

**336th Annual Sessions
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
July 27 – 31, 2016
Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
Sunday, July 31, 2016 – Morning Session**

Worship

The 336th Annual Sessions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends reconvened Sunday morning at 9:15 am in Seegers Union Building of Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA. The announced theme of our 2016 Sessions is “Be Transformed!” At the appointed hour, we settled into Meeting for Worship and prepared ourselves for our business. Clerk, Penny Colgan-Davis (Germantown MM) explained that there are Quakers here from Kenya wanting to meet with us, who have just been at the Democratic Convention. She asked for the Body’s permission to briefly videotape our opening worship, which was granted. The Clerk expressed her hope that our corporate worship will have openings and silence between messages.

Welcome and Introductions

Then, at about 10:00 am the Clerk greeted us. Others at the table introduced themselves: Alternate Clerks Tom Hoopes (Valley MM), Alison Andrews (Central Philadelphia MM); and Amy Kietzman (West Philadelphia PM) introduced themselves. The co-recording clerks were Marty Smith (Moorestown MM) and Anthony Taylor (Fallowfield MM); Becky Tallarico was the speech-to-text transcriber.

A first time attender, Jake Emerson (Swarthmore MM) introduced himself.

Epistle Reading

Annette Benert (Lehigh Valley MM) and Melissa Rycroft (Pennsdale MM) first read the Epistle from Ramallah Friends Meeting and then read from Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting and Piedmont Friends Fellowship.

Melanie Douty-Snipes (Fallsington MM) and Jonathan Snipes (Fallsington MM) led us in singing *Standing in the Need of Prayer*. The Clerk thanked tonya thames taylor (Fallowfield MM) and Avis Wanda McClinton (Upper Dublin MM) for an inspirational keynote speech Saturday night.

Undoing Racism Proposal

In preparation for considering the proposal, the Clerk said that we are striving to bring a structure which will support our corporate witness of addressing racism within PYM and beyond. We have this chance to be truly led by God. She asked how can we assure a pathway for elders

to be present to guide and lead us? The Clerk then explained why the URG Proposal has come before us for consideration this morning. Thursday night, when the body saw the Undoing Racism proposal for the first time, there was much confusion. Despite her statement then that the proposal was not being brought forward for approval, many Friends have expressed intense interest over the past few days in its consideration for approval. Therefore, in preparation for this morning's consideration, the Clerk met with URG asking them to clarify and simplify the proposal.

The newly-crafted Undoing Racism Proposal was explained by Noah White, Lucy Duncan (Green Street MM), and Vanessa Julye (Central Philadelphia MM). They showed a diagram with URG members "at the table" while decisions are made in relationship with the body. They then showed an organizational developmental diagram leading to inclusiveness and a transformational multi-racial Religious Society of Friends. They stressed that, unless we are actively undoing racism, the PYM body will perpetuate white supremacy. The body then considered URG's proposal, which was created as a "cross-cut structure," having input in all levels of governance within the yearly meeting. URG would be self-governed and appoint their own representatives to serve on the *Nominating*, *Quaker Life*, and *Administrative Councils*. It would remain an open group, welcoming anyone in PYM to participate. They would annually appoint an URG representative to the *Faith and Practice Revision Group* and *Sessions Coordinating Committee* and make sure that at least one aspect of addressing racism and white supremacy would be on the agenda of sessions. URG's place in the structure would be reviewed in 2018, when a full evaluation of the new structure will take place.

There was a period of deep worship with observations, queries, and calls for unity in the Spirit. The Clerk then asked for a two-year experiment to put this proposal into practice. The body was not of one mind and heart to do that, thus the Clerk acknowledged we were not united in approving the proposal.

As the children and young Friends entered, Jonathan and Melanie Snipes led us in song *What God Has Shown Me*.

General Secretary's Report

Christie Duncan-Tessmer (Chestnut Hill MM) began her report by the call and response: *God is good all the time; God is good...* It is very important that we be where we are with God. We need to think about that query, when we go back to our meeting. There are so many ways that we can share with one another in the YM what is happening with us in our lives and religious communities. This can be done through the PYM website, so we can be inspired by how others have responded to the Spirit. The General Secretary's formal report is attached.

