



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

4.16.22 Quaker Life Council Minutes

Fourth Month 16, 2022

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 Prestwidge-Barch, with 24 other participants. Two new members of the Administration Council were welcomed: Carter Nash and Kruskal Hewitt. Christie Duncan-Tesmer, General Secretary, reported that several staff positions are shifting, with interviews underway. A PYM-wide survey is underway asking when would be the best times for annual and interim sessions. The office space is being reconfigured for more comfortable hybrid working conditions, to be completed by mid-May. A policy on ministry and advocacy is being finalized.

Reflecting on the recent virtual continuing sessions in late March: it was a learning experience; the “chat” in Zoom turned out to be challenging and troubling (and distracting – it can hijack the agenda); the Westtown School discussion showed that education is still a vital value for all of us as Friends; some people found the beginning and end wonderful (topical, inspiring, and spiritually grounded).

Jean-Marie reported that the Ministry on Racism effort is developing a group of stewards (now called “deep listeners”) who can carry out this ministry in the Truth and Transformation process.

Tonya Thames Taylor has observed that we, as Quakers, are often too hard on ourselves. Our work does show and inspire – it is noticed. Her sorority sisters all have positive current images of Friends, and they will be attending the Trenton Friends Meeting together soon. “Will you come with me?” can be a powerful invitation.



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QUAKER LIFE & NOMINATING COUNCILS (By Zoom 11:10 AM-1:00 PM)

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

PARTICIPANTS – Marge Dawson, Sue Dietz, Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Susan Kight, and Rose Ketterer. Absent: Robert Greene, Tom Hughes, and Guinevere Janes.

Ex Officio Members – Jean-Marie Barch (PYM Co-Clerk), Christie Duncan-Tesmer (Executive Secretary, part), Zachary Dutton, (Associate Secretary for Program & Religious Life), and Melissa Rycroft (rising PYM clerk).

Guests from Nominating Council – Joan Broadfield, John Christman, Suzanne Day, Robert Horvay, Michael Lane, Deb Lyons, Alice Maxfield, Jeff Rosenthal, Tacie Trull, and Terri Whiteford (serving as QLC interim clerk).

We opened and closed this session with centering silent worship.

A DEEP DIVE INTO QLC -- Terri, as interim clerk, welcomed us and offered a series of queries for us to discuss. First we QLC folks introduced ourselves. General comments included: There has been no orientation to those coming new to QLC. We often were asked to make decisions without full knowledge or enough members. Institutional memory has evaporated with current arbitrary term limits. It often feels overwhelming with so few members.

-- *What is QLC working on right now? And what are your priorities for 2022?* – Agendas have been developed month to month. One priority has been connections to local monthly meetings (especially small ones) to hear what they want. We have just started hearing monthly reports from committees under our watch. These days, Program Committee is where the action is and handles most of the funds. There is also much to do in carrying out the YM's current approved action issues. Many monthly meetings are already stretched thin, especially when they have historic properties to care for.

Zachary offered how important it is to see both the challenges and the joy and life of this work! QLC should set strategic goals and offer policy guidance and leadership. The best clerk should have such a vision and work well with PYM staff. Jean-Marie, as clerk of the Ministry & Care Committee, helped us distinguish between the doers (committees and collaboratives, etc.) and spiritually-led oversight. There should be a QLC representative on each of its committees. Coming on to QLC may mean being a liaison to one or more of its committees or subcommittees or collaboratives. (This commitment needs to be stated upfront when seeking new members for QLC.)

-- *Besides the number of people, what is getting in the way of your getting things done?* – It has been good to get agendas and prior readings at least a week ahead. Some of us are technologically challenged and need to ensure that communications really works.

-- *Should a new clerk come from outside or be one of us?* – If being a strategic thinker is important, probably someone new will be required.



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--*What skills or experiences are needed to complement the current Council members?* – Needs include strategic thinking, experience with the Yearly Meeting, possible co-clerking, and institutional memory.

In the future we should give out an outline of what is expected in our committee reports.

Based on this discussion, the Nominating Council will hold a de-briefing session sometime in the next two weeks. Terri is eager to receive any additional ideas and suggestions. Resource Friends may also contain eligible members and possible QLC clerk.

MINUTES OF APPRECIATION FOR ANTHONY STOVER AND ZACHARY DUTTON – **The minute for Anthony was approved as written.** Steve will present Anthony's minute on YM letterhead to him personally. **For Zachary's minute minor changes were made and the minute was approved.** The minutes are attached in Appendix A.

