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Preview--
In Memoriam:
Indiana Yearly Meeting

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Preview Issue
Contents

Editor's Introduction, p. 4

The Proposed Split of Indiana Yearly Meeting:
What Its Monthly Meetings Say
By Stephen W. Angell, p. 7

Editor's Introduction

September 11th. Is there a more ominous date on the contemporary American calendar?

Now, 9-11 has become a landmark date for Indiana Yearly Meeting (IYM), in a manner eerily reminiscent of its traumatic meaning for society at large.

On September 11, 2012, IYM Meetings were notified that the long charade of a peaceful "reconfiguration" into two bodies, dubbed "IYM-A" and "IYM-B" is to be abandoned as of September 29, when the IYM Representative Council meets. It will be replaced with a plan leading to the simple expulsion of those meetings unwilling to accept the dictation of the top officials of IYM. The meetings in the crosshairs are those which could loosely be called "liberal," above all West Richmond (Indiana) Meeting.

Of course, the Council will have to ratify this plan, and as the report that follows here shows in considerable detail, there is widespread unease about both the 9-11 proposal and the entire process which it culminates and exposes.

Yet as our reporting on this sorry saga has also shown, at each the several previous moments of confrontation, when the chips were down, there have been no dissidents with courage enough to stand firm and vocal in opposition to the purge. Thus, the odds are that the faction that has been driving toward expulsion of the "liberals" will get their way. They have shown a steely

determination, while opponents have mainly whispered and dithered, letting themselves be steadily pushed toward the unceremonious bum's rush now looming up behind them.

But setting aside the bad taste of the purge announcement's September 11th timing, the long pretense now concluding has had one grim advantage: it has given this journal the chance to chronicle a distasteful and unbecoming episode in detail as it unfolded. This is coverage unavailable anywhere else. As a result, while some advocates may still be promoting the notion that dragging the expulsion process out for nearly two years and repackaging it as "reconfiguration" somehow makes it acceptable, "Christian", or "Quakerly," these accounts remain available to make clear its true character, with chapter and verse.

In one sense, this drama has had a pronounced unreal, even absurdist aspect. That's because the actual protagonist of the whole fiasco appears to be the Man Who Wasn't There: Phil Gulley, the controversial pastor from Western, the Yearly Meeting next door to IYM. Much of the current IYM leadership was deeply involved in the multi-year charge to strip Gulley of his pastoral credentials in Western, based on his publicly-stated universalist theological views.

When this purge ultimately failed, that defeat clearly rankled, and several anti-Gulley meetings left Western. Now, the IYM crusade looks most like a reactive strike by some of the losers in Western, to preemptively rid the body of any proto-Gulleyites. If the ordeal to which IYM is being subjected is not a graceless spectacle of delayed revenge, it's hard to see what else it could be.

The underlying hypocrisy involved is made even more stark by the account here of the IYM leadership's response when faced with several meetings which have been offering outward sacraments. Such observances are

flagrantly, inarguably contrary to IYM's Discipline. Yet faced with open defiance from evangelically-oriented meetings, the IYM leadership fretted and huffed a bit, and then did – nothing. But when West Richmond Meeting dared to openly welcome gays and lesbians, a position by no means so clearly contrary to the Discipline, out they must go, and any sympathizers with them.

So be it. The avid evangelical “B-ites” in IYM talk much of evangelism and church growth, no doubt sincerely enough. One frequently hears from that quarter that if all this controversy could only be cleared away (by banishing the uncomfortable diversity), way would open to bring in a great harvest of souls.

Never mind that the historical record of such purges runs largely in the other direction. Contemporary survey research confirms their dismal record, even the work of such evangelical pollsters as the Barna group. (See, for instance, their “You Lost Me” series at: <http://www.barna.org/>)

So the IYM militants will likely have their “reconfiguration.”

And they'll also carry the specter of their own 9-11.

Take that, Phil Gulley. I guess they showed you.

– Chuck Fager

The Proposed Split of Indiana Yearly Meeting:
What Its Monthly Meetings Say
By Stephen W. Angell

Regular readers of this journal will be familiar with the outlines of the ongoing saga of Indiana Yearly Meeting and its attempts to cope with its divisions within. The current train of events was sparked most obviously by the discernment of West Richmond Meeting to adopt a minute that welcomed and affirmed gays and lesbians, in June 2008. Many other Friends in their Indiana Yearly Meeting disagreed strongly with West Richmond's action in this regard, and labored with them, through the Yearly Meeting's Ministry and Oversight Committee, to get West Richmond to change their minute and to take it off their website, but years of discussion did not result in any change.

In October 2011, the Yearly Meeting's Rep Council controversially approved a minute for a "deliberative, collaborative reconfiguration," proposed by a task force specially formed to respond to the conflict, and thus the Yearly Meeting set itself the task, and charged a reconstituted Task Force with the hard labor, to set up two yearly meetings within a year's time, with the two yearly meetings distinguished by their differing views of yearly meeting authority, and also of the authority of Scripture. (See QT #18; 19; 20 at: www.quaker.org/quest)

In April 2012, after considerable feedback on an earlier draft, the Task Force finalized its descriptions of two potential yearly meetings. "Yearly Meeting A" defined itself as an "association" of Christian meetings who seek to be "mutually accountable to one another," but it would not expect its constituent meetings to undergo "subordination" to the organizational structure of the yearly meeting. By way of contrast, "Yearly Meeting B" would be "a yearly

meeting of Christ-centered Friends (Quaker) meetings who value the authority of Scripture and mutual accountability, embracing the current *Faith & Practice* and organizational structure of Indiana Yearly Meeting.” It would claim continuity with the founding (1821) discipline of Indiana Yearly Meeting “providing for subordination of . . . monthly . . . meetings to the yearly meeting.” These descriptions were then distributed to the Monthly Meetings of IYM, and each was asked to discern, by a deadline of September 1, to which Yearly Meeting they would wish to belong.

As of September 4, 52 of Indiana Yearly Meeting’s 62 monthly meetings had responded. Of the responses I have examined thus far, they fall into the following categories: 37 indicate some sort of preference for Yearly Meeting B; 19 oppose or critique the reconfiguration process, of these 19, 6 also indicate that they are “B-type” meetings, while 9 indicate no preference between YM-A or YM-B; and so far 4 meetings, Englewood, West Richmond, Friends of the Light and Williamsburg, have discerned a preference for YM-A. One (Dublin) has been unable to discern any direction in this task.

(Whatever happens, the United Society of Friends Women will not be part of any reconfiguration. USFW in Indiana plans to maintain a united organization for Quaker women from however many yearly meetings issue from the current Indiana Yearly Meeting.)

Meetings seem to recognize the solemnity of this task. One sign of this: two meetings, Parker with 3 members and Peaceful Valley with 15 members, seem to have had all of their members sign their respective letters.

It would be worthwhile to examine these letters briefly in order to see if we can ascertain any patterns in their responses.

Yearly Meeting B

Many of the meetings which have favored Yearly Meeting B are small, rural meetings, but not all. The largest meeting in the yearly meeting is Wabash, and it chose Yearly Meeting B. Westfield Meeting, another large meeting, has also sent in its letter in support of IYM-B.

Yearly Meeting authority and the authority of Scripture were the two most oft cited reasons for a monthly meeting to choose Yearly Meeting B. Little Blue River Meeting put these points succinctly when it justified its choice of B, because “we desire to be part of a yearly meeting that ‘has the power to set bounds and exercise authority over subordinate monthly meetings.’ We value the authority of Scripture and mutual accountability.” Marion Meeting was “saddened” by the need for such a process, but hoped that “in the future the exercise of yearly meeting authority [will] be as careful and gracious as it has been recently without sacrificing our core values or changing the truth of Jesus Christ the Bible lays out for us.” Upon declaring a choice for B, Rural Friends Meeting took “this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the supremacy of Scripture.” Upland Friends church helpfully restated its understanding of B as “a more tightly organized uniting of Friends churches and meetings that recognized the authority of Scripture and the need for mutual submission.”

As to which particular aspects of Scripture most speak to the Yearly Meeting B experience, diverse possibilities are offered, and some passages recur on both ends of the spectrum. The Task Force description referenced the two “Great Commandments” (love God and love your neighbor, Matthew 22:36-40), which are also a favorite of Yearly Meeting A folks and those opposed to reconfiguration. Placing an emphasis on evangelism, the Task Force description also referenced the “Great Commission,” Matthew 28:18-20. One meeting that chose

B, Van Wert First Friends, and a meeting that opposes reconfiguration, Parker, both referred to Jesus' admonition that "If a house is divided against itself, it cannot stand." (Matt. 12:25; Mark 3:23; Luke 11:17) Parker Friends Meeting sees IYM division as something which is yet to come and which can be prevented, if only Friends lay aside the reconfiguration process: "By dividing the IYM we are dividing God's house." On the other hand, Van Wert Friends see IYM division as an already accomplished fact, and hence reconfiguration as the only healthy way forward: "The reconfiguration of IYM into two separate meetings is not an option but is vital to the spiritual health and future of IYM." Lynn Meeting cites 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. We at Lynn Friends take this to heart and believe it to be the truth."

