Historical Sketch of NCYM-C

We miss / are deeply concerned about the loss of the original section "Early Years" that laid the foundation of our faith. We think it important to have this material in the opening section that tells how our spirituality developed – specifically about George Fox's famous quote. Even if the committee intends to put this somewhere else, we feel it belongs in front of F&P.

We think that the expansion of the Historical Sketch to 7 pages is too much (although we think it is interesting and have no doubt about it being correct), given that we want a F&P that remains slim - less than 50 pages. We wonder the reason for this expansion, and wish there was some background explanation for why the committee wanted the expansion. By amending the title to "Historical Sketch of NCYM-C", the section limits the review of the history of Friends; will that be reviewed later or dropped completely or what? We suggest that the content of this section would fit better at the end of F&P instead of the beginning, so that readers can get right to the "meat" of our Faith and Practice.

During our review of this material, we had rich discussions about our history and how our faith and practices developed, so we appreciate having the information.

1. The first Friends in North Carolina of which there is a record are Henry Phillips and his wife Hannah, who were convinced of the Truth in New England and subsequently moved to the Albemarle Sound region of the Carolinas in 1665. When William Edmundson and George Fox visited them in 1672, Phillips reported he had not seen any other Friends for seven years. Edmundson wrote in his journal that in several meetings for worship he and George Fox held for inhabitants of that area several hearts were reached and tendered by the Lord's testimony. By 1680 there were several monthly meetings and a quarterly meeting active in the area around Albemarle Sound. North Carolina Yearly Meeting was established on Fourth Month 4, 1698, and has met annually since that date. Within 50 years of the beginning of the "Quaker movement" in mid-17th century England, the movement had spread to the colony of the Carolinas and grown into an organized yearly meeting in North Carolina.

2. The number of North Carolina Friends grew steadily throughout the ~~next century~~ 1700s through immigration and convincement. Around the middle of the 1700s a large number of Friends began moving into the Piedmont area of North Carolina, many attracted from the Philadelphia region by the availability of fertile farmland at an affordable price. The Friends community was nurtured and knit together during this period by numerous Friends traveling in the gospel ministry for extended periods of time, often in the most difficult of situations. It is notable that many of these travelers were women, which regularly scandalized people outside the Religious Society of Friends and made it more difficult for the women to travel.

3. Though Friends were never a large portion of the population of the colony, they did wield political influence; Quaker John Archdale was governor of the colony in 1695 and 1696. During the period beginning with his governorship, a number of Friends were elected to the assembly; and Quakers were the most influential political power in the Carolinas in the last decade of ~~the~~ that century.

4. For a long time, Friends in North Carolina avoided the major schisms that divided the Quaker world in the 19th century. Consistently, Friends in North Carolina chose to value living in unity over disputing fine points of doctrine or Quaker tradition and practice. The teachings ascribed to Elias Hicks in the 1820s did not gain much traction in North Carolina, and the yearly meeting remained a solid part of what would be known as the Orthodox branch of Friends. The Wilburite-Gurneyite split in 1845 posed a greater danger to the yearly meeting's unity. ~~At the moment~~ it appeared that Thomas Hunt, Yearly Meeting clerk, would recommend receiving the epistle from the Wilburite yearly meeting in New England, but his father Nathan Hunt rose to give such powerful testimony to the value of remaining unified that the moment passed without action and the Yearly Meeting did not divide. By the beginning of the 20th century North Carolina Yearly Meeting was the only yearly meeting established before the separations began that had not itself separated.

5. Outside pressures on North Carolina Friends may have contributed to their desire to maintain unity among themselves. As chattel slavery permeated all aspects of life in the South, it became more and more difficult for Friends to live in keeping with their doctrines and belief. ~~The combination of economic opportunity, the general "westward movement" and escape from a slave-owning society was a strong attraction to many North Carolina Friends.~~ In the years leading up to the Civil War, as many as 10,000 Friends are reported to have emigrated from North Carolina to free territories and states, motivated by economic opportunity, the general "westward movement" and desire to escape from a slave-owning society. Some monthly meetings moved as a group; their minutes report a meeting for business in North Carolina one month, and the next meeting in Indiana or some other free region. (During this period so many Quakers left Virginia that the yearly meeting was laid down in 1837, and the remaining meetings attached to Baltimore Yearly Meeting as "Virginia Half-yearly Meeting.")

