



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

1.15.22 Quaker Life Council Minutes

First Month 15, 2022 (using Zoom format)

JOINT SESSION OF THE PYM QUAKER LIFE, ADMINISTRATION, AND NOMINATING COUNCILS (By Zoom 10:00-11:00 A.M.)

We were welcomed by PYM presiding co-clerks, Frank and Jean-Marie Barch, with 27 other participants. General Secretary Christie Duncan-Tesmer reported that a lot is going on, including new staff vacancies. She shared a revised organization chart to fill them based on the PYM strategic directions and sought our comments. The new chart seeks to foster engagement and collaboration while lowering the number of executive positions and being budget neutral. Total staff would be 19 full time equivalents. Discussion looked at the roles of data throughout the organization, capacity, the re-assignment of roles, comparison to other YMs, and our inclusive identity as Friends (not “Quakers”).

QUAKER LIFE COUNCIL (By Zoom 11:10 AM-1:00 PM)

Decisions **are shown in bold.**

PARTICIPANTS – Marge Dawson, Sue Dietz (part), Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Robert Greene, Rose Ketterer, Sue Kight, and Anthony Stover (clerk).

Ex Officio Members – Andrew Anderson (PYM Treasurer), Jean-Marie Barch (PYM Co-Clerk), Christie Duncan-Tesmer (Executive Secretary, part), and Zachary Dutton (Assoc. Sec. for Program & Religious Life).

Guests – O (Ministry and Care, part), Steve Olshevski (Program Committee, part).

Absent – Tom Hughes and Guinevere Janes.

WELCOME – Anthony welcomed us and introduced the guests.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT – Committee clerk Steve Olshevski used a PowerPoint to share the committee’s mission, how they nurture “spiritual fire,” some administrative tools, and recent accomplishments (including identifying liaisons with collaboratives, funding, and concerns framed by YAFs and EJC). His observations include:



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- The 2014 YM reorganization is too complicated and not working as promised.
- Program Committee's core group of 6 often feels helpless.
- Some groups in the YM feel wounded, and there is no process for healing that right now.

He recommends:

- Laying down the Program Committee and redeploying active members where they could be most useful,
- Starting the process to re-organize PYM again to foster accessibility and simplicity, maybe reflecting committee structures already used in our monthly meetings.
- Evaluate and restructure the PYM General Secretary's job for better effectiveness.

In the discussion, Rose thanked Steve O. for his courageous report. Anthony also thanked him for the report and re-stressed "Friends values" rather than "Quaker values." Robert cautioned that when there are communications breakdowns – everyone involved has a responsibility. Let's not lay our problems primarily on staff shortcomings; we each need to look to our own roles in creating these problems. (Steve O. agreed with this.) O identified with the statement "What part do we each play?" How we wield power is also complex. Most of us have learned terrible communications skills, but we as Friends have something valuable to offer (if we could only practice that better). PowerPoint report is attached.

MINISTRY & CARE COMMITTEE REPORT – Committee clerk Jean-Marie Barch gave highlights from their written report:

- New members and their energy,
- Starting earlier this year soliciting Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports,
- The Truth and Transformation sprint and its recommendations,
- Another sprint working on at-large memberships (with one application processed so far),
- Supporting the anti-racism thread gathering later this winter, and
- and A minute of appreciation for PYM staffer George Schaefer when he retired.

She then went into detail on the proposed Truth and Transformation process and how it was developed. A foundation of trust is essential for us to continue as a body. This will be an ongoing process of connecting rather than "othering." Most of the work will occur at monthly meeting-based trust circles. The sprint will provide training, technical assistance, and deep listening tools.

Anthony expressed concern that the charge by annual sessions was for "truth and reconciliation." Instead, will transformation also do this work? Jean-Marie explained how the sprint discerned that transformation allows distrusting parties to change their perspectives. Two processes are currently overlapping: steering the YM body and creating



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new structures that foster accountability. The hope is that well trained “deep listening stewards” can help with both. Andrew asked how this relates to the YM’s current DEI initiatives. Jean-Marie hopes the two processes are interlocking but not identical. O noted that “conciliate” means to both restore and overcome distrust. The goal in this proposal is to first build trust by sharing “sacred space.” Trust will lead to transformation and then reconciliation.

Jean-Marie continued by stating that trust and connection are key to enabling transformation. Trust circles in Baltimore Yearly Meeting have shown that people feel empowered, shifting from feeling shut down to being heard and respected. Building trust lessens wounding. Their goals, schedule, and tools are spelled out in the written report.

Andrew asked about available resources. Steve E. asked about publicizing this effort once approved. At first it will be promoted by us and the YM newsletter. Word of mouth may be the most effective advertizing. **We approved supporting the continuation of this work and promoting its use throughout the YM.**

REVIEW OF QLC FINANCES – PYM Treasurer, Andrew Anderson, outlined how QLC’s finances currently operate. The YM budget is worked out each spring for approval by annual sessions. The QLC’s “Envelope Fund” (now \$30,500 annually) comes from the YM’s General Fund. A few years ago this was delegated to our Program Committee to support collaboratives and other YM groups. (In the past this was divided 2/3 for collaboratives and 1/3 for travel.). Also there is a strategic reserve that now contains just \$1,500, the residue from a 2016 fund of \$50,000.

Anthony summarized the delegation to Program Committee. Andrew noted that if the Program Committee dissolves, these funds would return to QLC. Much of this year’s \$30,500 remains to be spent. (Currently Zachary is standing in for Olivia B. in tracking these funds.) Anthony is concerned that much of this has only recently come into focus. There has been no reporting on these funds from the Program Committee.

Are unspent funds carried over? Does Program Committee currently have the capacity to adequately oversee these funds? Andrew explained that unspent funds are not carried over, and it would be good order to ask for regular accounting and see if current structures serve us usefully. Zachary will distribute a one-page summary of Program Committee expenses for the past three years.



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SESSIONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SCC) MEMBERSHIP CHANGES – Zachary reviewed the SCC nominating process for new members. **We approved the nomination of Susanna Davison (London Grove MM) as Co-Clerk, July 2022-2025 and reappointing Wanda Wyffels (Abington MM) for a second term, July 2022-2025.**

We also accepted releasing from the SCC Jim Herr, Tyler McCullough, and Connie Lezenby as they have requested.

Jean-Marie noted that the SCC is becoming more active and energetic. New members will be nominated by staff based on thread gathering participation and phone inquiries. People active in MMs and QMs are also suggested. Names will come to QLC when ready for approval.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES -- **Steve read the minutes and they were approved.**

Attachment: Program Committee PowerPoint