

Additional Summary of Small group discussions May 2022 about Restructuring BFM sponsored by M&W

Submitted by Anne Marie Pois of the Task Force for Restructuring BFM, October 1, 2022

Judi Dressler gave an introduction in which she proposed a simplified structure for BFM. I provide this for context, Followed by the queries.

“Along those lines, early on we asked which committees we could **not** do without, and the general consensus was that we at least need Finance and B&G (for practical reasons), that we combine M&W with O&M (for nurturing our spirituality), we need religious education for our children, a committee for serving our needs inside our Meeting, and one for serving others in the outside world. We also heard suggestions for a task-oriented approach for some needs, similar to how Fellowship Committee has successfully done it, where anyone could sign up on a sign-up sheet to help the committee during fellowship on Sundays.

So rather than pushing on with our current structure, we offer to you a new idea; that of a simplified structure. With the idea that not every committee position that we have now must be filled. That we keep essential tasks but drop the others. A chance to consider how we might joyfully contribute to our Meeting within a simpler, less complicated framework. One which is less stressful and more fulfilling. Granted, we will not accomplish everything we might wish for, but then again, isn't “simplicity” one of our testaments as Quakers?

So, once again, the proposed 6 committees are Finance, B&G, M&W/O&M, religious ed, inside service and outside service. Along with the idea that some tasks might be completed by Friends outside of a committee.”

Queries:

How can you imagine yourself functioning within this hypothetical structure? Would you need to adjust the manner in which you serve the Meeting, and if so, how?

How can you envision yourself and the Meeting as a whole allowing the past structure to be erased as if by the tides, in order to allow a new, simplified structure to help make service to our Meeting easier?

Summary:

Overall groups agreed there must be change; one was more negative about the proposed changes, the other two were more positive. Both presented the possible challenges and concerns about the proposed simplification.

Positive responses included:

- Expressions of enthusiasm and excitement for change, support for experimental approach, acceptance of some risks for creating the evolving structure.

- Strong support for a task-oriented approach to getting specific jobs done; feeling that people can find what they want to do with a more specific focus and in some cases, time limited.
- Possibly hiring people for some tasks
- Tasks also provided more opportunities to get to know more people.

- Recommended that the Committee for serving needs outside the Meeting be composed of focus groups and that ad hoc committees could get tasks done and meet needs as they arose.

Questioning and/or Negative Responses

- Logistics of new structure questioned: with six committees, each would be too large, take more time to function, and conveners would carry a heavier workload.
- Focus on growing the Meeting, then change of structure would not be needed as new people assumed committee work
- Committees provide a space for seasoning new ideas for whole community and nurturing for leadings
- Committees can build connections among people.
- Concern for what happens to liaison volunteers who represent BFM to other Quaker groups.
- Concern for the role of the Nominating Committee.