and mutual support among Meetings and individual Friends in Canada. Between these extremes is the role of having a common discipline, which some see as the primary purpose of a Yearly Meeting. There is never a clear line between centralized and decentralized organization. It is always various shades of gray. However, C'nR believes Canadian Yearly Meeting structure is based on the principle that the Monthly Meeting is the primary locus where Friends worship, practice corporate discipline, and give witness individually and corporately to their beliefs. We therefore think that neither Representative Meeting nor Yearly Meeting in session should initiate social action. Our recommendations rest on the understanding that Yearly Meeting is primarily a supportive mechanism. (For further clarification of these issues, we refer Friends to the pamphlet that we circulated to all Meetings and Worship Groups in 2005: *Fellowships, Conferences, and Associations: The Limits of the Liberal Quaker Reinvention of Meeting Polity* by Elizabeth Cazden, Beacon Hill Friends House Pamphlet 1001).

We found much confusion within our Yearly Meeting about the meaning and role of “testimonies” within the Society of Friends. There is tension currently about whether Friends’ concerns about environmental issues arise from a corporate testimony, and what this would mean. Many are uneasy about any testimony taking on the appearance of becoming a “top down” directive. We hope that development of a Quaker education program, such as we have recommended in this document, would foster discussion of testimonies and help us toward a common understanding.

We have made many recommendations in this report without including strategies for their implementation. This was deliberate, as we do not see implementation as our role and we have no means to do this. Nor did we have the time and background knowledge to provide cost estimates related to our recommendations. The Finance Committee gave us some estimates based on our interim report and we have received many good suggestions for implementation. We will be pleased to pass these on to the appropriate committees as the work progresses.

There are many recommendations in this report that, if implemented, will require changes to that part of our discipline known as *Organization and Procedure*. We did not point this out with every recommendation, but we ask Friends to be mindful of this as we proceed. If changes such as those we are recommending here are carried forward, it will be necessary to conduct a review and revision of *Organization and Procedure* as a whole.

It has been difficult for us to make recommendations for our Yearly Meeting that make sense for everyone. CYM is made up mainly of small meetings and worship groups where less than a dozen people regularly meet for worship. Only five meetings have average attendance over twenty. We are scattered over thousands of kilometers. There is a subtle but very important difference in the culture of

meetings and worship groups in different parts of the country. We realize that some of our recommendations will sound very different to a Monthly Meeting that is made up solely of widely-scattered worship groups than to a geographically compact meeting like Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton; or very different to a meeting in the far west than to a meeting in central Canada. We have tried to take this into consideration. Please forgive us where we have been unsuccessful.

We have found our work to be highly spirit-led and have come away from long and difficult meetings with a sense that God has inspired and directed our work. This is deeply rewarding for us and we give thanks for the corporate discernment in which all of CYM has engaged during our process.

The following two sections are a very brief overview of some of the highlights of the findings from our interviews and consultations.

## **2. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **A. CYM in Session**

Many Friends regard Yearly Meeting in session as absolutely central to building the spiritual community and “recharging” for the year ahead. However, the idea of Yearly Meeting holding sessions every two or three years rather than annually was often mentioned during our visits as a necessary change for reasons of cost and/or as a response to environmental concerns. There was universal agreement in the responses to the recommendation in our interim report that we continue to meet annually at the present time. But there were equally strong opinions expressed that we continue to wrestle with this question. Many felt that our concerns for the environmental costs of meeting annually would inevitably require us to change. So too would the cost and the increasing difficulty in finding suitable sites that meet our current criteria.

In our interim report we cited the lack of structure and participation in conducting business meetings on the part of regional meetings as a primary reason for recommending that Yearly Meeting continue to meet annually. In order to reduce the frequency of Yearly Meeting sessions, an alternative structure should be in place. The responses we received to our interim report indicate that this lack of regional capacity to assume more work probably will not change in the immediate future (see section B below). However, the question of meeting less frequently should remain with us.

A number of Friends expressed concern that our week-long Yearly Meeting session means that some Friends cannot attend for the full time because of work pressures and expense. Others felt that too much travel time and money are involved to go for a shorter time period. Many feel that fellowship is a very important part of CYM, as it is often the only time they have to be with a large group of Friends, and that fellowship is foundational to the spiritual essence of the Meeting for Worship for Business.

It is important that those attending part time feel as welcomed and involved as those who are there for the full time. Where cost is a factor, Friends are reminded that financial assistance is available from Monthly Meeting and CYM travel funds. For those who can manage it, camping and eating in the food co-op help to reduce costs.

We make no recommendation about changing the length of CYM in session.

**Recommendation A-1: that CYM should continue to meet annually as one unified Yearly Meeting at this time.**

**Recommendation A-2: that CYM consider the necessary changes to enable less frequent national meetings.**

## **B. Regionalization**

We believe that because of costs and environmental issues CYM will have to reduce its activities and/or conduct more activities at a regional level. However, at this time we do not have strong regional meetings that could take over any CYM business. Atlantic Friends Gathering (AFG) used to meet from a Friday to a Monday in spring and fall, but it was felt to be too much, since there is another fall weekend gathering with New England Friends. Now there is a one day meeting in the fall for Atlantic Friends to share current concerns in addition to the 3 day spring gathering. AFG has no structure for conducting business meetings. Ontario has three regional meetings – Yonge St. Half Yearly Meeting, Pelham Half Yearly Meeting, and the St. Lawrence Regional Gathering. All three have been experiencing declining participation and exhibit little energy. Western Half Yearly Meeting has about 100 people attending. It used to have higher attendance and do more business. It also has a huge distance problem. Before any more of the Yearly Meeting work could be regionalized, the regional gatherings would have to become prepared or we would need to add regional meetings to our structure for this purpose alone.

We recommended in our interim report that “Friends at the local levels seek ways in which the regional gatherings can be strengthened or supplemented, so as to be able to take on more functions . . .”. Based on our interviews and consultations we were hopeful that Friends were ready to move forward with regionalization. The responses we received to our recommendation told us that Canadian Friends remain very divided and exercised about this suggestion. There is significant support for moving toward a more regionally based model, made stronger by current concerns for the environmental and financial costs inherent in a national body. There were also a number of interesting ideas for ways in which we could move forward, such as developing alternative decision-making bodies at regional levels different in size and character from the existing gatherings and Half-yearly Meetings. Others felt that regional meetings could be a stepping stone to eventually having three yearly meetings. But alongside the positive responses were some very serious reservations about the willingness and ability of current regional gatherings and meetings to take on more responsibilities. There were concerns about developing a new regional structure that is seen as a costly and complicating layer in an already complicated organization. There were also concerns about asking Monthly Meetings to take on more work.

The nature of the debate is distressingly contradictory if not irreconcilable. It seems to be stalled in the same place it has been for many years – the desire to decentralize Yearly Meeting is log jammed by the

reluctance of many Friends to take on more work in their local and regional meetings. We have not heard any concrete suggestions about laying down any parts of the current work of Yearly Meeting. We see that virtually all the current work of CYM is necessary to sustain a spiritually vigorous yearly meeting. The way forward is not yet open to us and it seems that almost any recommendation we might make will be met with considerable resistance.

