



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Fall Continuing Sessions 2024: Called to Healing

Held in person at Arch Street Meetinghouse and virtually via Zoom on Saturday, November 9, 2024 with 45 Friends in person, 40 participating online.

Land Acknowledgement. Presented by Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, Jeanne Elberfeld and George Schaefer. We recognize that we have much to learn about the indigenous people who occupied this land before us and who are still present with us today.

Introductions. Presiding clerk Nikki Mosgrove opened the session and introduced herself and the Elders, both here and online, and those serving on Pastoral Care. Nikki introduced Melissa Rycroft, previous clerk, providing answers to questions online.

The Presiding Clerk welcomed all in the spirit of peace and healing, in this world and within us. Let the light within you recognize and honor the light within those gathered. The recording clerks, Sally McQuail and Meg Barney, and General Secretary Christie Duncan-Tessmer introduced themselves.

George Schaefer from the Nominating Committee presented the nominees for appointments. All nominees were approved.

A Friend shared a concern that there are two open positions for representatives to FCNL. George confirmed that there are, and invited Friends to forward candidates for these positions to him as they are led. Nominating Council's next report on appointments will be at Spring Continuing Sessions in March.

Releases and completed terms were approved. The Nominating Council Report was accepted with gratitude.

Nikki Mosgrove representing the General Secretary Search Committee presented the eight members of the committee for informational purposes, who reflect the diversity & richness of experience of our Yearly Meeting members.

- Carleton Crispin, Woodbury Monthly Meeting
- Melanie Horton, Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia
- Jada Jackson, Trenton Monthly Meeting
- Sameer Manchanda, Newtown Monthly Meeting
- Nikki Mosgrove, Trenton Monthly Meeting
- Melissa Rycroft, Pennsdale Monthly Meeting

- Tom Zemaitis, Moorestown Monthly Meeting

The committee members were received with gratitude. A Friend shared appreciation for the process and these Friends.

An interlude of singing was enjoyed by those gathered. We held a short break.

Minutes were read, corrected and approved.

Jeanne Elberfeld updated Friends on the progress of the Listening and Lobbying Sprint. The charge was to craft a spirit-centered policy that represents the needs of our PYM community, makes space for many PYM Friends, and maintains the integrity of PYM practice.

Jeanne asked Friends to remember the original 2014 document: Rekindling our Fire, which invited Friends to see ourselves as a great people, being intentional in our work while finding strength in community.

The Sprint was populated by Friends representing the Administrative Council, Quaker Life Council, PYM staff, and Friends representing listening sessions across PYM. This well-balanced group came together in order to consider our current practices and to discern a new way forward.

Jeanne spoke to the history of how we got to this point. From 2021 to 2022, some Friends were energized to lobby legislators to address climate concerns. But there were concerns that we were violating our 501(c)3 status. Administrative Council brought an advocacy policy forward, which was approved by the councils, but it did not come before the body. Friends felt confused and misunderstandings arose. Some Friends organized a 501(c)4 entitled the Quaker Action of the Mid-Atlantic Region, because this type of tax-exempt organization is permitted to lobby.

The policy was suspended in 2024. Friends asked that a Sprint be raised which subsequently held three online listening sessions. Friends shared a broad range of messages. Friends shared gratitude for feeling heard. We need to speak out in alignment with our testimonies. We are privileged, and have a responsibility to take action on behalf of those who do not have such privilege. More and varied voices are needed at the table. Friends must be clear when they are acting on their own behalf in lobbying, and not representing their Meeting; saying they represent their meeting could jeopardize that meeting's nonprofit status.

The Sprint recommendations will be in the form of Advices, not hard and fast policies. We trust each Friend's spiritual leanings. The sprint will hold further listening sessions, likely online, and share the draft advices with PYM Meetings. These will be brought back for approval at Continuing Sessions in March 2025. A Friend shared her gratitude for how this report was presented. A member of the Sprint reminded us that individual voters are more influential than PYM, as PYM does not vote. A Friend

reminded all to read the information that PYM provides for us. A Friend reminded us not to lose sight of our history.

The definition of advocacy is to educate and motivate. Lobbying is encouraging legislators to vote in a specific way. Listening sessions will season the advices. Friends were reminded to let the spirit be thy guide and to lean into community to do this work.

Minute of Solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ Community from Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting.

The Presiding Clerk received this minute during the summer and copies were presented to Friends to read silently. The Clerk asked Friends to consider: What is spirit saying to you? Friends responded: This is a safe and sacred space. How can we be allies in word and deed?

