



**Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quaker Life Council**  
**Saturday, May 18, 2024**  
**Approved Minutes**

*Arch Street Meeting House and remote via Zoom*

**Attending:** Jean-Marie Prestwidge-Barch (QLC clerk), Kathryn Pettus, Nikki Mosgrove (Rising Clerk), Sue Dietz, Robert Greene, Debbie Murray-Sheppard, Melissa Rycroft (Presiding Clerk), George Schaeffer, Cecilia Filauro (Executive Administrator), Christie Duncan-Tessmer (General Secretary), Linell McCurry (CFO), Meg Barney.

**I. Worship and Welcome** Opened at 11:33 a.m. with the Council entering into centering worship.

**II. Review of Joint Council session**

A Friend asked for clarity about the relationship between the Climate Witness Stewards and Administrative Council. Jean-Marie shared that the relationship is not prescriptive from the Administrative Council to the Climate Witness Stewards, but is meant to engage the Administrative Council in a supportive role. Jean-Marie shared that the Climate Witness Stewards serve the corporate body. Melissa noted there may be ideas and actions the Climate Witness Stewards will want to bring forward that could be strengthened from the guidance and resources the Administrative Council could provide.

**III. Review & approval of minutes** Jean-Marie asked if Friends were easy to approve the minutes of April 20, 2024. **Friends approved** with great gratitude.

**IV. Committee Report: Program Committee** Wendy Kane, clerk of the Program Support Committee, shared the Program Committee report. As of this date, most of the funding for collaboratives has not been spent. Wendy will be learning more about this situation. Are the collaboratives not asking for reimbursement, is their work not requiring funds at this time, is something preventing them from doing their work, or is there something else to know? In the category of 'PYM Reps to Outside Organizations', which does not require a detailed budget, approximately two-thirds of the funding has been spent (\$6,720.84 out of \$10K). Wendy shared that there was confusion about a new email policy, approved by Administrative Council in December, 2023 which allowed collaboratives to apply for an @pym.org email address for their collaborative. Wendy

shared that this policy change was not communicated to the clerk of the Program Support Committee. She requested that if council decisions are made that are to affect the responsibility and workings of the committee, the clerk of that committee needs to be informed. This concern was investigated and Wendy was informed that within two days of the decision being made an email was sent to the clerks of committees, granting groups and collaboratives, including Program. The Program Support Committee requests improved lines of communication between the Councils and the committee. The Program Support Committee is looking forward to receiving reports from each Collaborative in May. The reports will get reviewed and then lifted up in June. Jean-Marie appreciated the sharing of the current status of the expenses. Friends of QLC noted their gratitude to Wendy for her work and the work of her committee, and for being with us this morning.

## V. Sprints

### A. Sprint Proposal: Multilayer Map of Indigenous Land and PYM

During last month's QLC discussion of the land acknowledgment sprint, Friends recognized that it is difficult to know the tribal areas where various groups of indigenous peoples lived and do live. Friends wondered if it would be useful for Friends to have a visual tool or map that portrayed the land areas. A Friend shared that there was much movement of indigenous peoples over the centuries through forced migration with groups being separated into different areas. A land area would have a list of many people who had lived there at different points in time. A Friend suggested that maybe more than one map would be needed to show different time periods. Cultural sensitivity would be needed to develop a comprehensive representation of what is a complex history. Friends noted the visual item should not be static, but could be interactive in some way to portray various regions across a timeline. Jean-Marie encouraged Friends to not have the desire for perfection overcome the desire to begin.