While Lynn Meeting's reference to 2 Timothy reaches to the issue of Scriptural authority in general, part of the reason for action by IYM meetings identifying with B is often a conviction that any Christian reader of Scriptural passages such as Romans 1, using proper methods of interpretation, would have to criticize or condemn homosexual practices. This is, of course, a view strongly disputed by IYM meetings identifying with A, and it would take another essay to explore all of the ramifications of this dispute between YM-A and YM-B Friends. However, if one grants this basic contention by YM-B Friends, then a set of queries, like the following from Amy Smith Dennis, would naturally follow: "What does accountability look like in a group like ours? Isn't accountability supposed to be that when someone goes outside the guidelines (the Bible, *Faith & Practice*) that others tell them about it to bring them back in? So what do you do when the meeting or individual doesn't seem to want to be held accountable?"

The status of IYM's *Faith & Practice* is a vital concern to all IYM Meetings, including meetings affiliating with IYM-B. The instructions accompanying the outlines of IYM-A and IYM-B urged local meetings to review "the current *Faith & Practice* of Indiana Yearly Meeting" at the start of the process, with the Richmond Declaration of Faith, the current "Questions for Spiritual Growth," and Section 108 on order and authority within the Yearly Meeting to be a particular focus for their attention. Undoubtedly meetings choosing B were inspired by the phrase in Section 108 that IYM is to be a "means of common protection" for its constituent monthly meetings. (See QT #20) Meetings choosing B understood *Faith & Practice* as giving the YM the power to set bounds and exercise authority over subordinate meetings. Knightstown finds useful "behavioral guidelines" in *Faith & Practice*. The issue was addressed in some depth at the April Rep Council Meeting. Representing B-type meetings, Greg Hinshaw believed that it will be necessary to amend the current *Faith & Practice* to "clarify some things." From a similar viewpoint, Dave Phillips proposed that IYM-B would need to clarify what is meant by "accountability," but suggested that any changes in *Faith & Practice* would not be major.

The Monthly Meetings' concern with West Richmond's affirmation of gays and lesbians is a thread that runs through many of these letters to the Task Force. Vermillion Friends observe that "the issue of homosexuality is a very divisive force in our world today, not just in IYM. While we know that God loves all his creation and seeks to draw all to Him who will be obedient, we do not believe that God intended or approves of this lifestyle." In their letter, Bear Creek Friends cite the 1982 IYM minute stating "homosexual practices to be contrary to the intent and will of God for humankind" and declare

their Meeting's opposition to "any efforts to destroy Indiana Yearly Meeting or to abdicate its authority on issues of morality."

The surrounding American culture comes in for critical comment in these letters. It was while IYM meetings were deliberating on these letters that, for the first time, a sitting American president, Barack Obama, announced his support for marriage equality. In choosing B, Bethel Friends provided this oblique comment on such shifts in the broader American culture: "Change is inevitable. However, how we change is crucial. IYM has always prayerfully maintained Scriptural Truth with cultural shifts or societal changes. They have remained conscious that God's will must not be compromised by either human desire or that His Holy Word be amended to keep current with cultural trends or personal preferences. The issue isn't whether we can make God relevant to our culture, but whether we can keep our culture relevant to God. In a culture with seismic shifts occurring, this is no small task."

Not mentioned in the monthly meeting letters, but very much on the minds of Indiana Yearly Meeting leaders who favor option B, is the way that a similar controversy over an attempt to remove Phil Gulley's recording played out in Western Yearly Meeting not so long ago. *Quaker Theology* gave extensive coverage to this issue. (See QT #s 9, 14, 16, 18; all online at www.quaker.org/quest) The attempt to remove Phil Gulley's recording failed, and subsequently six evangelical meetings withdrew from Western Yearly Meeting. Other meetings with a conservative or evangelical perspective remained within WYM, however. In the IYM Rep Council of April 2012, IYM Superintendent Doug Shoemaker reflected on his 25 years of pastoral experience in WYM: "I come to this task with vivid memories of gut-wrenching conflict, based on

differing views of Scriptural interpretation, church authority, and homosexuality. I have seen the negative effects of chronic conflict.” After WYM’s Clerk discerned no sense of the meeting to remove Gulley’s recording, Shoemaker reflected that “Western Yearly Meeting underwent significant organizational damage. Western Yearly Meeting *has* reconfigured, although not deliberately. I have watched in horror as Indiana Yearly Meeting is poised to replay the same conflicts.”

In an August meeting at New Castle Meeting, speaking to mostly opponents of reconfiguration, Task Force member Dave Phillips made a similar argument. He asked, “How do we do this reconfiguration in a loving, collaborative way where we don’t destroy each other? Look at Western Yearly Meeting. They would not have the hard conversation, nor make the hard decision. Our Yearly Meeting (IYM) is dying because we have not made the hard decisions. I want the will of God. It’s hard. It’s really hard.”

Meetings declaring for B are generally anxious that reconfiguration be accomplished with minimal disruption, both to themselves and IYM-B. Peaceful Valley speaks for many of the meetings choosing B when it “prays that with this reconfiguration, there will finally be peace among all meetings. We would like to see the constant strife that this has caused to end. . . . It does not seem necessary to discontinue Indiana Yearly Meeting, but ask those meetings that want to break away to rename themselves.” And not only should reconfiguration happen with the minimum of disruption, it needs to happen quickly. According to Lynn Friends, “There is also a consensus within our Monthly Meeting that this needs to be accomplished before the end of 2012. Prolonging this process will only add to the division within the YM.”

Meetings Opposing Reconfiguration

At least 16 Monthly Meetings in IYM have finalized letters to the task force questioning, critiquing, or opposing the ongoing Reconfiguration Process. For many meetings, there has been a clear sense that proper Quaker process has not been followed, or IYM never would have undertaken reconfiguration in the first place. Winchester Friends stated, “We never felt clearness for the Task Force’s Model #4 or Model #5, nor gave approval for them when they were considered in Representative Council.” Greenfield Meeting made the same statement in its letter to the Task Force, and the same point is prominent in discussions at Friends Memorial in Muncie (many of whose members initially attempted to stand in opposition to the Reconfiguration at the October 2011 Rep Council Meeting – by the end of the meeting, they did not persist in their objections – and whose members continue to oppose reconfiguration.) Moreover, the same point comes up repeatedly in discussions at West Richmond Meeting, which has never expressed a desire to leave Indiana Yearly Meeting, and if it eventually does leave, will leave only with the greatest reluctance.

With IYM’s finances already in great peril, several meetings raise the cogent concern that the reconfiguration process will only make the financial situation much worse. Back Creek Friends Meeting writes, “We are concerned that a split of IYM would mean two smaller yearly meetings with fewer members and less operating funds and this would severely affect the available financial support for Quaker Haven, Whites’ [Institute], and Friends Fellowship Community. We consider these entities as vital to our mission as Friends. . . . We are concerned about the conflict within IYM regarding whether a newly set off yearly meeting would be entitled to a cash settlement as

part of the split. We are concerned about increased financial costs for the above named organizations if their articles of incorporation should need to be rewritten to accommodate a split of IYM.” Spiceland Meeting has raised the same point in very similar terms. Anderson Friends wrote to the Task Force, “We do not believe two separate but equal yearly meetings that share common resources is a tenable long term solution.”

Neither do Friends knowledgeable about IYM finances, even ones affiliated with meetings that have opted for B. One such Friend is Marion First Friends’ Kim Manwell, longtime clerk of the IYM Committee on Stewardship and Finance. At April’s Rep Council Meeting, Manwell made an impassioned plea for IYM Friends to take a serious look at their finances before proceeding with reconfiguration. He noted the difficulty that individual monthly meetings already have in meeting their assessments. The meetings that form the smaller yearly meeting will have especial difficulty with their finances. “I’m having trouble figuring out the bottom line,” he proclaimed. “This whole process makes me sick. We’re all Friends. We disagree about a couple of things, but that’s been true forever.”

The Task Force is not oblivious of these financial concerns. In its FAQ sheet on the reconfiguration process as presented at yearly meeting sessions, it soberly observes, “Reconfiguration will undoubtedly mean the creation of two bodies with fewer resources. After the division is complete, it will be for each to determine what their resources are and how they should best be used.”