A Friend deeply and richly shared her personal story around the current national political climate; she reached out for support, then she felt an endless capacity to hold space for Friends in the divine. That is what community does. God is with us in dark times. Another Friend spoke to the possibility that we may need to think about things like providing sanctuary. A Friend shared that if we are the salt of the earth, then this minute helps to heal our broken world. A Friend shared her fear of losing her rights in this current political environment.

The Presiding Clerk asked us to hold Friends' concerns in a period of worship.

We paused for a singing interlude.

Tara Rubenstein, PYM Sessions and Events Coordinator, shared announcements. What does it feel like to be together? Imagine what it feels like to be spiritually fed in community. What does it feel like to not be alone? Sessions is a huge part of what brings us together.

There will be a Sprint survey on the future of Sessions. What helps you feel enlightened? The intention is to have Sessions be the heart of our Yearly Meeting. The survey will come out before Spring Sessions in 2025.

Next year's Annual Sessions will tentatively take place at Cheyney University from July 23-27, 2025. Cheyney was founded by a Quaker, Richard Humphreys, whose family made their wealth through the slave trade.

Minutes were read, corrected and approved. All reports are available on the website.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally McQuail and Meg Barney, recording clerks

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Fall Continuing Sessions 2024: Called to Healing

Held virtually via Zoom on Sunday, November 10, 2024, with 93 Friends in attendance.

Presiding Clerk Nikki Mosgrove introduced Susan Elliot and Cathleen Marion as our Elders today. Selden Smith is our Rising Clerk, Sally McQuail and Susan Kennedy are serving as our Recording Clerks, and Edie Nolan & Carter Nash are providing Pastoral Care online.

The Joint Council report was presented by George Schaefer, Clerk of Nominating Council, Jeanne Elberfeld, Clerk of Administrative Council, and Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, Clerk of Quaker Life Council. The three council clerks reported on the Joint Council experiment together. The three councils are meeting as one body to encourage deeper discernment. The experiment will continue for one year. PYM recording clerks are taking minutes to be approved in the face of the meeting, with an aim towards sharing the minutes in the next week's PYM newsletter. The new format has allowed the recording clerks to better understand the business of the Councils. The minutes from October 12th were posted to the website on October 17 in a Joint Council Update.

The clerks spoke about Joint Council business items that benefitted from the seasoning of the larger group. These included getting more Quarters involved in the governance of PYM. Six of 13 quarterly meetings have not appointed representatives to the Nominating Council. Friends also considered what is essential to being a Meeting in light of changes in membership advancements in technology. Joint Council referred the work to Ministry and Care for reflection.

The clerks also reported Friends Counseling Service Advisory Panel committee is looking for people to get involved. Friends are invited to contact Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch if they are interested in joining this committee.

The PYM website has descriptions of the councils, their responsibilities, and their members.

The Climate Benchmarks were shared by the Presiding Clerk.

The Clerk shared the history of our concerns about the climate, starting in 1965.

PYM's Climate Change Witness was approved in 2021. It is the responsibility of all of our Meetings to consider our actions. The Climate Action Playbook was introduced in 2023. Have Friends used this resource? It includes five action areas.

In July of 2024, three benchmarks were approved for the entire yearly meeting:

- Measure the carbon footprint of Yearly Meeting operations, gatherings, and facilities. *Complete by: July 2025*
- Identify how the Yearly Meeting could be carbon net zero by 2030. *Complete by: December 2025*

- Invite monthly meetings to strive to reach 50% carbon reduction for members and meetings.
Complete by 2030 or sooner, if possible.

Are we ready to approve this work? We are nearing the tipping point for the health of our planet. A Friend said that this will require changing the way that we walk in the world. It is a commitment to action, requiring constant thought and undoing habits. Doing what we can do. A Friend said that scientists and engineers were consulted to help us implement these benchmarks. Contact Presiding Clerk for more information. The climate stewards have embraced the idea of mourning loss and instilling hope. **The Climate Benchmarks were approved.** It was not just a question of approval of the benchmarks, we need to act in a way that is substantive.

Report on the World Plenary Meeting 2024 of Friends World Committee for Consultation presented by Amy Duckett Wagner.

Amy was the Yearly Meeting's approved representative for FWCC's World Plenary Meeting 2024 in August. 500 participants from 53 countries and 91 yearly meetings gathered in business, worship, and fellowship at the week-long meeting in South Africa. The theme was 'Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with Hope to God's Call to Cherish Creation and One Another'. Ubuntu is a Zulu word which means 'I am because we are'. Amy encouraged Friends to see the 28 YouTube videos of singing from this conference which are available for viewing on FWCC's website. Amy said that courage is the foundation of other virtues. She presented a slide show report of the event.