Young people and adults reporting back

Children, Young Friends, and Young Adult Friends:

Young Adult Friends: More than 50 YAFs gathered together in the spirit of love and friendship seeking spiritual community beyond traditional Friends meetings. YAFs feel excluded from service within YM but seek direct membership with PYM. Because Young Adult Friends are supportive of anti-racism work, they were disappointed when Friends did not support the URG Proposal Thursday night. YAFs plan to change the name of the William Penn Lecture, at the recommendation of Undoing Racism Group, because Penn owned slaves. YAFs have struggled to find a voice which would be recognized and heard in business sessions; they are discouraged, frustrated, and ignored. But the Young Adults come back to sessions because they trust the Spirit to lead them.

Young Friends: 23 YFs participated in workshops on conformity, connected with Friends of all ages, and learned about business meeting. They struggled with a bathroom issue and came to unity. They worked on how to create a non-racist society and pledged to do more work with the undoing racism proposal. They were inspired by Saturday evening's speaker, tonya thames taylor.

Middle School Friends: They enjoyed delicious food, made new friends, played a lot of Four Square, did worship-sharing and walking meditations, swam, did crafts, watched a movie and discussed "isms" in the media, delved into undoing racism, and looked at new ways of leadership.

Fells: The 4th & 5th graders shared their favorite activities: playing an unfair game, kickball, finger knitting, and face painting. *Fishers:* The K-3rd graders loved being together with old and new friends. They found unity through and discovered "treasures" within ourselves. The Clerk expressed gratitude to staff and volunteers, who planned and oversaw the Children and Youth Programs. Over half of the body stood, when Clerk, Penny asked for those who volunteered to make these Sessions happen.

Outgoing Epistle

Amy Kietzman, tonya thames taylor, Annette Benert, Louis Le Fevre (Trenton MM), and Melissa Rycroft. The group shared the outgoing Epistle which includes the acknowledgment that PYM has struggled to understand and address racism in our Body. Many Friends gathered together to discern the will of God. There was praise for the excellent food provided by Muhlenberg University. We were enriched by presence of Friends from Kenya. We received reports from elements in our new structure. We appreciated by the leadership of our Clerk and the sharing of the children, youth, and young adults. The Undoing Racism Group proposed a way to weave their concerns into the structure of the YM. tonya thames taylor gave an inspirational Saturday

night message asking us to consider: *How can we be subversive and transformational?* Melissa then gave a definition of White Supremacy.

Friends suggested adding the phrase: “We are being held in the light and we seek guidance...” and that Britain YM Friends need to be added to the visitors.

Friends approved the Outgoing Epistle with two additions and much gratitude. (It is attached.)

Clerk’s Report

Due to time constraints, we did not get to hear an oral summary of the Clerk’s report. Following is the written report the Clerk submitted ahead of sessions. Her written report submitted in advance is attached.

The Clerk asked all who had volunteered to stand so we could thank not only the Sessions Planning Committee and the PYM staff who worked so hard to create the week, but everyone else who made this possible.

The meeting ended with worship.

Submitted by,

Recording Clerk, Marty Smith (Moorestown MM)

Recording Clerk, Anthony Taylor (Fallowfield MM)

Presiding Clerk, Penny Colgan-Davis (Germantown MM)

Proposed Structure and Leadership for the Undoing Racism Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

VISION

We believe, and our experience has shown, that an elemental aspect of undoing racism is decentering whiteness.

The Undoing Racism Group (URG) is the body within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) comprised of significant numbers of Friends of Color¹. These Friends of Color, along with other white Friends, have been engaged in sustained study and practice of ending racism. Friends of Color within URG are centered in positions of leadership, such that this centering facilitates accountability and forward movement.

In order for PYM to fully live out its commitment to ending racism in our midst, it will be essential for the body to understand that unless we are actively resisting racism, a majority white body will perpetuate the racism and white supremacy.

We believe it is essential that the Undoing Racism Group *also* be placed within the structure of PYM in such a way that it has the responsibility to hold the yearly meeting accountable to its corporate witness around racism.

PURPOSE

Our primary purpose and goal is to eliminate racism and white supremacy in our Yearly Meeting. We will achieve our purpose by:

- forming a Care Committee, consisting of Friends of Color dedicated to the service of holding the Yearly Meeting and our clerks accountable in a loving and faithful manner²
- advising in the writing and editing of job descriptions and search committees for yearly meeting employees and leadership (presiding clerk, subgroup clerks, elders), so that addressing racism is woven into all our professional and volunteer work and roles
- assisting the yearly meeting leadership in getting training around racial justice and inclusion
- providing queries on addressing racism and white supremacy for regular use by any subgroup of the yearly meeting

¹ Our use of the term **Friends of Color** includes people of African, Caribbean, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander descent, and indigenous peoples.

