

**New York Quarterly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends
Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
Zoom/video-conferencing / Brooklyn Meeting
first month, seventeenth day, 2021**

MINUTES

Present: Nancy Britton (Morningside), clerk; Ann Kjellberg (Fifteenth Street), recording clerk.
Attendance: Brooklyn 22, Fifteenth Street 11, Flushing 2, Manhattan 3, Morningside 13, Staten Island 1, Brooklyn Friends School 1, Friends' Seminary 5, Mary McDowell 1, Quarterly Meeting General Manager 1, visitors 3. Total 63.\

2021.01.01 The Meeting begins at 1 p.m. with waiting worship.

2021.01.02 The clerk gives the following message:

Friends, we meet today in a distressed country and a world in crisis, leaving us feeling isolated, emotionally challenged and spiritually thin. The pandemic and recent violence in our government's capital feels like we're riding heaving tectonic plates. Vaccines and the leadership change is still a distant horizon. We are in a tender place and in a painful space. We're gathered today on the steady ground of community and are here together to witness and minister to each other. Let's be tender to each other and in these times, be prepared to go slowly and stay centered in the Spirit.

2021.01.03 Friends approve Ann Kjellberg as today's recording clerk.

2021.01.04 Friends Seminary Trustees' co-clerk Isaac Henderson introduced their written report. He read a message from Bo Lauder, head of school. Fellow Trustees Peter Rahbar, Kennedy Cogan, Buxton Midyette, and Andrew Lowry assisted him in reading portions of the report. The report is accepted and attached.

2021.01.05 Beth Schneider, Associate Head of the Mary McDowell Friends School, verbally presented their annual report. The nature of the pandemic is at odds with their practice as a school for children with learning disabilities that uses all types of modalities. Head Debbie Zlotowitz reached out to the community about how to envision themselves under lockdown. Half of the school did not believe that they would close. Classes were conducted remotely from March through September, prioritizing providing full access to virtual learning for students.

Staff and administration drew on simplicity as a value to adhere to for uncovering what was essential and what students most need. They modeled a trauma-informed approach to teaching. Their practices depended on routine, connection, choice, and advocacy. Silent Meeting proved very important for the

community. Middle School designed their own way to close Meeting in lieu of shaking hands. Graduation and moving up ceremonies will be very important. Some practices they developed to adapt to this experience proved valuable and will remain after the pandemic, for example, bringing in students' home environment. Commitments were made with board, faculty, staff, families, alumni, and students to anti-racism and working to respond to the challenge of dismantling white supremacy and addressing attacks on truth and science. Recommendations and action-steps, looking at race, class, privilege, and accountability came from all members of the community. Five committees drawn from the full community are working on hiring, admissions, training, expanding leadership, building a welcoming community, and "our journey." The school was deliberate about developing clear language for discussing the election and its aftermath.

School reopened on September 14th. Young children's classes were 100% in person; middle and upper school were hybrid, with in-person classes two days a week. A 100% remote alternative was provided for those who needed it. The school was fortunate to have a full complement of equipment and full preparation to return in person. The children have been amazing in their mastery of the new protocols. Younger and Middle School students are happy to be back. Upper School is harder, the students are profoundly impacted by this experience, so contrary to their expectations of school, though they have been creative in adapting to virtual existence. The school completed a major construction project: the expanded footprint of the lower school which enabled a socially distanced return, and they completed a separate Meeting House which has become a beloved space. Beth praised the work of the faculty and staff amid anxiety and professional challenge. Many faculty members were able to be vaccinated last week. There is power in what they have learned this year.

The report was accepted.