General Secretary Christie Duncan -Tessmer asked Friends what are the five Strategic Directions?

Connecting, Belonging, Witnessing, Communicating, and Functioning.

Be the Yearly Meeting by increasing interactions between several meetings. It will build relationships. PYM Connect was introduced by Claire Kinnel; it is an evolving platform to facilitate active engagement of Friends. Threads, Yearly Meeting wide witnesses and peer groups are available to help meetings work together. The goal is to create an interconnected community for our Meetings, to support each other and use our gifts fully. A Friend expressed excitement about this platform. The platform will expand as it grows.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally McQuail and Susan Kennedy, Recording Clerks

PYM Land Acknowledgment

Queries:

1. What do I know about the indigenous people who live and have lived in the region in which I live? How can I grow more fully into that?
2. What do I know about the relationship between the indigenous people in the region in which I live and the Federal and State Government? How can I grow more fully into that?
3. How am I living into my responsibility to be a good steward of the region in which I live, including the land and the relationships with other living beings? How can I grow more fully into that?

Statement:

We gather today as people of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting with affiliations to different groups of worshipers which occupy the ancestral lands of and home to many indigenous peoples. We each recognize and commit to the need to understand the historic and current relationship among all those who inhabit these lands and will each undertake to inform ourselves of these facts. We have much to learn and can only begin with what we know. We understand that knowledge and commitment must underpin action, and that reciprocal and respectful connection and communication must undergird right relationship. We intend to grow into this commitment, connection and communication, "...as long as the creeks and rivers flow and the sun, moon, and stars endure."

Nominating Council Report

Nominating Council Members (For informational purposes)

Name	Monthly Meeting	Quarter	
Ron Inskeep	Gwynedd	Abington	Quarter Representative
Terry Christensen	Newtown	Bucks	Quarter Representative
		Burlington	Quarter Representative
Jessy Eaby	Reading	Caln	Quarter Representative
		Chester	Quarter Representative
Serita Spadoni	Birmingham	Concord	Quarter Representative
		Haddonfield	Quarter Representative
		Haverford	Quarter Representative
Chloe Rosenthal	CPMM	Philadelphia	Quarter Representative
Carleton Crispin	Woodbury	Salem	Quarter Representative
		Southern	Quarter Representative
		Upper Susquehanna	Quarter Representative
Deb Wood	Westtown	Western	Quarter Representative
Nancy Robbins	Third Haven	Southern	At Large
Meg Barney	Providence	Chester	At Large
George Schaefer	Abington	Abington	At Large
John Marquette	Lehigh Valley	Bucks	At Large
			At Large
			At Large
			At Large

Note: The complete current roster of Nominating Council is provided on the first page of this report for informational purposes. At-large members of Nominating are appointed by the Administrative Council; Quarter Representative members are appointed at their quarterly meetings.

Appointments

Clerks			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Selden Smith - Rising	State College	Upper Susquehanna	2026 (1)
Meg Barney - Recording	Providence	Chester	2026 (1)
Emily Blanck - Recording	Mickleton	Salem	2026 (1)
Susan Kennedy - Recording	Schuylkill	Caln	2026 (1)

Quaker Life Council			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Kate Bregman	CPMM	Philadelphia	2027 (1)
Bethann Morgan	Buckingham	Bucks	2027 (1)

Nominating Council (For informational purposes only)			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Jessy Eaby	Reading	Caln	2027 (1)
Deb Wood	Westtown	Western	2027 (1)

Pennsylvania Council of Churches			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Melissa Rycroft	Pennsdale	Upper Susquehanna	2027 (1)

Friends Fiduciary Board (For informational purposes only)			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Michael Homans	Radnor	Haverford	2027 (1)

Releases and Completed Terms

Administrative Council			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Jim Waddington	Salem	Salem	2025 (2)

Nominating Council (For informational purposes only)			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Jim Waddington	Salem	Salem	2026 (1)

Elders			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Bethann Morgan	Buckingham	Bucks	2025 (2)

Representatives to Friends Committee on National Legislation			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Louis Pilla	Green Street	Philadelphia	2024
Scott Duncan	Medford	Haddonfield	2024

General Secretary Search Committee

Charge:

With Divine assistance the committee will support the process of seeking unity on identifying the next General Secretary by shepherding the search process and bringing finalists forward for decision.

Background:

In July 2025 the current General Secretary's service will be complete. The Administrative Council holds authority for the process of seeking the successor and is sharing that authority with Quaker Life Council and Nominating Council. Together they will set up the committee charged with managing the search process.