Such practical considerations were the basis for Jericho Meeting’s hesitations about reconfiguration: “Although we prefer Model B, we greatly fear the action of disbanding IYM to form two groups will greatly weaken our religious organization.” Before making any decision,

they wish to have a better understanding of the “details concerning the financial implications as well as the organizational structure of any model.”

Meetings that oppose reconfiguration also perceive homosexuality to be a more complex issue than those that opt for B in an unqualified fashion. West Richmond and other meetings opposing reconfiguration are much more likely to look to a 1995 IYM minute on the issue for guidance, rather than the short, blunt 1982 minute cited above. The 1995 minute recognized “a diversity of beliefs” within IYM as to how Friends should interpret Scriptures on homosexuality. Then IYM called “for the fair treatment of homosexuals and their full protection from physical and verbal violence, and effectively encouraged meetings to welcome gays and lesbians into their midst.”

One of Spiceland Meeting’s reasons to oppose reconfiguration is that “we have multiple families who have children [or] relatives that are gay and lesbian, and it is our feeling that we would welcome them to worship with us and be a part of the monthly meeting.” Spiceland’s approach toward gays and lesbians does not go so far as to embrace the “affirming” part of West Richmond’s “welcoming and affirming” minute. Still, they clearly value West Richmond’s participation in IYM: “we do not want to dissolve those relationships [with West Richmond] or to see IYM dismembered.”

Richmond First Friends reports a sense of “confusion, lack of clarity, and discomfort” in their own monthly meeting and elsewhere in IYM “around the matter of homosexuality and religious authority.” This experience has been “painful and challenging” for them, but it has also deepened their commitment to Spirit-led waiting: “the Yearly Meeting needs to sit with these issues with more patience and prayer and wait for God’s leading and a broader and deeper sense of clearness from the membership

as to a way forward.” Friends Memorial of Muncie writes, “We believe that by truly minding The Light, we will be led into unity, not division.”

Those meetings opposing reconfiguration do not assign blame for the crisis only to West Richmond. Rather, they also look askance at those meetings within IYM that emphasize the speed with which reconfiguration ought to be completed, or they will leave IYM willy-nilly. Spiceland writes, “It seems to us that both West Richmond and the monthly meetings who are threatening to leave are holding the entire yearly meeting ‘hostage.’” Back Creek minuted its agreement with Spiceland on this point. Above all else, the Friends opposed to reconfiguration want more time to work to resolve IYM’s knotty issues, and a commitment to stay together in the meantime. Winchester Friends note that they have “asked IYM to allow God enough time to help us resolve these issues and remain intact.” The goal of taking time is to achieve a deeper sense of clearness, as Richmond First Friends notes: “On issues of great significance, Friends have always been led by ‘God’s time’ rather than by the often rushed and shortsighted clock of our world.”

Michael Sherman, pastor of Raysville Friends Meeting, believes that the crucial point, too often missing from these discussions, is Indiana Friends’ (lack of) trust in God: “IYM B asks us to put our trust and future security in the Yearly Meeting office while IYM A asks us to put our trust and future security in the diversity of its people. Neither articulates a future of trust and faith relying upon God.” Thus, Raysville Friends “do not choose A or B and are currently opposed to the proposed reconfiguration. Neither A or B offer Raysville a home where we feel the Spirit of God will be the primary voice of a healthy life-giving future. . . . Splitting is too easy to be the Godly thing to do.” Muncie Friends observe, “It is our position that a healthy, thriving Yearly Meeting needs guidance from

members of all ‘Types’ of Friends. It is our diversity – not our similarity – that results in a more clearly thought out position of discernment.”

Meetings opposing reconfiguration tend to interpret *Faith & Practice* in a very different light than B-type meetings. Winchester highlighted Section 108, Part C, in which “the Yearly Meeting recognizes the freedom of the Monthly Meetings and the validity of their prophetic voices. Each needs the other to be strong and vital, and both need the mediation of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” Greenfield also cites this passage as an especially meaningful part of the *Faith & Practice*. Neither meeting goes far to explicate the importance of this section, but Section 108, Part C, was put forward by West Richmond Meeting as something which would permit a welcoming and affirming minute such as the one they adopted.

Among Meetings opposed to reconfiguration, even those which say they would choose IYM-B if forced to choose, there is considerable nervousness about the changes an IYM-B might make to *Faith & Practice*. This was a focus of Walnut Ridge Meeting’s minute: “While we do not believe “reconfiguration” is necessary or even beneficial, we cannot accept plan A because of the potential for interpreting God’s Word according to worldly norms. Therefore, if reconfiguration goes forward, we would be accepting of Plan B by default, as long as Plan B continues to follow the current IYM *Faith & Practice*, and it is applied equally to all levels of the Plan B structure.” In this brief minute, Walnut Ridge managed to criticize three things: IYM-A, IYM-B, and the reconfiguration process itself. Here what they say about IYM-B is of most interest. While they could accept membership in IYM-B by “default” (i.e., if they had no other choice), they would only be able to do so under the “current” *Faith & Practice*.

Presumably they would cast a jaundiced eye on the amendments other B-type meetings might want to make. The final clause, asking that *Faith & Practice* be applied equally to all levels of the Plan B structure, may be an allusion to the fact that heaven and earth has been moved, in effect, to chastise West Richmond Friends Meeting (although of course IYM leaders would disclaim any such intent), while meetings offering physical sacraments, clearly a violation of *Faith & Practice*, are allowed to proceed with only occasional yearly meeting admonishment.

(On the latter point, we might refer to Tom Hamm's succinct summary of some protracted IYM deliberations: "The yearly meeting did spend considerable time on the subject of dealing with meetings offering outward sacraments. The Yearly Meeting M&O did visit and admonish some of them. But the yearly meeting was never able to reach unity on anything. Ultimately, however, it probably says something that Doug Shoemaker's proposed solution was to change yearly meeting policy to accommodate the 'waterites,' some of whom have been among the most strident critics of West Richmond (Upland, for example). That also failed.")

Even if the document of *Faith & Practice* remains the same, a different way of applying it to individual monthly meetings would also be of concern to IYM meetings opposing reconfiguration. Thus, Winchester observes that "we have gladly abided by a covenantal understanding of IYM's current *Faith and Practice* for decades, and we have no interest in departing from that commitment. We call upon Meetings who consider the *Faith and Practice* to be a binding contract, or to be merely a set of non-binding suggestions or guidelines, to reconsider those assumptions and their impact on spiritual community."

In response to the FAQ, “Will belonging to a yearly meeting with authority to discipline subordinate meetings result in an increase in yearly meeting intrusion into the affairs of monthly meetings?” the Task Force offered this response at IYM sessions: “This is not the intent of this reconfiguration, however, meetings blatantly disregarding the *Faith & Practice* of YM B need to understand that the yearly meeting has the right to exercise appropriate discipline should it choose to do so.”

Like the IYM-B Meetings, the Bible is of great importance to the IYM Meetings opposing reconfiguration. Both Greenfield and Winchester Meetings cite Ephesians 4: 2-3: “Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” In general, IYM Meetings opposing reconfiguration find great meaning in the Biblical passages urging love and reconciliation.

Meeting minutes aside, the Bible and its interpretation has been one of the most thoroughly explored topics on the Indiana Yearly Meeting Facebook Discussion Page and elsewhere. One of the most persistent examiners of this topic is Richmond First Friends member Doug Bennett, also President emeritus of Earlham. In the June-July 2012 issue of *Friends Journal*, Bennett writes, “The rupture over the Bible is the deepest schism of all among Friends. . . . We need to value the Bible together as a font of spiritual authority.” Bennett has written extensively about his conviction that “the homosexuality-is-a-sin reading” of the Bible is a “harmful” one, albeit convincing few Quakers in Indiana who identify with IYM-B on this matter. Nonetheless, many in IYM who oppose reconfiguration join Bennett in his elevation of the two Great Commandments of Jesus to love God and to love our neighbors, over any of the Biblical passages which address

homosexuality. Bennett concludes, “We can find our way in unity to a loving understanding of homosexuality, but only if we will read the Bible together.”

Meetings that oppose the reconfiguration often have diverse memberships. For many meetings in IYM, often the smaller ones, the opportunity to choose a yearly meeting with a clearer and sharper identity, such as either IYM-A or IYM-B, is a welcome one. Not so for the diverse meetings, who often feel that the yearly meeting is merely pushing its problems onto them, and making it more likely that the monthly meetings will divide, too.