2021.01.06 Ed Oliver, clerk of the Brooklyn Friends School Board of Trustees, presented their verbal report. He described the difficulties of closing in the spring and shifting over to virtual school. They prioritized preserving a sense of togetherness both academically and in activities, and making graduation ceremonies as memorable as possible and bringing joy to a difficult situation. The BFS Cares Emergency Fund raised money to support community members affected by Covid and the school worked to provide tuition assistance where needed to keep the community together. The school applied for a federal Paycheck Protection Program loan. Ed described the reckoning over systemic racism and to the work to become allies and accomplices in anti-racism. Students participated in the 'I Run With Ahmaud' committee to join in a national discussion about dismantling systemic racism.

Ed shared with the Meeting the school's reopening plan. The reopening plan documented the efforts we made to meet a strong community desire for in-person learning, including Pods, circulation, and the option to be virtual. Air flow and filtration and person density were important for reopening. Universal testing, temperature checks, limiting access, and expanded medical staff were essential and improvements to the facilities were made that enhanced school safety along with heightened cleaning procedures and schedules. Community covenant. Meeting for Worship has continued virtually. fortunately there wasn't a need to quarantine classes or grades and school has been open every day since September 14th with an infection rate below 1%. The School provided a benefit of community to students and families in a difficult year. In November In-house forums were held about the union and the petition concerns and a forum about the finances of the school.

The clerk reminds Friends that the concerns from the listening session on the Brooklyn Friends School union have been carefully considered and the Ad Hoc Committee under the care of Ministry and Council that came out of that session has been prayerfully discerning these concerns.

The report was accepted.

2021.01.07 Glenn Josey, reads the Education Committee's annual report, which is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report. For the 2020-2021 academic year one student at Friends Seminary and twelve at Brooklyn Friends School received grants in the amount of \$76,325.75. The application for the coming academic year is available and it is on the website, nycquakers.org. The report was accepted.

BREAK

2021.01.08 The clerk reopens the meeting reading the following:

“Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time. And it makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the Helm. And when our little day is done, we lie down quietly in peace, for all is well.”

Thomas Kelly, 1941, 12th month, Day 31. Daily Readings from *Quaker Writings Ancient and Modern*.

2021.01.09 Gloria Thompson reads Manhattan Monthly Meeting's quarterly report, which is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report.

2021.01.10 Jane Alexandre reads Morningside Monthly Meeting's quarterly report, which is appended to these minutes. Two minutes are read for approval by the NYQM. Friends accept the report.

2021.01.11 We approve the first Morningside Monthly Meeting minute below and will forward it to the New York Yearly Meeting Witness Coordinating Committee.

I. Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minute in Support of the Fair & Timely Parole Bill (approved at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, June 2, 2019)

Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) supports the passage of the Fair and Timely Parole bill, which provides that if a person's record in prison is good and the person does not evince a current and unreasonable risk to the safety of members of the community outside prison, the person should be granted parole as a matter of course once he or she has served the minimum time the judge has set. As Friends, we believe that we all have the possibility of transforming our lives. People who have turned their lives around while incarcerated and have demonstrated that transformation deserve to be released. They can make important contributions to their communities and families. The nature of the crime committed many years before should not

be the sole reason for denying parole. Those of us who have volunteered in NY State Correctional Facilities have seen numerous examples of this kind of positive change and know many who, upon release, have been assets to their communities.

2021.01.12 We approve the following second Morningside Monthly Meeting minute and will forward it to the New York Yearly Meeting Witness Coordinating Committee.

II. Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minute in Support of the Elder Parole Bill (approved at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, June 2, 2019)

Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) supports the passage of the Elder Parole bill. This provides that all people aged 55 years or older who have served 15 years or more in prison would become eligible for parole consideration. It does not mean people will automatically receive parole, but it does allow people who have sentences such as life without parole or 50 years to life to be considered. As Friends, we believe all lives are sacred. This does not mean, however, that those who have committed murder or other violent acts deserve to have indefinite or life-without-parole sentences if they have transformed their lives while incarcerated. In fact, it means the opposite. Moreover, African Americans and other people of color receive these sentences disproportionately, so that granting those who are over 55 years of age a chance to be paroled may well be mitigating earlier injustice. At the same time, the evidence shows that people who are over 55 years of age have a minimal risk of recidivism. It also shows that people with these long sentences often lose hope and sometimes commit suicide. By recognizing the possibility of change, the possibility of hope is restored.

