



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quaker Life Council

June 15, 2024

Approved Minutes

Arch Street Meeting House and remote via Zoom

Attending: Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch (QLC clerk), Christie-Duncan Tessmer (General Secretary), Sue Dietz, Rose Ketterer, Linell McCurry (CFO), Kathryn Pettus, Melissa Rycroft (Presiding Clerk), Debbie Murray-Sheppard, Nikki Mosgrove (Rising Clerk), Salvador Orellana (Deputy General Secretary), Susan Claggett, Guinevere Janes, Michael Moulton, Meg Barney (substitute recording clerk)

- I. **Worship & Welcome** Friends gathered at Arch Street and on Zoom. At 11:38 a.m., Jean-Marie led the group in silent worship. Jean-Marie asked the group to provide any feedback about the agenda. Friends did not have any adjustments nor questions.

II. Review of Joint Council Session

Jean-Marie asked if Friends had questions, comments, and items needing resolution as a result of the earlier Joint Council session. Melissa summarized that the session brought forward three items for Friends to consider: Annual Sessions registration, the document of Joint Council schedule changes/calendar for 2024-2025, and an announcement of an upcoming staffing change. A Friend shared their excitement about the new Joint Council structure. A Friend asked if the orientation that was held last year would occur again. Rising clerk Nikki Mosgrove shared that might be a possibility. A Friend asked how the transition to the next PYM clerk will take place. On July 31st, Melissa Rycroft will complete her term as PYM Clerk and Nikki will be the new clerk. In previous years of Annual Sessions, the Nominating Council has offered a name to be the next rising clerk. But for this July, there is not a name. September will be the starting time for the next clerk. The position is held for a two year term. QLC members were encouraged to support George and the Nominating Council in their work.

III. **Review & Approval of Minutes** The minutes of the May 18th meeting were **Approved**.

IV. Committee Business

A. Friends Counseling Service Report

Friends were asked to consider the Friends Counseling Service report. Friends did not have questions nor comments about the report. QLC members were asked to consider names of Friends to serve in this area. The financial component was explained regarding charges, fees and administrative tasks. A Friend asked if a person must be a PYM member to serve on a

committee. Christie shared that membership is not required to serve on a committee, but Counselors must be members. Friends accepted the report with gratitude to the Counselors and the Friends Counseling Service Advisory Panel.

B. Sessions Coordinating Committee.

The Sessions Coordinating Committee is in the process of lifting up a sprint to look at long term planning for Sessions. This year's schedule provides the opportunity for a fresh look at what PYM is doing and what it might do. Jean-Marie is very grateful to the folks who have agreed to serve on the sprint. A Friend raised a concern that the Sessions Coordinating Committee had not provided a report. A Friend asked what the relationship would be between the next 'super' Joint Council and Sessions Coordinating Committee. Jean-Marie shared that the work of the Sessions Coordinating Committee has been a very heavy lift for several years. Friends involved in the work develop plans for Sessions and seek to bring them to fruition. There are several committed people and several challenges. The importance of having a longer term vision became apparent in order to connect the Spring and Fall Sessions. Jean-Marie shared that Friends need to look at the long term arc of Sessions. The Sessions Coordinating Committee is under the care of QLC. There are members of QLC also serve on SCC. A Friend was pleased with the Bridge Bible Study series and the upcoming Annual Sessions. Tara Rubenstein is an employee of PYM and serves in the Sessions Coordinator position, supporting Sessions and other PYM events.

C. Resignation from Ministry & Care Committee

Jean-Marie reported that Barbara Ziegler has served faithfully and is requesting to resign at this time due to other responsibilities. QLC Friends are asked to consider and lift up to Jean-Marie the names of Friends who might have gifts to share in this area.

V. Spiritual State of the Yearly Meeting Report Draft

Friends acknowledged they had read the report and shared their gratitude for the beautifully written report, with one Friend describing it as "a lovely quilt" of a report. Jean-Marie said it was a heavy lift and very rewarding to make the report. The report gives a reality of our monthly meetings. The report will be added to the advanced reports for annual sessions. Christie said the report could be included in the annual retreat of the councils. Ministry and Care said it is difficult to convey to meetings how important it is for the meetings to write a Spiritual State of the Meeting Report. The annual report is a vehicle that is used by QLC and PYM as a living document. A Friend said that in the past, reports were printed and handed out in paper copy at Annual Sessions. A Friend suggested putting photographs of meetinghouses up on the wall at sessions for those meetings who had submitted reports. A Friend shared that her meeting was confused about the two reports - meeting membership names/numbers and Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports.