Nevertheless, we continue to believe that strong regional meetings are necessary if CYM is to be simplified and if Friends are to have the spiritual nurture and experiential learning opportunities that come from attendance at larger gatherings. Our suggestion at this time is that we work on devolving more of the work that Yearly Meeting currently does either to willing Monthly Meetings or to some other grouping of Friends who have the interest and who can work together in a reasonably small geographic area. This could be similar to the responsibility for the Quaker Pamphlet Series currently contracted by HMAC to the care of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting, or it could be some other arrangement so new to our experience that there are no current examples. We envision a grass-roots process hoping that there will be plenty of energy for the work when people who have an interest are encouraged to organize it. Examples of work that might be carried out this way are:

- Study the structure and workings of Australia Yearly Meeting and report their findings and ideas (see recommendation B-2)
- Study the structure and workings of North Pacific Yearly Meeting and report their findings and ideas
- Oversight, support and care for a Youth Secretary (see recommendation G-1)
- Management of CYM's Travelling Library
- Sharing ideas and developing curricula for children's programs (see Section G)
- Investigate the feasibility of reprinting Deborah Haight's pamphlet (see recommendation E-1)

This is a very incomplete list of possibilities.

We see an advantage to undertaking serious study of how other Yearly Meetings with similar problems of distance and size are managing. Perhaps such study will help us find clarity on a direction for CYM in future. We have found it informative and inspiring to look at the structure and organization of Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM) which also has to cope with small numbers over huge distances. AYM has strong regional meetings within it. Two descriptions of the structure of AYM can be found on the CYM website. We have also heard that it may be helpful to know more about Pacific Yearly Meeting's experience.

**Recommendation B-1: that CYM examine how Australia Yearly Meeting is organized, how well it works, and whether any well-functioning aspects of their structure could be models for CYM to deal with cost, distance, and associated vitality issues.**

**Recommendation B-2: that all Canadian Friends consider if they have a leading to take on some aspect of Yearly Meeting work. Thus groups of Friends in local areas with an interest or concern for a particular project or activity could assume responsibility. This could be through their Monthly Meeting, through a Half-Yearly Meeting or Regional Gathering, or some other grouping where they can work together easily. Accountability lines would need to be worked out for each project.**

## C. Diversity

*“ . . . We would support the general idea of deepening our understanding of the relationship between Quakerism and Christianity, both past and present, and of deepening our appreciation for the more progressive strands of contemporary Christianity. . . . Canadian Quakerism should be a place where both Christians and non-Christians will feel welcome and comfortable.*

*. . . we believe it would be appropriate to identify [Canadian] liberal Quakerism as part of a broader current of religious thought, which might be called Progressive Theism. Within the category of Progressive Theism, we would include, liberal Quakerism, Unitarianism, the progressive wing of Christianity, the progressive wing of Judaism, the more socially engaged wing of Neo-Paganism, progressives working in a variety of other faiths, and a number of movements which have crossed religious boundaries, such as women’s spirituality, eco-spirituality and process theology.*

*All of the above examples tend to display a number of common themes: a desire to be free of overly rigid and fundamentalist interpretations of the respective traditions, a desire for just and inclusive practices within the respective religious organizations, a desire for tolerance and respectful dialogue between world religions, and a desire to participate in the work of peace, social justice and sustainability in the broader world.*

*The personal experience of the Divine, the life of the meeting, and action in the wider world, are all deeply intertwined and a part of what we are.”*

*(from the Canadian Friends Service Committee's response to the C'nR interim report)*

On the whole Canadian Friends express much appreciation for diversity of thought and practice. There is a strong sense that diversity is our main strength and attraction, along with the practices of being “tolerant” and “non-judgmental.” Our lack of creeds and dogmas, and the opportunity for each of us to discover our own spiritual path are very important to Canadian Friends. There is a prevalent belief among Canadian Quakers that we are unique in our acceptance of diversity. Some individuals cite this as their reason for attending Quaker Meetings. Yet considerable diversity exists in other faith groups, including those we often associate with rigidity and authoritarian attitudes.

Many Friends are very concerned that these strong beliefs about the importance of our diversity may be causing us to lose a coherent identity, even to becoming an “anything goes” religion. (See responses to Query 2 in *Responses to the C'nR Queries and Thoughts on Canadian Yearly Meeting Gleaned from the C'nR Consultations with Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups*, available on the CYM web site.) C'nR shares this concern because an organization that has no common ground and shared focus will inevitably fall apart.

While most Canadian Friends believe that we should be open to diverse theologies and differing points of view, we tend not to engage with our diversity. We keep our points of view to ourselves because we fear unpleasant or hurtful responses when we share (often with justification). Christians feel silenced because it too often happens that others say (even in response to ministry in Meeting for Worship) that they are offended by Christian language. It appears that tension between Christian and non-Christian Friends has created difficulties in many local meetings and that the Christians are the ones leaving. Friends often stated that these problems are connected to the “baggage” we have brought with us from other faith traditions. Very few of us were born into Quaker families. Meanwhile we have serious



difficulties operating First Day Schools when parents cannot agree on what to teach and many parents are afraid of their children being indoctrinated with beliefs contrary to their own.

We were often reminded that Friends must be open-minded about language and not get stuck on the words – rather “love to feel where words come from” (Papunehang, a Delaware leader cited by John Woolman); listen in tongues; look for the constructively positive in the words and ideas of those who express their spirituality differently than ourselves. Friends who share their spirituality in non-Christian ways also should not be made to feel uncomfortable expressing their spiritual experience in Friends' meetings.

The responses to our section on *Diversity* in our interim report indicated a deep and fundamental division – a troubling dichotomy. Some respondents suggested that we should acknowledge our Christian nature openly and clearly, welcoming non-Christians, but making sure they understand that we are a basically Christian faith community. On the other hand there are those who see the Christian character of Quakerism only in relation to our past and see us moving beyond that to what is essentially a universalist community. 21st century Friends in Canada are dealing with a significant move away from being a purely Christian faith community to one of mind boggling diversity – very different from our roots.

**Recommendation C-1: that Canadian Friends openly recognize the Christian tradition of our Religious Society of Friends and its continuing nurture for many of our members and attenders. We ask local meetings and Yearly Meeting to find ways to engage more deeply with the Christian roots of Quakerism. This does not mean overlooking the current breadth of belief and conviction among those who are not Christian – both Christian and non-Christian beliefs have a part in fostering the loving community and inspirational diversity we now experience and value corporately.**

**Recommendation C-2: that local meetings and Yearly Meeting deliberately create opportunities for open dialogue about beliefs and expression of spirituality, thus enhancing our freedom to worship together and to minister to one another with a variety of spiritual language. We remind ourselves to “feel where words come from”.**

**Recommendation C-3: that our *Organization and Procedure* be revised so that it acknowledges our diversity, as described in C-1 above.**

## **D. Membership**

Membership is a divisive issue in some Monthly Meetings. The meaning of membership is often not communicated to attenders at Friends meetings. Sometimes membership is seen as a tool for “power” in decision-making, which can cause ‘outsider’ feelings on the part of participants who are not members. The membership process is ill-understood and often poorly done. We are afraid to ask the hard questions. Sometimes we ask those questions in a way that makes a prospective member feel tested and attacked. Sometimes we neglect to invite long-term attenders to consider membership.