² The Care Committee does not need to consist of all members of these groups.

- supporting Friends of Color in various ways including securing funding for an annual retreat

OUR PROPOSED STRUCTURE

The Undoing Racism Group proposes the following:

1. Undoing Racism Group does not fit into any current category, or under any of the three councils of the new PYM governance structures.
2. Undoing Racism Group will be created as a cross-cut structure, one that has a relationship with all decision-making bodies of PYM, and serving the yearly meeting in its calling to address racism and end white supremacy.
3. Undoing Racism Group will consist of three co-clerks. Two of the three appointed co-clerks will identify as Friends of Color or of mixed race.
4. Undoing Racism Group—through an internally-appointed nominating committee—will appoint representatives to serve as members of each of the three councils: Quaker Life, Administrative and Nominating.
5. Undoing Racism Group is an open group. Any active participant in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting community is welcome to participate and be active in our meetings.
6. Undoing Racism Group co-clerks and appointed sub-group clerks (or their designees) are the official representatives for URG and have a critical role in communicating across the yearly meeting.
7. Undoing Racism Group will annually name someone to be on PYM's Faith and Practice Revision Group, the Sessions Coordinating Committee, and work with PYM leadership to make sure that there is at least one aspect of addressing racism and white supremacy on the agenda at sessions.
8. Undoing Racism Group's Care Committee will hold the responsibility to periodically assess and discern if and when URG may be ready to lay itself down.

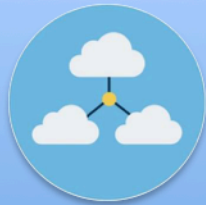
INWARD LIGHT, SPIRIT, GOD, LIVING CHRIST...

PYM Clerks & Elders



Admin Council

- Collaboratives
- Sprints
- Threads

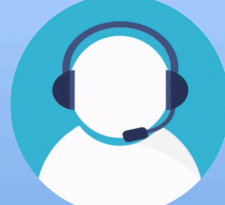


Quaker Life Council

- Collaboratives
- Sprints
- Threads



Nominating Council



PYM Staff

Quarterly Meetings

Monthly Meetings

Monthly Meetings

Monthly Meetings

UNDOING RACISM GROUP

Report of the General Secretary to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Friends, this past year has been one of enormous energy and many moving parts that has moved us down new paths. Since this time last year we have a new structure that is based on encouraging and supporting Friends to work and learn and live deeply in the heart of God together. This report provides an overview of the highlights of our community during the past year. Each item is described with just a few sentences which must be understood to represent significantly more effort, impact and nuance than implied by the length of the description!

Governance Structure

This year we launched new structures that allow our governance and activity to be accessible, meaningful and immediately usable. One evening in the fall I was working at home at the dining room table while my son was doing his Civics homework and he asked what I was doing. After I described what I was working on with a committee he said “Oh, you’re framers of the Yearly Meeting.” That’s a perfect description of what has taken place in the last 12 months.

Governance Handbook: We have a 57-page document of the structures of PYM which describes the details of the authority, responsibility, accountability, available resources and means of accessing the governance structures. It is constantly referred to by the staff, Councils and other structures.

Council Training: We offered a training to the members of Quaker Life, Administrative and Nominating Council members so they could hit the ground running with a sense of what their roles are from the big picture to the where the rubber meets the road.

Council Mapping: The Handbook explains the roles and responsibilities of the councils as well as the resources and structures they have at their disposal, but it does not tell them *how* to use those resources or meet their responsibilities. The Quaker Life Council and the Administrative Council began mapping out their plans for how to function through establishing committees, sprints and regular practices.

Continuing Sessions: Over 400 Friends from 75 meetings participated in Fall Continuing Sessions and 375 people from nearly 80 meetings attended Spring Continuing Sessions. There are far more people in the room for these business sessions than there are for business sessions at Annual Sessions so more Friends of the yearly meeting community are involved in the governance. We continue to struggle with finding how to balance the high number of priorities within a single day of Continuing Sessions. I think we’ve been successful at balancing business, meaningful community engagement, learning and worship in a way that feels not dissatisfying to each group of people who have a particular fondness for each of these foci. At the same time it feels like too much overall.

