

From the Desk of Sylvia Graves: A State of FUM Report

September 2011

Dear Friends,

Greetings! There is so much to tell you about the ministries of Friends United Meeting. What I hope to do is provide some information about the work and progress of the General Board during the last Triennium, as well as report on our financial health, to put some of that information in historical perspective, and to share my thoughts and reflections about the state of Friends United Meeting.

When I came to this position in March of 2006, it was my privilege to come alongside the very capable and devoted leadership of Brent McKinney as clerk. Brent encouraged the FUM General Board to enter a process to develop a Strategic Plan that would guide the work of Friends United Meeting through this triennial and perhaps further into the future. The board approached the task with reasonable enthusiasm and divided into four groups to develop goals and strategies that would improve the function of Friends United Meeting. The four groups were to address concerns in Administration, Communication, Evangelism, and the FUM Identity.

It was the Identity Group who had the most difficult time coming to agreement on a description of who or what is Friends United Meeting. Actually, the group put in long hours, spent much time in discernment and prayer, and is to be commended for tackling some tough issues. Recognizing that understanding where we have come from often helps us know who we are, the Identity Group asked Tom Hamm, curator of the Friends Collection at Earlham College, to write a short history of Friends United Meeting. In it, Tom included this statement, which was submitted by Rufus Jones and approved in the 1922 sessions of Five Years Meeting:

We recognize with profound sorrow that there is in the world today a great drift of religious unsettlement, unconcern, and unbelief. **We desire at this time to call our own membership to a deeper religious life, a greater consecration of heart and will to God, and a more positive loyalty to the faith for which so many of our forerunners suffered and died.** We wish to reaffirm the statements and declarations of faith contained in our Uniform Discipline, viz., “The Essential Truths,” “The Declaration of Faith” issued by the Richmond Conference in 1887, and “George Fox’s Letter to the Governor of Barbados,” and we urge upon all our membership to refresh their minds by a careful reading of these documents which gather up and express the central truths for which we stand, now as in the past. But we would further remind our membership that our Christian faith involves more than the adoption and profession of written statements however precious they may be. It stands and lives only in free personal loyalty and devotion to a living Christ and in an inward experience of his spiritual presence and power in the soul, making the facts of our religion as real and as capable of being soundly tested as are the facts of the physical universe. May Friends everywhere bear in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus.



Indeed, those in the early years, those in the middle years, and those in recent years have had to have their own discussions and discovery of the FUM identity. Members of the current General Board of FUM, like those since our beginning in 1902, represent a range of differences in their interpretation of the Quaker Faith. One of the many privileges I have had is visiting among different meetings in our membership. I have witnessed that range of faith interpretations practiced in the worship, business, and service in our many monthly and yearly meetings. Yet, our General Board members recognize that we have been left with a legacy worth preserving and sustaining.

Most members of the current board volunteered extra time and resources to come to a retreat at Stony Point in New York (September 2009) to labor over the questions, “Do we have enough in common to stay together?” and “Do we believe God still has work for FUM to do?” The answer was “Yes.” It seems to me that what we have most in common is the work we feel called to do. And, it is probably safe to assume that most, if not all of you who are reading this, would agree. **The challenge for us presently is what to do about those half a million Friends who are not reading this but who make up the FUM membership worldwide. For there are many, many Friends out there who hardly know who FUM is, let alone demonstrate enough ownership and loyalty to this organization to sustain it. Here are the most common views I have seen across the FUM global picture:**

1. There are relatively few who look at FUM as both **your own and your meeting’s response to Jesus’ Great Commission** (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). You not only are glad to pay your yearly meeting’s defined portion of “dues,” but you send extra funds when you feel especially led to support a ministry. You keep interested and participate.
2. Probably a majority of us perceive Friends United Meeting as **an affiliated Quaker organization** and consider participating in its ministries as an option. When our staff attends your yearly meeting sessions, we are often invited to share a five- to ten-minute report of FUM along with other “Affiliated Organizations” at yearly meeting sessions, even in yearly meetings that support the missions with tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.
3. There are many Friends, even in some of our yearly meetings who participate at a high level, who see FUM as only **a mission organization** and “sort of” remember that their meeting sends money “sometimes.” When I have had the privilege of

showing pictures and first-hand accounts and telling the stories of what is being done on your behalf, especially in areas where people are least familiar with the FUM ministries, most people are amazed, pleased, and somewhat proud of the good work being done! We wonder what we can do from our office to amaze *more* people.