Sometimes Meetings are willing to accept anyone who wishes into membership in the Religious Society of Friends. This is not consistent with the membership section in our CYM discipline. Our *Organization and Procedure* treats membership as a commitment, a serious undertaking, and an initiation process into a Quaker community with mutual accountability. The first sentence in the membership section states: “*Membership implies a desire to enter joyfully into the activities of the Society, to attend its Meetings for Worship and Business, and to give service through its committees and otherwise as the way opens, and to share financially in an appropriate degree.*” A condition of membership should be a willingness to engage faithfully in Quaker process, acknowledging that the Spirit often guides us in unexpected ways, and that Quaker process implies a willingness to put oneself under the corporate discipline of the Meeting. Putting oneself under the corporate discipline of the Meeting means several things in our opinion:

- willingness to abide by decisions of the Meeting,
- being familiar with and respecting the Discipline,
- being willing to put one’s leadings to the test of a clearness committee and in the case of concerns that lead us into public witness, to the discernment of the Meeting as a whole,
- being willing to resolve differences and conflicts using Quaker methods.

The membership issue raises questions as to our concept of Quaker identity. Who are we? How are we different from other religious organizations that are similar to us? How are we different from non-religious organizations with similar social testimonies? What is our relationship to Christianity today? Can or should we accept into membership people who openly reject our Christian heritage, or any form of theism? These questions are controversial and it is important that we discuss them.

Most Friends who responded to our interim report expressed support for our recommendations regarding membership. Other suggestions we heard were:

- Regular attenders who are interested in ongoing association should be encouraged and helped to attend Half-Yearly Meetings and Canadian Yearly Meeting in session.
- We must communicate better to new members that participation in Meeting for Worship for Business at the different levels is part of the package.
- This subject needs to be discussed at the Monthly Meeting/Worship Group level.
- The *Discipline* should be used regularly and be seen to be used.
- Membership information needs to be at hand. (We received wording for a membership pamphlet from one group.)
- We should invite long-term regular attenders to consider membership.
- We could expect to set up a clearness committee for any non-member who attends regularly for six months.

**Recommendation D-1: Friends are reminded to learn and use the Discipline. When an attender shows an interest in participating deeply in the life of the Meeting, Friends should invite them to consider membership and ask them to read our “*Organization and Procedure*”, as well as “*Christian Faith and Practice in the Society of Friends*” and “*Advices and Queries*”. Meetings should ensure that these three parts of our Discipline are well known and easily accessible to all Friends. “*Organization and Procedure*” is available online at [www.quaker.ca](http://www.quaker.ca).**

**Recommendation D-2:** that Yearly Meeting, Monthly Meetings and regional meetings hold open discussions about the meaning and the process of membership and how it relates to our Quaker identity.

**Recommendation D-3:** that Monthly Meetings assure that prospective members have an awareness of the variety of expressions of faith among Quakers. This should include an understanding of the Christian heritage and continuing tradition within the Religious Society of Friends.

## **E. Quaker Education**

C'nR found a surprising level of misinformation among Canadian Friends about the structure and activities of Canadian Yearly Meeting and about Quaker faith and practice. It is clear that the Yearly Meeting does not have adequate communication with many Monthly Meetings and especially with Worship Groups. It seems to us that this results in a lack of both understanding and enthusiasm for the work of CYM. We also suggest that the financial problems of the Yearly Meeting may be related to this lack of enthusiasm. Too few Friends have experienced either the spiritual community or the profound sense of a spirit-led Meeting for Worship for Business that can occur at Yearly Meeting. Very few have any understanding of the work of our various committees. We found that many Friends in local Meetings felt that Yearly Meeting was not highly relevant to them, although intellectually they knew it was important to be connected to other Quakers.

Many individuals experience much satisfaction with belonging to small worship groups and many such groups seem quite content with their relative isolation and smallness. Because of smallness, isolation and the scarcity of experienced Friends in many of these groups, there is a lack of knowledge about both Canadian Yearly Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends. Not enough of us have had opportunities to meet, listen to, or work with Friends who have a breadth of knowledge about and a long-time commitment to Quakerism.

C'nR is concerned that many worship groups have moved their centre away from Quakerism and some are deeply divided regarding traditional Quaker practice and testimonies. There is a prevalent lack of knowledge about corporate discernment. We wonder if the understanding of this foundational tenet of Quakerism – that we find and follow the will of God as a worshipping community – is slipping away from Canadian Friends. The differences between us (e.g. social activists vs. quietists, non-Christian or universalists vs. Christ-centred) seem less important and more solvable than the problems created when a significant number of us believe our individual spiritual practices take precedence over corporate spiritual life and discernment. The lack of understanding of “Gathered Meeting” and the disinterest in the Meeting for Worship for Business at any level raise questions about how we can continue to function as a Religious Society of Friends. In the words of one Monthly Meeting’s response to our interim report:

*“We have a RELIGIOUS Society of Friends, not ethical or secular. We work through corporate discernment and must not fall under the sway of the individualism that is so strong in the social context we live in. Meeting for Worship for Business is a worshipful process, potentially slow. We must honour this and not fall sway to secular ‘get it done’ mentality.”*

Because of the issues raised by our diversity and the lack of knowledge within the Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups about CYM and Friends' ways, and because we heard it requested over and over in our visits, we are recommending that CYM establish a program to foster learning about Quaker faith and practice and to communicate information about how Yearly Meetings serve Friends. The program should include dissemination of knowledge about such things as Quaker history and organization, the meaning of spiritual discernment among Friends, the resolving of conflicts within a Meeting, the role of Quaker testimony, and such practical matters as clerking and the recording of minutes. We suggest three structural elements to the program:

- 1) Locating, gathering and distribution of resources,
- 2) visiting, and
- 3) development of audio-visual resources.

We recommend giving the responsibility for this program to Home Mission and Advancement Committee (HMAC) where this kind of work was historically lodged. This has considerable implication for the need for change in HMAC. We address this in Section K below.

We recognize that CYM's Religious Education Committee has a travelling library and has been working on development of resources to deepen and nurture our spiritual life. These materials should form the basis of the resource base, which could be added to, as appropriate. The Quaker Education Program resource base should also include a list of Friends who have the Quaker background and knowledge, the skills, and the time to share these with the wider community, either through visiting or by being interviewed as part of an audio-visual program.

