

Trans and non-binary inclusion

Introduction

As Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM), we have been aware of, and sometimes troubled by, the growing conversation in Quakerism about trans and non-binary identities.

Relative to cis people (whose gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth), trans and non-binary people face unique challenges, ranging from difficulty obtaining adequate medical care to navigating social spaces that do not accommodate deviation from traditional views of gender. Too often, those challenges continue in local meetings, where – generally driven much more by a lack of information and understanding rather than any desire to hurt – Friends don't always succeed in being inclusive.

Last year several Quaker meetings hosted events by 'gender critical' groups, who use the position that gender is solely a social construct to argue for the exclusion of trans people, particularly women, all too often through fear and misinformation. But questions of when meetings should accept or reject bookings are secondary to asking what our testimony to equality means in the context of trans rights.

Last May, YFGM affirmed the right of everyone to self-identify their gender, recognising all genders as valid and real. Young Friends' powerful and emotive ministry made it clear we still had work to do.

The minute adopted in May 2018 read:

2018.20 Trans and non-binary inclusion (2)

We affirm the right of everyone to self-identify their gender and recognise all genders as valid and real.

YFGM aims to be a welcoming and accessible space for people of all gender identities where people feel included and oppressive behaviour is not accepted.

We recognise we have further work to do including some more immediate changes, and creating space to nurture deeper cultural changes within both YFGM and the wider Society of Friends.

As a next step we agree to hold a Special Interest Gathering, open to everyone, to further our discernment around this topic, after which we will consider the next steps of our community's journey.

This February, YFGM adopted the minute below, including our values statement. We offer this to the Society with excitement and hope, noting our joy as a community to affirm our love and inclusion of all friends of diverse genders within and beyond the gender binary.

This is not YFGM's last word on the subject. We are committed to fostering a spirit of loving unity within Quakerism. We want to support all Friends in learning about gender diversity, build intergenerational conversations, and make the events we run inclusive of everyone, trans or cis, binary or non-binary.

Minute of YFGM, February 2019

a) Trans and non-binary inclusion

Further to minutes 2018.16 and 2018.18, we have heard from Jane Booth, about November's special interest gathering on Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion.

We have heard the statement produced by that gathering. We as YFGM adopt this statement with minor amendments (wording in Minute part (b) below). We are joyful as a community to affirm our love and inclusion of all friends of diverse genders within and beyond the gender binary.

We commit to the following practical actions:

- Making our value statement clearly available on the website
- To support Friends in the wider society of Friends to learn about gender diversity and trans inclusion. This may be by providing education to society as a whole, perhaps as special interest groups at BYM, or fact sheets. This may be new material or existing material which could be publicised on the YFGM website. To support Intergenerational conversations on the subject, carefully facilitated; we have heard that this work may be taken on by the engaging young adult Quaker programme.
- Provide supporting evidence for trans friends within the YFGM community while the current gender recognition act requires such submission.
- We would like to take all steps possible to ensure that all our YFGM meetings are held in a trans inclusive spaces. This includes taking our trans friends into consideration when we book meeting houses, providing gender neutral bathrooms and ensuring any gendered spaces are explicitly trans inclusive.

We have heard an introduction by Sam to the QLCC statement. We agree that we would like to formally respond to this statement as YFGM, urging QLCC to take note of our value statement, and making clear the points at which we believe the two statements contradict. In particular, we note our disagreement with the position that “the critique of transgender identities in the political sphere is not necessarily transphobic”.

We agree to send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life Central Committee, along with context from the report from the special interest gathering. We thank those Friends who have contributed to bringing this before the community.

b) YFGM Value Statement on Trans and non-binary inclusion

We believe that each person has the right to determine for themselves what gender identities and expressions are most comfortable and authentic for them. We recognize that each member of our community has a unique and deeply personal experience of gender, and that the expression of this is a form of living truthfully and of witness.

As Friends — both trans and cis, binary and non-binary — we affirm that there is no conflict between trans inclusion, feminism, and liberation from gender roles and stereotypes. We do

not support the use of meeting houses to host events which claim otherwise, and we hope that Meetings will decide not to host these events in future.

The Society of Friends should be welcoming and affirming of trans and non-binary people. We commit to fostering change to this effect and to bringing YFGM and the Society of Friends closer to this ideal.

We encourage Friends engaging in this conversation going forwards to consider the message of A&Q#22: *“Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.”*

Further information

Young Friends General Meeting is the national community for young adult Friends aged 18-30ish within Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

For press enquiries please contact yfgm.tnb.inclusion@gmail.com