4. There are several Friends who see that **members of FUM have too wide a range of theology** and they don’t want to associate with or even have conversations with other Friends who believe or behave so differently from themselves. **One thing I have learned in the past five years is that every FUM member yearly meeting in North America contains people representing the same range of faith and practice as we find across Friends United Meeting.** I mean that there are some people in what we might generalize as a theologically conservative, evangelical yearly meeting who would prefer more silence in their meetings and a more social justice agenda, and there are some very Christ-centered Friends in the more theologically liberal yearly meetings who get impatient with what they view as tedious dialogue and silence and wish people were more comfortable talking about Jesus. Each yearly meeting has different proportions of people with those preferences. **I have also learned that FUM is very important to many Friends in every yearly meeting, Friends who see FUM as an expression of what they believe is the appropriate response to Christ’s call for unity and mission, no matter what yearly meeting they come from.**

In the process of developing a strategic plan, our efforts were not focused on reinventing Friends United Meeting. The board has affirmed repeatedly the work done decades ago to define the FUM purpose and to set work priorities of Communication, Evangelism, Global Partnerships, and Leadership Development. The work done by others before us is recognized and appreciated. Though I wish to reflect on some of the efforts of the current General Board to move ahead in trying to help Friends United Meeting more effectively carry out our purpose statement, let’s first take a brief look at what might be considered the *peak* of North American participation in our century-plus-nine year history.

Using the book, *Go Into All the World: A Centennial Celebration of Friends in East Africa*, edited by Herb and Bea Kimball, I counted the number of North American

and European Friends serving on behalf of Five Years Meeting/Friends United Meeting in the 15 years between 1956 and 1970, just in Kenya. There were others serving in Ramallah and Jamaica during that time as well. But we had many missionaries in Africa at that time who lived on the Kaimosi Mission compound—that 1,100 acres acquired for the Industrial Mission. Others lived and worked in Lugulu, and a few began work in the Turkana area. In those 15 years, 214 adult missionaries worked in Kenya as teachers, nurses, doctors, administrators, evangelists, in the industrial department, etc. Though most of those 214 people represented FUM member yearly meetings, there were some who came from other yearly meetings, such as Pacific and Northwest. **Using past minutes of Triennials and General Board meetings I have gleaned that membership in our North American yearly meetings added up to nearly 100,000 in 1960.** During that time, there was still only one East Africa Yearly Meeting centered at Kaimosi, numbering about 30,000 members. Since then, 15 more yearly meetings have registered in Kenya and been accepted into FUM membership. **Currently, FUM membership in the 11 North America yearly meetings, plus Cuba and Jamaica, numbers only about 38,000, about one-tenth the population of Friends in Kenya.** I probably don't need to spell out the effect that that change has had on our resources.

We were probably long overdue in establishing an office for Friends United Meeting in East Africa, but thanks to Retha McCutchen and Brent McKinney, the Africa Ministries Office opened in 2005. The number of FUM staff working from that office in Kenya is three: John Mwanji, Judith Ngoya, and Eden Grace. At this time, Eden Grace and Ann Riggs (Friends Theological College principal) are the only two Field Staff from North America working in East Africa—a huge reduction and change in FUM's responsibility of carrying on the work as compared to the number of those missionaries serving in 1960. The only institutional management responsibility we have now in Kenya, beyond networking and helping develop leadership for the yearly meetings, is for Friends Theological College and Kaimosi Hospital. The other ministries we endorse and support are not managed or staffed by Americans, but have Kenyan yearly meetings and/or oversight committees who manage them.

Is that progress? Or is it failure? Have we empowered and equipped our Kenyan Friends, or did we abandon them? Both views exist. If the primary objective of the Industrial Mission set up in Kaimosi in 1902 was “to exert a Christian influence on the natives who are employed and

teach them the habits of industry and to establish a self-supporting Christian church,” have we succeeded? Kenyan Friends have now over 2,000 local meetings, around 1,200 primary schools, and about 230 secondary schools. At the Kaimosi Mission compound, as well as all the other areas where American and European Friends worked, the work is now being done by Kenyans. Every yearly meeting has active ministries to address needs in education, the plights of widows and orphans, and the development of leadership. Since the FUM office opened in 2005, more and more of the Kenyan yearly meetings are contributing financially to that effort. Yet, the Kenyan and Ugandan yearly meetings are like the North American yearly meetings in that not all see FUM as their essential link to the implementation of the work called for in the Great Commission. Most Friends in our 30 member yearly meetings see FUM as an affiliated organization, at best, and have a mental picture not of half a million people working *together* to support the work to equip and energize Friends for ministry in all 30 yearly meetings, but see instead an office in Richmond, Indiana, that sends appeals for money.