Our C'nR visits showed us that CYM is rich in experienced and knowledgeable Friends who could be encouraged to visit. There were many expressions of appreciation for the positive impacts on meetings, especially small ones, of the visits of travelling Friends. There was strong support across Yearly Meeting for our proposal for a visitation program in our interim report to CYM. We recommend that visits occur as much as possible within the region of the visitor, or in conjunction with other travel, to minimize travel costs. We believe that Friends who act as visitors in the Quaker Education Program need spiritual, organizational and financial support and that they should have a travelling companion. We think that HMAC, in conjunction with Half-Yearly Meetings and Regional Gatherings should co-ordinate visitors travelling within regions of CYM. If and when national travel is to occur, we think HMAC should co-ordinate it in consultation with Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel. We recommend that HMAC consult with Friends General Conference about the operation and success of their Traveling Ministries Program and ensure that a CYM program would be complementary, rather than duplicating efforts.

C'nR asks that HMAC develop education opportunities using new or emerging resources such as DVD's and web-based learning. We received a detailed proposal from the Houlton-Woodstock Worship Group of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting that CYM create a DVD/video Quaker visitation library of interviews and conversations with seasoned Friends who have been prepared by their association with Quakerism to share their understandings on key points of faith and practice. They recommend that this DVD/video library be organized into an adult education programme for use by Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups, households and individuals. We strongly support this idea and we ask HMAC to consider implementation of it as part of the Quaker Education Program. Its authors proposed it as a replacement for our idea of establishing a visitation program. Although we continue to support having a visitation program where Friends would visit other meetings and worship groups, we

see this DVD/video library as an invaluable resource that has the potential to reach many more Friends than a person-to-person visit at much less financial and environmental cost. Nevertheless, we do not see electronic resources replacing the invaluable learning that happens when Friends are meeting together for worship and fellowship and can interact with each other face to face.

C'nR firmly believes that co-ordination of this Quaker Education Program should not be left to volunteers. It needs the consistency and dedicated commitment of a part-time staff person who would co-ordinate the work of volunteers and ensure that they have the support and resources they need. Our recommendation for Friends to visit as part of a Quaker Education Program is not meant to replace Friends' practice of travelling under a concern or travelling in the ministry.

**Recommendation E-1:** that Canadian Yearly Meeting consider reprinting Deborah Haight's pamphlet "Meeting" and distributing it through the Canadian Friend. We also suggest making it available on the CYM website. We ask Meetings to use this pamphlet to explore together the meaning of their Quaker experience.

**Recommendation E-2:** that Canadian Yearly Meeting establish a Quaker Education Program for adults about Quaker faith and practice and about Canadian Yearly Meeting, and that Home Mission and Advancement Committee have oversight of this program.

**Recommendation E-3:** that the Quaker Education Program include development of a comprehensive resource base for use by Monthly Meetings, worship groups, and individuals. This resource base would contain study programs and audio-visual media developed by Canadian Yearly Meeting and other Quaker bodies, a list of Friends who could share their time and knowledge in various ways (including visiting), and logistical information for Friends who travel for the Program.

**Recommendation E-4:** that CYM establish a Visitation Program where experienced and knowledgeable Friends will visit Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups. The objective of these visits will be to increase Friends' understanding of Quaker faith and practice, including our practice of corporate discernment, approaches to conflict in meetings, and the organization and activities of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

**Recommendation E-5:** that a Quaker Education Program co-ordinator be hired to provide administrative support, co-ordinate visitor recruitment, and organize and maintain the necessary supporting resources for the program.

**Recommendation E-6:** that CYM ask its finance and fund-raising committees to set up a way of financing this Quaker Education Program so that individuals and Monthly Meetings can donate to it specifically.

## F. Environmental Concerns

Considering the major role that environmental issues play in our world today C'nR was surprised at the relatively small attention that it received in our consults. We realize that the query regarding the environment was placed near the end of our queries and many groups did not discuss it. When the subject arose it was with reference to Friends' awareness of their environmental impact when traveling on Friends' business.

The negative-sounding recommendations in our interim report inspired many Friends to strongly express the deeply spiritual aspect of their concern for the environment. Following is a quotation from one Meeting that captures the flavor of these responses:

*"We are clear that care for the planet is not just a personal witness, but a concern arising from our testimonies of simplicity, justice, integrity and unity. . . . It is one of the most pressing issues of our time, with particular ramifications for our younger generations and vulnerable populations. What is not clear to us, is whether some CYM entity needs to be created in order to encourage this process and to advocate for action . . . Is there a spiritual and Quakerly reason for participation in a specifically Quaker environmental group, rather than to put this same energy into support for existing secular environmental groups?"*

The responses to our interim report indicated both agreement and disagreement with the recommendation that CYM withdraw membership from Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW). Both Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) and Quaker Ecology Action Network (QEAN) support our membership in QEW, either through CYM itself or through CFSC. CFSC is already involved in ecological and environmental work through the ecumenical partnerships of which CYM is a member, particularly the Canadian Council of Churches and KAIROS.

**Recommendation F-1: that the Quaker Ecology Action Network continue in its present form and that if it feels need for more structure, it explore this with Canadian Friends Service Committee.**

**Recommendation F-2: that CYM examine the nature of our relationship with Quaker Earthcare Witness and discern whether to retain membership, and if so, whether it is more effective for CYM or CFSC to be the member. CYM might ask QEAN and CFSC to undertake this discernment.**

## G. Young Friends

CYM is critically important to the development of many Canadian Young Friends. C'nR heard loud and clear that it is necessary for Young Friends and children to meet each other at various types of gatherings. For many it is the only place where they feel they can find like-minded Friends and support for their distinctive witness. Older Young Friends often conduct powerful business meetings at these gatherings. These youth do get good experience of Quaker process. Yet we heard grave concerns in our interviews with past clerks of Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting (CYFYM) about the difficulties experienced by CYFYM.

We must address the question of whether there would be the critical mass of Young Friends needed to sustain a spiritual community of Young Friends if Yearly Meeting met less frequently. Young Friends of all ages crave community with one another. Many of them connect at Camp NeeKauNis. But most from east and west don't ever get there. Some participate in half-yearly meetings or regional gatherings, but many who are in isolated meetings or worship groups do not have easy access to regional meetings. Both Young Friends and older Friends need to do more to rectify this. As a Yearly Meeting we need to make sure that there are opportunities for Young Friends gatherings, regardless of the frequency of Yearly Meeting sessions or the strength of regional gatherings.

a) Young Teen Friends and Young Adult Friends

Subsequent to both our interview process and the development of our interim report, we formally met with Young Friends and Young Adult Friends during Yearly Meeting sessions in 2006. They had some clear messages. CYM support for Young Friends gatherings is unequivocally essential. This includes financial support for Young Friends to attend Yearly Meeting, and to organize regional gatherings including, but not limited to use of Camp NeeKauNis. Support for attending Young Friends gatherings at FGC was also mentioned. In Ontario, some Young Friends have been interested in gathering across the Half-yearly and regional gathering lines, i.e. all of Ontario. While there was some understanding of the difficulties, there was longing to bring in others from east and west. Numbers are important.

We heard that having a Young Friends Coordinator would be helpful. As one put it, “could we have an equivalent of Kerry for Young Friends?” This idea met with more enthusiasm than our recommendation (in our interim report) to release a Young Friend to travel. We also heard that Young Friends currently underutilize existing resources (primarily communication and mentoring); that CYFYM is taking steps to improve communication and continuity problems; and that greater interaction with older Friends at Yearly Meeting and in Monthly Meetings would be good.