Connect Friends and Meetings to One Another So That We May Experience a Vibrant, Spirit-Led Faith Community & Broaden Engagement and Deepen Connection

These are the first and fifth strategic directions in our Five Year Plan and they are central to the work of staff. As I wrote last year, focusing on these directions asks us not to prioritize solely getting more people involved but to think about how we engage with one another, how we create partnership and how we structure resources and programs so that they are usable by a wide variety of people who come from a wide variety of places – figuratively and literally. There are many, specific ways in which we’ve addressed these directions.

Friendly 800's: This event invited all Friends to join a potluck dinner of 8-12 people at the same time and day across our yearly meeting. From Chambersburg to Moorestown and Pennsdale to southern Delaware, at 28 different locations, 250 people ate together, considered queries, posted photos and “micro-Epistles” on social media using the hashtag #friendly800s.

Community Engagement Staff: We shifted some titles and job responsibilities to create the Community Engagement Coordinator, a staff position that has the responsibility for ensuring that the interactive work across our community (including coming together at Sessions) is well supported and stimulated. We applied for and received a \$50,000 grant from the Tyson Foundation to allow us to hire a Community Engagement Fellow for 20 months who is helping us get tools in place so that the work can be self-sustaining once established.

Nurturing Collaborative Work: Staff makes sure that the seeds that are planted by the Quaker Life Council's work in caring for Sessions, Collaboratives and Sprints are supported so they can come to life. Toward this end we moved nearly 50 projects that were lifted up by Friends at Continuing Sessions into populating seventeen groups that held the most interest to six named Collaboratives and two named Sprints and several more in the works. The Program and Funding Committees of the QLC are functioning well to season, approve, and sometimes fund, these groups. The Community Engagement and administrative staff in the PYM office offer logistics, communications and nurturing support to help Friends in the yearly meeting who are growing and exploring ideas that may become work and witness in the yearly meeting.

Thread Gatherings 2.0: The next generation of Thread Gatherings is in motion and the first was held in the spring. There are multiple Threads held at each event so there are fewer events and more cross-over of interests. The first one was enthusiastically reviewed by attendees.

Gatherings for Monthly and Quarterly Meeting Clerks: We began a new process this year of holding gatherings for monthly meeting clerks to come together and learn from one another and build community. There were also two conference calls for all MM clerks. A similar schedule was supported for Quarterly Meeting clerks.

Visit meetings each month: I continued to visit monthly meetings on a regular basis. In my second year I found that meetings inviting the “new general secretary” was no longer a thing and I began inviting myself or just showing up!

Finances

FY15 financial summary: Our FY15 income overall came in on budget and our expenses were lower than budgeted; support from meetings met budget; support from individuals (Annual Fund) was lower than budgeted and is on that same pathway for the current year. Lower expenses were largely related to fewer program offerings by working groups, careful spending by staff and lower than planned professional and service fees. We transferred \$225,000 to the operating reserve fund, bringing the total up past \$1MM, bringing us much closer to our goal of \$1.2MM (see the treasurer's reports for more detailed information).

Established a Strategic Direction Project Reserve: Each year we budget for a surplus that we use to “refill the granaries” (re-establish operational reserves) and to ensure that we have money for a conservative three-year budget. In FY15 the cash we had available at the end of the year was higher than anticipated by \$75k. The default expectation was that all money would go into the operational reserve. I developed an alternative proposal for using these funds to support programs and projects related to our strategic directions which was approved by the

Administrative Council. This reserve fund gives QLC and the General Secretary more money for important projects and it puts Friends contributions to good use.

Database: After years of wishing and talking about it, we took the steps needed to shift us to a new database that better supports our needs. After conducting significant research, and receiving approval for the use of capital funds we began the work of moving our data to Salesforce. The database will replace both Raiser's Edge and Gifts (our grantmaking database) and will connect our online giving, electronic communications data and event registration data. It will also simplify and support the maintaining of member data from and for monthly meetings. We are in the final stages of the conversion.