We currently have no field staff in Jamaica or Cuba. I'm pretty certain we would have if we had the resources to support those yearly meetings to the extent that is needed. Jamaica has asked for our help. We're grateful for North Carolina Yearly Meeting's response to that need as they have sent several individuals to work on the strategic planning and leadership development that Jamaica has asked for. And certainly Cuba would like more attention to building relationships with them. We are glad for the partnership that New England Yearly Meeting has provided.

Three years ago we agreed to “endorse” the ministry of Johan and Judy Mauer in Russia, meaning we welcome them to try to raise funds in FUM and to send a report regularly. However, we have left the primary support of their work to Northwest Yearly Meeting.

There are just a small handful of Friends in Ramallah. The population of Christians in Ramallah has been steadily dropping. We depend on Joyce Ajlouny (Ramallah Friends Schools' director) to be the expression of FUM's concern there. And, though we channel donations of over \$100,000 to the Friends Schools annually, a large portion of donations comes from Friends or others not even affiliated with FUM.

Our editor, Katie Terrell, read every issue of the past 50 years of *Quaker Life* magazine to select articles and compile what I think is a remarkable and historic 50th anniversary issue, which, by the way, should be purchased for every one of your meetings' libraries. It was my honor

to get to read it first, for my input on editing. What I learned, more than anything else, as I read about people I knew and respected in leadership and ministry roles throughout these 50 years, is that there has been profound work done through this organization. And that our General Board, in efforts to align finances with the work we have felt called to do, have tweaked and fiddled with our organizational structure and our office staff assignments over and over and over in order to “fix” Friends United Meeting. Yet little seems to have happened to effectively help local and yearly meetings honor the original commitment to and ownership of the work of FUM.

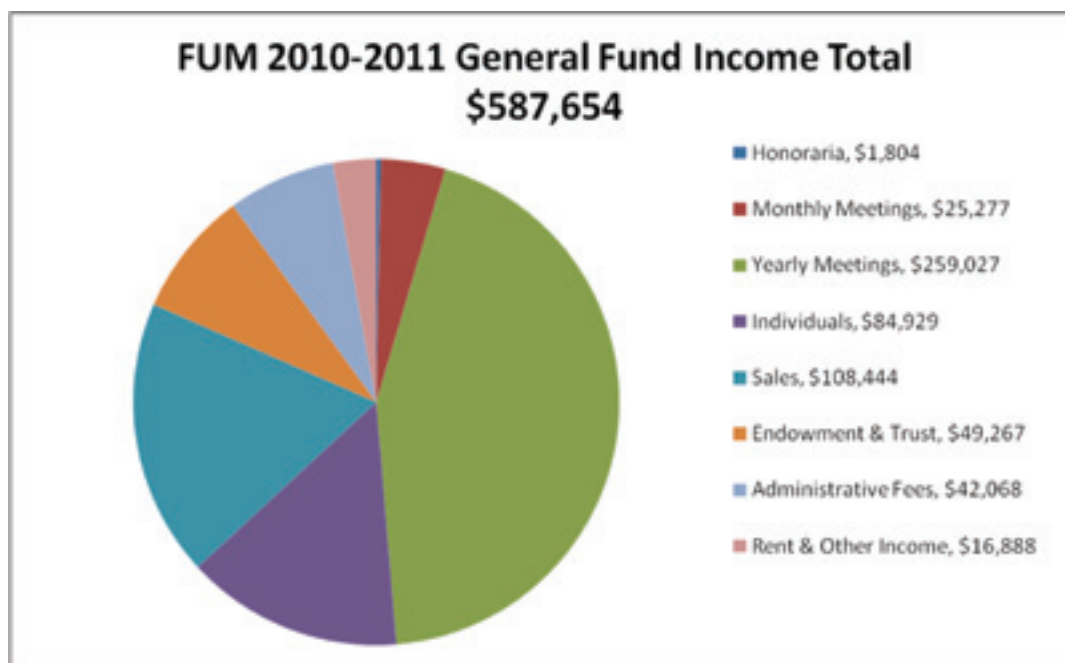
Five Years Meeting (the original name of Friends United Meeting) was not set up to be an “affiliated” organization. We were set up to be the right arm for each local meeting’s effort to respond to the Great Commission to take the gospel message to all nations by addressing both evangelism and humanitarian causes. And we were meant to be your inter-Quaker common source of communications and education. Now we seem to have become that affiliated organization that often competes for the resources of your own meetings and yearly meetings. Since FUM isn’t seen as an integral part of your yearly meeting’s, your local meeting’s, or your own sense of global ministry, many of our local meetings have found other outlets for global ministry if they do it at all. Our board has discussed on numerous occasions how we can provide spiritual nourishment to our North American yearly meetings, similar in ways we have done in the past with staff and curriculum devoted to growth among American Friends, but at this time that is deemed unaffordable. We also recognize that the reduction in North