Responses to the Young Friends section of our interim report were generally enthusiastic. Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups recognize the need for Young Friends to meet on a face to face basis as much as possible, and they were supportive of the idea of a traveling Young Friend. C'nR believes that there is broad acceptance of the need to more fully support Young Friends and that this will translate into financial support.

We are recommending the employment of a part-time (one or two days per week) Youth Secretary, an experienced young adult Friend, whose job it would be to provide support, continuity and encouragement to Young Friends as they organize their affairs. The development of a job description and budget for this position could be the responsibility of CYFYM in consultation with relevant Yearly Meeting committees and with the liaison person (Recommendation G-3). We suggest consultation with FGC about their experience of establishing a Youth Ministry position. We imagine that our Youth Secretary might do some travelling, but not in the sense of travelling in the ministry – the main focus would be to foster communication.

**Recommendation G-1: that CYM employ a Youth Secretary on a part time basis. This person could be chosen by a hiring committee established jointly by Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee and Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting. We suggest that applicants for the**

**position supply a recommendation from a Monthly Meeting, together with an indication of the Monthly Meeting's willingness to assume responsibility as the "employing committee" according to Yearly Meeting's Personnel Policy. (This includes arranging for the supervision, spiritual nurture and care for the individual in the position.)**

**Recommendation G-2: that CYM encourage and support more gatherings of Young Friends through 1) greater use of Camp NeeKauNis, 2) making available other venues that are practical for Young Friends to use, 3) provision of travel funds and 4) better use of current communication networks.**

**Recommendation G-3: that CYM appoint an experienced Friend to act as liaison between CYM and Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting. The role could include mentoring as needed.**

#### b) Children's Programs

C'nR is concerned that few children are growing up in our Meetings. One child told us that "*Quakerism is not the best kid-suited religion.*" We wonder whether this may be related to our problems with diversity. We heard that sometimes parents do not trust one another to operate a First Day School because of fears that children would be indoctrinated with teachings that parents oppose. We learned in our review of State of Society Reports that only 3-5 Meetings out of 23 were pleased or somewhat satisfied with their First Day School. We heard of the frustration of many Friends as they try to provide a children's program when there is erratic attendance and little help available to run the programs.

Perhaps the poor attendance of children is mainly cultural. Families do much less together than in former times. Often families are so busy in so many different directions that they may choose to spend their time together doing non-Quaker activities. Many members and attenders, both partnered and single, are the only ones in their family who attend Friends' Meeting. Does that make it more difficult to bring children to Meeting? We are most uncomfortable with the idea that Quakerism is a religion only for adults or mature people, as was mentioned in some of our visits.

Some responses to our interim report expressed disappointment that we had no recommendations regarding children's programs, especially since we had recommended laying down the Religious Education Committee. The reason for this omission is that neither the lack of families with children in our meetings or the development of programs to attract them were deeply considered in our consultations. Our only thought regarding this is that a Monthly Meeting who has this concern be asked to collect ideas, share them broadly, and perhaps take on the development of children's programming. (See the end of Section B.) This still begs the question of how we encourage parents to bring their children to Quaker Meetings.

We visited with the children and their adult leaders at Yearly Meeting 2006. As for older Young Friends, Yearly Meeting is an important place for these children, many of whom have no other children their age in their home meetings and are often bored. We heard great enthusiasm for the relative freedom and just plain fun that these young people experience at Yearly Meeting. We heard some grumps about the food and requests for more variety in the program.



Responses to our interim report led us to reconsider our recommendation regarding responsibility for the children's program at Yearly Meeting sessions. We agree that the Program Committee should not be asked to carry this responsibility. In the past the responsibility has in practical ways been largely carried by one individual who does the planning, recruiting, and assists with implementation. We believe that this arrangement has been generally satisfactory, except that responsibility for recruiting this person has been a source of frustration for the Religious Education Committee. We think that our regular nominations process would be a good way of finding a Children's Program Coordinator who resides in the region (east, west, or central) where Yearly Meeting session will occur. The Children's program co-ordinator should be an ex officio member of, and accountable to, the Yearly Meeting Programme Committee.

**Recommendation G-4: that each year, through the regular nominations process, CYM name a Children's Program Coordinator who resides in the region of the upcoming annual sessions. The Coordinator would become an ex officio member of the YM Program Committee and be accountable through that Committee.**

## **H. Electronic communication**

It is now a reality that CYM relies on the use of e-media. In the last 15 years it has come into general use, and has greatly affected how we operate. There are both practical and philosophical concerns about electronic communication. With respect to the practical, we have the problem of access to our process for those not on line and a concern that we are creating a two-tiered society in the Religious Society of Friends – those who are on email and those who aren't. Those who aren't tend to be disadvantaged in their participation. There is also a serious concern within CYM about the misuse of electronic communication. We need guidelines, advices, counsel, and wisdom regarding the use of email, websites and teleconferencing.

There are also spiritual concerns. Can email be used for discernment? Can we have spiritual communion without face-to-face communication? We seem to have reached a stage where going back to non-use of electronic media to manage our church affairs is not an option. Yet we seem to be unclear about the limitations of its use and its potential effect on our relationships with each other as Friends.

While electronic communications would logically make archiving our records easier, there seems to be a decrease in the forwarding of materials to the archives. Friends from all decision-making bodies within our Yearly Meeting are reminded that documentation of our considerations is a record of our exercises in the truth. We need to decide which of our electronic communications are appropriate to forward to the archives, and how we go about doing this.

**Recommendation H-1: that CYM thoroughly thrash the subject of electronic communication and agree on written guidelines or protocols regarding the use of email, websites, web-based learning and teleconferencing.**

**Recommendation H-2: that consideration be given by all decision-making bodies within CYM to methods of archiving records originating in an electronic medium.**

## **I. Finances:**

Despite the importance of the ministry of money, Friends in Canada know little about CYM finances and the subject of money was hardly mentioned in our consultations. Some of the responses to our interim report pointed out that we said surprisingly little about CYM finances, considering that it has been a major issue for the Yearly Meeting for a number of years now. In responding to our report, several Friends and Meetings suggested solutions to CYM's financial difficulties.

C'nR sees CYM's financial issues as related strongly to the lack of knowledge of, and interest in, CYM by so many Friends in Canada. Therefore, our major recommendations regarding the problems with money are the ones in other sections of the report. We believe, if these recommendations are implemented and Canadian Friends become more informed and excited about Quakers working together, that CYM's financial problems will be resolved. Also, we note that when money is raised for specific purposes, there seem to be fewer problems, for example the outpouring of funds for the World Gathering of Young Friends in 2005. We are therefore optimistic about support for our proposed Quaker education program and for a Youth Secretary.

C'nR wishes to remind Friends that there is a strong connection between our spiritual health and the way we spend our money. There is a great deal of tension when thinking or talking about money in our culture and also within the Religious Society of Friends. We ask Friends to reflect on whether their dedication of personal resources to the Religious Society of Friends is in keeping with their spiritual commitment.

