



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

5.21.22 Quaker Life Council Minutes

Fifth Month 21, 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 21 other participants. After opening worship, Frank Barch reported on the new Climate Stewards group and their charge. A draft of that charge and a list of proposed members will be submitted to the three councils for consideration over the next month.

Terri Whiteford reported for Nominating Council and its current focus on the QLC. A roster of candidates is being assembled, and all of us were invited to share possible names with her. Meanwhile, Jean-Marie will serve as interim clerk of QLC.

Roy Zatcoff reported for the combined Governance Advisory Committee serving all three councils. They are available to help each council evaluate themselves, using methods unique to Friends and from outside, too. Accountability is always a challenge. Therefore, each council is encouraged to offer a report during annual sessions this summer. They recommend that each council's report include accomplishments, challenges and difficulties (including what we didn't get to), and plans to address the challenges. (Just naming challenges can help with discernment, even if the way forward is not clear.)

Christie Duncan-Tesmer offered her General Secretary's report. Highlights included scheduling annual session in late July (all by Zoom again), June 25 for all workshops, July 23 for affinity groups, and "Quaker Fun Day" in person at Arch Street Meetinghouse. The Arch Street Meeting Preservation Trust will be launching a capital campaign soon. The new Aging Coordinator, Sheila Sorkin, will offer an on-line gathering May 26. YM and QM leaders now have sharing sessions three times a year. The challenge of better connections among the levels of Friends were identified, but didn't dominate.

The new updated policy on political advocacy was thoroughly threshed by PYM's lawyer and all the collaboratives. By law, direct and grassroots lobbying (influencing specific legislation) and political campaigning by churches is prohibited. (It would be costly if PYM ever lost its tax-exempt status.) Having the policy helps protect the YM and its many parts and resources. Behind this limitation lies the bigger question of "What is our vision and strategy for addressing anti-racism and climate change?"

Discussion on this policy included that donations should be restricted to non-political functions or go to non-religious groups. Is some of our religious education actually advocacy? How can this be presented without seeming like a restriction? Offering the background and context is essential. Writing letters on general issues as a meeting is OK, but just not advocating for specific bills.



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QUAKER LIFE & NOMINATING COUNCILS (By Zoom 11:15 AM-1:00 PM)

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

PARTICIPANTS – Jean-Marie Barch (PYM Co-Clerk and serving as QLC interim clerk), Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Robert Greene, Tom Hughes, Guinevere Janes, and Rose Ketterer.

Absent: Marge Dawson, Sue Dietz, and Susan Kight.

Ex Officio Member – Christie Duncan-Tesmer (Executive Secretary).

We opened and closed this session with centering silent worship.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION -- Jean Marie, as interim clerk, offered an observation by another Friend, “The more we have to do, the more time we should spend in worship.” We as a council have a broad range of responsibilities. She noted that the Nominating Council is looking both short term (the next three months) and long-term. And she has been a close partner to this group over the past year and is willing to serve as interim clerk for at least three months. She especially noted the value of the Agenda Committee in guiding her as clerk.

REPORT FROM GRANTING COMMITTEE – Guinevere reported that the Granting Committee has already prepared their report for our consideration. However, Christie pointed out that it should go to the Administrative Council, not QLC.

REPORT FROM FRIENDS COUNSELING SERVICE -- Robert Greene, as an FCS Advisory Committee Member, noted that we have all received this group’s written report (see attached). This group offers mental health services. It involves six practioners on a sliding scale of fees (and more practioners would be welcomed). George Schaefer is serving as interim clerk while Janaki Spickard-Keeler is on maternity leave. A suggestion to change the payment system was made last fall and is currently being simplified and clarified by PYM staff.

UPDATE: PERSONNEL SELECTION PROCESS FOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR – Christie described the process for filling this job and how it was posted internally first. The candidate who arose satisfied everyone involved. The concern about reaching out more widely to seek greater diversity was reviewed by the Personnel Committee, and they decided to continue the current policy to build internal career paths. And offering a job to external candidates when one inside is likely, that is unfair to everyone involved. Currently, staff are already healthfully diverse. For this job, Melinda will be shadowing Zachary for the next month. However, Guinevere was uncomfortable with the publicity about this appointment and possible layers of more bureaucracy.



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RELEASE OF SUSAN KIGHT – Jean-Marie offered that Susan is departing from both QLC and the Ministry and Care Committee, and **we minuted our gratitude for her service with both groups.** She will be missed.

PREPARING A REPORT FOR ANNUAL SESSIONS – **Steve will take the interim report, build on it, and distribute it to the committee before our June meeting.** Guinevere apologized for publicly criticizing last year's report. By reviewing it together before annual sessions, we can avoid such a situation again.