Composition of the Committee:

The Committee will include 6-9 people. Together, the people serving on the committee will have the experiences, perspectives, and the skills to support their responsibility for identifying qualified candidates. These include:

- **Non-profit administration** – the requirements and responsibilities for running a small to mid-size non-profit organization.
- **Non-profit governance** – the roles and responsibilities of a governance structure in relation to the organization and to the chief executive officer.
- **Quaker process** – the ways in which Friends worship, listen, discern and move forward.
- **Monthly and quarterly meetings** – the needs of Quaker meetings for healthy functioning and being in relationship with one another.
- **Governance members** – at least one member of the committee will be a member of Quaker Life or Administrative Council. The treasurer is ex officio.
- **Larger Quaker landscape** – the range of Quaker organizations and yearly meetings with which PYM is in constant relationship.
- **Diversity**
 - **Age** – Because we want to see a Quaker community that includes Friends of all ages, we'll see age diversity on the committee: half the committee will be under 65. At least two members will be under 35.
 - **Race** – Because of our commitments to belonging and to addressing racism we'll see racial diversity on the committee: at least a third of the committee will be BIPOC Friends.

- **Experience** – Because we want to nurture leadership and because Friends in the yearly meeting have a wide range of experience with Quakerism, at least one Friend who is newer to Quakerism or to service in a high-impact governance group will be included.
- Committee members will be spiritually grounded Friends who are familiar with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. They do not need to be members.
- Nominations for membership on the committee will be solicited from the councils and from the body.
- The clerk will be appointed by the Joint Council. The committee may appoint an assistant clerk, recording clerk, or any other role.
- A staff member will not provide logistical support for the work of the committee. Initial meeting logistics can be set up by staff but ongoing work will need to be supported by the committee and the search firm.

Accountability:

The charge for the Search Committee and its members will be approved by jointly by the councils.

The Clerks Group will be responsible for bringing nominations for the committee membership to the Joint Council.

The committee will report in person (or by zoom) to the Joint Council quarterly. At each significant stage in the search the committee will report in writing to the Joint Council. The committee will always be available for responding to the questions or needs of the councils, through the clerks of the councils.

The committee will be held accountable on an on-going basis by the Clerks Group which will ensure that it maintains momentum and the work is completed. In the event the committee requires assistance, whether the need is perceived by the committee itself or by others, the Clerks Group is responsible for providing the assistance.

The committee will report in writing to the PYM body on a quarterly basis.

Responsibilities (what the committee will do):

1. Hold the meetings and the work of the committee in the manner of Friends, grounded in Spirit.
2. Identify a search firm that has experience working with Quakers and Quaker organizations. The search firm will support the logistics of the search and will assist the committee in meeting its responsibilities.
3. Collaborate with the PYM Finance office regarding resources and contracts.
4. Develop a timeline for the search including candidate identification, and consultations and communications with governance, staff and the body.

5. With input from the Personnel Committee, review the job description of the General Secretary. Recommend changes to the Joint Council for approval.
6. Identify a potential interim General Secretary to serve on a short term basis if needed. This will allow maximum flexibility in the timeline.
7. Identify a committee member who will be in regular two-way contact with staff, including:
 - a. Organize an initial hearing by the committee from staff on their needs and hopes regarding the General Secretary.
 - b. Organize a mid-point meeting with the committee and the staff.
 - c. Report to the staff on a quarterly basis at a minimum.
 - d. Receive and report back to the committee questions, thoughts and concerns from staff throughout the process.
8. Ensure the General Secretary position is posted and well publicized.
9. Carefully review all application materials.
10. Conduct interviews.
11. Members attend at least 80% of the meetings; come to meetings having read all advance material.
12. Recommend two to three finalist candidates to Joint Council and arrange for interviews of the candidates by councils and by staff.
13. Maintain confidentiality.

Outcomes:

1. The job description will be updated as needed.
2. Two to three finalist candidates will be identified.
3. PYM Friends and staff will be informed of the process all along the way.

Next Steps:

1. The Joint Council will bring a single finalist candidate forward for consideration of approval by the yearly meeting in session.
2. A Transition Plan will be set up by the councils and leadership staff to facilitate the incoming General Secretary's orientation and success.

Sprint on Listening and Lobbying

Charge:

This sprint will craft a spirit-centered, well-seasoned draft lobbying policy that is grounded in our faith and practice. The policy will meet the needs of PYM Friends whose ministry is grounded in advocacy, the needs of the PYM community, and our responsibility to maintain PYM's resources and nonprofit status. The draft policy will be arrived at through a two-stage process:

- a) Making space for many PYM Friends to share and listen to diverse experiences of spirit-led activism and advocacy and responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the institution of PYM.
- b) Crafting a draft policy based on the listening.