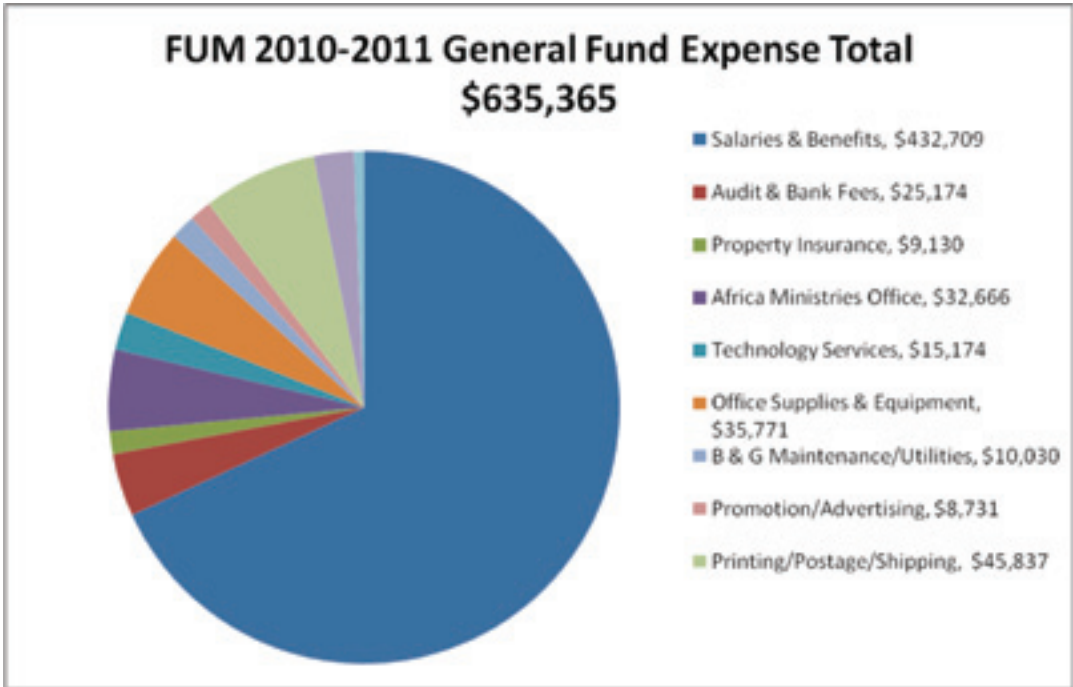
American membership and loyalty to a religious institution, like that of all other mainline denominations, is a contributing factor in our changing situation.

The following graphs (*below and at right*) indicate the income and expenses for the operating fund of Friends United Meeting during Fiscal 2011 (July 1, 2010–June 30, 2011). You will notice that expenses are more than the income, and even that is with spending held to about \$60,000 below the budget. People in the not-for-profit world tell us that we did quite well given the state of the economy. Still, we have trimmed budgets, given no increases in salaries, and not spent funds that were allotted in order to keep costs down.

Please note that donations to outreach projects and missions are in restricted funds and not part of the operating budget. The total amount contributed for the restricted fund in Fiscal 2011 was \$926,291, as compared to \$1,017,994 the year before (this does not include a large bequest for Kaimosi Hospital), and \$1,206,778 in Fiscal 2009.