DISCUSSION: UNDERSTANDING US AS “HOLDERS” OF THE WORK OF QLC -- Jean-Marie opened a discussion to get more clear about what our work really is as a Council. In last month's joint Council discussion she heard how passionate many of us are about our work and the frustration about knowing enough about our wide span of responsibility. Robert and Rose spoke to the need for more active liaisons with our committees as well as the new initiative for visiting meetings. Too often we feel detached. Often we have not known enough to “steer” effectively. We also need many more members to be effective. Yet, we are not to be the “doers” but provide oversight and guidance. How do we balance our oversight and involvement? Communications has also been a perennial problem. For example, our own committees have not yet been effectively informed that they are to make periodic reports to us.

Intervisitation with meetings can be very simple, just to hear people's issues. It can be rich and rewarding without having to represent the Yearly Meeting and its councils. However, covid pandemic restrictions currently inhibit us. **Robert suggested that in our next meetings we get to some details that may suggest solutions in areas such as meeting visitations, liaisons to committees, etc.**

Christie offered accessing the “meta-level” based on the YM's strategic plan. What are our big directions? This is a discussion we will continue in the future. **Meanwhile, Jean-Marie enjoined each of us to re-read our council's charge.**

DISCUSSION: NEW CLERK FOR PROGRAM COMMITTEE -- Jean Marie announced that Steve Olchewski has resigned as clerk of the Program Committee, effective at annual sessions. We need to develop guidance to find a suitable replacement. Tom noted that when the committees were established, finances were a big issue. Then there was a structure on reporting – now all that seems to have dropped away. An ideal candidate needs to have time, be well organized, and be a good communicator. The old charts might still be useful to us (Zachary may still have them in storage). **We need to meet with Program Committee to discuss leadership succession.**

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



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PYM Friends Counseling Service Report to Quaker Life Council April 2022

Friends Counseling Service offers professional therapeutic counseling services to individuals, couples, and families in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting which are affordable and grounded in the Quaker spirit. Services also include consultation to Friends and meetings regarding substance use and abuse, addictions treatment, and other behavioral challenges. FCS providers are licensed mental health professionals and active Friends.

- Services are provided by licensed counselors, members of the yearly meeting, for a fee of \$95 a session;
- Counselors are paid \$70 for each session;
- Counselor reimbursement rate is 40% below the customary fee in this region;
- Friends who are unable to pay this fee are provided a financial subsidy by FCS;
- Subsidy is based on a sliding scale of household income;
- The minimum fee asked of those receiving subsidy is \$20; those Friends who can afford the usual and customary fee (\$125) help to defray the cost of the subsidy provided to those that cannot.

FSC Subsidy is also provided through an endowment and contributions:

- The Arlene Kelly Fund, managed by Friends Fiduciary Corporation
- The John Martin Trust Fund contributes \$15,000 annually to the FCS
- Monthly meetings are asked to contribute funds to offset subsidy received by their Meeting members.

Currently, there are six FCS psychotherapists serving Friends in the yearly meeting: Terence Carroll, Deborah Cooper, Betty Hartzell, Danielle Havelin, Winden Rowe, and George Schaefer. Several clinicians have retired in the past two years, so we are actively seeking new clinicians. We were delighted to accept George Schaefer's application to return as a counselor with FCS after his retirement at the end of 2021. Janaki Spickard Keeler, LCSW, serves as coordinator, and Jess Purvis provides administrative support.

During the pandemic, the FCS counselors moved almost entirely online; most have since returned to a mix of in-person and online services. The shift to online services opened up services to individuals and families who live far from the current clinicians, and we are excited to be able to reach areas of the yearly meeting that had previously not been able to access counseling services.



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The Friends Counseling Service Advisory Panel, the oversight body that sets policy for the counseling service, was launched last year and has been working on updating paperwork and setting new policy around tele-health. The current members are Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, Robert Greene, Sallie Jones, and Danielle Havelin. Janaki Spickard Keeler serves in an *ex officio* capacity.

The Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2021 can be found in Attachment 1. Compared to the prior fiscal year, our caseload went up 11%, and the total number of appointments went up 46%. This indicates that Friends have needed more support during the pandemic than previously. As you can see from the report, members account for 78% of the subsidies used. Ten of the thirteen quarters of PYM have at least one member or attender who used the counseling service, representing an expansion over prior years.

QLC received a minute of concern from the FCS counselors last November, regarding ongoing difficulties with PYM's contracted accounting services that have affected our counselors getting paid (see Attachment 2). A discussion with the Finance Department yielded some progress in our coordinator getting access to approve check requests, but there continue to be unaddressed logjams in this area that remain a subject of concern. The counseling service has been promised a new check request form for the counselors that is readable by the artificial intelligence used by the contracted accounting service Bill.com, as well as twice-yearly balance statements of the FCS finances, which we hope will happen in the near future.

Janaki Spickard Keeler, FCS Coordinator, will be on maternity leave in late spring and early summer. While she is out, George Schaefer will fill in as interim coordinator.