First Friends Richmond eloquently gives voice to this aspect of the situation: “You have asked us to declare what kind of Meeting we self-identify with (‘Yearly Meeting A’ or ‘Yearly Meeting B’) as it relates to matters of authority and scripture. We have members at First Friends who believe that ‘Yearly Meeting A’ is fully in conformity with our current *Faith & Practice* and other members who believe that ‘Yearly Meeting B’ is fully in conformity with our current *Faith & Practice*. This may be confusing and call for prayerful attention in the future, but it is truthful and we should recognize that fact.

“While many in our Meeting identify readily with the characteristics and attributes listed under ‘Yearly Meeting A,’ others identify readily with elements of ‘Yearly Meeting B.’ We are by no means a homogenous and single-minded faith community. This diversity, we believe, has been a great and longstanding strength at First Friends. We see the proposed division as a false choice and fear it may even force an internal split within our own Meeting. It is as if you are asking a parent to choose one child over another. These are not Spirit-led choices. We are all God’s children.”

For several of the monthly meetings opposing reconfiguration, the bottom line (in the words of

Spiceland's minute) was a "request that the task force offer another option for moving forward that does not involve splitting the yearly meeting, but allows meetings to leave who do not wish to remain affiliated with IYM." Back Creek, Greenfield, and, more generally, Friends Memorial of Muncie, Richmond First Friends, and West Richmond, agree with Spiceland on this point. Richmond First Friends asks that "the Yearly Meeting do what Quakers have done since the time of George Fox when matters of great importance are not clear. Wait. Pray. Talk. Listen. As Way opens, we will come to the Righteous path by walking it patiently together."

Friends of the Light, West Richmond, and Williamsburg Meetings

Thus far, four IYM meetings seem to have expressed a desire or a willingness to join IYM-A Yearly Meeting, should such a yearly meeting be formed: Englewood in Ohio; West Richmond and Williamsburg in Indiana; and Friends of the Light in Michigan. Englewood is a special case, so we will look at it in our next section. Friends of the Light had considered the matter of reconfiguration in meetings for business in April and August and both times opted for IYM-A. According to Harriet Jones, Clerk of Friends in the Light, their minute "basically said FOTL is a live-and-let-live meeting and our affiliation would be with YM-A. Not much more than that." That message was communicated to IYM in a letter dated August 31.

Williamsburg is a meeting nine miles north of Richmond. In the words of its clerk, Joyce Crull, "our meeting is now small with mostly older people." Like other Indiana Friends, they are devout and take their Scripture seriously: "We read our Bibles, believe in the scripture and

how it can console each according to their need.” While it is small, it is also a generous congregation. “We donate what we can and work hard to help our friends in sadness and in health. . . . In particular, those with mental and physical handicaps have brought us to deeper understanding with God, and their words are not forgotten. We try to welcome all and hope that if they need guiding they will find peace with us. We believe Christ can transform us in thinking and in living.”

While Crull’s letter is not specific on this next point, openly gay and lesbian persons are among those who have found a welcome at Williamsburg Friends. Some Williamsburg Friends think of themselves as “welcoming and affirming” toward gays and lesbians, while others see that issue somewhat differently. In any case, they love each other deeply, and a baseline conviction among Williamsburg Friends is that differences over Scriptural interpretation about homosexuality should never be a bar to fellowship within the congregation. And if it is not a bar to fellowship within the congregation, neither do Williamsburg Friends believe that it should be a bar to fellowship with other Friends churches who have achieved clarity on a “welcoming and affirming” policy toward gays and lesbians, which is not something God has led them to yet.

Crull’s letter is clear about the decision that resulted from Williamsburg’s discernment process: “We find it difficult to understand how the divisions in Indiana Yearly Meeting have led us to this point. We wish we didn’t have to make such a decision. Nevertheless, at our business meeting on August 12, we decided, guided by the Holy Spirit, that Yearly Meeting ‘A’ best represents our position. We pray that the transitions being made will go smoothly and lead to a sense of unity in spite of our disagreements.”

Turning to West Richmond Meeting, they, too, like Williamsburg, have felt considerable anguish about the “reconfiguration/separation,” which is a course of action that they have never favored and yet has been forced upon them. One of the myths articulated by some Friends who favor IYM B is that West Richmond brought on this crisis, because they wanted to leave IYM. Nothing could be farther from the truth. When West Richmond Meeting approved their “welcoming and affirming” minute in 2008, they thought that it was in accord with IYM Faith and Practice, and also with IYM’s 1995 minute on welcoming gays and lesbians into Friends Meetings. During the past few years, it has become very evident that there are many meetings within IYM who disagree with West Richmond on such matters, but for reasons explained more fully in the past three issues of *Quaker Theology*, West Richmond was never convinced that it was wrong on any of these matters. Nor are they protesting IYM’s stand on homosexuality, nor the stances of any meeting within IYM. They have fully paid all of their assessments to the Yearly Meeting, for example. The reconfiguration process has always proceeded on the principle, that all Meetings should be free to choose their future affiliation, and that none will be forced out. But West Richmond Friends will be pardoned if they sometimes feel, despite everyone else’s best intentions, that they are being forced out anyway.

Like the meetings opposing Reconfiguration, West Richmond prominently states its “substantial amount of concern, objection, and regret about the prospective reconfiguration/ separation. We are not of a single mind about this concern; but for various individuals it includes such matters as (1) regret over the inglorious, long history of fractiousness and schism in the Christian church as a whole and Quakerism in specific, (2) a strong desire to maintain ties of history, service, friendship, and affection

with our sisters and brothers in IYM, (3) concerns about some actions of IYM leaders that have seemed to be predisposed to separation and exclusion of our Monthly Meeting, and (4) a process that has been rushed, forced, and lacking in Friends' characteristic patient listening for God's leading. We reiterate to all Friends in IYM and to all observers in the world that we have never sought division or separation in any form; nor have we sought to impose any demand, request, or expectation upon other Monthly Meetings or upon IYM to take the position to which we have been called over a long period of prayer, study, and deliberation." A weighty statement indeed, one that eloquently and accurately summarizes West Richmond's role in the debates that have consumed IYM in the past few years.

West Richmond's statement continues: "As a Monthly Meeting that has been called into affirmation and full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons, reflected in our minute of June 2008, WRM believes that such affirmation and inclusion are compatible with our current membership in IYM. **Yet recognizing the realities of the reconfiguration process that is underway, we clearly state that WRM as a body recognizes that our identity is as described in the Task Force characterization of Yearly Meeting 'A' rather than Yearly Meeting 'B'.**

"While we affirm our witness expressed through the WRM minute that has brought to the surface a much broader group of serious disagreements within IYM, to which separation has been one response, we reserve for the present our future options about organizational affiliation. It is not entirely clear to us that immediate affiliation with a group known as IYM 'A' will be the wisest or best choice for us, although it might be. We are open to other possible models of yearly meeting or affinity group affiliation.

“We are also mindful that a significant number of other Monthly Meetings have been led not to choose either A or B, expressing reservations like those we express in this minute. We know that Friends are meeting to pray, discuss, and support one another in this leading, in the hope of the emergence of options for reconciliation that have not yet been included in the process. WRM remains open to the possibilities to which this movement might lead.

“Finally, we express our care and concern for all our fellow Monthly Meetings in IYM, both those which reached a decision about reconfiguration and those that have been led not to choose. We feel sadness for struggle, anxiety, and internal division that might have been elicited in any Monthly Meeting as an unintended result of our action.

“We send this report with our love and blessing for peace, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Emphasis in the original)

So West Richmond Meeting sends out an olive branch to all of the meetings in IYM. In addition, it is especially interested in seeing how it can work together with IYM Meetings that have found themselves unable to make a choice in the current reconfiguration process; or, to speak more plainly in good Friends’ fashion, West Richmond suggests that the word “separation” might be appropriately used in this context.

Many meetings, while not clear about being welcoming and affirming themselves, cherish their relationships with West Richmond Friends and would like for their relationships to be ongoing; understandably, these meetings tend to fall into the category of those that have articulated criticisms of the reconfiguration process. As a Friend from Raysville Meeting said at the August gathering at New Castle, “West Richmond, we love you. . . I could not personally support your welcoming and affirming

minute. But I support your right to make that minute. There are many things that I appreciate about you. You are very honest. You say when you are in disagreement with IYM, and you provide links to IYM minutes when you are in disagreement.” He emphatically disputed any notion that West Richmond was the “cause” of IYM’s proposed reconfiguration.

