

Pastoral Care Committee Job Description

(Description based partly on guidelines in *NPYM Faith and Practice*)

Purpose: To care for the Meeting's members, including outward aspects of building a fellowship in which all members feel acceptance, loving care, and opportunity for service. Responsibilities include:

1. **Responding to member concerns**, including organizing mealtrains and other support for Friends experiencing a special need for help.
2. **Staying in touch** with members in a spirit of affectionate interest and loving care.
3. As needed, **creating and facilitating support groups and care committees**.
4. **Facilitating the setup and working of clearness committees**, including those for membership in the Society of Friends. Works with W&M in setting up committees to assist with weddings and memorials. Encourage regular attenders to consider membership.
5. **Promoting activities that deepen fellowship** within the Meeting, such as:
 - a. Game nights, soup and stories, midweek community-building activities, and assisting Worship & Ministry with planning retreats.
 - b. Keeping up to date the photo gallery online for Friends comfortable with it.
 - c. Confering with the Web Master annually to assure that the website is up to date, welcoming, accurate, and informative.
 - d. Working with the Outreach and Welcoming Coordinator to provide care for individual accessibility needs of newcomers to assure that all feel welcome in our fellowship.
6. **Meeting monthly and making reports** to Meeting for Worship for Business.
7. **Confer annually with the Clerk of Meeting** to develop a census report for NPYM, when requested by the secretary of the Yearly Meeting.

Friends on this committee must have dedication, tact, confidentiality, and discretion. The committee ideally includes members who are representative of the varied makeup of the meeting and are persons of experience, sympathy, and good judgment. The committee meets regularly to carry on its work in a spirit of dedication and love. They should be guided in matters requiring confidentiality, by BFM's Guidelines on Confidentiality, below.

This committee and Worship and Ministry will stay in close communication, and may hold joint meetings or retreats once or twice annually.

The clerk or co-clerk of Meeting may serve ex officio on this committee or Worship and Ministry, in accordance with their gifts and leadings. Neither will serve on both committees. If neither clerk nor co-clerk is ex officio on this committee, the clerk of Pastoral Care will stay in close communication with both clerks of Meeting.

Depending on the number of ex officio members, this committee will ideally have four or five members.

Two-year terms will be staggered insofar as is practical.

(Adopted August 2019)

BFM Guidelines on Confidentiality

In all work before committees of Bellingham Friends Meeting involving personal matters or concerns of individual members and attenders, committee members shall use the utmost care in granting and maintaining confidentiality. (NPYM *Faith and Practice* advises that “it is essential for the meeting to identify sexual offenders promptly, so that it can maintain appropriate monitoring for the safety of all children and adults.”)

Confidentiality is defined as follows: Confidentiality is a state of trust in a relationship, between individuals and in community. Violating the trust harms the relationship and creates obligations to accept responsibility for the breach and to repair the harms it caused.

When a question of confidentiality versus disclosure arises, any Friend *asking for* confidentiality as well as Friends *asked to provide* it, whether as an individual or a committee, might consider at least the following queries:

“When we serve on committees, do we exercise discipline if we confide in our partner, friend, or family member?

“Is anyone's safety at risk? If so, how is that person's safety best assured – by what degree of confidentiality and what degree of disclosure?

“Is anyone's psychological well-being at risk? If so, by what degree of confidentiality or disclosure is that person's well-being best protected?

“What is the need of any individual or part of the community to know certain information? Is that need of greater importance than the need for confidentiality that some other individual or group has?

“How are the needs of the whole meeting be met (or not met) by granting confidentiality?

“If there is a need for the community as a whole to know something of the matter, how it's processed, or its ultimate resolution, can publication of what needs to be known be done in a way that respects the individual's need for confidentiality?

“What record of this matter would serve both the needs of this meeting and the individuals involved?”

In general, no written or electronic documents containing confidential information should be retained by the meeting, committees, or committee members after their work on a confidential matter is completed.

Official reports from standing, ad-hoc or clearness committees read into the minutes and approved by the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, however, will be retained in BFM records. One clear exception is storage of an individual's requests for end of life medical and memorial decision-making, to be maintained by Pastoral Care Committee in a locked cabinet or storage box. The clerk will remind the Meeting for Worship for Business of these policies annually in June and in a written notice in the newsletter.

This process is not meant to take precedence over state laws requiring the reporting of known or suspected emotional, sexual or physical abuse of vulnerable persons. Friends requesting confidentiality need to be aware that there are Friends in Meeting who may be legally unable to grant confidentiality on certain issues.

¹ Adapted by Bellingham Friends Meeting August 2019 from Burlington (VT) Friends Meeting, who adapted from Friends General Conference: *Resources for Fostering Vital Friends Meetings. Compassionate Use of Information-Confidentiality vs. Disclosure.* Portland (Maine) Friends Meeting, NEYM