The draft policy will be brought to the body for consideration and approval.

Composition of the Sprint:

There are two groups carrying out the charge of the sprint:

- a) A **core group** is responsible for ensuring the charge is met. This group will include three members of Administrative Council, the Presiding Clerk, the CFO and the Deputy General Secretary. The General Secretary will join periodically as needed. This group was approved by Administrative Council.
- b) Three to seven additional Friends will join the core group to form a **working group** of the sprint which will craft a draft policy. The three to seven additional Friends will have attended at least one listening session of the sprint and will represent a diversity of experiences amongst them. The additional members will be nominated by the core group and approved by Administrative Council. The working group will be clerked by a member of the core group.

Accountability:

This sprint is in the care of Administrative Council (Admin). Admin is responsible for ensuring the sprint's activity and outcomes come to fruition and will receive the sprint's report. In the event there is conflict, a lack of clarity or progress, or another disruption to the charge, Administrative Council is responsible for recognizing and rectifying that.

Responsibilities:

1. The core group arranges the logistics of worshipful listening sessions, ensuring each one is:
 - a. Spiritually grounded and truly focused on active listening,
 - b. open to all PYM Friends,
 - c. accessible to a wide range of people, regardless of age, geography or digital literacy.
 - d. query-based and structured in a way that opens participants up to sharing and receiving a range of expertise and experience,
 - e. representative of key perspectives,
 - f. able to capture the sense of the worship sharing through notes (minutes).
 - g. held within a two-week period at varying times to accommodate people's scheduling needs,
 - h. arrange for an elder to be present.
2. As necessary, the core group will arrange for alternative means for gathering Friends' experiences to allow for broad participation in a timely manner.
3. The core group will identify participants for the working group. The roster of the working group will be in alignment with the composition described above. The core group will ask for approval of the working group membership from Admin Council.
4. The working group will meet several times, as needed, to process the Listening Sessions and to craft a draft policy.
5. The core group will ensure that the Administrative Council members and the PYM body are kept informed.
6. Administrative Council will bring a recommended policy to the body for discernment and decision.
7. The Administrative Council will ensure this work is inclusive and celebrated.

Outcomes:

1. The core group will hold at least three zoom-based listening sessions by May 15.
2. The core group will develop a written report that shares the sense of the listening sessions which will be shared with Administrative Council on May 18.

3. The working group will be approved by Administrative Council on or before May 18.
4. The working group will provide a recommended policy that takes into account the sense of the listening sessions and needs of PYM Friends whose ministry is grounded in advocacy, the needs of the PYM community, and our responsibility to maintain PYM's resources and nonprofit status by June 13.
5. Administrative Council will consider the draft policy and determine whether further seasoning is needed on June 15.
6. Administrative Council will report to the body at Sessions.
7. Administrative Council will bring the draft policy to the body for discernment and decision when it's ready.

Following Steps:

1. Administrative Council will determine in June what next steps are needed to meet the charge.
2. God willing and the creek don't rise, a policy will be approved by November Continuing Sessions.
3. Administrative Council will work with other councils and the body regarding issues of authority and responsibility. Their work will include the experience of the Advocacy Policy and the authority and responsibilities of the councils and the body which were approved by the body in July 2014.

Continuing Sessions November 2024 Listening and Lobbying Sprint Report

The Listening and Lobbying Sprint was approved by the Administrative Council following July, 2022 Annual Sessions and charged with crafting a spirit-centered, well-seasoned draft lobbying policy. The charge reads:

This sprint will craft a spirit-centered, well-seasoned draft lobbying policy that is grounded in our faith and practice. The policy will meet the needs of PYM Friends whose ministry is grounded in advocacy, the needs of the PYM community, and our responsibility to maintain PYM's resources and nonprofit status. The draft policy will be arrived at through a two-stage process:

- 1. Making space for many PYM Friends to share and listen to diverse experiences of spirit-led activism and advocacy and responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the institution of PYM.*
- 2. Crafting a draft policy based on the listening.*

The draft policy will be brought to the body for consideration and approval.

This action by Administrative Council is aligned with the intentions that we, as a yearly meeting, outlined in the 2014 Rekindling Our Fire document as well as in the PYM Governance Handbook which are the platforms on which our governance structure currently rests.

