

<20210412_QM_M&C_Minute_20210412-A>

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
15 Rutherford Place
New York, NY 10013
New York Quarterly Meeting
Ministry and Counsel Committee
(NYQM M&C)
Regular Meeting-Fourth Month
04.12.2021

A NYQM Ministry and Counsel Minute laying down the BFS ad hoc Committee

20210412-A) Friends have submitted the following for discernment and consideration:

<20210419_QM_M&C_Report_Establishing_BFS_QM_Working_Group>

After time for reading, issues are considered at length. One Friend describes this small working group as prescribing the needed vessel and strongest support we can currently give this effort. Friends are thoroughly harmonious in the creation of the BFS QM Working Group. We ask the Quarterly Meeting to lay down the BFS Ad hoc Committee detailed in the authorization below:

<20201029_QM_M&C_DRAFT_adhoc_Committee_Authorization>

In Light,

Steven Monroe Smith, clerk

M&C Report to the NYQM on the BFS ad hoc committee 2021-04-18

2020-10-18 AD HOC COMMITTEE FORMED:

At the tenth month seventeenth day meeting of New York Quarterly Meeting (NYQM), Brooklyn Monthly Meeting (BMM) in their quarterly report brought the following minute to the NYQM and it was approved: “We ask the New York Quarterly Meeting to take up this issue [Brooklyn Friends School (BFS) conflict] and find a way forward to address our concerns.” (BMM’s full report is in the NYQM October 18, 2020 minutes: 20201018_BrooklynMonthlyMeeting).

At the conclusion of the listening session in this same NYQM meeting, the body approved the following minute for M&C to form an ad hoc committee:

2020.10.17 Friends engage in worshipful listening to one another sharing concerns and insights for our Brooklyn Friends School and Quaker communities on working together to heal and discern possible ways forward. Friends agree to form an ad hoc committee to discern how the Quarter can support the Brooklyn Care Relationship Committee in their work for labor justice, racial justice and equality at Brooklyn Friends School, as well as encouraging familiarity with Friends’ values and practices. Those interested in volunteering for the committee would contact the clerk, assistant clerk and Ministry and Counsel clerk (nancy AT brittonfamily DOT org, steviepesce AT icloud DOTcom).

NYQM’s AD HOC COMMITTEE’S WORK REPORT:

Many F/friends reached out to the clerks. At the following NYQM Ministry & Council (M&C) meeting on October 29, 2020, M&C wrote the attached 20201029-QM M&C BFS ad hoc committee Authorization with four queries to support and guide its way forward, deliberately allowing a broad charge and wide participation. M&C discerned a convener, Alice Pope. With tenderness Alice and M&C discerned that Quaker process be followed in assembling this ad hoc committee and given the nature of the concerns before it that a listening exploration of all constituencies was essential. Acquiring and distilling these concerns would be the convener’s purview and M&C is grateful to Alice Pope of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting for her leading to rise to this challenge and her subsequent ministry in her long work.

In summary:

Sensitivity to disrupted relationships between BFS and monthly and quarterly meetings, and among individuals in our Quaker faith community made it important that any action taken not result in further escalation of the conflict. Alice Pope embarked on a “listening tour” to identify potential avenues for assisting BFS and Friends in right relationship. Consulting with individuals and small groups, mostly using Zoom, some via telephone, and a very few using email all spoke

to the query: What actions can NYQM take to be of help to BFS at this time? There continues to be disruption and concern in numerous areas and to recognize the multiple contributing factors including pandemic; new head of school; heightened racial tensions nationally and at the school; unionization; a wish for opportunities to have questions answered and to have concerns heard and considered; more genuinely Quaker approaches; and more. Pervasive was the question “Can the Quaker community show leadership in lovingly extending an invitation to the school to find the right way forward together?” Throughout the listening tour, Alice repeatedly brought gleanings to trusted Friends, who served to support discernment. Over thirty F/friends sat with Alice in discernment during this ‘tour’. Several individuals stated that this listening tour was, in itself, healing for those who have felt unheard, and gratitude to NYQM was expressed for this. A sense of ministry permeated these conversations.

By the end of February, 2021, Alice felt that this phase of the work was completed and asked for the ad hoc committee to be laid down while seeing the way forward as transforming the ad hoc committee into a small working group under the care of M&C to hold the relationships among F/friends and BFS in the Light and provide ministry.

*M&C approved laying down the ad hoc committee and recommends to the New York Quarterly Meeting that this committee be laid down. (20210412-AA NYQM Ministry and Counsel Minute laying down the BFS ad hoc committee).

WORKING GROUP FORMED UNDER THE CARE OF M&C:

Recognizing that the primary work that needs to be done is to repair, restore and nurture the relationship between our meetings and BFS and that this work is and always will be, on-going, this small working group is a proxy for each of their committees.