Though FUM has never defined for each yearly meeting a specific expectation in regard to financial support, it seems that now there is a huge discrepancy in the financial responsibility accepted by our member yearly meetings. Here is a graph (*at right, bottom of the page*) showing you a comparison based on donations for both operating expenses and for restricted giving in Fiscal 2010 (July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010) for our North American yearly meetings. I do not have the comparative figures for the African yearly meetings, but they too have a wide range of financial support for FUM ministries.

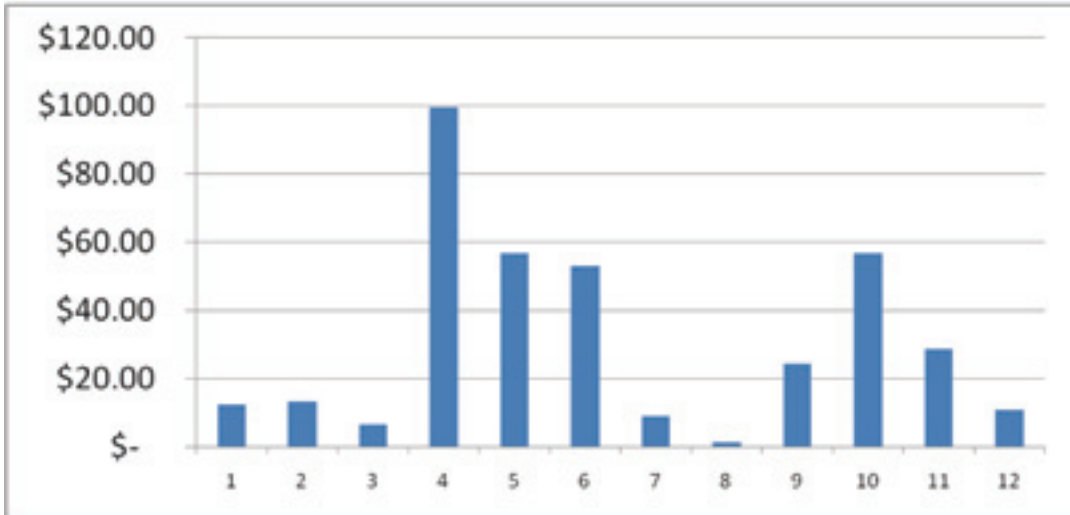




This chart (*below*) shows the range varies from \$1.16 per person in one North American yearly meeting to \$99.60 in another. The average donation per person per yearly meeting is \$31.03. (Remember that is General Fund and Designated Giving combined.) **Imagine if every person in every member monthly meeting gave \$35 a year to FUM. We could fund all of our ministries without spending a big chunk of staff time and your resources trying to raise money for our commitments!** I realize that some of you may back off since it seems that you are doing more than your share. But I show you this chart because those yearly meetings who are way over the average have already told us they cannot keep it up. **So, now what are we to do?**

Our General Board, two years ago, appointed a Re-structure Task Force, charged with the task of bringing back some ideas that would help FUM to more effectively live out our purpose statement: *“Friends United Meeting commits itself to energize and equip Friends through the Power of the Holy Spirit to gather people into fellowships where Jesus Christ is known, loved, and obeyed as Teacher and Lord.”* The Task Force, consisting of Jonathan Vogel-Borne of New England Yearly Meeting, Doug Shoemaker of Indiana Yearly Meeting, Mary Lord of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Brent McKinney who is past clerk and from North Carolina Yearly Meeting, Kelly Kellum who is our most recent clerk from North Carolina Yearly Meeting, and myself. We were told by the Board to “Be Bold.” So

2009-2010 Donations by Yearly Meetings to Operating and Restricted Funds



we tossed around some thoughts and came back to the board with some big ideas for change that we might consider, such as:

- In order to build connections and ownership of the missions and ministries of FUM, have the yearly meetings take on more management and decision making responsibilities for those missions for which they showed the most interest and support. FUM would still be the bookkeeper and serve in an advisory role while continuing to tell the stories.
- Redefine membership so that individuals and meetings who want to belong to FUM can be members even if they are not in member yearly meetings.
- Realign yearly meeting representation to the governing board so that appointments are more in proportion to the financial support given by that yearly meeting.