The Sprint was populated by Friends representing the Administrative council, Quaker Life council, PYM staff, and some Friends who participated in the Listening sessions to form a balanced group. The Sprint members include Martha Bryans, Lynn Oberfield, David Leonard, Michael Homans, Carter Nash, Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, Debbie Murray-Sheppard, Salvador Orellana, Linell McCurry, Christie Duncan-Tessmer and Jeanne Elberfeld (clerk).

Currently under the care of the Joint Council, the Sprint has met faithfully to review and understand the messages from the listening sessions last Spring, to learn about a non-profit's responsibilities and the legal requirements that apply to the Yearly Meeting, to consider our historic and current practices around advocacy and lobbying, and to prayerfully craft and propose a new way forward.

A bit of background:

The opening of the 2014 Rekindling Our Fire says, "Let us, the Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM), dare to see ourselves as "a great people to be gathered". Let us respond to God's call to live faithfully in the Quaker way – a way of being open to the Spirit Within, a way of worshipping, and a way of being intentional about how we live – all of which are strengthened in community."

This document guided PYM's restructuring, in order to simplify the governance of the Yearly Meeting, to

- significantly reduce the number of committees and people needed to govern and administer the Yearly Meeting.
- make the organization less complex and more sustainable
- give two councils, Administrative and Quaker Life, significant authority and the ability to be more quickly responsive on behalf of the Yearly Meeting
- continue the roles and responsibilities of the individual members, monthly and quarterly meetings and officers of PYM essentially unchanged.

The PYM Governance Handbook outlines the role and responsibilities of the Administrative Council:

OVERVIEW: With divine assistance the Administrative Council maintains the health and integrity of the finances, property, personnel, and long-term vision of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It ensures that resources are well managed in a sustainable manner...

AUTHORITY, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ACCOUNTABILITY: The Administrative Council holds full authority and responsibility for managing the affairs of PYM except for the authority and responsibility assigned to the Quaker Life Council or reserved to yearly meeting in session, the yearly meeting officers, or staff...

The History of the, now-suspended (March 2024), PYM Advocacy Policy:

The approval of a corporate, PYM-wide witness on addressing climate change in March 2021 energized PYM collaboratives to invite Friends, through PYM communications channels, to lobby elected officials to vote specifically on legislation impacting these concerns. After months of conversations with Friends, collaboratives, and staff, a policy that prohibited lobbying while supporting advocacy was approved by the Administrative Council in January 2022.

After the issuance of a policy on advocacy and lobbying, there was consternation from PYM Collaboratives whose work involved social concerns consistent with Quaker testimonies.

Opinions about the policy ranged greatly. Some saw the policy as a strong and clear statement to the world that PYM obeyed IRS regulations for a 501©3 religious, tax-exempt organization, and therefore, provided appropriate protection for the property, endowments, and gift-giving policies of PYM. Others saw it as prohibiting historic and legal Quaker activism. Some saw it as being clear that PYM is a religious organization, an inclusive place for spiritual nurturing, growth, sharing, and expression for Quakers with a variety of leadings, and not a place for too much politics. Others saw it as tremendously hindering political and social justice actions that grew out of spiritual leadings.

Over the next two years, many Friends' views were heard by Staff and Admin Council. Disgruntlement came from across the body of PYM, as the policy had not come to Sessions for

discussion and approval. It was unfamiliar to many. Opinions and strong feelings roiled, and a threshing session and Yearly Meeting-wide listening sessions were held by the presiding clerk. During these much anger was expressed, misinformation shared, and misunderstandings of the roots of opposition to the policy. Communication was challenging as many were talking and yet not actively listening to each other. There was division within the PYM body, and much confusion. The lobbying issues and the process for approval of the policy unearthed a sense that PYM governance and decision making were now removed from the body as a whole and rested with a small group, the Administrative Council. The deeper question of authority within PYM was raised by the body.

During this time, one PYM Collaborative (Legislative Policy Collaborative) dissolved; another Collaborative joined other groups to form a 501©4 (Quaker Action Mid-Atlantic Region), and thus their activism rested elsewhere. In many ways, the activists among PYM groups, whose volunteer activity assured that PYM was a strong social justice leader, felt betrayed.

At Annual Sessions in July 2022, during the Administrative Council Report, we heard that the advocacy policy has been under development for 10 months and viewed a brief video describing the policy. Friends raised serious questions and concerns. Following Sessions, it was suggested that a Sprint be formed to wrestle with this prickly issue.

