

Report to Annual Session on seasoning a Minute regarding Gender Inclusivity  
ad-hoc Gender Concerns Committee, Multnomah Monthly Meeting  
July 16, 2017

Dear Friends,

Multnomah Monthly Meeting in Portland, Oregon sent to North Pacific Yearly Meeting (NPYM) in June 2016 a request that member meetings, worship groups and NPYM committees season a Minute for consideration at 2017 Annual Session. We are appreciative of the deep spiritual work that has been ongoing as Meetings discern together about the proposed "Welcoming All Genders" Minute.

To date we have received suggested wording changes from seven Meetings. After prayerful consideration, we are proposing that some of these changes be included in the Minute for seasoning.

First, we have provided the updated proposed Minute, including the recommended changes – labeled version 3. Second, we have included the initially proposed Minute showing where changes have been made. Finally, there is a copy of the original proposed Minute.

Following the Minute, we have provided a report on the seasoning process – where Meetings are and what concerns have arisen. A more detailed report is available.

An information packet is available, "Becoming More Welcoming to People of All Genders: A Resource Packet from Multnomah Monthly Meeting's ad-hoc Committee for Gender Concerns." To download it go to the Multnomah Friends Meeting website and choose "Resources" from the top bar, or use this link : <https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/multnomah-friends-meeting/resources/becoming-more-welcoming-people-all-genders>.

Faithfully,

The ad-hoc Committee on Gender Concerns at Multnomah Monthly Meeting

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**Current proposed Minute** (Version 3 – 2017-07-03)

NPYM Minute Welcoming Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People

North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, an organization of unprogrammed Quaker meetings and worship groups in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, seeks to be an open and affirming faith community. We welcome all to share in worship and the activities of our common life.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting understands that the Divine Source is leading our Meeting to honor the gender identity and expression of each person, as understood by that person. We affirm that gender expression and identity may be fluid and changeable. We recognize that when we embrace the Light within the full spectrum of gender identities in our Meeting, our worship deepens and our community is enriched.

As part of our evolving struggle to live our testimony of equality, North Pacific Yearly Meeting minutes our commitment to becoming an affirming, safe, and nurturing place for everyone to live fully that which the Spirit is leading them to be.

We extend our loving care to people of all genders, including, but not limited to, transgender, genderqueer, cisgender, gender fluid, agender, gender non-conforming and intersex persons, their families and friends. We will continue to educate ourselves and our communities and take appropriate action to bring about a more equal world.

*Suggested changes to the Minute as originally proposed:*

**NPYM Minute Welcoming All Genders / Proposed Inclusivity Minute Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People**

North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, an organization of unprogrammed Quaker meetings and worship groups in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, ~~and Montana, and Wyoming~~ **is seeks to be** an open and affirming faith community. We welcome all ~~who come as religious seekers~~ to share in worship and ~~fully participate in~~ the activities of our common life.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting understands that the Divine Source is leading our Meeting to honor the gender identity and expression of each person, as ~~determined~~ **understood** by that person. We affirm that gender expression and identity may be fluid and changeable. We recognize that when we embrace the Light within the full spectrum of gender identities in our Meeting, our worship deepens and our community is enriched.

As part of our evolving struggle to live our testimony of equality, North Pacific Yearly Meeting minutes our commitment to becoming an affirming, safe, and nurturing place for everyone to live fully that which the Spirit is leading them to be. ***(This paragraph split into two paragraphs.)*** We extend our loving care to people of all genders, including, ***but not limited to,*** transgender, genderqueer, cisgender, ***gender fluid, agender,*** gender non-conforming and intersex persons, their families and friends. ***We will continue to educate ourselves and our communities and take appropriate action to bring about a more equal world.***

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*Original proposed Minute:*

**NPYM Welcoming / Inclusivity Minute**

*North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, a Quaker organization, is an open and affirming faith community. We welcome all who come as religious seekers to share in worship and fully participate in the activities of our common life.*

*North Pacific Yearly Meeting understands that the Divine Source is leading the Meeting to honor the gender identity and expression of each person, as determined by that person. We affirm that gender expression and identity may be fluid and changeable. We recognize that when we embrace the Light within the full spectrum of gender identities in our Meeting, our worship deepens and our community is enriched.*

*As part of our evolving struggle to live our testimony of equality, North Pacific Yearly Meeting minutes our commitment to becoming an affirming, safe, and nurturing place for everyone to live fully that which the Spirit is leading them to be. We extend our loving care to people of all genders, including transgender, genderqueer, cisgender, gender non-conforming and intersex persons, their families and friends.*

**Summary of status of seasoning in NPYM Meetings (details available in separate report):**

Approved as is or with word changes: 15 of 24 Meetings:

Boise Valley, Bridge City, Eastside, Eugene, Lopez Island, Multnomah, Port Townsend, Salem, Salmon Bay, Sandpoint, South Mountain, South Seattle, Tacoma, University and Whidbey Island.