There were others, but none of those have found a home in our hearts and minds, and what the “restructure” or “revitalization” plan will look like is yet unrevealed to us. Some progress I feel we accomplished as a board was to reaffirm the core of our existence and purpose so that there won’t be any doubts about that. It really hasn’t changed in 109 years. **We are a Christian organization and do our work based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as best as we can understand them. What our task force seems to be realizing is that a century of tweaking the organizational structure and realigning staff or reducing the number of staff is not what it will take to help us implement our purpose more effectively. We need a transformation of hearts, souls, and minds across the half a million people we represent. Sounds sort of like Rufus Jones, doesn’t it? “We desire at this time to call our own membership to a deeper religious life, a greater consecration of heart and will to God, and a more positive loyalty to the faith...”**

I know that some of us don’t see ourselves as evangelists, but when we read a good book and talk someone else into reading it too because we know it will meet some special need and because it may change his life for the better, we are evangelists. When we see a movie or take a trip that we can’t wait to tell our friends about, we are evangelists. When we try a new product and like it so much we buy it for someone who might need it, we are evangelists. **My prayer for this year and this Triennium is that we will have renewed minds regarding the value of the minis-**

tries we support. My prayer is that we’ll all have such a great feeling about the hope for our future, and excitement about the successes of transforming lives, we’ll gather folks up to help Colin Saxton our new General Secretary, the new board, and the office and Field Staff with all the energy we can muster for doing God’s work through the channels that are already built for us to use.

I have learned in my five and a half years of serving as General Secretary that this is an organization worthy of our loyalty and advocacy. I am confident in the conscience and the competency of each of our office and Field Staff members who, if not given more support, are on the verge of burnout. We have a General Board sincere in their efforts to find a place of common ground that will hold up our work. We spend great effort and expense to be registered, to be legal, and to be audited so that the ministries of FUM can be held accountable. I can testify that there are thousands of people being energized and equipped for better lives in the Spirit through our churches, schools, and health ministries. And I couldn’t be happier about handing over the proverbial baton to Colin Saxton for the next leg of the race. With your help and with the help of the next General Board, Colin will be able to take us to a new level of vision, integrity, and effectiveness. But he can’t do it by himself, and please don’t put unrealistic expectations on him. He will need help from each one of you and from many more.

Friends United Meeting, if we were ever sure of who we are, it is now. If we are to trust our leaders and see that they are supported adequately, it is now. If we are to trust the Spirit to lead us into a better position for witnessing and ministry, it is now. If you ever wished you could be first to share the good news, it is now! Be ready! Be open to what God has in mind for us. Be open to what the next three years will bring to you in terms of changes in Friends United Meeting. Be willing to change—your mindset, your attitude, your trust level. There is a fresh wind blowing. I pray to God that you can feel it, that you can capture it, and that you can share it with the half a million Friends who aren’t reading this. May we be changed, as God sees fit.



Sylvia Graves
General Secretary

We believe FUM is doing the work God has called us to and invite you into this ministry by sharing from the gifts that God has entrusted to you.

I want to support Friends United Meeting with my gift of \$_____.

A check is enclosed made to Friends United Meeting.

Please charge my: Visa MasterCard Discover Am. Express
(circle one)

Credit card #: _____

Exp. date: _____ Security code: _____

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

Total amount to charge my credit card: \$_____



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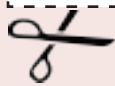
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E-mail: _____

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Friends
United Meeting
101 Quaker Hill Drive
Richmond IN 47374-1926

CS2011



Above: FUM Africa Ministries Office staff, John Muhanji;
Below: FUM Richmond office staff—standing, left to right:
Frank Monroe, Sylvia Graves, Katie Terrell, Shari Veach; seated, left to
right: Barbara Smith, Terri Johns, Yvonne Snyder, Kim Schull

“I have found that contributing to FUM through their automatic monthly giving program has been simple and convenient. FUM receives the gifts regularly and every month when I open my credit card statement I am reminded of the work that FUM is doing and the people that make it all possible.”

— Will Taber
Arlington, Massachusetts




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During the 2011 FUM Triennial Sessions in Wilmington, Ohio, photographer Daniel J. Kasztelan captured many faces of FUM. You will see these photos in the months and years to come as we focus in the next triennium on the theme, "A People to be Gathered."