

June 3, 2014

Friends:

We would like to offer Friends a timeline of the discernment that led to the present form of the alcohol policy. We would also like to explain how concerns encountered along the way were addressed and the framework within which approval is being requested.

We first broached the need to author a policy on alcohol consumption at the Young Adult Friends Working Group Meeting held on 10 June 2013. The Working Group had heard a growing desire from the YAF community for us to organize, host, sponsor and/or advertise informal social events for Young Adults Friends. The Young Adult Friends Working Group acknowledged that these events could take many different forms, but some of the requested events from the YAF community included happy hours and other situations that tend to involve alcohol consumption. For the sake of integrity, moderation, and safety, the Working Group decided that an alcohol policy would be needed to guide us as we worked to support such informal social events. Our co-clerk, Zachary Dutton, authored a version, which was heavily revised by Friends Lane Taylor and Elizabeth Piersol Schmidt. This version was brought before our community for consideration at a business meeting session held on 27 July 2013 during the residential Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions. This business meeting would become one step in a longer journey.

We quickly knew that we were not ready to approve the policy. We had not held any threshing or listening sessions for Friends to consider the policy over a period of time and to offer feedback in a discernment process. The policy had also been authored with too broad a focus. It seemed to apply to all situations rather than to the specific social events for which it had been intended originally.

During our meeting on 15 September 2013, the Young Adult Friends Working Group reached a sense of the meeting to hold a listening session at the October 2013 retreat, after which a second revision of the policy was attempted. During this listening session, Friends affirmed the original intent of the policy to guide the support of informal social events. In this spirit, our Co-Clerk, Elizabeth Martin, brought a second revision of the policy for further seasoning to the Young Adult Friends Working Group at its meeting on 17 November 2013. Friends agreed that the revised version of the policy appropriately reflected, "the salient elements of the discernment process leading to its drafting," and agreed to bring it to a Business Meeting at the January 2014 retreat for consideration.

At this point, the policy had been crafted to address concerns about potential exclusion of underage Young Adult Friends. It continued to convey the respect and trust we have for underage Young Adult Friends to monitor themselves with integrity. It also sought, and continues to seek, balance between needs for closer intimacy and for wider fellowship. The policy further acknowledged implicitly that some among us might be in recovery from alcoholism, which is a chronic spiritual and physical condition. In part, these concerns are now reflected in the line that reads, "Any [informal] social event will be open and welcoming to all YAFs throughout our age range (18-35ish), regardless of whether or not YAFs are able or choose to consume alcohol."

During our business meeting session at the January 2014 retreat, we added a line to the policy, which the Working Group moved to the preamble. (The preamble will accompany the policy wherever it appears.) The additional line reads: "In promoting such [informal] events...advertisement(s) will state whether alcohol consumption will, may, or will not occur." We also intend to accompany any advertisement of events that may or will involve alcohol with the policy attached or linked. However, at our business meeting

during the January 2014 retreat, we held off from approving the policy to provide time to explore several newly raised issues. These issues were threefold: Firstly, are we confident we know why we are creating an alcohol policy? Secondly, how do we implement a policy that prohibits underage Friends from drinking? Lastly, is it congruent with our conscience to prohibit underage Friends from consuming alcohol at events where of-age Friends are drinking? At its meeting on 2 February 2014, the Young Adult Friends Working Group seasoned these concerns and arrived at a set of suggestions.

As mentioned, adopting a policy on alcohol will allow us to open further opportunities for fellowship and outreach (like happy hours, quizzo nights, potlucks, and parties). Our community would be able to contain a wider breadth of participation and to benefit from the resulting increased vitality. The alcohol policy frees us to open such opportunities for fellowship because it provides additional liability coverage and because it establishes a set of important, collective intentions for engaging moderately and mindfully in alcohol consumption. These points are reflected in the lines reading, "The YAF community will work together to hold each other accountable and maintain a safe, responsible, and respectful social environment. As we continue to deepen our fellowship with one another, we can use this policy to grow a Young Adult Friends community that is inclusive, safe, and intentional."