TAG Together: TAG stands for **Thanking, Asking, Giving**. It is the approach we are shifting to which invites more Friends to have a stake in our development work. Rather than only reaching out to Friends to ask them to give, we also ask them to help with asking for support and thanking those who have given. For example, we held six TAG-a-thons in which meetings hosted an event local Friends who phoned or emailed other Friends to ask them to give or they sent thank you notes to those who already had given. Also, we play TAG at Annual Sessions where people can Thank, Ask, and/or Give at the TAG Headquarters. Once they have done so, they "tag" another person to ask them to go to the TAG station and Thank, Ask and/or Give.

Increased Covenant Request: The 2016 budget asked meetings to increase their giving by 1.5%. We did not increase spending to match rather we affirmed that increased giving would trigger a Shovel Ready project (see the Newsletter Project in Communications below). Many meetings did say that they could increase their covenant, one by as much as 25%, and so we launched the Shovel Ready project. Thank you Meetings!

Communications

The Video: We engaged a professional videographer to capture our first Continuing Sessions for use in sharing what Continuing Sessions is about. We used the video footage for the front page of the website as well.

Website: The PYM website was refreshed! The news and the calendar and the front page are particularly stunning. The focus is to show all that is happening in the Quaker world in our footprint and help it look as lively as it is. The Newsletters and Story Editors projects, below, help bring vitality to the website by providing well written content from a variety of places.

Newsletters project: Thanks to the additional income from meetings who increased their covenant, we had paid staff support to sign up the PYM office for MM and QM newsletters and to ensure that every MM and QM has a contact to receive info from PYM for their own newsletters. We can therefore encourage sharing the stories from their newsletters with the broader community.

Story Editors: We contracted with four people to formulate and/or edit stories for format and content for publication on our website. This allows us to have the capacity to 1) edit text written as announcements to be more like engaging stories, 2) turn stories written for a MM's newsletter into stories for all readers on the PYM communications channels and 3) get a second set of eyes on written material being published online or in print without distracting staff from their real jobs. We are working out kinks in implementation but it has been a great resource.

Faith IN Practice – Our New Print Publication: We replaced PYM Today with a new 8-page color publication that comes out 3 times a year. It's name? Faith IN Practice. This newsletter allows us to communicate three times as frequently, in color, for the same cost as PYM Today. It is designed and written in-house.

Staffing

Diverse approach to staff positions: I began using a more varied approach to meeting the staffing needs of the yearly meeting. This allows us to use funding that is available when it is available to complete project-focused work without imposing a higher fixed staffing cost that isn't flexible when we need it to be. Examples include the use of:

- Temporary staff for short term projects, for example a 3-month full time development person which allowed us to implement new approaches while still using old ones.
- Contracted staff for specific tasks, for example copy editors.
- Interim staff, for example two youth program positions that have turned over and which we expect will change in some way in the next year
- Grant funded staff like the Tyson funded Community Engagement Fellow
- An incoming Fellow through Quaker Voluntary Service, financed by the Strategic Direction Project Reserve.

Anti-Racism Training: The PYM staff is committed to making our office an anti-racist multicultural workplace. Every staff person participated in an intensive 3-day training that began our work to understand the effects of racism in our interpersonal relationships and in the institution. The process to get to the point of having the training was one in which all the dynamics we want to learn to end were surfaced. It was messy, long, painful and freeing. We will continue the work as a whole staff. We are currently defining and identifying an Internal Transformation Team to be trained and, in turn, to train the rest of staff as well as manage proposals of change.

Ending Racism Ministry

Summaries of the work addressing our corporate witness to end racism are more completely reported by the Presiding Clerk and the Quaker Life Council and by the Undoing Racism Group. I will note several things here though. The work to recognize and dismantle white-centered culture and structure is increasingly part of the agenda of yearly meeting meetings. For example, asking what meetings are struggling with and engaged in to end racism is part of every gathering and conference call with clerks. That said, it still happens with regularity that I notice after the fact that addressing racism wasn't included on an agenda or integrated into a program. Also, increasing numbers of meetings, monthly and quarterly, are coming under the weight of our corporate ministry and finding ways to learn, seek (and find) transformation and act in their communities. The relationship of the Undoing Racism Group in our governance structure continues to be undefined along with the way in which we hold this corporate ministry which is increasingly frustrating and complicated. Finally, I think it is true that we are learning more about the discomfort, fear and anger that comes with doing the work of identifying and ending racism among us for real and many of us are, at the moment, trusting our community enough to be able to experience those feelings together. Even though there are several qualifications in that sentence it represents significant strides forward, and yet there are many more strides and changes before us.