The Sprint's work:

The Listening and Lobbying Sprint was tasked with actively listening in a worship-sharing manner to understand Friends' concerns deeply. Themes from the listening sessions include: Friends' values and testimonies and our unique way of being in the world. Friends shared fear, pain, frustration, confusion, lack of trust, lack of unity, a strong sense of urgency to action, and a sense of exclusion and isolation. There were also messages of hope, gratitude, and finding our way forward.

After three listening sessions were completed, the sprint was populated and charged with drafting a policy that would meet the needs of Friends whose leadings are in social justice, the community of Friends and PYM the 501©3. The intention was to provide guidance to those wishing to live into their Quaker leadings regarding social justice issues.

What we learned from Friends during the Worship-sharing/listening sessions:

- Friends share gratitude for the opportunity to be heard. The listening sessions felt like we are coming back into alignment with our process and that we wanted to hear Friends.
- Friends value history as Friends of the Truth; "Our history is not to be timid."
- The importance Peace Work and Friends as 'changemakers'.

- The world is moving fast, and we need to stand up and speak out with our heart and to our testimonies. People look to Friends to do this and when we don't, we are out of alignment with our identity.
- The importance of lobbying to guide public policy in alignment with Quaker testimonies. If we are committed to climate change and to racial justice as a yearly meeting and if we are committed to our testimonies of peace, equality, stewardship and integrity, we must be strategic and effective in taking action.
- Quakers tend to be privileged in our level of education and economic resources. We will not be the first to be affected by the damaging policy of our government. For these reasons we have even more responsibility to take strategic, effective action to stand for and with those who suffer from violence and racism and injustice.
- We need to deeply listen to Spirit through each other, we need to trust, and we need to move forward in unity.
- Corporate discernment is part of our faith and we are a gathered community.
- Friends are committed to Quaker Process and participating in the governance of PYM.
- The Lobbying policy was made by the council without consultation of or discernment with the body. Friends feel left out of the process – and as process is central to who we are, that is an existentially threatening experience. More and varied voices were wanted at the table.
- People didn't know about the policy or the process or the reasoning behind it – if they had the opportunity to be part of it, everyone would be richer and would know more. By making decisions together, we all become more deeply engaged and woven together.
- Administrative Council overreached in its authority: Even when the decision was made with the best purposes at heart and in good faith, the council made a decision that was beyond their authority and that feels abusive. The council seems to act as though it believes it is in a hierarchical position above everyone.
- Our decisions need to be in alignment with Faith and Practice.
- No one can lobby in the name of the yearly meeting for anything that the yearly meeting has not come to unity on and minuted in session.
- Everyone can speak on their own behalf.
- Anyone can participate in FCNL and FCNL activities in our meetings are welcome.
- The yearly meeting can come together as a body and decide to go against what is legal. We can choose to give up our tax-exempt status.
- About 501©3 rules and regulations there are deeply held beliefs about what is allowed and what isn't allowed by the IRS – but the beliefs expressed were varied and contradictory.

Over that past months **Sprint members have learned from nonprofit and legal consultants that:**

- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's status as a 501©3 tax-exempt, not-for-profit, religious organization is important to the financial health of the organization. It enables PYM to receive charitable contributions; administer trusts in our care; and be exempt from real estate taxes. It also is the tax identification status used by Monthly and Quarterly meetings and PYM's organizations.
- Should Philadelphia Yearly Meeting lose its 501©3 tax exempt status, the repercussions would cascade down to the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings whose tax-exempt status is contingent upon the Yearly Meeting's.
 - The opposite is NOT true: individual monthly meetings that jeopardize their own tax-exempt status through direct lobbying would impact only that meeting.
- Religious 501©3 organizations must be non-partisan. While we may advocate for the issues that are consistent with commitments and testimonies of the organization, lobbying for specific bills at the must not be a substantive activity (approximately 3 – 5% of activity).
- PYM Collaboratives and other groups, who dedicate their work to addressing social justice issues must be clear that they are acting as individual Friends, not representing PYM. Their efforts are non-partisan and do not endorse a political party nor candidate.
- There are 501©4 organizations available to partner with such as Friends Committee on National Legislation, Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence, and Quaker Action – Mid-Atlantic Region, to support PYM Friends' direct action on particular legislative issues.
- PYM's communication channels used to educate and inform is considered advocacy and is permissible but substantive lobbying activity and is not.
- Other churches and denominations approach this issue differently. Our Yearly Meeting must evaluate the risks and benefits of our activities without reliance on other organizations' positions.