This working group will be composed of one current member each of the bodies that work with BFS acknowledging that some will represent more than one group:

one each from Brooklyn Monthly Meeting: M&C
BMM Friend/parent
BMM CRC member

one each from Brooklyn Friends School: BFS Trustees
BFS administration
BFS colleagues

This working group remains under NYQM’s M&C’s care and will maintain their connection and on an as-needed basis. An NYQM member of the group will be the liaison to M&C. Alice is willing to continue her work, now as the convener of this working group, and as a member of the NYQM.

This working group is charged with “nurturing the care relationship” of Friends and our schools. Finding love through conflict and maintaining right relationship into the future are great challenges and many avenues will emerge with clarity and unity with openness to the spirit. The members of this

working group should be prepared to be present and generous with their energy and time, maintaining their active participation throughout their time on their respective committees.

This working group will bring recommendations to M&C. The NYQM's M&C is open and in expectant waiting to provide support and resources to further this work. All members must continue to ask and consider thoughtfully how this work is moving forward in the spirit and are they holding and speaking to the concerns of all involved and to continue to discern when they feel they can lay their work down.

This working group was formed by M&C minute 20210412-A. This report and the M&C minute will be sent to the clerks of BMM, BMM M&C, BMM CRC, BFS Trustees and the convener will begin her work assembling the working group members.

In Friendship,

Steve Monroe Smith, NYQM M&C clerk
Zack Edminster
Ed Elder
Jolene Festa
David Herendeen
Hugo Lane
Robert Wilber
Nancy Britton, NYQM clerk, *ex officio*

REFERENCES to past NYQM minutes:
20201018_BrooklynMonthlyMeeting

ATTACHMENTS:
20201018_M&CBFSUnionCommunityReconciliationMinute
20201029_M&CMinuteForNYQMBFSAdHocCmteAuthorization

20201018-QM_BFS_Union_Community_Reconciliation_Minute

Friends,

The Ministry and Counsel Committee (NYQM) feels we must recognize the recent events surrounding the Union at Brooklyn Friends School. Our testimonies and advices lead us not to assign blame, but to acknowledge the high level of trauma to which these events have led. As such traumas can only be healed first through acknowledgment, let us all recognize what has happened here.

To the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting concern as to questions of the “values and process at the heart of our faith,” we would ask Friends to give the BFS/Brooklyn Monthly Meeting Care Committee both the time and peace to recover to address this issue. We will forward your concern.

To the concern featuring Children of color at Brooklyn Friends School, we will name representatives to a working group on the issue.

In times as these, with the very great demands externally being made upon the humanity of us all, let us reach down deep into ourselves first and find ways forward together. Ministry and Counsel makes itself available to assist in reconciliation between all effected by these events. The night has passed. Let us look to dawn.

NYQM M&C Committee
Tenth Month, Eighteen, 2020

20201029-QM M&C BFS ad hoc Committee Authorization

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
15 Rutherford Place
New York, NY 10013
New York Quarterly Meeting
Ministry and Counsel Committee
(NYQM M&C)
10.29.2020

20201029-QM M&C BFS ad hoc Committee Authorization

During the listening session of the October 28, 2020 New York Quarterly Meeting (QM) Friends heard the concerns expressed about Brooklyn Friends School (BFS) by Friends of the Quarter, BFS personnel, and BFS parents, students and alumnae and their community.

The NYQM Ministry and Counsel Committee (NYQM M&C) responds to the session's call for an ad hoc committee to be formed to bring clarity and unity to finding ways forward. As the QM has a responsibility of oversight of the Quaker nature of BFS, and M&C is its agency for such concerns, Friends are in unity to form the ad hoc committee under the care of M&C.

The Brooklyn Monthly Meeting (BMM) and the BMM Care Relationship Committee with NYQM's M&C will assemble the ad hoc committee members drawn from Friends invited from the BFS Care Committee, invited Friends from the BFS personnel-(administration, faculty and staff), and invited individuals with Quaker experience from the BFS parents and community. The ad hoc committee will report on a frequent basis to the NYQM's M&C.

The ad hoc committee is instructed to seek to create a safe space, to act in the manner of Friends, and to initially set aside all prior assumptions and to start with worshipful consideration of first principles and discerning the ways forward in a spirit-led process.

We offer queries to support spirit-led guidance as the process begins:

1. What is needed for a Quaker school to be authentically Quaker, beyond professing "Quaker values"?
2. How does a Quaker school balance and maintain a self-aware and intentional Quaker perspective as it interacts with the social and economic expectations and requirements of the external society?
3. How does a Quaker school balance and maintain its BFS colleagues and administrative roles in accord with the testimonies of equality, simplicity and integrity?
4. What support do Friends bring to support a Quaker school that is in their care?

From worshipful and spirit-led consideration, Friends' perspectives on the actual facts of the situation as well as the interpretations of events and personal experiences of people involved may emerge with tenderness and increased clarity, perhaps leading to unity on recommendations for future actions.

We need clarity about the needs for each aspect of our community of faculty/staff, administration, BFS parents, BMM-BFS CRC, BFS trustees, and our children. We need to ensure that all concerned have the resources and understanding they need to comfortably and capably work within Quaker processes.

In Light,

Steven Monroe Smith, clerk
NYQM M&C Committee