Outside Contacts

The past year has offered an increasing number of opportunities for me to meet with organizations and individuals outside of our yearly meeting. I attended the annual meetings of seven different organizations in the last year in addition to conferences and events sponsored by these and others. I was invited, with other Philadelphia religious leaders, to meet with the Secretary of Homeland Security; I was asked to lobby the House Majority Whip's office with National Council of Churches; I was invited to address an event sponsored by the Islamic Society of North America on anti-Muslim rhetoric. At nearly every one of these events the fact that the General Secretary of PYM was in attendance was remarked on with enthusiasm. This is an area of the role of our General Secretary that may be growing.

Takeaways

This report includes many words (about 2400 up to this point). You may not remember or even read all of it. But there are a few points that I want everyone to take from it and to make it easy, I'll list them for you:

- We have successfully done a huge amount of work toward restructuring our governance so that it is nimbler and more able to be inclusive.
- Our finances continue to be strong BUT it is imperative that the number of donors and the total dollar amount increase quickly.
- The PYM website is an important tool for sharing the work, witness and events of Quaker organizations – including your meeting. Post stories of what has happened on the news feed (you can do it yourself, it's easy!) and post events on the calendar (again, do it yourself!)
- You individually as well as your meeting as well as our extended family of Friends (the yearly meeting) are called on to end racism and white supremacy in our beloved Religious Society of Friends and in the world.
- Broaden your engagement and deepen your relationship with Friends' community.

To Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from the 336th Annual Sessions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, from July 27 to 31, 2016.

What is God calling Quakers in our Yearly Meeting to do next to end racism and white supremacy in the Religious Society of Friends and beyond? What will the blessed community look like in the future? How can we create a welcoming and inclusive space for all Friends? Just as the caterpillar struggles to transform into a butterfly, so we have struggled to understand and address the racism present in our yearly meeting.*

Our theme this year comes from Romans 12:2, “Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Five hundred Friends, ranging from a few weeks to 96 years old, gathered together with the hope and longing to be transformed. We are thankful for the wonderful hospitality provided by Muhlenberg College, especially the friendly, helpful kitchen staff who supported our work by providing healthy food and frozen yogurt. Our Young Friends have reminded us that the Native Americans once lived upon this land.

We were enriched by the presence of Friends from Vihiga Yearly Meeting, East Africa Yearly Meeting (Kaimosi), Britain Yearly Meeting, Southeastern Yearly Meeting, and New York Yearly Meeting. We joined in song with Tribe 1 for an interactive, inventive, and deeply moving concert, which led to a joyful conga-line dancing to “I Can See Through Illusion.”

In our Meetings for Business, we approved nominations and a budget, as well as receiving reports from our Councils, committees, and organizations who are important partners in the wider Quaker world. Each afternoon, we participated in Work and Witness or Undoing Racism Workshops. We look forward to a new version of Faith and Practice, which has been a labor of love over seven years for a small but determined committee. We appreciated the guidance and structure provided by our clerks.

Our children and youth program leaders shared joy, laughter, leadership, and fun through our all together time each day.

Most importantly, throughout Annual Sessions we have talked, thought, prayed, and worshipped about how we will address racism and white supremacy. We disagreed; we protested; we were frustrated, angry, and discouraged. We are being held in the light and we seek its guidance. In all our conversations we made great efforts to speak our Truth with a goal of transforming ourselves and our yearly meeting. Our Young Friends testified that the phrase “people of color” did not resonate with them, to the extent that it should be changed.

The Undoing Racism Group presented a proposal for formalizing the structure, leadership, and governance of Undoing Racism Group in relationship with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Using a tool, “Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution,” we attempted to place our Yearly Meeting along a spectrum of structural racism. Many of our conversations about racism continued long into the night, in big and small groups, during meals, and in the hallways outside our formal sessions.

On Saturday evening, our keynote speaker, dr. tonya thames taylor, carried us to her grandmother’s 5’x7’ front porch, in Gulfport, Mississippi. From that porch, we heard lessons young tonya learned about resilience, the power of language, and encouraging one another – “when a situation arises, you recognize the pain and the struggle, but you don’t let it rob you of your humanity”. In her inspirational and challenging message, tonya drew from the Bible, African American history, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Henry David Thoreau. tonya left us with a query: When you have a burning bush experience, how will you respond? How do you be subversive and transforming?