Secondly, in the event that underage Friends were drinking in the presence of other members of the community at an official Young Adult Friends event, it would be the community's responsibility to remind underage Friends of the established expectations and then trust them to self-regulate. We keep each other accountable through tenderness of heart, which at times requires the courage of direct communication. We name our truths even when it is difficult to do so.

Thirdly, it is unclear whether it is against our all of our consciences to prohibit underage Young Adult Friends from drinking--while of-age Friends are drinking--at official events hosted by the Working Group (and PYM by proxy). The answer to this question should be born out by our lived experience with the policy. We were especially hopeful that approving a policy allowing of-age Friends to drink in the presence of underage Friends--who are prohibited from drinking--would provide for healthy modeling of safe and responsible alcohol consumption. The YAF Working Group therefore recommended a tentative approval of the policy's revised form with the intention to revisit it in twelve to eighteen months.

The policy was next brought to the Meeting for Business at the Young Adult Friends Spring Retreat on 17 May 2014. After reviewing the policy, history, and the recommendation of the Working Group for approval with a review after 12-18 months, Friends broke up into pairs to thresh the policy along the lines of two queries: *What would an alcohol policy allow us to do? After reading the policy and history, do you have any concerns remaining about this policy?* When we settled back into worship and began reflecting on the policy, it was clear something had shifted from our previous Meeting for Business. Friends who had previously held concerns were now at ease, and the questions that followed were more focused on how it would be implemented rather than concerns about having a policy or how it was worded. After a period of discernment, **Friends approved the present draft of the alcohol policy** with the understanding that we will revisit it in twelve to eighteen months. The YAF community also directed our YAF Working Group to explore strategies for holding ourselves accountable to the policy and to the law.

The policy is proffered to Friends in a spirit of worship after a journey of discernment and discovery. The policy expressly does not apply to all situations at which Young Adult Friends may gather, but only to those informal social events outside retreats supported in some way officially by the Young Adult Friends Program. Such support could mean anything from direct organizational support to support from PYM staff

or the YAF Working Group with invitations and outreach. Support for events would never include the purchase of alcohol with YAF Working Group or PYM funds. We also emphasize that there is only a small subset of informal social events that may involve alcohol consumption. When they do involve alcohol consumption, it behooves us to ensure that we approach our activity with a sense of integrity, moderation, and safety. The purpose of the events is to provide more opportunities for YAFs be with our spiritual community of peers, not to consume alcohol. Ultimately, the policy enshrines these and other values in our consciousness to guide us in our fellowship and ministry.

Sincerely,

Zachary Dutton & Liz Martin, Co-Clerks, and Elizabeth Piersol Schmidt, Communications Coordinator  
On behalf of the Young Adult Friends Working Group

### Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Young Adult Friends Working Group

#### Policy on alcohol use at informal YAF social events

Approved May 17, 2014

The Young Adult Friends (YAF) Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) is committed to upholding the needs of all the members of our community to the best of our ability, and it is our intention to provide a fruitful, safe and loving space for all of our members to grow spiritually together and as individuals. Accordingly, the basic guideline for our events is that all participants accept collective responsibility for the upholding of this loving space. To supplement this guideline, the PYM YAF Working Group establishes the following policy for alcohol consumption at certain social events like a happy hour or quizzo/game night officially associated with the Working Group. In promoting such events, the advertisement(s) will state whether alcohol consumption will, may, or will not occur. The policy is proactive, and we do not draft it in response to any alcohol-related incident. PYM YAF weekend retreats have been, and will remain, alcohol-free.

The policy follows accordingly:

The Young Adults Friends Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting accepts that alcohol consumption may occur at select social events (such as a happy hour or quiz night.) Any such social event will be open and welcoming to all YAFs throughout our age range (18-35ish), regardless of whether or not YAFs are able or choose to consume alcohol. All attendees are expected to follow the law; those under 21 will not consume alcohol at YAF events. The YAF community will work together to hold each other accountable and maintain a safe, responsible, and respectful social environment. As we continue to deepen our fellowship with one another, we can use this policy to grow a Young Adult Friends community that is inclusive, safe, and intentional.