6. For those who stayed behind, life became more and more difficult. Friends reached unity in the early 1770s that they were not to hold slaves themselves, but what were they to do about buying goods made by slaves (which included just about everything)? What about the slaves themselves? Friends in North Carolina made numerous efforts to address these problems, none of which were successful. They freed their own slaves and even purchased some slaves from non-Friends so they could be freed, but the state legislature made manumission illegal and ruled that any "free" Negro could be re-enslaved by any white citizen. Efforts were made by "colonization societies" to send groups of freed slaves to Liberia, Haiti, and other places, but were eventually given up as infeasible. Friends attempted to purchase slaves and treat them as free persons, transferring many to the ownership of the yearly meeting in order to keep their motives clear. The state legislature responded by making it illegal for any slaveowner to neglect to treat slaves as slaves, and empowering any citizen to seize any slave whose owner was neglecting that responsibility. A number of North Carolina Friends did participate in the Underground Railroad. Levi Coffin and his wife Catherine, who are known for their work in this area in Indiana and Ohio, were native North Carolinians.

7. The sufferings of North Carolina Friends for conscience's sake during the Civil War included fines, imprisonment, seizure and destruction of property, forced labor, and in a

few cases sentences of death by firing squad or bayonet. Many of these incidents are uniquely recorded in Fernando Cartland's "*Southern Heroes: Friends in War Time*."

8. By the end of the war and during the Reconstruction period the circumstances of Friends in ~~the state~~ North Carolina were so difficult, physically and spiritually, that a group of Northern Friends banded together in the Baltimore Association to provide material, educational, and spiritual assistance. These efforts were by and large a great blessing, but they also introduced new ideas and practices to North Carolina Friends that would prove to be both controversial and disruptive.

9. In the years between the end of the Civil War and 1900, Friends from the Baltimore Association encouraged North Carolina Friends to adopt some of the techniques and practices employed by the evangelical Christian movement that was sweeping much of the nation. Friends began holding what would today be called revival meetings under the auspices of the yearly meeting, including mourner's benches, altar calls, and much greater emotionalism than was common in Friends meetings of the day. While these innovations were successful in many ways, some North Carolina Friends, particularly in the northeastern portion of the state (Eastern Quarter), felt they were not in keeping with Friends historic faith and practice. In keeping with the desire to maintain unity, the yearly meeting agreed that those meetings which did not approve of the new evangelical work did not have to participate or pay for it in their yearly meeting apportionments.

10. The Richmond Conference of 1887 and the subsequent *Richmond Declaration* were additional sources of strained relationships in North Carolina Yearly Meeting. Some North Carolina observers were concerned that such a conference was being held, pointing out that previous conferences had played a role in Hicksite and Wilburite separations in Ohio. While the *Declaration* issued by the conference did seem to discourage the excesses of revivalism, it also left the way open for programmed worship (including congregational singing and altar calls), and above all a professional ministry. There was also an implied shift in the understanding of salvation from the historic view of a lifelong work ("taking up the daily cross") to a single and swift conversion experience accomplished in a moment.

11. Matters came to a head when the majority of North Carolina Yearly Meeting adopted the *Uniform Discipline* over the expressed opposition of Friends in Eastern Quarter. The *Uniform Discipline* was the organizing document of a new central organization of Friends (Five Years Meeting), to which it was hoped all yearly meetings would belong. It increased the authority of yearly meetings in an attempt to increase the uniformity of Friends faith and practice in the wake of the separations of the 1800s. An example which bore heavily on Friends in Eastern Quarter was the new authority of the yearly meeting to prevent individuals from being recorded in the ministry or appointed as elders, or to dismiss those already recorded, if they did not hold and teach doctrines approved by the yearly meeting. This seemed an unacceptable infringement on the responsibility of local monthly meetings to discern spiritual gifts among their own membership.