The Undoing Racism Group has asked us to envision a blessed community. We will continue our labors to discern how to move rightly toward achieving that end.

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!

And so I’m happy, tonight.

I’m not worried about anything.

I'm not fearing any man!

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!

Martin Luther King, Jr., I've Been to the Mountaintop

* Many describe the central issue as “white supremacy,” which legal scholar Frances Lee Ansley defines as “a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.”

<http://www.pym.org/addressing-racism/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2016/05/Working-Document-of-Undoing-Racism-Group-Fostering-Beloved-Communities-of-Love-and-Justice.pdf>

Annette Benert, Amy Kietzman, Louis LeFevre, tonya thames taylor, Melissa Rycroft

Clerk's Report to Annual Sessions, July 31st, 2016

I want to begin by acknowledging that there are so many people to thank for *so many* acts of kindness and hard work this week. Let me highlight a few:

- **Muhlenberg College** for its warm welcome, flexibility in accommodating our needs, delicious meals and comfortable surroundings,
- **You all** for your hard work and deliberations day after day and willingness to keep on going even when the discernment had been especially intense or the day had been extremely long,
- **Tribe 1** for another fabulous concert. As the Reverend William Barber of Repairing the Breach says, "Music can make us one," and Tribe 1 and Jonathan Snipes, Melanie Douty-Snipes and Amy Duckett Wagner's leading us in song every day certainly strengthened that power of worship that creates the feeling of being one with each other.
- **The Sessions Coordinating Committee** for the many hours members put into envisioning our gathering and making our hopes and dreams real,
- All of the plenary speakers, workshop presenters, worship sharing and affinity group leaders, conversation group facilitators, cart drivers, field guides, volunteers who worked before sessions, Friendly Presences, group leaders and ushers who actually *made* the gathering worth coming to, safe and comfortable, and
- **The entire PYM staff** for its dedication, patience, tirelessness and endless good humor. They made *everything* work, from acquiring Muhlenberg College, managing an easy registration and outreach process, planning and executing a wonderful children and youth program, organizing *all* of the documents and presentations for the website and onsite, packing up a ton of material, moving it here, setting it up and then packing it all up again and schlepping it back to Friends Center. You have been the best, and we *all* owe you a huge ovation!

My year

This year was not only a transition year for me, moving into a new position, but one for the yearly meeting, living into our new structure. I know how hard it has been for many, giving up what was familiar and cherished and taking the risk to try new approaches to our decision-making and work. I applaud the courage Friends showed in just *doing it*, and I'm feeling much more confidence coming from Friends now that we have had almost a year to experience that new vision. We aren't "finished" and probably never will be. As an experimental and experiential religion, we are constantly in the making, trying new approaches and laying down old ones. What I *have* seen is great success, and I feel a deep appreciation for the trust that Friends have placed in each other and the PYM leadership, as well as a willingness to take risks. Let me highlight some of these successes that we *all* have accomplished:

- Thanks to the work of the Implementation Committee, we have taken the Long Range Plan and its strategic directions and turned them into a structure to support them.