**Recommendation I-1: that representatives to Representative Meeting and Yearly Meeting be sure to report specifically on CYM finances to their Monthly Meetings, and that Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups find ways to discuss CYM finances.**

**Recommendation I-2: that Finance Committee continue to seek presentation formats that are concise, clear, and as easy as possible for Friends to understand, bearing in mind that many of us are financially illiterate.**

## **J. Conflict Within Meetings**

C'nR has become aware of deeply dividing conflicts in Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups which wound our faith community at all levels. The bottom-up structure of Canadian Yearly Meeting creates the situation where there is no authority for resolving disputes within Monthly Meetings. Because of this and the usual huge distance to the next Monthly Meeting or Worship Group, there is no place for a Friend in conflict with their local meeting to go and still remain an active Quaker. Such Friends are no

longer able to obtain traveling minutes, membership for their children, marriages, memorial meetings, etc. Who helps these meetings find their way back to peace and unity? How do we deal with issues where arrogance and need for power play a major role? The existence of conflict is a serious issue within Canadian Yearly Meeting and may be connected with the widespread lack of understanding of Quaker ways.

**Recommendation J-1: that responsibility rest with Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel for finding resources and assistance for meetings in conflict.**

**Recommendation J-2: that the Quaker Education Program recommended above (see section E) include a strong section on Friends' approach to addressing conflicts in the Monthly Meeting or Worship Group.**

**Recommendation J-3: that Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel consider holding a pre-CYM workshop on Friends ways of dealing with conflict in our Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups that could later be conducted at regional gatherings or in Monthly Meetings.**

## **K. CYM Structure**

Many of our recommendations in this section were primarily influenced by the 46 interviews we held with clerks and Friends who voluntarily do the work of CYM. Collectively these individuals represent a source of detailed knowledge of the inner workings of Yearly Meeting, both its strengths and its weaknesses. These inner workings are mostly invisible to the larger body of Friends, which is why we took the unprecedented step of conducting formal interviews.

We also heard comments about our committee structure during our visits. It was often stated during our consultations that CYM made too many demands on Monthly Meetings and that Yearly Meeting was trying to do too much. But it is interesting that the sense of too much work and too great a load did not come from those who had carried the work. We suspect that the underlying issues are probably financial and environment costs and the potential for drain on the energy and resources of the Monthly Meetings. These issues are very important and deserve our continued attention.

We received feedback on the recommendations about structure in our interim report from the Yearly Meeting committees, and some very thoughtful and helpful responses from individuals and Meetings, many of whom could draw on long experience in Yearly Meeting work. The recommendations below reflect this input. Several respondents pointed out that our recommendations do not 'simplify' Yearly Meeting, contrary to the original title of this section. On the whole, they are quite right. In effect, what we are suggesting is a re-organization of some of our committees and a redistribution of the work currently carried out. We do this in the belief that it will provide a better framework for our volunteers to do their work and for solving some of the administrative problems that have troubled us. There is a foundation of Yearly Meeting work that is essential to provide support for the spiritual community building and social witness activities of Friends in their Monthly Meetings. Although simplifying Yearly Meeting is a concern of many, we heard no substantive suggestions of practical ways to reduce

or simplify this work. As much as we yearn for a simpler structure, we need to maintain that foundation of support until and unless we are led to unity on a different way to accomplish it. (See also the discussion in Section B.)

a) Records Committee:

We heard general agreement that change to this committee would be helpful. The current Records Committee sent us a good outline for moving forward. Our rationale for suggesting a Board structure was strengthened by several of the suggestions made: a need for longer terms of service, the need for expertise that may not be found within the ranks of Canadian Friends, the need for this work to remain geographically centred in proximity to the archives. These needs cannot be met using the same criteria that exist for Yearly Meeting committees.

There were grave reservations about placing responsibility for our records and archives with the Trustees, including from the Trustees themselves. The alternative that made sense to us was to place the line of accountability through Representative Meeting as is the case with other CYM administrative committees. This of course, would not preclude the new Board consulting with the Trustees as needed.

We also heard that the Canadian Friends Historical Association has in many ways acted as a 'Friends of the archives' group. We hope that this will continue to meet the needs for hands on work in the archives.

**Recommendation K-1: that the Records Committee be laid down and that a new Board of Records and Archives be established, reporting to Yearly Meeting through Representative Meeting.**

**Recommendation K-2: that the size and membership of the Board of Records and Archives be recommended to Yearly Meeting by the Nominating Committee in consultation with the Trustees and the current Records Committee. We suggest that the members of this Board reside within reasonable travel distance from Pickering College; that the term of office for members be no less than five years, renewable as appropriate; and that persons who are not Friends but have expertise in archival work be eligible to serve (with the exception of the position of clerk), filling no more than one third of the positions.**

b) Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee

We found that the mandate of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee was not clear, that the work of this committee has changed significantly over the years, and that there is considerable dissatisfaction with its current structure and role. The responses to our interim report pointed out that the current committee provides information to the Finance and Nominating Committees regarding the expenses of our representatives and possible candidates for serving on ecumenical and interfaith bodies. This is helpful, but inserts an added layer into this sharing of information and in itself does not seem to us sufficient reason to maintain a national committee.

We are aware from our review of State of Society Reports, that there is considerable ecumenical and interfaith work being carried out by Friends in their Monthly Meetings. CFSC is also heavily involved with such work. Our Yearly Meeting representatives to the various Quaker and wider bodies bring their reports and agenda items directly to Yearly Meeting and while we heard of need for support, it was not of the kind that could be delivered by a national committee. This work is proceeding well without need for any additional structure. We remain convinced that it is time to lay this committee down.

**Recommendation K-3: that Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee be laid down.**

**c) Religious Education and Home Mission and Advancement Committees:**

The responsibilities of Home Mission and Advancement (HMAC) and the Religious Education (RE) Committees have been a matter of some debate for many years and we were aware of the difficulties that were being experienced by both committees. We had much positive feedback, from Friends generally and from RE Committee and HMAC, about the recommendations in our interim report regarding these committees. HMAC in particular saw the suggested changes as allowing them to return to their original purpose of nurturing Quakerism in Canada.

**Recommendation K-4: that Religious Education Committee be laid down.**

**Recommendation K-5: that the responsibility for religious education be given back to Home Mission and Advancement Committee.**

**Recommendation K-6: that HMAC be relieved of the responsibility for the Canadian Friend, the Quaker Pamphlet Series and oversight of the CYM web page. We recommend that a new committee be struck to take responsibility for these programs (see recommendation K-7 below).**

We are uncertain as to the appropriate committee through which the Quaker Book Service would report. At present it is under the care of Ottawa Monthly Meeting through agreement with HMAC. This is working well and ties in with the proposed Quaker Education program. We suggest that HMAC consider this question and make a recommendation.

**d) Publications and Communications Committee:**

We originally thought that the Canadian Friend, the Pamphlet Series and the Book Service could be brought under a Board of Publications. We returned to the idea of a committee structure similar to all other Yearly Meeting committees when we recognized that the criteria we used for the board structure for the archives did not apply here.