Jean-Marie shared that she had offered the drafted land acknowledgement at a Quarterly meeting recently with a positive response as Friends engaged with the queries. Jean-Marie suggested that a sprint group could be composed to create a visual representation with the group members being an indigenous person, a person of color, a person from the communications department, and the Deputy General Secretary. A Friend suggested the current clerk of the First Reconciliation Collaborative be a member of the sprint because of their strong cultural sensitivity and knowledge. And Debbie was encouraged to be on the sprint also. Friends can send additional names to Jean-Marie. Jean-Marie hopes the sprint can be in place in the next few weeks and work for the next few months. Friends asked if a person must be a Quaker to be on the sprint. Jean-Marie said it is fine for a person to not be a Quaker. Christie asked if the names need to be brought to QLC for approval or can the sprint move ahead. **Friends were in unity to support Jean-Marie's proposal for gathering a sprint** and that there was no need to bring names forward due to the restricted time frame for completing the work.

Jean-Marie asked that the word 'map' be changed to 'visual representation' and be explicit in describing the various time periods, evolving territories, and distributions of indigenous peoples over time. This aspect will be emphasized at the front of the proposal. A Friend asked about the purpose of the visual representation. Is it educational only, or part of the land acknowledgment, or something else? Will there be 'space' for this item to move to another step? Jean-Marie said this is a first step that may be able to be scaled up over time. Melissa asked that it also be accessible beyond sight only. Jean-Marie shared that the visual representation may have many eventual uses. It would help to 'frame' the acknowledgement and provide a variety of layers of understanding. Another Friend suggested that the sprint group include an educator, perhaps from a Friends school. A Friend suggested leaving room for continuing revelation and letting the sprint group have space to pursue this. Jean-Marie asked if Friends were easy to move forward with this charge as amended. **Friends approved.**

## **B. Request from Clerks Group to run a sprint**

Although the Clerks Group meets regularly, they have no authority. The Clerks Group is a distilled version of the Joint Council and was formed in an attempt to look at ways to strengthen service among us. QLC holds in its care the Session Coordinating Committee, which containerizes sessions by season for planning purposes. There are more considerations in the present time for how Annual Sessions are offered due to coming through the COVID times. The Clerks Group is asking the QLC for approval to create a sprint to look at the strategic plan for PYM's Annual Sessions. The sprint would have three tasks: support and approve a survey design, develop a timeline and strategy to distribute the survey, and create a report after collecting feedback. The sprint would be held under the care of the clerks group. The Clerks Group would not be the sprint group, but would find others to serve on the sprint. A Friend suggested that someone be on the sprint who does not attend PYM Sessions. Friends supported this suggestion. Jean-Marie said that both Debbie and Susan were asked to participate and are willing to serve. A Friend suggested asking a past PYM Clerk. Jean-Marie asked that QLC folks send her their suggested names. A Friend suggested that people of the next generation be included so that the work is looking forward, and not just looking backward. Jean-Marie asked if Friends were easy to delegate to the Clerks Group the responsibility for forming this sprint. **Friends approved.**

## **VI. (Agenda adjustment) Friends World Committee on Consultation Representative**

Jean-Marie read the Traveling Minute letter from Fallsington MM in support of Amy Duckett Wagner. Amy plans to attend the FWCC plenary and will also be offering a workshop at FGC Gathering. Fallsington MM seeks the endorsement of QLC for Amy's Traveling Minute letter. If QLC approves, QLC will bring the name forward for the PYM clerk to endorse Amy's travel minute. The PYM clerk would write a Traveling Minute letter for Amy to go to FWCC. **Friends approved.**

## **VII. (Agenda adjustment) Discussion Questions**

Friends were asked to consider three queries: How can the council live up to our commitment to address climate change? What is a meeting? How to communicate with meetings? The second query received the focused time in this meeting.

Recently, QLC concerned itself with the query of 'what is a meeting' when a meeting wanted to call itself an Executive Meeting. And the recently established 'members at large' category also helped QLC to ask 'what does it mean to be a member'? We recognize in this time period, we are part of an evolution. What does it mean to be a meeting? What do we give to our meetings? Jean-Marie invited Friends to enter into worship sharing now and share what spoke to us. A Friend shared that Quakers are members of a community but other religions have an outward commitment that is visible at a certain age and is an outward sign or action of the religion. Quakers do not have such outward signs. A Friend shared that for them, a meeting is the essence of a place, that business flows from worship and friendship and that we carefully find community with God when we are with each other.