- We have created three well-organized and well-functioning governance councils (Nominating, Quaker Life and Administrative), which has meant that the work of yearly meeting as it relates to finances, human resources, religious education, pastoral care and outreach have continued without interruption *and* we have made great headway in helping Friends join with others who share a leading in order to continue our very important witness in the world. All of the new Collaboratives and Sprints have a PYM website presence so that Friends across our yearly meeting can know what they're doing and how to connect with that work, and many have received funding for particular activities. There is still room, however, for many more Collaboratives and Sprints, and I am eager to discuss how to create them if you're interested. Yes, there are areas in the new structure that have not been addressed as yet, including how to create the very-important Resource Friends Network, recruiting Bridge Contacts for each meeting, how to plan our yearly meeting-wide work to end racism and white supremacy, and lingering questions about process such as how to share Minutes of Concern with the body. We will take up that work in the Fall.
- We held two successful and very well attended Continuing Sessions, one at the Westtown School and the other at Arch Street Meetinghouse. At both gatherings we focused on worship, fellowship, advancing our work to end racism and white supremacy and on discerning our leadings so that our witness for peace and justice in the world can continue and become even more effective and influential.
- Thread Gatherings continued, addressing needs that are shared widely by meetings.
- We found exciting ways to share information across our large yearly meeting on a regular basis electronically and in a beautiful new print form.
- The General Secretary and I met twice this year with monthly meeting clerks and held two conference calls with them to begin building a community of clerks that will provide mutual support. One of the conference calls focused on sharing information and resources about the Syrian refugee crisis. We also met with quarter clerks and coordinators and held a second conference call. These calls and meetings allowed Friends from across the yearly meeting to communicate with each other, hear what's happening throughout the yearly meeting, ask questions, get help with thorny issues and build skills. They all have been well-attended and much appreciated, and Christie and I look forward to continuing the gatherings next year.
- We held a review of the work of our General Secretary. The committee, named by the Administrative Council, was composed of myself; the Clerk of the Personnel Services Working Group, David Jones; and Nancy DeMis, former clerk of the Personnel Services Group, member of the last General Secretary Search Committee, and member of the Pension Fund Committee. The committee's report to the Administrative Council concluded with: "... We feel that PYM is greatly enriched by Christie's dedication to the position of General Secretary. She is a courageous servant-leader for PYM. She articulates her vision for the future of the organization with clarity and surprises us with creative and challenging ways to communicate information. She has strongly supported the implementation of the new PYM structure as part of the Long Range Plan. She has greatly expanded her facility with budget and finance matters, and development concerns. She works tirelessly toward

making the yearly meeting community an integrated body. She is fearless in her willingness to shine a bright light on the issues of racism in the Society of Friends. She builds relationships which are respectful even in disagreement. These are the characteristics of the General Secretary that PYM needs at this point in its history.” We are indeed lucky to have such a leader!

As I look ahead, what is uppermost in my mind as work for this coming year are four major concerns:

1. Creating a plan for how our work to address racism in PYM and beyond will move ahead.
2. Creating more ways to engage *all* Friends and *all* meetings in our work in order to unleash our enormous energy to be effective witnesses in the world. If we want *everyone* to be involved in our work, we must find a multitude of ways for Friends to share their skills and leadings and a multitude of ways for Friends to interact with each other about that work.
3. Finding a multitude of ways to reach out to and communicate with Friends about the work of the yearly meeting, our Collaboratives, Sprints, meetings, quarters and governance councils. The new website is rich and full and so much easier to navigate, but I also understand that not everyone thinks of it as the first place to go to learn about what’s happening in our PYM world. My guess is that here are more ways we can use monthly meeting and quarterly meetings’ communication systems and the wonderful position of **Bridge Contacts** to bring “home” what is happening.
4. Approving the revision of Faith and Practice. (I add this now because of the sad failure to do so during Annual Sessions.)

Just as the yearly meeting has grown and changed, I have too.

I took on this role because I have been greatly nourished spiritually and personally by the yearly meeting, growing up as a child in Wilmington, DE Meeting, and as an adult working with Quaker educators from our region in public and Friends schools. I learned so much from weekend workcamps, FGC gatherings in Cape May, being a long-time member of the Nonviolence and Children Working Group and as a member of the Committee on Friends Education. Serving on CC11 helped me see the breadth and depth of the yearly meeting and observe servant leadership at its finest.

When I was asked to consider becoming Rising Clerk two years ago, I embraced the opportunity to give back to a community that had been so supportive of me. I also knew that, as a former school leader, I understood the stresses, pain *and* joy of creating a new way of working and being together. I am in-the-making as clerk, I know, and truly humbled by and grateful to the many servant leaders I have had the good fortune to work with and talk with this year. I can honestly say I have loved the many meetings I’ve attended, sitting across the table from Friends, all of whom have access to the truth, listening as the spirit has moved among us. I often describe finding unity as “a magical process,” but I know well that the “magic” comes from our discipline of listening carefully, deep reflection, being open to other perspectives and letting go of our own concerns. Every time I attend worship at my beloved Germantown Meeting, I

come away transformed in some way. I have felt that same process of being transformed when planning Continuing Sessions, creating the budget, attending council meetings or in my meetings monthly with Christie. I have been humbled too by the enormity of the work before us to bring justice and peace to the world and am energized by the work we have accomplished this session.

Thank you, Friends, for your trust in me and for your willingness to let me grow in this role. I welcome your criticism and suggestions, as I know they will strengthen me and help me be of greater service to this beloved yearly meeting.

In gratitude and peace,

Penny Colgan-Davis
Clerk