2021.01.13 Nancy Britton reads Staten Island Monthly Meeting's quarterly report on behalf of Staten Island Monthly Meeting, which is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report.

2021.01.14 Charlene Ray presents the report from the Audit and Budget and proposed 2021 budget, which are appended to these minutes. Following questions, Friends accept the report and approve the budget.

2021.01.15 Nancy Hadley Jaffe reads the Relief Committee's annual report, which is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report. The Committee reminds Friends to encourage Friends to seek relief when needed. Information about seeking relief is on the NYQM web site.

2021.01.16 Ed Elder delivered a written report for the Ministry and Counsel Committee, which is appended to these minutes. He read the following minute from Ministry and Council:

“Recognizing that the primary work that needs to be done is to repair and restore the relationship between our meetings and BFS, the ad hoc committee is moving forward with care and sensitivity to discern how best to work in partnership with our school to address the concerns brought forward at the October NYQM. “

M&C's October 25th minute forming the BFS ad hoc committee minute is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report.

2021.01.17 Joan Malin reads Brooklyn Monthly Meeting's quarterly report, which is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report.

2021.01.18 Carol Summar reads Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting's quarterly report, which is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report.

2021.01.19 Nancy Britton reads Flushing Monthly Meeting's quarterly report for Flushing Meeting, which is appended to these minutes. Friends accept the report.

Then, at 4:40 p.m., the meeting concluded with a period of waiting worship

ADDENDUM:

Follow-up from October 2021 meeting:

2020.10.16 The Meeting directs our clerk to send minutes 2020.10.04, 2020.10.06, 2020.10.12 (with appended report) and 2020.10.18 to the BFS Head of School, BFS Trustees, the BFS union, and BFS Friends and Families.

Sent to: Joan Malin (BMM clerk), Eamon Howley (BMM/CRC clerk), Ed Oliver (BFS trustees clerk), Electra Cummings (BFS trustee QM), Lakisha Grant (BFS trustee QM), Marie Hoguet (BFS trustee QM), Martha Hyde (BFS trustee QM), Audrey Jaynes (BFS trustee QM), Marilyn Stotts (BFS trustee QM), Gloria Thompson (BFS trustee QM), Crissy Caceras (BFS Head), Seth Phillips (BFS Asst Head), Jason Novak (BFS), G.Pinder (BFS), K. Prince Thompson (BFS), Brooklyn Friends School Union, Brooklyn Friends School Colleagues, Michael Van Biema (BFS), Brooklyn Friends and Families.

ATTACHMENTS:

Audit and Budget Annual Report and 2021 Budget
Brooklyn Friends School Annual Report-verbal, see minutes
Educational Fund Annual Report
Friends Seminary Annual Report
Mary McDowell Friends School – verbal, see minutes
Relief Committee Annual Report
Brooklyn Monthly Meeting Report
Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting
Flushing Monthly Meeting Report

Manhattan Monthly Meeting Report
Morningside Meeting Report
Morningside Meeting Report Addendum (with two minutes)
Staten Island Meeting Report

UPCOMING APPROVED NYQM DATES:

2021 NYQM dates:

April 18th: Fifteenth Street Meeting, Manhattan (likely by Zoom)
July 17th: Saturday, Quaker Cemetery, Prospect Park, Brooklyn (at the Cemetery!?)
October 17th: Morningside Monthly Meeting, Manhattan

2022 NYQM dates:

January 16th: Brooklyn Friends Meeting, Brooklyn
April 17th: Fifteenth Street Meeting, Manhattan [Easter]
July 16th: Saturday, Quaker Cemetery, Prospect Park, Brooklyn
October 16th: Flushing Monthly Meeting, Flushing