12. On Ninth Month 5, 1903, the traditionalist Friends in Eastern Quarter, believing that the *Uniform Discipline* had not been properly adopted, "reassembled" as Eastern

Quarterly Meeting in Rich Square to meet under the 1893 *Discipline*. The motive of this step, the minutes of that meeting show, was

> *not merely to transact the business, ...but also to inform the monthly meetings in a clear but loving manner, that we believe the time has fully come, when we must cease to go on as we have in the past .... To every member of Eastern Quarterly meeting, who favors the adoption of the Uniform Discipline, we would say in tender love, that while it is in a sense of inexpressible sadness to us, that we cannot walk together and be agreed, yet we desire that every one may be fully persuaded in his own mind, may seek diligently to know the will of our Heavenly Father, and be faithful to his leadings. We crave this for our entire membership.*

13. From this meeting in 1903 the separation of North Carolina Yearly Meeting into two continuing bodies may be dated. In 1907 the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends held at Cedar Grove in Woodland, N.C. approved a minute "embracing some of the reasons for our existence as a separate body":

> *Dear Friends: We are now assembled in this place the fourth time in the capacity of a Yearly Meeting. A concern has spread over us to briefly set forth by way of explanation some of the reasons for our existence as a separate body. We had borne with the spirit that had been at work for many years among us, introducing subversive changes, especially in our manner of worship, until the Uniform Discipline had been prepared and offered for our acceptance. This Discipline was adopted by the body assembled at High Point, North Carolina, in a Yearly Meeting capacity, and was sent down, requiring all subordinate meetings to put it into practice. It would have been a severe trial of submission to have adopted the minor changes, but there were changes involved, the importance of which were fundamental. Among these was the submission of qualification for the ministry to a body over which the particular monthly meeting had no control.*
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> *Although this Uniform Discipline does not require of all those accepting it that our ancient manner of worship shall at once be abandoned; it opens a way for it and offers encouragement for the introduction of a new order of things as soon as it can be effected without apparent violence. It offers no protest against the pastoral system which it is well known is rapidly gaining favor among those claiming to be Friends.*
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> *With the remnant of like faith from various parts of our State, and the body of Friends in this locality which included the larger part of the members of the original Rich Square Monthly Meeting, we are now holding North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends at Cedar Grove in Woodland, N. C.*

14. Beginning in 1908 and in successive revisions of the *Discipline*, the yearly meeting has summarized these matters into the following theological and practicing commitments:

> *About this time, those members of the Yearly Meeting who felt that it was right for them to maintain the doctrines of the immediate and perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit, of the headship of Christ over all things to His Church, and of the waiting worship and inspirational ministry which are, and must ever be, the outgrowth of these doctrines, believed it would be right for them to hold a separate Yearly Meeting. Accordingly they met in the capacity of North Carolina Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, at Cedar Grove, in the town of Woodland, Northampton County, North Carolina, in the year of 1904.*

I see paragraph 13 and 14 as a "Declaration of independence" for NCYM-C from NCYM-FUM. But, it isn't clear to me how this paragraph differentiates the two Yearly Meetings. What is it? We lack the basis to know what it is. If this is a statement of doctrine, will it be in the "Doctrine and Testimony" section?

15. North Carolina Yearly Meeting at Cedar Grove immediately initiated correspondence with six other yearly meetings with which they felt they had most in common. These six yearly meetings had also separated from their fellow Friends over theological issues, though at different times and under different circumstances. With varying degrees of alacrity each of these six yearly meetings accepted North Carolina Yearly Meeting at Cedar Grove as part of what became known as the Conservative branch of Quakerism. North Carolina Conservatives were distinct from other Conservative Friends in attaching less importance to maintaining plain dress and plain speech; more importance to higher education; and in giving greater weight to the immediate, perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit than to Friends tradition or Scripture. This paragraph doesn't explain what is distinctive about being "conservative" for us. It doesn't explain the significance of initiating correspondence and exchanging episles. Although we can understand the distinctions that separated the North Carolina Friends, the section doesn't explain why we didn't (as Virginia did) align with Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

16. An immediate result of the separation was a large influx of Friends transferring their membership from other monthly meetings to the conservative Rich Square meeting in Woodland (formerly Cedar Grove Preparative meeting, part of Rich Square Monthly Meeting in the town of Rich Square, five miles to the south). In a civil negotiation immediately following the separation, Friends on both sides agreed that the Conservative body would hold title to Cedar Grove Meeting House in Woodland, and the Five Years Meeting Friends would retain title to the Rich Square Meeting House in Rich Square. Both groups called themselves Rich Square Monthly Meeting.

