



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

2.19.22 Quaker Life Council Minutes

Third Month 19, 2022

QUAKER LIFE COUNCIL (By Zoom 10:00 AM-11:50 PM)

Decisions and follow-up actions **are shown in bold.**

PARTICIPANTS – Marge Dawson, Sue Dietz, Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Robert Greene, Tom Hughes, Guinevere Janes, Rose Ketterer, and Anthony Stover (clerk).

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

Absent – Sue Kight.

Guest – Betsy Crofts and Steve Olshevski (both Program Committee, part).

We opened and closed this session with centering silent worship.

WELCOME – Anthony welcomed us and then announced that **he will resign from being our clerk as well as leaving the QLC.** He thanked us for our service and expressed his continued support for the Yearly Meeting. This led to a deep discussion about our sadness at his decision and the current fragmentation and alienation among Friends (and elsewhere, too). There has been a pattern of QLC clerks (and Yearly Meeting clerks, too) leaving early – what can we learn from this? “Holding the center” may be becoming increasingly difficult in these trying times. We are grateful for Anthony’s encouragement of inter-council strategic thinking – all under very trying circumstances. He also had the courage to ask the profound questions – what should we really be doing? His counsel and guidance have been invaluable to all of us. **We will develop a minute of appreciation for Anthony’s service.**

COUNCIL CONNECTIONS TO MONTHLY MEETINGS (including inter-visitation) – Christie Duncan-Tessmer described how this effort grew out of our three-council work a year ago. How can we be in deeper relationship with our MMs to hear what their needs and priorities are? If successful, the MMs will be deeply touched, the YM will speak to their needs, and many will attend annual and continuing sessions where they will feel safe and heard. Among the councils, being a visitor will be voluntary. Each person will visit up to three



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meetings, with three visits to each. (Some contacts can be virtual or at special events.) At first, “Meet the energy where it is,” so no visits to self-contained or struggling MMs. “We’re creating relationships, not transactions.” We will strive for a 2-way relationship between the monthly meeting and the Yearly Meeting. Visits will include deep listening, sharing information, and encouraging attendance at Yearly Meeting sessions.

Our discussion addressed access to the spiritual state of the meeting reports. Ministry & Care tries to follow up on concerns that are expressed in these reports. Visiting struggling meetings could actually be very fruitful. What did Christie learn from her own visits to many MMs when she first started? Many were just happy to be visited. Most wanted better connections to others. Friends love Quakerism and our deep connections to Spirit. Already PYM has many connections to the monthly meetings – these visits would just make it more personal. (How much should these “touch points” be connected?) Marge really appreciates the weekly PYM calendar and the resource people and services it offers.

FINDING VOLUNTEERS FOR THE CLIMATE WITNESS SPRINT -- Sue Dietz reported that the policies and procedures by the sprint will be finished soon. They are looking for at least 3 or 4 more climate witness stewards to carry out priority climate justice actions. PYM attenders and members are eligible. These names will be approved at Annual Sessions. Nominations should go to the Administrative Council.

RECENT SUPPORT FOR SMALL MEETINGS -- Zachary Dutton outlined that the Yearly Meeting has used money from the Shoemaker Fund and contracted consultations to help local meetings build better outreach. The consultants, John Marquette (Lehigh Valley Monthly Meeting) and Emily Provence (New York Yearly Meeting), have been very helpful as meetings have applied for assistance.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT – Clerk Steve Olshevski and member Betsy Crofts joined us. Their report (on PowerPoint) started with their mission which supports collaboratives, bridge contacts, resource Friends, PYM representatives to other organizations, thread gatherings, and young adult Friends. The Committee suggests:

- a process to reorganize PYM to make it more accessible, inviting, and spiritually grounded,
- a new reconsideration of skills needed by the General Secretary for the future (similar to a 360-degree evaluation in private industry), and
- that the Program Committee should continue functioning.



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The Committee could not report on finances until it can refine numbers working with staff. In the discussion it was noted that “structure reflects culture.” How does the first recommendation tie in with the Governance Committee’s recent recommendations? QLC has authority to lay down the Program Committee, but re-allocations of members may lie with the Nominating Council. We appreciated that this report was thorough and thoughtful. (Guinevere pointed out that in Britain Yearly Meeting, most staff are involved with the protection of children.)

SESSIONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE REPORT -- The written report is attached to these minutes below. Jean-Marie and Zachary Dutton reported that the Annual Sessions agenda is being formulated and hopefully will reflect the Yearly Meeting’s current priorities. All sessions will be virtual. This year’s “runway” starts June 25 with a “Workshop Saturday” of five workshops. These will be recorded. Annual Sessions will start July 23 with “Affinity Group Saturday.” A spiritual formation retreat with Clinton Pettus will occur July 26-27. Then sessions will occur July 27-31 with business sessions and two plenary speakers.

Meantime, Continuing Sessions will occur this next weekend, March 26-27, with singing on the 25th. In both sessions, monthly and quarterly meetings will be encouraged to give reports. We are each encouraged to invite Friends to attend both. Yearly Meeting is not just about decisions, but sharing rich information in community.

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



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SESSIONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Sessions Coordinating Committee (SCC) Report to Quaker Life Council - March 19, 2022

The mission of SCC is to listen to Divine promptings in setting the direction of the Annual and Continuing Sessions. The committee supervises continual long term planning and with staff implements the directional decisions. Collecting and evaluating surveys assists in measuring goals and responses within the PYM community.

Each year the SCC takes responsibility for the yearly theme. We listen for the Teacher within to glean a message or thoughts that holds weight from which we can contemplate and grow as a religious community. The theme that manifested for the 2021-2022 year revolved around the thought that what we uproot transforms and that forgiveness is continual to our well being so

“Across the Generations, As We Repair Broken Foundations, We
Become Unified in Our Beloved Quaker Community”

The theme speaks to inclusion, connection, earth care, racial justice, all ages and all the ways we need each other in co-creating membership in Spirit.

SCC has brought forth three main goals to keep in mind and follow : 1) Inclusion and Belonging of our younger people, BIPOC and gender diversity folks and others interested in PYM and that we are providing welcoming safe spaces, 2) Embracing Newcomers - getting to know them and to evaluate programs geared in this direction and 3) Bridging with Local Monthly Meetings to assess if there has been increased awareness/interest in PYM.

The SCC, Staff and PYM Clerks continually work to develop the Annual Sessions and the Continuing Sessions. With Staff assistance we have some great metric tools to assess information that can to guide our direction forward. We hope this report gives some clearness and broadens the SCC/QLC communication in the Light and care of our community.

Sincerely and on behalf of the SCC & Co-Clerks, Cathleen
Marion