We also heard the suggestion that communications is a burgeoning area of opportunity as well as concern, and that it requires much more attention than HMAC can currently give. Indicative of its increasing importance are the many suggestions in the responses we received that we make greater use

of electronic media for disseminating information, including the possibility of publishing the Canadian Friend online and reviving *Happening Now*, a newsletter providing current information prepared by the YM office in past years. The serious concerns about our use of electronic media are discussed in our background report entitled “*Summary of Interviews of Yearly Meeting Clerks and Representatives to Other Bodies*,” and the subsequent discussion paper “*Friends and Electronic Media*,” both of which are posted on the CYM website. The need for guidelines is widely accepted and this proposed committee could provide coordination to ensure that it happens in a consistent and useful way.

This proposed new committee would be acting in a period of immense change in the ways people communicate in our culture. We anticipate that it will need to evolve from the place where Friends are now to one where we can confidently use appropriate new technology to enhance our ability to communicate without compromising our spiritual and communal principles and beliefs. The transition will be significant and will need careful discernment.

**Recommendation K-7: that CYM establish a Publications and Communications Committee to oversee the Canadian Friend, the Canadian Quaker Pamphlet Series, and the CYM website. This committee would also work to develop our understanding and use of emerging technologies as they may meet Friends’ needs for communication and Quaker education.**

e) Position of General Secretary:

With some exceptions, we heard little support for re-instating the position of general secretary, which has been vacant since 1997. There was some concern that we not rule out filling this position in future. However there was support for increasing the amount of administrative support in the Yearly Meeting office. We believe that staff support for the Quaker Education Program and for Young Friends will be best achieved if we employ individuals with the specific experience and skills needed for these two areas of work. (See also sections E, G, and I.)

**Recommendation K-8: that CYM lay down the position of general secretary. This does not imply that this position could not be re-instated in future if needed.**

If there is unity on changes to our committees such as those outlined above, we think it would be helpful if either Yearly Meeting or Representative Meeting ask all these committees to propose terms of reference and recommend the optimal size for the committee’s membership.

## **L. Representation on Wider Bodies**

Canadian Yearly Meeting has failed to instill knowledge and excitement among Canadian Friends about our participation in wider Quaker and other religious bodies. Those who have had the privilege of hearing first hand from our representatives are generally enthusiastic about our involvement, but these are very few because Yearly Meeting does not have a satisfactory reporting system for these representatives. Monthly Meetings do not often have an opportunity to hear reports from such

representatives in person.

In our interim report to Yearly Meeting in 2006, C`nR recommended that CYM withdraw membership in Friends General Conference (FGC) and Friends United Meeting (FUM) because we heard Friends say that CYM is too small an organization to adequately maintain our representation in all the religious organizations of which we are currently members. We heard from some, including the representatives themselves, that it might be better to do less and do it well.

However, at Yearly Meeting session in 2006, great opposition was expressed to the recommendations to withdraw from these organizations. Friends gave many testimonials about the valuable service and information that such membership provides to CYM and its Monthly Meetings. This opposition may have kindled more interest on the part of Canadian Friends in these organizations than was obvious before Yearly Meeting. In the responses to our Interim Report we have heard both agreement and strong opposition with our recommendation to withdraw from FGC and FUM. We are now recommending that we retain our membership because of the enthusiasm expressed by Friends working with these organizations and the benefits CYM receives. However since we heard it strongly expressed that CYM should withdraw from FGC and FUM, we suggest that our membership be re-evaluated in a few years.

**Recommendation L-1: that we maintain our membership in Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends General Conference, and Friends United Meeting.**

We were unsure about whether CYM should withdraw its membership in the World Council of Churches because there would be no opportunity to change our minds and rejoin later. Therefore we recommend CYM give this further thought.

**Recommendation L-2: that CYM examine the appropriateness of our participation in the World Council of Churches.**

## **M. Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel**

Yearly Meeting of Ministry and Counsel (YMM&C) is a parallel meeting to Canadian Yearly Meeting and as such is not accountable to Yearly Meeting. Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel (Continuing Meeting) is the body appointed by YMM&C to continue its work between Yearly Meeting sessions in similar ways as Representative Meeting does for Yearly Meeting. Continuing Meeting reports to YMM&C and its clerk also acts as clerk for YMM&C. Some Friends have expressed concern over the independent nature and confidentiality of minutes of both YMM&C and Continuing Meeting. This structure has evolved from the meetings of elders originating in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to oversee the spiritual well-being of Meetings. The independent nature of the Meetings of Ministers and Elders, while longstanding, has been controversial in more recent times. Challenges to tradition have always been difficult among Friends and we must practice careful discernment before making any

change here.

Yearly Meeting of Ministry and Counsel is the body of CYM that has responsibility for the spiritual undergirding of Canadian Yearly Meeting. This body lacks consistency in membership and continuity because it is comprised only of those members of local Meetings of Ministry and Counsel or their appointees who are present at Yearly Meeting and meets only during the time of Yearly Meeting sessions. Thus the responsibility for carrying out the work of YMM&C falls to Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel. C'nR believes it is important that we all feel supported and nurtured by Continuing Meeting and that Continuing Meeting members feel supported by Canadian Friends. This has not always been the case.

We interviewed three past clerks of Continuing Meeting. We noted in the summary of these interviews that *“because of the nature of our questions, the responses tend heavily toward the problematic. This means that the report appears to be heavily critical and negative. It overlooks the very good and soulful work that has been carried out by the many Friends who have served on Continuing Meeting over the years.”* We would like to acknowledge the many worthwhile and faithful works done by the overburdened Continuing Meeting through the years and remember that our “findings” draw our attention only to the concerns and problems that have existed, some of them as far back as the origins of Continuing Meeting in CYM.

In our interviews we became aware of debilitating problems for the functioning of Continuing Meeting. The mandate to care for Yearly Meeting, Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups with spiritual nurture has been difficult and often impossible. We heard that the practice of CYM handing over difficult issues to Continuing Meeting has severely interfered with its ability to carry out its original mandate and that this has been a persistent problem over the years. We wonder if this is partly why Continuing Meeting has had major problems with continuity of, and commitment from, its members. The nominations procedure for Continuing Meeting has not worked well, as the ad hoc nature of the process during Yearly Meeting in session leaves little time for careful recruitment, consultation with Monthly Meetings of Ministry and Counsel, and proper discernment.

In our interim report we recommended that Continuing Meeting become a standing committee of CYM. Based on feedback to this suggestion, we think it is advisable to wait before considering such a change. Implementation of recommendations M-1 and M-3 (see below) might enable Continuing Meeting to be more effective in its stated purpose. We heard general agreement that changes to the nominations process for Continuing Meeting would be helpful.

Our *Organization and Procedure* states that both YMM&C and Continuing Meeting “should be in close communication with local Meetings of Ministry and Counsel” and that a responsibility of Continuing Meeting is to “provide care and support for all Meetings for Worship across Canada”. We question whether this mandate is workable. We ask YMM&C and Continuing Meeting to look at this and consider the feasibility of providing care and support for local meetings. We also question the feasibility of Continuing Meeting providing direct support to individuals when their Monthly Meeting's Ministry and Counsel is not available or helpful to them. We suggest that CMM&C and the individual try to find resources closer to home.