Antioch Chapel, Englewood, and Penn

In this section we look at an ideologically diverse grouping of meetings that either have used the occasion of this controversy, or have initiated a monthly meeting deliberation that happened to coincide with the controversy, to seek out a new Yearly Meeting affiliation, with already existing Yearly Meetings. Antioch Chapel and Penn have chosen to leave IYM to affiliate with the Canton, Ohio-based Evangelical Friends Church-Eastern Region; and Englewood has been accepted into membership with a yearly meeting affiliated with Friends General Conference, Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. The dually affiliated Englewood maintains membership in IYM.

The separation of Antioch Chapel in Van Wert, Ohio, seems to have been accomplished rather quietly; I have found little reference to it in yearly meeting records. But yearly meeting leaders have had to spend considerable time and attention in their responses to Englewood and Penn Meetings, as the whole rest of the YM simultaneously is in crisis.

Penn Friends Meeting, nestled between Quaker and Penn Streets in Cassopolis, Michigan, (the southwest corner of Michigan – Cassopolis is a few miles north of South Bend, Indiana) has experienced significant new growth during recent years, drawing in both new converts

and persons who had been attending other congregations. It has a long history, being founded in the 1840s. Its current attendance averages about 150 persons per Sunday. It is an isolated meeting – the two nearest IYM meetings, one in Dewart Lake, Indiana, and another in the opposite direction, Traverse City, Michigan, are both very distant.

In August 2011, Penn Friends hired a new pastor, Steve Witzki, whose roots are in the Battle Creek, Michigan, congregation affiliated with Eastern Region Friends. Prior to pastoring in EFI, Witzki was a Free Methodist, and he appears to maintain his Free Methodist ordination as his ministerial credential. In the opening months of 2012, Doug Shoemaker, the Yearly Meeting Superintendent, got wind that Penn Friends wanted to withdraw from IYM. Yearly Meeting Executive Committee minutes allege that Witzki “has led the charge to leave IYM.”

On May 1, at the request of Shoemaker, Witzki confirmed that Penn Friends were “out of unity with IYM *Faith & Practice*” (presumably because they were offering outward sacraments) and that the congregation intended to withdraw from IYM. According to the minutes, Shoemaker “asked for Steve’s resignation and requested that the decision regarding withdrawal be delayed.” Witzki and Penn Friends refused to comply with these requests, instead deciding by majority vote to withdraw from IYM. Shoemaker was in contact with a minority in the congregation loyal to IYM, and this small group of Penn Friends felt that formal intervention by IYM in their local meeting’s affairs would “not be helpful.” Shoemaker was in contact with Wayne Evans, a part of Eastern Region’s yearly meeting leadership team. Evans had sought to convince Witzki not to leave IYM, but Witzki had not heeded Evans’ advice any more than he had heeded Shoemaker’s.

At a called executive committee meeting, Shoemaker proposed that IYM “communicate our concerns to Penn Friends, noting that they are out of unity with *Faith & Practice*, making them understand that this was made without the proper Friends’ procedures, and pointing out that there were people outvoted who were not in agreement with the decision to withdraw.” Shoemaker recommended a variety of conditions should they persist in their desire to withdraw, including insistence that they pay up their back assessments, that they repay grants given to them under the Ministerial Excellence Initiative, that they wait until 2013 before joining Eastern Region so that they would have a chance to consider their withdrawal from IYM, and “we might want to ask for their historical records as well.” However, Shoemaker did not recommend a “very costly and maybe ugly legal process” to keep them in the yearly meeting fold.

Upon the suggestion of Tom Hamm, the IYM executive committee approved setting up another meeting with Penn Friends, but “if they refuse, Doug’s suggestions will be taken into action.” The Executive Committee then minuted its appreciation to Shoemaker for his “leadership” in a very tough situation. Subsequent Executive Committee minutes disclose that Witzki responded promptly to IYM Clerk Greg Hinshaw’s invitation to resume the conversation, but Witzki stated that Penn Friends were not willing to “have any further discussion.” Hinshaw emphasized “that Penn lacked some integrity in not paying assessment but asking for grants from IYM.” Penn Friends replied that they desired “to leave IYM in peace, withdraw on their terms, and affiliate with Eastern Region.” Executive Committee then concluded that, after consulting with IYM legal counsel, IYM could then “give [Penn] the terms for intervention/withdrawal.” Penn did ultimately

repay some or all of its Ministerial Excellence Initiative grants.

Englewood is a much newer meeting, located in the northwest suburbs of Dayton, Ohio. It was founded by IYM in 1976, using some money in its missions budget to plant a congregation in a new area for IYM, but fairly closely adjacent to IYM meetings in Richmond, Indiana. Its early pastors came from a variety of theological perspectives within the yearly meetings. Its current pastor, Rick Miller, is a graduate of the Earlham School of Religion. Englewood's meetinghouse had been purchased with IYM funds, but in time Englewood Friends were able to reimburse IYM for this expense. Its deed does have a reversion clause to IYM.

Over the years, it grew modestly. Theologically and spiritually, it seems to have grown closer to the perspectives of the Richmond meetings than of the evangelical meetings elsewhere in IYM. Some of its newer members were enthusiastic, at least initially, about participating in IYM, wanting the full Quaker experience, and understanding well that the local meeting was not an entity totally in and of itself, but was part of a larger network of Friends. One such new Friend, a young adult who generally inclines toward a liberal Christian theology, had great hopes of engaging IYM Friends, but when he attended yearly meeting sessions, he found that his ideas were scorned and he felt unwelcome. He recalled that the experience was so painful that he came home in tears. (Incidentally, it is not only liberal Friends who have experienced pain from IYM's chronic conflicts. Task Force member Dave Phillips, an advocate for IYM-B, recalled that in his more youthful years he found yearly meeting sessions so painful that he stayed away for many years, and resolved to return only much later.)

When West Richmond adopted its “welcoming and affirming” minute for gays and lesbians, Englewood Friends found themselves in agreement, but they knew full well that an expression of agreement would not go over well in IYM as a whole. Some Englewood Friends were tempted simply to lie low and to attempt to avoid IYM’s notice, but others differed with that approach, and the Meeting eventually reached a sense of unity that not to confront the important issues on which they differed from the Yearly Meeting lacked integrity.

In 2010, Englewood invited Phil Gulley to speak at their meeting. When they sent notice of this event to the IYM of this event, however, this news was not printed in IYM’s newsletter or otherwise disseminated to other IYM meetings as Englewood had intended. Subsequently, in the fall of 2010, Englewood sent a letter to IYM that, in the words of its former clerk Russell Wheeler, “pointed out some of our concerns,” including the failure to notify other Friends of the Gulley event at Englewood. The letter went on to state that Englewood Friends were not sure that they fit in IYM, and they asked for someone from IYM to come visit with them. The result of that letter was a visit by two IYM Friends, Rod Dennis and Ivan Flaugh, to Englewood. At this meeting, some Englewood Friends brought up the fact that their meeting is LGBT affirming. This news was not received well by the IYM visitors. According to Wheeler, Flaugh “went on a rant,” while waving his Bible. Among other things, he said that IYM couldn’t have those type of people teaching at church camp.

In this meeting, Dennis drew a matrix to illustrate his points. This matrix, or chart, has been used by IYM leaders in several contexts, with both nonconforming meetings such as Englewood and West Richmond and with individual pastors. As Wheeler remembers it, Dennis drew both a horizontal axis and a vertical axis on a whiteboard.

In the upper left hand corner, he wrote “conservative-orthodox.” In the lower right hand corner, he wrote “liberal progressive.” Then he placed an “x” in the upper-left hand corner to represent IYM, and an “x” in the lower-right hand corner to represent Englewood. Dennis intended his matrix to demonstrate that IYM and Englewood “have irreconcilable differences.” Dennis and Flaugh also emphasized that Gulley’s universalist theology was outside the IYM mainstream, and thus it was quite proper, in their view, that the IYM leadership had not seen fit to communicate the Englewood event involving Gulley to other IYM meetings.

The only bit of practical advice that Dennis and Flaugh left behind was that Englewood should find another yearly meeting. Understandably, Englewood Friends took this advice very seriously. Englewood Friends decided not to pursue affiliation with other FUM yearly meetings, in part because of their concerns over the FUM personnel minute limiting volunteer and paid work to persons who are either celibate, or are married, with marriage defined as between one man and one woman.

Shortly after the visit of Flaugh and Dennis, they talked to a staff person at Friends General Conference in Philadelphia, who put them in touch with Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. As Englewood Friends studied the matter of yearly meeting affiliation, there was a lot that they liked about Friends General Conference and Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. They found out that FGC Meetings were much more likely to be friendly toward diverse theologies and LGBT affirming. They read through the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting *Faith & Practice*, and compared it to that of Indiana Yearly Meeting. Where there were differences, they found that in every case they preferred the guidelines offered by OVYM over those offered by IYM.