17. Over the next several years, as monthly meetings were established and new meeting houses built in several areas across the state, the Friends who had transferred their membership to Rich Square transferred them once again, to the new (Conservative) monthly meetings. ~~In each case,~~ the founding members of these new meetings were primarily members of one or two extended families, and these families sustained

leadership at the monthly and yearly meeting levels for over half a century. The Yearly Meeting was organized into Eastern and Southern Quarterly Meetings, following the pattern of the yearly meeting before the separation. (how many members were there total?)

18. during what time? Friends in North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends (Cedar Grove) maintained civil relationships with their Five Years Meeting counterparts over the years. They also kept up a steady stream of correspondence, intervisitation, and transfers of membership with other conservative yearly meetings, particularly Ohio Yearly Meeting. A special link existed between West Grove monthly meeting in North Carolina, Stillwater quarterly meeting in Ohio, and Fairhope monthly meeting in Alabama. Why was this?

19. In 1935 the yearly meeting ~~was moved to~~ approve a *Brief Statement of the Doctrines and Principles as ever believed by Friends*. While closely parallel to the *Brief Synopsis of the Principles and Testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends* adopted by all seven Conservative yearly meetings in 1912, ~~it~~ the Brief Statement …~~-~~is the expression of ~~one~~ our yearly meeting only, and therefore more illuminating as to the beliefs and practices of North Carolina Conservatives in particular. Where are these documents, and can they be included or summarized?

20. The establishment of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) in 1937 occasioned serious debate inside ~~the~~ our yearly meeting: to what extent should Conservative Friends associate with those who had different beliefs? The arguments offered against participation by some Friends in the yearly meeting were articulate, extensive, and published ~~publicly~~ outside the yearly meeting, but the sense of Representative Body was that Friends who felt led to participate should be free to do so, and that Representative Body would provide them with the proper credentials. Since that time the yearly meeting has been quite active in various FWCC programs and activities.

21. ~~As one's focus moves nearer to the present day,~~ it becomes more difficult to tell what more recent events and developments are truly important. The full import of some events have not yet unfolded in their entirety; the contemporary observer may be blind to developments that will prove to be quite significant. Recognizing these limitations, there are points in the recent history of the yearly meeting that appear notable. Beginning with Virginia Beach Friends in 1954, ~~a series of~~ several new, urban monthly meetings ~~were~~ have been accepted into yearly meeting membership. Some had members with family ties to the yearly meeting, while others did not. At the same time, several of the monthly meetings established a half-century earlier, mostly in rural settings, were declining in membership or laid down altogether. Only two of the five original monthly meetings which ones? survived into the 21st century; they are currently joined by seven new monthly meetings, all in urban settings. The shift in membership from a body primarily composed of families whose members were born and raised among Conservative Friends to a group made up largely of unrelated individuals who became convinced Friends as adults has had several consequences. It isn't clear to me what are these several consequences. Suggest using "bullet points" as shown below.

- Doctrines and practices that were at one time simply 'received' as the way Friends are must now be articulated in new ways that are accessible and convincing to newcomers. Adult religious education is seen as more important than ever before.

- The yearly meeting and its members have been drawn to more engagement with the wider world of Friends in recent decades. This activity has included publications that articulate the nature of conservative Quakerism as well as participation and leadership in various Quaker programs of study and retreat.

- The yearly meeting's commitment to Friends education includes involvement with several Quaker affiliated schools.

- Meetings are involved in a wide number of activities with Friends and other groups around common issues, including the environment, justice, peace and other social concerns. One important commitment has been our support of and involvement with the peace work of Quaker House of Fayetteville.

The confluence of old and new seems to have been spiritually productive for all involved, as the Yearly Meeting has consistently sought out the immediate, perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit in each situation.

The use of the term "conservative" remains unclear, and also remains a source of concern for many members and attenders. This section would be a good place to better define it. We all could understand the distinction of "programmed" and unprogrammed meetings, paid clergy, and we can recognize what is intended by "waiting worship". But this document doesn't help differentiate our Yearly Meeting from, for example, Baltimore Yearly Meeting. If we want to claim the name "conservative", then we should define what it means.

As we all know, the political term "conservative" is repellent to many of our members and attenders, and we are linked to that political meaning until we clearly differentiate ourselves from it. The term today is a liability we struggle to overcome, and we are left to individually guess what it means until F&P spells it out. Without that, we would be far better off to discard the term and find a new name for our Yearly Meeting.