REPORT BY MINISTRY & CARE COMMITTEE -- Jean-Marie, as M&C Committee clerk, reported that 68 meetings or other PYM entities now have submitted spiritual state of the meeting reports! This is many more than in recent years at this time. Meetings are increasingly open to reporting challenges and problems; this honesty can only make our understanding better. Are small meetings fully involved? M&C will be assembling a combined Spiritual State of the Meeting report. In addition the work includes trying to link meetings who share similar issues. It will be offered to QLC in June. (Meanwhile, there will be a reminder to those meetings who have not yet submitted their reports that it is not too late to do so.)

The training for the Trust Circles with Clinton Pettus has been amazing – 16 have participated so far. Special training involves a separate group for Westtown School and Meeting. Third Haven Meeting and a nearby church are also building trust circles. This resource of “deep listeners” may be very helpful in healing current hurts in our yearly meeting, avoiding shame and blame.

We noted that QLC is responsible for nominating people to all its committees. Staff have been invaluable in developing preliminary lists of candidates. Ideally the QLC should have a nominating subcommittee.

PYM RESPONSE TO UKRAINE WAR – Rose Ketterer outlined her response to the daily worship sponsored by Friends House, Moscow. It's been going on for almost two months involving as many as 100 Friends daily, many of whom are retired. At first there was grief, then prayer – even for Mr. Putin. And now she feels deeply connected through the breakout groups following worship. Practical support to Ukraine and refugees has been discussed from many angles. It turns out it is hard to reach “Friends everywhere.” One young adult Friend from California is trying to understand the Peace Testimony in times of violence and attack. What are our spiritual “inward weapons?” Self-defense is always a difficult topic.



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Do PYM Friends care to be involved – or should this just be reported on in regular PYM communications? George Lakey’s writings can be helpful. Joan urged Rose to develop a compelling account to get more folks deeply involved. Michael Lane discouraged us from thinking intellectually about a threatening crisis – however our testimonies can help re-direct threats that come our way. We can be models of non-violence.

This is a timely concern, what should we do about it now? PYM has already published a statement about the Russia-Ukraine War and resources to help. (On similar issues in the past, PYM has held a conference call of interested people and developed a statement. Or they have asked a collaborative to develop a statement. Also, sprints have worked out strategies. Sometimes, YM has held a called session for the “body” to discern and act.)

For this issue, Rose is studying future preparedness and “the Lamb’s War.” Why don’t we have a 100-year Peace Plan? Melissa shared about one PYM family with Ukrainian connections. She recommends Bob Dockhorn’s current testimony for addressing violent conflict. Joan recommends getting involved with FCNL’s priority-setting project, especially reducing the U.S.’s military budget. Jean-Marie alerted us that in protecting those like us (white, European) we should also broaden our field to all humans and, in fact, to all living things. Our outrage can also apply to many other places not as prominent in the news right now. And there are those suffering whom we can help much closer to home.

In closing, Terri suggested that we follow-up on the larger challenge to our Peace Testimony at future QLC meetings.

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



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Appendix A – Minutes of Appreciation

To Our Friend, Anthony Stover,

As you depart from the Quaker Life Council of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, we wish to thank you for your five devoted years of service as co-clerk and clerk. Yours has been a steady hand of leadership, a caring and sensitive soul, and an inclusive spirit that made us each feel welcomed and heard.

We are deeply saddened that you have left suddenly but know this is your Spirit-led decision and we respect that deeply. Not only have you mentored each of us, you also spearheaded strategic thinking at higher levels that fostered communication among the Yearly Meeting councils and staff. Neither the covid-19 pandemic nor your personal health setbacks deterred you, since you immediately pivoted to new formats and schedules.

You encouraged us to ask the profound questions – What should we really be doing? How can we be more effective? What are we not hearing? Who else should be at the table? How is Spirit leading us? The Quaker Life Council has only benefitted from this approach.

Your counsel and guidance have been invaluable to all of us. You will be sorely missed. For your time serving with us we are deeply grateful. May the next chapters in your life deeply nourish your soul and spirit!

In appreciation,

Members of the PYM Quaker Life Council

Dear Zachary,

As you move on from serving as Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Associate Secretary for Program & Religious Life, please know that you depart with our blessing and love.

Your service to us and to the wider Quaker world has been exemplary. Your willingness to handle the smallest details, the complex technical issues behind the scenes, the endless scheduling, and the complex communications within our web of volunteers and staff have impressed each of us. We have a hard time imagining doing this work without you.

You brought to this job the special perspective of a Young Friend reared locally and grounded in local Quaker practice. You added to that your own unique and deep



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commitment to our community. This enabled you to give your work with us a depth and insight that will be tough to replace. Your counsel, guidance, patience, perseverance, and plain speaking have been invaluable to each of us. You will be sorely missed here.

For your time and devotion serving the QLC and the rest of the Yearly Meeting community we are deeply grateful. May the next chapters in your life nourish your wonderful soul and spirit!

With much appreciation,

Members of the PYM Quaker Life Council