In May 2011, Englewood sent a letter to OVYM requesting membership in that yearly meeting. The OVYM *Faith & Practice* states that decisions about admitting new member meetings are to be made by the Quarterly Meetings, and accordingly Englewood's letter was referred to Miami Quarterly Meeting, which set up a clearness committee to meet with Englewood Friends. (The present author was a member of this clearness committee.) The clearness committee met with Englewood Friends in August 2011, and recommended to Miami Quarter that Englewood Friends be admitted as a new meeting. Miami Quarterly Meeting accepted this recommendation, and Englewood Friends were welcomed as a new member meeting at the Miami Quarterly Meeting session of February 2012 and at OVYM sessions in July 2012.

Meanwhile, Bear Creek Meeting had made a proposal to Indiana Yearly Meeting that no monthly meeting could have contact with another yearly meeting, for the purpose of exploring a new affiliation, without the permission of Representative Council, Executive Committee, or yearly meeting in session. In the summer of 2011, IYM put this proposal on hold. It is almost certain that an IYM-B, should that come into existence, will incorporate such a provision into its *Faith & Practice*, but the meetings opposing reconfiguration objected, so its immediate progress was halted.

In August 2011, when Doug Shoemaker visited Englewood Friends, they informed him that they were working with Miami Quarter of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. As Wheeler recalls, "nothing major" came out of that meeting with Shoemaker. But in February 2012, Englewood sent a letter to IYM informing them that Englewood had been accepted into Miami Quarterly Meeting of OVYM, and was expecting to join OVYM in July. The IYM reply, signed by Hinshaw and Shoemaker

and sent on March 27, stated that it was impossible for Englewood to maintain a dual affiliation with Indiana Yearly Meeting and another yearly meeting. The reply seems at least somewhat ironic, since it was the advice of IYM elders that sent Englewood Friends looking for another yearly meeting affiliation in the first place.

According to IYM Executive Committee minutes, Englewood's response "answer[ed] some questions and shar[ed] their continuing concerns with IYM and clearness in considering affiliation with Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting." According to Wheeler, the Englewood letter stated that nothing in IYM's *Faith & Practice* says that a meeting cannot be dually affiliated. In fact, at least one monthly meeting that was part of IYM until recently was dually affiliated. (That was Clear Creek Meeting in Richmond, Indiana, which dropped its IYM membership in the 1990s.) Another letter from IYM stated that the *Faith & Practice* of the two yearly meetings – IYM and OVYM – were too divergent to be compatible with one another. Englewood Friends do not dispute that IYM contention.

A committee of Shoemaker, Hinshaw, Wade Beatty, and Tom Hamm was charged with meeting with Englewood Friends, and this meeting took place toward the end of June (with Shoemaker, Hinshaw, and Beatty in attendance – Hamm was unable to make it). As Wheeler recalls, Hinshaw did most of the talking. He emphasized the authority of the yearly meeting, and the subordination of the monthly meetings. Referring to the Hinkle Creek decision of 1982, he stated that the Indiana case law was clear, and that if Englewood challenged IYM, they would lose in court. (See QT #20, pp. 16-19, for more detail on these points.) Hinshaw stated that there were meetings in IYM that would like us just to throw Englewood out of the yearly meeting. Wheeler said it was "not my idea of a great meeting," because what Hinshaw was saying "sounded so

much like a threat.” It was a “chastise Englewood meeting.”

But eventually this meeting did offer Englewood Friends a way forward, and that opening came during the question-and-answer section at the end. Someone asked, “The fact is, we will be dually affiliated in another month. Now what?”

Hinshaw stopped to think. When he finally spoke, he stated that, if they stayed through a reconfiguration and chose A, IYM would hold its concerns about Englewood’s dual affiliation in abeyance, and that Englewood Friends would have to deal with that question with their new yearly meeting after reconfiguration was complete. Meanwhile, they would be required to catch up with their back assessments. (Wheeler says that they owe \$3000.)

On July 1, 2012, Englewood mailed a letter to the IYM office, choosing IYM-A.

But what if reconfiguration does not happen? Wheeler says, “That’s what concerns us most. Here’s what we’d like to have happen. Sign the meeting house over to us, we’ll pay our back assessments, and we’ll go our merry way.” There is some worry among Englewood Friends that IYM will try to take their meeting house, although most commonly YM leadership disclaims any such intentions with any meeting. Hinshaw told Englewood Friends that IYM had a lot invested in their building, but Wheeler’s rejoinder is that Englewood Friends have invested far more; in fact, “There is no comparison.” And Englewood Friends need to make roof repairs urgently, so they will be investing more in their building imminently.

Wheeler concluded his interview with me as follows: “To me, it [the reconfiguration process] looks like a purge of meetings that look a lot like West Richmond.”

Meetings that have been unable to decide

between IYM-A and IYM-B

To complete our survey of the more than 60 monthly meetings in Indiana Yearly Meeting, we must look at a fifth and final category, those monthly meetings which will be unable to make a decision on reconfiguration.

One such is Dublin Monthly Meeting. Nathan Ulerick posted the following message on August 24: “At this time, Dublin Monthly Meeting wishes to table our decision in what Yearly Meeting we would like to be part of, due to a Lack of Clearness as part of the Reconfiguration.” There will almost certainly be meetings other than Dublin that will be unable to come to clearness on reconfiguration. There is sure to be more contact between the Task Force and meetings like Dublin, after the September 1 deadline.

But both the meetings that oppose reconfiguration, and those that have been unable to decide on any response at all, underscore the often illusory character of the supposed clarity that the Task Force and the Yearly Meeting leadership have been attempting to achieve between a Yearly Meeting A and a Yearly Meeting B. For the many meetings that are home to members with diverse theologies, the breadth, even the ambiguity, of past and present IYM theological approaches serves them just fine.

Everybody loves Spiceland

At this point, it behooves us to recapitulate the data in a form that can fit on one page. (Otherwise the data can be quite confusing.) Unfortunately, there is no single agreed-upon way to interpret this data. Accordingly, I will present two tables that aggregate the data from meeting responses in two somewhat different ways. If one looks at which **meetings** have expressed a preference for YM-A

and which for YM-B, the data shows that many more have expressed a preference for YM-B:

Option	Mtg. Numbers	Pct. Of MM's	Numbers of In IYM	Pct. members
Chose A	04	06%	181	06%
Chose B	37	60%	2265	71%
Refused to choose	09	15%	541	17%
Withdrawn	02	03%	80	03%
Still to decide	10	16%	117	04%

As one can see from this chart, of the responses received thus far by the Task Force, the overwhelming preference of IYM Meetings has been to indicate a preference, whether strong or slight, for YM-B. In fact, of the responses received thus far, there have been many more meetings have chosen B (37), than have chosen A (4), combined with those that have refused to choose (9). Looking at the moment at those that have indicated a preference for A, they constitute thus far only 6% of the meetings in IYM. There is also a significant non-response rate, and the fact that the meetings that have not yet responded have a low percentage of the overall yearly meeting membership demonstrates that many of the meetings that have not yet responded are quite small. In fact, all but one (9) of the meetings yet to respond have fewer than 20 members; the only other non-responding meeting, Mooreland, has 32 members. So the non-responding meetings are generally quite small. If one

assumes that most meetings yet to decide will in the end side with YM-B, it would seem that YM-B will retain at least 75% of the current yearly meeting membership.

But there is quite another way to analyze the data. The Task Force did not solicit criticisms of the reconfiguration process, but it received many such critiques, and several Task Force members have promised to consider such critiques in the report that they will present in advance of the September 29 Rep Council. If one tabulates the data in this manner, one can discern two blocs within IYM of more equal size:

Opinion on Reconfiguration	Mtg.	% of Numbers In IYM	% of MMs	
Oppose or critique reconfiguration	19	31%	1065	34%
No objection to reconfiguration	29	48%	1843	59%
Withdrawn or dually affiliated	03	05%	99	03%
Still to decide	10	16%	117	04%

Here one can see that the number of meetings that have been moved to critique the reconfiguration process is closer to the number of meetings that have endorsed the process, than any delineation of A-type versus B-type meetings might make it appear. However, the meetings that support the reconfiguration process have several hundred

more members than those that have opposed or critiqued reconfiguration.

Why the difference between the two tables? One reason is a grouping of five meetings (Back Creek, Charlottesville, Jericho, Shirley, Spiceland, and Walnut Ridge) within IYM that have both critiqued reconfiguration, sometimes in great detail, and who have also indicated (sometimes using the language “if . . . forced to choose”) a backup preference for IYM-B. Spiceland, with 203 members, is the largest of these meetings. Their associate minister, Cathy Harris, serves on the Task Force and has helped to draft the plan for YM-A. All factions would dearly want to have Spiceland in their yearly meeting, whatever configurations emerge from the upcoming IYM deliberations.

