**Parent Quaker Life Committee Minutes**

Wednesday, October 1, 2014

The first meeting of the 2014-15 PQLC Committee opened with a moment of silence.

**In attendance:** Lauren Menzin, Eden White, Loren Kaler, Robin Valentino, David Shalam, Deb Shalam, Kristina Constantino, Derek Tolbert, Angie Martin, Robin Wachtler, Steve Fortuna, John Scardina, Donna Gerzof, Natalia Good, Rita Petrossian, Melinda Wenner Bradley, Andrea Miller

**Invited guests:**

Donna Gerzof, Former parent, clerk and a founder of QPLC
Angie Martin, Director of Quaker Education at FA, faculty member
John Scardina, Quaker-in-Residence
Melinda Wenner Bradley, FA parent, former FA faculty member and national presenter for Friends General Conference

Guest speakers and attendees introduced themselves and shared what drew them to the PQLC meeting. The common thread being:

The desire of parents to help heighten awareness of the Quaker identity of the school and learn how to incorporate related values and philosophies into their everyday lives and those of our children within our community and beyond.

**Donna Gerzof, former parent, clerk and a founder of QPLC:**

Donna spoke about the history and beginnings of the Parent Quaker Life Committee. “If we don’t look back, we can’t hold it precious,” she said as she recounted how in 2008, a group of parents met with Head of School Bill Morris to revive a sense of Quakerism in the school. Many of the Quaker faculty had retired and in Upper School, parents were not as involved in Quakerism. Donna and a group of parents helped to form the genesis of both the Green Committee and Sandwich Making Committee. Shortly after, a Quaker Life Committee, consisting of faculty, administrators and two parents was also formed. In 2009, it was decided that subcommittees be created to get work done between meetings.

The Parent Concerns Subcommittee was charged with creating a job description for a Quaker-in-Residence at Friends and the larger group finished the school’s Quaker Audit.

Since then, so many fantastic things have been achieved, including the opening of the Quaker Student Life Center, a Quaker Life section on the website and the hiring of QIR John Scardina.

**Angie Martin, Director of Quaker Education at FA:**

Angie is currently in her 2nd year as Director of Quaker Education at FA and starting her 6th year at FA. She shared the structure of Quaker Education within the school and the various initiatives in curriculum, infrastructure and activities that have happened over the last couple of years.

Angie explained that at Friends there are several Quaker subcommittees (parents, faculty, student – TASQUE [Teachers And Students for Quaker Education] and board). The Quaker Life Committee (QLC) is not a decision-making body, but more of a clearinghouse where members have experiences together and then share reports and have discussions that ultimately can spark a new project. Meetings are open within the school, so that FA school members, such as the Director of Diversity, Dean of Students and Archivist can attend. The QLC is working on a flowchart of how the groups work together, which can then be shared with the greater community.

Angie clerks the faculty committee, which is mainly comprised of faculty from the Religion department. Within this committee, they have worked to:

* **Strengthen the ties between faculty by having more cross-over meetings**
* **Encourage more inter-division interaction:** The Worship buddies program, which started last year pairs older and younger students. The first one of he year was Thursday, Oct. 2. There are 6 gatherings planned throughout the year and the students will keep the same buddies and be in the same community groups (groups that meet during Peace Week).
* **Explore multiple ways of experiencing Quaker worship**: Last year, the Upper School explored alternative ways to practice Meeting for Worship with Meeting for Singing, Meeting for Mindfulness, and Meeting for Meditative Walking. The first one will begin the week of October 6th. Angie noted that the LS already does a lot of this and remarked that when it comes to spirituality, the youngest among us sometimes have more to teach. There will also be a special MFW involving meditated walking through a canvas labyrinth that will be laid on the ground. The idea is that at the beginning of the walk, the person has a question in his/her mind. By walking the labyrinth, one moves their body through a guided pathway, which takes you to the center, where one may find they get certain insights.

Moving forward, TASQUE has established a rotating four-week cycle for Meeting for Worship: Full school MFW, Worship buddies, Alternative MFW and then grade to grade worship.

“Additionally, Upper School students are using Quaker decision-making process to examine the power we all have to build the community we want to have.  They have worked in small groups to define Green Light  (strengthen our community), Yellow Light (be careful) and Red Light behaviors (damage our Community) and will come together in business meetings soon to affirm their commitment to work towards the parameters that they defined.  “The way we treat each other has ripples and can make a more connected world,” said Angie."

Quaker-in-Residence John Scardina added that this year two Staff members have joined the TASQUE group and they are also exploring MFW for Staff. Additionally, they have begun a new program called, “It’s Only Lunch.” The idea is to have lunch with one person you don’t know and discuss two to three questions.

**Melinda Wenner Bradley, FA parent, former FA faculty member, national presenter for Friends General Conference:**

Melinda and her husband Matt left FA 13 years as faculty members and returned a year ago as FA parents. Melinda is helping Angie to coordinate the Quakerism in our Community Series. The series is a set of three workshops that will touch on a number of different issues. There is an evening geared for each division and each one will focus on a different concern/theme.

* **Lower School:** How is MFW used in the LS; how do teachers guide students?
* **Middle School:** Will focus on the testimonies and show parents the spirituality. Discussion will center around how to be a multi-faith community. In Middle School, kids are at a point where there’s a lot of religious milestones.
* **Upper School:** Will share Quaker process. We live in a very product-oriented society. How can we share with parents what Quaker decision-making looks like, so that they can use Queries and Silence as tools in parenting adolescents. How can we ground and nurture US students?

Melinda commented that all parents are welcome at any of the three workshops and should not feel limited to just their child’s divisional one.

**General Discussion Points:**

* Good to have PQLC presence at these workshops; see if assistance is needed.
* PQLC has also helped spearhead Parent Quaker Meeting for Worship with programmed meetings during Thanksgiving and Peace Week in the Meeting House.
* Positive feedback to both alternative ways of Meeting and Worship buddies from both parents and children
* Discussion about frequency of meetings: 1x a month?
* Piggy back off of faculty/staff “It’s Only Lunch” with parents and students?

Participating parents were given a questionnaire that was distributed for review and further discussion regarding future ideas for parent involvement in areas of education, experiential activities and collaboration with varying school groups.

The meeting closed with a Moment of Silence.

Respectfully,
Andrea Miller, Recorder