A Friend who serves on the PYM Ministry & Care Committee shared that in annual reports, some meetings say they are small yet feel the Spirit moving among them, and with age of members comes greater care for each other to get to meeting, etc. Several smaller meetings do their business as the 'committee of the whole'. Each year, all of the Spiritual State of the Meeting reports are shared online and Jean-Marie asked us to read the reports when they become available. A Friend shared that doing the work of the meeting is the service to the meeting, yet 'service' in the present time period is no longer 'a given' as it was for earlier generations. Melissa said the word 'essential' is important to her, and a worship group provides the 'essential' stuff of worshiping and supporting each other. Friends are to be under the care of a monthly meeting in our current structure. Do we (PYM) have the capacity to recognize Friends who are worshiping together even if they do not have specific aspects as outlined in *Faith & Practice*? A Friend noted that a monthly meeting meets at a local restaurant and in other spaces. Jean-Marie said the essence of a meeting does not rely on when, where, or how it meets, but it does have responsibility to each other and to Spirit. *Faith & Practice* says meeting for business is part of what makes a meeting, the making of decisions in the manner of Friends, of listening to how God is calling us in community to hear each other. Attending to business and taking care of each other can be different ways of seeing how God is calling us into that community.

Rich discussion continued. A Friend asked for clarity about what type of group it would be if it did not have property? Jean-Marie said part of the responsibility of QLC is to know the kinds of groups it is supporting, and she asked us to consider how what we say/do/are is influenced by the 'containers' that we have/use. What is the essence of a Quaker meeting? How do we support that essence? And enrich that group and enrich the Society of Friends?

A Friend suggested that if a group just met by itself, it would only live the testimonies as individuals within that group. How can Friends live out the testimonies in the world?

Corporate discernment and corporate worship go hand in hand, and together they underpin and strengthen corporate action. Jean-Marie said that Spirit is understood by Friends experiencing it (Spirit) together. If a meeting has property and all it talks about is property, that is a problem. Property can sometimes help Friends come together in community, while for others, property can sometimes be a constant worry. Does a meeting for business more closely resemble a Care committee or a Property committee? A Friends noted the engagement with the outer world can move into the neighborhood, working not in opposition to it, but in juxtaposition to it.

How does this discernment inform QLC as a council to support the monthly meetings? What are the implications of what constitutes a meeting? A Friend suggested that perhaps we need to look at what has been written in *Faith & Practice* and consider a revision. If there is a more meaningful definition/description of what a meeting is, that could help meetings. And yet also allow meetings to have space to describe themselves. A Friend asked what is our collective witness? The Yearly Meeting is a living embodiment of collective or corporate witness. A Friend shared that Wilmington Meeting will be holding a worship-sharing time on First Day to consider the future of its meeting, etc. Jean-Marie said that in July or in November, possibly there could be another opportunity for people to focus on this topic again. What is it in their Quaker life experience that relates to their monthly/quarterly/yearly meeting? How do we live out our testimonies and witness in the wider world? How do we let people know we are Quakers? Jean-Marie asked Friends to consider these questions. And how can Yearly Meeting provide space and time for this kind of deep discernment? *Friends were asked to consider this for next month.* Melissa expressed appreciation for the time and space provided today to think about big things and to consider how to bring people into community with each other.

### **VIII: Closed in worship at 1:06 p.m.**

Jean-Marie Prestwidge-Barch, clerk  
Meg Barney, substitute recording clerk

Documents used in this meeting are found in Boardspot:

2024 4 20 QLC DRAFT minutes.pdf  
2024-05 ProComm Report to QLC.pdf  
Sprint on Multilayer Map of Indigenous Land and PYM.pdf