Minute is seasoning: 05 of 24 Meetings:

Agate Passage, Bellingham, Corvallis, Olympia, and Pullman-Moscow.

Not considering corporately as a local Meeting, however was read or provided to whole Meeting with the understanding it would be considered at Annual Session: 03 of 24 Meetings: MGOF, Missoula, and Walla Walla Preparatory Meeting.

No response yet: 01 of 24 Meetings:

Billings

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**Concerns raised:**

We asked Friends to report on the process at their Meeting, including what issues or concerns were raised. Note that many Meetings have not yet provided this information. We also heard from individual Friends about their concerns, as well as from transgender visitors and people invited to provide trainings.

1. The List of Genders

In Meeting reports to us, the primary concern raised with approving the Minute was the list of genders at the end.

Friends struggled with how to address their concern that someone's identity would be left off the list. We have heard personal reports of Friends being uncomfortable with labeling in general. Several Friends are concerned that they aren't familiar with the words.

We have heard that the cisgender term (someone whose gender identity is aligned with their assigned sex) is important in helping everyone to understand that they have a gender identity, replacing the concept of "normal"/transgender with cisgender/transgender. We have also heard that the list, although not exhaustive, indicates that we understand there is a wide spectrum of genders.

Four of the fifteen Meetings who approved a Minute made a change to this list, two adding to the list and two removing the list. One Meeting reached unity on a Minute – except they could not unite about including or not including the list of genders.

2. Explicitly Naming Transgender People

We heard testimony that the Minute needs to be more direct in naming transgender people. We received suggestions to change the title of the Minute. From one NPYM Friend: *I feel a trend that I often notice is that when Quakers are writing or talking about transgender issues, Quakers avoid using the word "transgender" specifically. For example, the Multnomah Minute is commonly referred to as the minute on "gender inclusivity"; the proposed fall Quarterly theme (for Pacific Northwest Quarter) last year was "Gender Fluidity." Both of these sort of feel like obfuscations to me.*

*As a transgender Friend, I know there is a real power in being named explicitly and in being acknowledged and recognized as a transgender person.*

*I would like to encourage the work group around the Minute to be more explicit and specific in naming "transgender and gender non-conforming people" in the work you all are doing, instead of just referring to "gender issues" or "gender expression," which are terms that can feel erasing, vague, and indirect to me--a feeling that has become hurtful over time for me in Quaker spaces.*

3. I don't understand this

Many Friends are unfamiliar with gender non-conforming people – their variety, experiences and concerns - and express confusion or lack of knowledge about the relevant issues. Many Meetings provided education around these issues, and most Meetings where the Minute has not yet been corporately considered have delayed in order to plan education.

4. Lack of planned actions

Some have expressed a concern that action items be included with the Minute, and one Meeting approved adding the following wording to the Minute: *"We will continue to educate ourselves and our communities and take appropriate action to bring about a more equal world."* Several Meetings have assigned committees the task to consider how the Minute they approved should be implemented. Implementation has been the primary concern of Multnomah's ad-hoc Gender Concerns Committee - that approving the Minute will not automatically lead to NPYM being more gender inclusive but will require actions on our part to remove barriers to gender non-conforming people.

5. Issues regarding restrooms and showers

Transgender people have spoken to us about their experiences being harassed and their fear of assault when using gendered restrooms. We have heard about the restrictions and problems of organizing one's life to avoid using any public restrooms.

Some cisgender Friends have expressed feeling unsafe in restrooms or shower areas that are gender inclusive. We have heard from several women who have experienced sexual violence that having men with them in a restroom is a strong alarm trigger.

6. Pronouns

Due to concerns about labels and/or lack of understanding of transgender issues, but perhaps for other unstated reasons as well, there are Friends who are uncomfortable with stating their own pronoun preferences. One Meeting is having a winnowing session to discuss this concern.

Others have spoken to us about the pain of being misgendered (referred to using the wrong pronouns), and the feeling of exposure in being the only person stating pronouns. Other Friends have related the relief they felt when a person whose gender was unclear to them stated their pronouns.

7. Sexuality

Several Friends have raised a concern that the Minute includes or implies NPYM acceptance of all sexual activities and proclivities. Our committee's intent is for the Minute to not include anything about sexuality. We don't believe it does, but are open to hear wording changes that will make this clearer if Friends believe it is unclear.

8. Importance

We heard that some Friends do not believe the issue of gender inclusivity is sufficiently important to consider in their Meeting or at Annual Session, given other problems in the world.

We have heard from transgender Friends about the unrelenting discrimination they experience, the fears they have for their safety, and their need for a spiritual home where they are recognized, safe and included. As religion is the number one reason given for validating transgender discrimination and persecution, people have spoken about the importance of religious organizations being clear about their beliefs.