As these meetings have significant agreements with both the opponents of reconfiguration and the large faction of IYM Friends who unequivocally support the B option, they may constitute a center in the yearly meeting. If reconfiguration is approved along the lines that the Task Force presented it to the meetings last spring, they will form part of the large majority of IYM meetings opting for B. If, on the other hand, reconfiguration is not approved at the Sept. 29 Rep Council, they would happily remain in an IYM that would include West Richmond. One IYM Friend has summarized the situation as follows: “There is a tug of war to get to see who claims the center. I hope that there is a center that won’t be dragged one way or another.”

Harris summarizes the position of Spiceland as follows: “Spiceland’s letter does not call for disciplining West Richmond Friends. The question the meeting raises is, how did we go from trying to resolve the conflict between IYM and WRF to splitting the yearly meeting? [It] seems like a huge leap. Spiceland’s stance from the beginning of this whole mess is that the meeting is opposed

to reconfiguration, even if we can't support WRF's minute. Spiceland wishes to still be in relationship and feels that we recognize that there are differences and problems in IYM, but we are committed to being in relationship with one another and work together on the issues."

Sense of the Meeting, or Disguised Voting?

One irony is that, while IYM Superintendent Doug Shoemaker deplored the process of voting used by Penn Meeting in order to sever its connection with IYM, similar kinds of processes, without, of course, using the name of voting, have been deployed by IYM leadership during the controversy over West Richmond's minute. Brian Lilly states, "Before the topic of reconfiguration had ever risen, a letter from the Superintendent and Clerk of IYM M&O was received by my monthly meeting asking for responses to West Richmond's Welcoming and Affirming minute. While I may not have been incredibly happy with West Richmond's minute, I was even more bothered by the fact we were basically being asked to choose a side. In my mind that is pretty much equivalent to taking a vote in Quaker meeting. Since that time, it seems that we have forgotten the value of Quaker process. Quaker decision making doesn't choose a side, it seeks the will of God."

Yet Task Force member Tom Hamm comments, "I don't understand how asking an individual monthly meeting to choose YM A or B is voting. Tabulating who chooses what and declaring a 'winner' would be, but that's different." Indeed, many yearly meetings gather information from all of their monthly meetings on crucial issues coming before the whole body. But Lilly's point seems to be that the use made of the information gathered from the above-mentioned letter was polarizing, and meetings were in fact being asked to take sides. While the

results may have not been systematically tabulated and presented as such to the yearly meeting, it still seemed to Lilly that a winner was being declared. And Lilly is not alone in that feeling.

Another critical take on how yearly meeting decision making processes on these issues have been conducted was offered by a Winchester Friend: “It looks like we have thrown Quaker process out of the window. There have been some Rep Council Meetings where clearness has been decreed, even when several people have spoken out strongly in opposition to the course that the clerk has found to be the sense of the meeting. What we have in IYM is artificial, manufactured clearness. There is not clearness in the Yearly Meeting to proceed with reconfiguration, not now, not this way. For the same thing that happened at last October’s Rep Council meeting to happen again on September 29 would break my heart.” Along similar lines, Heidi Kratzer Hisrich has stated that, at the IYM sessions she attended, “My sense was not that we were in unity in what we discerned, but that some voices were silenced and/or disregarded. And I know that some of us who felt we weren’t heard throughout the process are struggling to come to terms with the Task Force plan.”

Tom Hamm notes that, while some IYM Friends have always opposed reconfiguration, “at both yearly meeting sessions in July 2011, and the October 1 Representative Council, Greg stated that unity had been reached on the proposal before the meeting. When a number of Friends asked to be recorded as standing aside, he reopened the discussions. At yearly meeting, after some revision of the minute, only one Friend stood aside. At Representative Council, no one did.” Perhaps Greg Hinshaw should get more credit for doing a good job as Clerk.

And yet some IYM Friends would insist that there is more to the story. One notes that the consideration of realignment at the 2011 yearly meeting sessions was chaotic before Tom Hamm himself, as recording clerk, stepped in to offer an alternative minute, which carried the day. (QT #19, 7-8) He drily notes that he was more impressed with Hamm's clerking skills than with those of Hinshaw. The Winchester Friend is correct that there were many strong dissenting voices at the October 2011 Rep Council, and the wisdom offered by these Friends seemed not especially reflected in the Reconfiguration minute that Hinshaw offered. (See QT#19, 18-21) And there are other ways to affect the meeting results, besides testing the sense of the meeting. Certain IYM Friends have sometimes been strongly cautioned by the IYM leadership not to speak from the floor, and the Winchester Friend who offered these thoughts perhaps knew of such instances. The gathered body would then be deprived of whatever wisdom the Holy Spirit might impart through the ministrations of these Friends.

Now some IYM Friends would like to ask: At this late date, can the IYM members and leaders set aside side-taking, in order to truly seek the will of God?

Next Steps, and Down the Road

The Rep Council will face strongly conflicting tendencies among IYM Friends whether to act or to delay on whatever proposal the Task Force puts forward. The IYM-B interest group at yearly meeting sessions in July, attended by about 80 people, fielded lots of questions as to whether the reconfiguration process was moving forward quickly enough. Task Force member Cathy Harris noted that a lot of meetings are pressing for a decision at the Sept. 29th Rep Council meeting. Dave Phillips noted that the

Task Force and IYM “have struggled with this incredibly. We are working hard to speak truth and love in balance. But we can’t be afraid to make decisions. Sometimes we are forced to make decisions. Those of us who favor Group B do this with incredible sadness.”

After the deadline for meeting responses on September 1, the Task Force of ten yearly meeting Friends will have to unite on a recommendation to carry forward to the IYM Rep Council on September 29. The Task Force will make a recommendation – see below – but it is important to state at the outset that the Task Force is divided on a central issue – its charge. Some Task Force members believe that, on the basis of the October 2011 minute, that the yearly meeting has already approved the implementation of reconfiguration, and the only matter now before IYM is the details of the plan that Friends will subsequently implement. How Friends coming from this viewpoint can possibly incorporate into their sense of a direction forward the significant input from monthly meetings opposing reconfiguration altogether is unclear, to say the least.

Other Task Force members believe that their charge was to enter into a year of discernment about reconfiguration, and that the September 29th Rep Council meeting should make the decision as to whether reconfiguration will be implemented. There is no indication that the Task Force members will be able to resolve their disagreement on this fundamental point.

The plan that the Task Force will recommend is as follows: It has apparently abandoned any distinction between YM-A and YM-B; there were too few meetings embracing YM-A for there to be a vital core for that group. Instead, the Task Force will recommend that the yearly meeting separate on the lines of affirming the authority of Yearly Meeting. If a Monthly Meeting affirms the authority

of the Yearly Meeting, than it is welcome to remain within IYM. To remain within IYM, a monthly meeting would have to affirm the YM-B concept of yearly meeting authority: that is, that monthly meetings are subordinate to the yearly meeting, which is the “means. . . of common protection” for all of the monthly meetings. This interpretation would disallow the counter-balancing phrases, such as the “validity of the prophetic voices” of monthly meetings, to be used to mitigate the overriding importance of subordination of monthly meetings to the yearly meeting. Meetings that cannot affirm this concept of yearly meeting authority would have to leave. In effect, instead of choosing between YM-B and YM-A, monthly meetings are now being asked to choose between “B” and “not-B.”

This Task Force response, and in particular its decision to characterize those meetings questioning the reconfiguration process as “not-B”, strengthens many IYM Friends’ view that all that is going on is that certain IYM leaders want non-conforming meetings out – or, to use Russell Wheeler’s word we have quoted above, what is going on is a “purge” of non-conforming meetings. As far as names go, are we not further down the road in the direction of Joshua Brown’s wry observation that the official Yearly Meeting process is oriented toward two putative yearly meetings, which could more honestly be designated as Indiana Yearly Meeting (Right) and Indiana Yearly Meeting (Wrong)?