We believe Continuing Meeting should continue to co-ordinate the development and sharing of the annual State of the Society reports. However we think these reports need revitalization so that they



encourage action on the part of the Meetings. Section 7.8 of CYM's *Organization and Procedure* gives a detailed description of the process and content of State of the Society Reports. If this process were more closely followed, Meetings would be undertaking a careful self-examination annually.

**Recommendation M-1:** that CYM Nominating Committee be responsible for submitting nominations for Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel to Yearly Meeting of Ministry & Counsel, and that Monthly Meetings and their Meetings of Ministry and Counsel be asked to submit names to CYM Nominating Committee for their discernment.

**Recommendation M-2:** that Yearly Meeting of Ministry & Counsel and Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel examine the descriptions of their purpose and function in CYM's *Organization and Procedure* to discern whether these descriptions are consistent with current needs and practices and whether either the practices or the Discipline need revision.

**Recommendation M-3:** that, when difficult issues arise that do not fall within the mandate of a standing committee, CYM establish ad hoc committees to work on them. Continuing Meeting may be asked to consult with these committees where appropriate.

**Recommendation M-4:** that Half-Yearly and Regional Meetings be encouraged to establish strong Meetings of Ministry and Counsel that would respond to the needs of Monthly Meetings and individuals when the Monthly Meeting is unable to do so. The long-term objective is that Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel could be relieved of the responsibility for responding to local issues, while still acting in a nurturing role for local Meetings of Ministry and Counsel.

**Recommendation M-5:** that the National Listeners Program be evaluated by Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel.

**Recommendation M-6:** that, in three years time, CYM, Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel and Yearly Meeting of Ministry & Counsel consider the wisdom of having Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel function as a standing committee of CYM, rather than as a parallel meeting.

**Recommendation M-7:** that Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel, with the help of Monthly Meetings, revitalize the state of society reports by adhering to the process for preparing these reports as described in section 7.8 of CYM's *Organization and Procedure*. Meetings should be expected to note their strengths and also to address any difficult issues, including ideas of how they intend to approach resolving them. This could be done through use of queries.

## **N. Representative Meeting**

In our interviews with clerks, we heard many positive things about the work and role of Representative Meeting. Many found participating in Representative Meeting a deeply spiritual experience. The clerks

brought to our attention that this is the only place within Yearly Meeting where all Monthly Meetings come together to make decisions between sessions of Yearly Meeting, that it provides continuity and an overview of what is happening throughout Yearly Meeting. We also heard serious complaints about the length of agendas and the lack of time to attend properly to what needs to be done.

C'nR heard support for enhancing the role of Representative Meeting. We found that the representation aspect of RM is not working well in that the delegates often don't effectively consult or report to their Monthly Meetings. Representatives of Monthly Meetings cannot be expected to bring a Monthly Meeting point of view on every issue to Representative Meeting, nor can they be expected to promote their Meeting's point of view in a meeting that relies on spirit-led corporate discernment. However, we believe it would enhance communication between Monthly Meetings and Yearly Meeting through Representative Meeting if the Monthly Meeting representatives were given better opportunity to inform and consult Friends in their Meetings on a regular basis.

We are aware that the manner in which representatives report to their Meeting varies considerably. Some representatives may be able to accomplish their task by regular attendance at a Meeting for Worship for Business. However in many meetings, especially those widely scattered, this is not a satisfactory or effective way to reach many members and attenders. Other possibilities might include writing articles for a meeting newsletter, sharing after Meeting for Worship, visits to worship groups under the care of the Monthly Meeting, or holding special study groups on matters currently on the agenda of Representative Meeting.

**Recommendation N-1: that CYM ask Monthly Meetings to appoint representatives to Representative Meeting who are willing to engage in various information sharing activities within the Monthly Meeting such as writing articles for a Meeting newsletter, visiting worship groups, holding special study groups on issues arising from Representative Meeting, and at least, write a report to attach to Monthly Meeting minutes.**

**Recommendation N-2: that Monthly Meetings and worship groups (which are not already doing so) enhance opportunity to disseminate knowledge about CYM by establishing mechanisms for their representatives to Representative Meeting and their delegates to Yearly Meeting sessions to report and discuss Yearly Meeting concerns.**

**Recommendation N-3: that all Friends have the opportunity (whenever possible) to know the items to be included on the Representative Meeting agenda so that those with an interest may give input through their representative. We further recommend that Representative Meeting consider posting the agenda and reports for Representative Meeting on the CYM website at the same time that it is sent to Representative Meeting members. This could facilitate the communication process.**

We heard a number of suggestions for addressing the problem of long agendas at Representative Meeting. Many clerks of Representative Meeting have struggled with this difficult problem. Nevertheless, we think that continued attention must be given to reducing the amount of business at these meetings. Suggestions included asking committee clerks to provide only written reports (rather than verbal), unless of course they have business for the Meeting to consider, and establishing a small

committee that could meet more often to attend to ongoing administrative matters. We have a recommendation regarding the latter suggestion in the section on Yearly Meeting Clerks below.

**Recommendation N-4: that all Yearly Meeting Committees provide regular written reports in advance to Representative Meeting, but only report verbally when they have a matter requiring a decision. This would require that the clerk make time on the Representative Meeting agenda for people to ask questions on the written reports.**

## **O. Yearly Meeting Clerks**

Our interviews show that on the whole, most clerks of Yearly Meeting committees and of Yearly Meeting itself carry out their work with great joy and satisfaction. It is seen as spiritually called and grounded work. However there was some evidence that the burden presently being placed on Yearly Meeting clerks and treasurer as well as the clerk and treasurer of the trustees is too onerous.

We need to acknowledge that being a clerk is a calling, and for some whose responsibilities are great, we might consider their work to be that of a “released Friend”. Yearly Meeting clerks and treasurers need administrative support. There is a need to clarify the executive/administrative function of CYM so that we can better handle problems like losing our bookkeeper, insurance issues, calls to chaplaincy, use of trust funds, and unexpected resignations of key volunteers. The mechanism for making decisions between sessions of Yearly Meeting and Representative Meeting is awkward. We heard suggestions that we establish a continuing committee that was smaller and met oftener. Currently, the Yearly Meeting clerks, sometimes through the mechanism of the current office review committee, have to assume this responsibility.

**Recommendation O-1: that CYM empower a committee to make decisions that need timely implementation between sessions of CYM or Representative Meetings to keep CYM functioning. We recommend that this committee be comprised of the CYM clerks plus the clerk of Representative Meeting and the CYM treasurer. Any decisions taken by this committee would be reported to the following meeting of either CYM or Representative Meeting.**

## **3. Closing Statement**

We were reminded that worship is the central element in all that we do. We may disagree about testimonies that were established in the past, but we unite in worship – worship being at the core of our lives individually and as a religious society. We are called to set aside our individual desires and listen to the guidance of the Spirit that unites us all.