Christie shared that each report includes different information. Jean-Marie said the request to meetings could be further clarified and provide the reasons why meetings should be doing the reports along with how the two reports are different. A Friend offered that if the two reports could be combined in some way, it might offer a better picture of what a meeting is doing. Some meetings do not have enough Friends to do the reports. Melissa shared that some meetings take great care in creating their Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports. The recording of members and attenders reveals that some meetings have disagreements about the topic of labeling. Further discussion could be very weighty on this topic.

A Friend sensed that the number of members on the Ministry and Care Committee will be reduced by one and asked that we hold/support the committee. Jean-Marie said the committee has about five people who are active on the committee. Serving on this committee requires folks, who are coming from different places, understandings, and gifts to come to the work with a sense of purpose for a goal. She shared that a gift is what you bring authentically - that is who you are. The gifts that each person brings forward will be different for each person and are not hierarchical in value.

VI. Sessions Agenda Item: The Essence of a Meeting

Following on the threshing session and QLC's discussion last month, this is now an item for discussion on the Annual Sessions agenda, to be supported by QLC. Looking at the conversations last month, how might QLC support this work at Annual Session? In what shape do we want to hold this, and how much time at Annual Sessions? 15 minutes? Perhaps consider using worship silence between topics during Annual Sessions to allow folks to be centered to participate? A Friend liked the use of worship sharing. A Friend shared her concern that 15 minutes would be too short. Christie said the State of the Meeting report is scheduled for 15 minutes on Saturday and can provide the background for what people will think about on Sunday. The "What is the essence of a meeting?" discussion will be 30 minutes on Sunday.

Christie shared that the QLC discussion at last month's meeting held many thoughtful ideas, heading in a direction. She suggested that QLC members could share a summary of what QLC had done, and lead Friends to consider how they might enter into this work/conversation. A Friend said if we tell Friends a direction, it might not be helpful as it would not feel like a faith body that moves by the Spirit. The Friend said that hearing reports does not feel like God is present and does not give time for the Body to tell us what they need. In the need to provide space, Jean-Marie has a concern that we do not to honor the space that has already been created. A Friend said she sees the topic on the agenda listed for 11:30 am to 1 pm. and is concerned about its placement on the agenda. The connection of Friends to the discussion of "What is a meeting?" is very personal and contributes to the Yearly Meeting. What is the hope of using this time?

Jean-Marie read aloud #8 on the PYM Annual Sessions agenda: *What is the essence of a monthly meeting?* Melissa said some meetings will see this as structure and others will see it as the richer aspects of what a meeting is. She said each meeting will engage with the query from

their own experience/situation. Some meetings think they are alone in their struggles, but as they share with each other, they learn they can share resources and support each other in their work. Melissa has a goal of having Friends be in communication with each other and share. Some meetings say, "We don't know if we are doing it right". Jean-Marie says meetings have the permission to struggle and learn. A Friend asked if the summary of Jean-Marie could be shared with Friends. Joys and challenges, especially challenges, can be shared. Changes are the opportunities. That is the faithful part of being a Quaker. On the children's show, Daniel Tiger says it's ok to make mistakes, to try to fix them and learn from them too. A Friend asked us to consider how we own a challenge and then continue by faith to walk forward. We all have challenges and can shoulder them together in Spirit. Jean-Marie said she hears that we, QLC, can provide a framework for Friends at Annual sessions to engage in this work, and capture the energy and thoughts that QLC has explored. A Friend liked Jean-Marie's suggestion that Saturday's spiritual reports support the Sunday discussion of 'What is the essence of a meeting?'

Noting the time, Jean-Marie asked if Friends were ok with moving the final item on today's agenda to the next meeting time. Friends agreed.

VII. Policy Review

The attached policy provides guidelines for PYM when considering gifts to other organizations. Developed by the Finance Committee, it formalizes the processes that have been in place for years, and has been approved by Administrative Council. This policy is for QLC to receive. Friends reviewed the policy. A Friend said the policy makes sense, was very clear, and they had no questions. Friends were in unity to support the policy.

VIII. Discussion Question: How can the Council live up to our commitment to address climate change? (This agenda item will be placed on the next meeting's agenda.)

This query comes from the Climate Witness Stewards. QLC wants to ask the groups in its care to also ask the question, but first will explore it for the Council. Then QLC will review who will speak with each of the groups in its care to ask them to address the query.

IX. Adjourn Closed in worship at 1:00 p.m.

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

Documents referenced in this meeting are found in Boardspot:

2024 5 18 QLC draft minutes.pdf
Friends Counseling Service Report to QLC 2024 and Annual Report FY23.pdf
Spiritual State of the Yearly Meeting Report 6th Month 2024 penultimate draft copy.pdf
Approved Policy on PYM Contributions to Other Organizations.pdf