This Task Force recommendation was communicated to IYM Meetings on September 11 by email and snail mail. Consequently, it seems highly uncertain that there will be enough time for Monthly Meeting Representatives to get adequately prepared for the September 29th meeting. Many of the complaints that were forthcoming at this August meeting concerned the lack of

timely notice on reconfiguration matters at last October's Rep Council. One IYM Friend complained that "there was so little notice given to Option 5 before last October's Rep council that I felt railroaded. I don't trust the process." Lack of trust, especially in yearly meeting, is a huge issue, particularly for Friends opposed to reconfiguration. (See QT #19, p. 19)

It is likely that an alternative reconfiguration plan might be proposed from the floor of the Rep Council. One such yearly meeting possibility is currently dubbed "IYM-O." One version of this is as follows: YM-O would agree to be set off from the Yearly Meeting; it would adopt the current governing documents of IYM, including the current Faith & Practice as its own, with the latter interpreted "relatively loosely"; it would agree to a 10-year effective moratorium on enforcement of the 1982 minute; during the moratorium, no other minute or change in Faith& Practice regarding a stance on homosexuality could be adopted by the yearly meeting without absolute and express unanimity from all monthly meetings; monthly meetings would have some de facto autonomy under this proposal, but their actions would in no way bind any other monthly meeting.

Of course, the September 29 Rep Council upcoming will provide another daunting test of the ability of the whole yearly meeting and its clerk to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit amidst some very strong disagreements. It is devoutly to be hoped that the yearly meeting will be able to avoid a disguised voting process on this occasion, too.

Task Force member Ray Ontko, when he contemplates the possibility of an impasse around such different perceptions of where the Spirit is now leading IYM Friends, shares these two questions for Friends' consideration:

“First, was there wisdom in the historic splits, or not? If there was, then this may be the logical continuation of the process. Second, can one of these groups make the gift of departure to the other group, acknowledging that the work of all meetings may go forward better, if this barrier to individual and meeting consciences was removed?”

Some ask that more work of reconciliation be done between the various factions of IYM, in keeping with the Quaker reputation as peacemakers. Margaret Fraser writes that she first heard about the possibility of a separation at July 2011 yearly meeting sessions, and then the October Rep Council meeting two months later set the reconfiguration process in motion. “I’m not saying that it’s the wrong outcome, but I do understand those who still feel their heads spinning. And I do wonder how much real deep intentional reconciliation work has been done in the YM as a whole. Seems to me that there is a lot of impatience among some, which isn’t how Friends do their best discernment of God’s will. If it took some early Friends a couple of years to get clear to undertake a particular piece of travel in the ministry, it wouldn’t be surprising if a decision to fracture a faith community would take longer.”

Other Indiana Friends ask pointed questions about the usefulness of work on reconciliation. Amy Smith Dennis asks, “When meetings opposed to reconfiguration say that we need unity and reconciliation, what would that look like? How does unity in a Christian organization look when there are deep theological differences? What are we unified by? . . . How does diversity in basic beliefs make us stronger? Has it made us stronger in the decades that we have been arguing over these things?”

Another IYM Friend, contemplating the matters before the yearly meeting in September 2012, names “a failure of leadership” in IYM, as evidenced by a “widespread confusion about what is and has happened”

and also a “lack of clarity or unity among the task force itself concerning its own charge.” Along similar lines, Jay Janney, a professor of management at the University of Dayton thinks that “Doug Shoemaker has failed at leading the yearly meeting. He might be a nice guy (I don’t really know him) but at the end of the day, you measure leaders by the outcomes of the organization.”

To fellow members of Richmond First Friends, Janney urged that they get their “lack of confidence in Doug S.’s leadership . . . on the record. It’s not personal, just business. I’ll spare you the details, but I think that by how we academics define leadership that Doug S. failed. I think voicing that is important. . . . The best thing for us to do is to act, not react. And to act with deliberate, visible action.” In fairness to Shoemaker, however, at every business session where reconfiguration has been discussed, there have been a number of Friends who affirm him and his leadership. He has strong support among IYM members who identify with option B.

Board members of organizations under the care of Indiana Yearly Meeting are aware of the impending division within Indiana Yearly Meeting and the extra burdens that will place on their organizations and their board’s management. One trustee of Friends Fellowship Community, a retirement community under the care of Indiana Yearly Meeting, recently reflected on the difficulty of decisions that his board will ultimately face, how and whether to admit unmarried couples, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Yearly meeting tensions, he thinks, will bring an added layer of difficulty to the decision making process. Janney wrote about his experiences at the Quaker Haven Camp this summer: “The reconfiguration hung over the counselors. Everyone knows the big split is coming. I didn’t hear anyone looking forward to it. I hear a lot of hurt in the voices of people, and people feel disengaged.”

Much, of course, depends on the outcome of the September 29 Rep Council, and no one knows exactly what that outcome would be. But the likelihood of sweeping changes in the near future is so great that IYM Friends have to look past September 29, and to conceive of what the future for themselves and their meetings will look like after that date.

One possibility is that the Rep Council will approve reconfiguration in some form. If that is the case, according to a timeline distributed at yearly meeting sessions, there will be a three month interim period, until December 31, when any groups of Friends who do not accept the authority of the yearly meeting as the Task Force has defined it, will begin organizing, all IYM appointed officers and committees will continue to function without change, and meetings who have yet to discern their choice of affiliation with any possible yearly meeting configuration will continue their discernment process.

As of January 1, 2013, meetings opting for a new yearly meeting grouping will be released from all assessment obligations, and members of these meetings will cease their service as IYM officers or committee members. However, meetings not reporting a choice for any grouping will continue to be responsible for paying their assessment, but members of such meetings can no longer serve as IYM officers or committee members.

From January 1 until July, 2013, any necessary arrangement to legally relinquish assets and property rights to meetings opting to be part of the new yearly meeting will be made. Departing meetings, if leaving in a group, under the proposed Task Force plan, would be given their proportion of liquid funds of the yearly meeting (the unrestricted funds total about \$300,000; the departing settlement would be proportionate to membership, and that fund amount is roughly \$100 per member). Legal costs for

setting up a new yearly meeting grouping or grouping would be paid from IYM funds. Departing monthly meetings would receive clear title to their meetinghouses, and any legal costs relating to that title transfer would also be paid by the existing IYM. It appears that the existing IYM would retain, in their entirety, illiquid assets (the yearly meeting owns a strip mall in Muncie) and the restricted funds for missions use.

In yearly meeting sessions in July 2013, the meetings opting for new yearly meeting groupings will be formally released by action of IYM in session.

Indiana Yearly Meeting has agreed to host the Friends United Meeting triennial in 2014. At the April 2012 Rep Council, Chris Sitler, pastor of Dublin Meeting, asked Doug Shoemaker how the hosting of the triennial would fit into the reconfiguration process. Shoemaker replied that if two IYMs exist at that time and both are part of FUM (as both A and B Friends appear to want to do), the two IYMs will co-host this event bringing in Friends from all over the world. There has been a brief discussion of this matter at the Friends United Meeting Board level, and FUM General Secretary Colin Saxton confirms that, if there are two yearly meetings by 2014, that FUM would desire them to work together, peacefully and collaboratively, to co-host the triennial. The FUM Board will surely have more conversation about this matter as the date of the triennial draws closer.

If the IYM Rep Council does not approve of reconfiguration at its September 29 meeting, there will likely still be repercussions of some sorts. Those Friends who favor B say that there will be some monthly meetings that will leave IYM. As mentioned earlier, there is already a great deal of impatience for a decisive outcome among some Friends favoring the B option. When Western Yearly Meeting discerned no unity on the matter of removing Phil

Gulley's recording, six meetings withdrew; those who favor the B option say that there may be more meetings that leave IYM over the West Richmond minute than left Western Yearly Meeting over Gulley's recording, and based on the information that the Task Force has carefully collected over the past few months, there is no reason to think that they are wrong.

On the basis of the information gathered by the Task Force, it remains to be seen whether there are enough meetings who would opt for a YM-A (or a yearly meeting that is not YM-B) to form a vital core. What other options might then exist for these meetings? They might explore affiliation with other yearly meetings in the geographical vicinity – Western Yearly Meeting, Wilmington Yearly Meeting, both of which are affiliated with Friends United Meeting; or if, like Englewood or Penn, they wish to relinquish FUM ties, they could explore affiliation with Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting affiliated with Friends General Conference or with Evangelical Friends Church - Eastern Region. Since Westfield and Hinkle Creek Meetings made the move from Western to Indiana Yearly Meeting, and are poised to join IYM-B when and if that forms, there may be meetings from IYM which will want to make the reverse migration, to join an existing yearly meeting which seems more accepting of diverse theologies.

It is still to be hoped that IYM will come up with a plan that will strengthen Friends' witness at both the monthly meeting and yearly meeting levels. Perhaps, even in the wake of past separations, and recent discord, it can yet model Friends' testimonies on unity and reconciliation. Many Friends have been praying diligently that IYM find its way out of its impasse for years now. May their continuing prayers be fruitful. In this time of crisis, Friends will need to listen closely to God's whispers to discern a

loving and peaceful way forward for the good of all Indiana Friends.

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