To date our discernment and work proposes that:

- PYM values and honors the diversity of Friends and the variety of their Spiritual leadings. We understand that our greatest risk is the exclusion of Friends who do not share the same specific, personal leading as other Friends through lobbying or advocacy efforts.
- Our recommendations will be in the form of Advices, not a hard and fast policy,
- because we acknowledge that there is much discernment required on these issues.
- That PYM groups, when in unity around a specific legislative effort, may educate and motivate Friends into action in a manner consistent with each Friend's Spiritual leadings. We trust that Spirit guides Friends.
- Our Advices would be applied to the programs and practices of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting only, not broadly applied to all the monthly or quarterly meetings.
- These recommendations will be distributed widely throughout the Yearly Meeting for seasoning prior to asking for approval.

- The recommendations, once seasoned, will be brought to the body of Friends for consideration and approval. (God willing and the creeks don't rise! in March 2024).
- We understand that Friends may unite around a different course of action in the future after prayerful consideration.

Conclusion:

Friends we plan to continue to work to refine the draft Advices. Our hope is to hold listening sessions in mid-winter 2025 to share the draft, for Friends' seasoning, prior to bringing it to sessions in March 2025. Please accept apologies for the delay, understanding that this process seems the most Quakerly way forward to our Sprint members.

Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting

Minute of Solidarity with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) Community

Adapted from a similar minute from Germantown Monthly Meeting
Approved by PQM July 28, 2024

Those who would extinguish freedom have historically targeted the most vulnerable and disregarded in society — those with the fewest allies, the fewest willing to put themselves in harm's way to defend them, the fewest who see their fate as inextricably bound up with them. To the degree they are successful in isolating the most marginalized, they are emboldened to widen their assault until, in the famous and sobering words of Martin Niemöller, "There is no one left to speak out."

Today, those facing the spearhead of this attack are the LGBTQIA community — and in particular, trans people. Already fighting a rearguard action against the extension of marriage equality, the abolition of anti-sodomy laws, and the growing social acceptance of lesbian and gay people, the religious Right, and those who would use them as catspaws, are now focusing their assault on this minority-within-a-minority that does not conform to conventional norms of gender expression and gender identity and who can most easily be "othered."

The viciousness and danger of this assault is reflected in the overtly genocidal threats that are now issued publicly without shame or qualification. "Transgenderism," a recent speaker at CPAC [Conservative Political Action Committee] proclaimed, "must be eradicated from our public life," chillingly echoing the language of the Nuremberg Laws. And in grim confirmation of the seriousness of this intent, the flood of recent state laws prohibiting gender-affirming care, not only for children and adolescents but also for adults, will, to a certainty, multiply the cost in trans lives beyond the already intolerable levels of violence, murder, and suicide that plague this beleaguered community, effectively eradicating trans individuals.

Even the advances in civil rights for the broader queer community that we have come to take for granted are under attack, as opponents seek to carve out "religious freedom" exceptions to anti-discrimination laws and call on an already predisposed Supreme Court majority to re-legitimize anti-sodomy laws and reverse marriage equality.

Finally, not content with crusading domestically, the forces of repression have actively supported anti-LGBTQIA laws and campaigns beyond our shores — most alarmingly in Uganda, where the recent "Kill the Gays" law, imposing the death penalty for so-called "aggravated homosexuality," actually enjoyed the support of some East African Friends and some American Quaker supporters.

In such a climate, mere assurances of tolerance, acceptance, goodwill, and even support are no longer enough from those who stand for justice and equality. We of Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting commit ourselves, as individuals and collectively, to active resistance and to solidarity with LGBTQIA people everywhere, in ways including:

- Declaring to the world that all individuals are by right entitled to the sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression that are authentically theirs, and actively campaigning for laws and policies that reflect this testimony.
- Promising to provide a safe space for all LGBTQIA members, attendees, and other individuals who reach out to us.
- Pledging to continually educate ourselves on issues of concern to the queer community and charging our committees to consider how LGBTQIA issues impact their work and how they can contribute to advancing justice and equality.
- Pledging to be allies in word and deed.

Council Report for Continuing Sessions 11/10/2024

- **What is the Joint Council experiment?**
 - Explain what joint council is and why.
 - *At Annual Sessions 2023 Governance Advisory Committee presented its evaluation of our current governance structure as a part of the 10-year review. The committee recommended that the three councils be combined into one joint council for greater efficiency and greater Spirit-led discernment among the council members.*
 - *On Saturday, October 12th, the three councils that support Philadelphia Yearly Meeting—Quaker Life Council, Administrative Council, and Nominating Council—held their first meeting in a new joint format. In this structure, all three councils meet together as one Joint Council to worship, discern, and conduct business collaboratively.*
 - *It is an opportunity to look at a single piece of business from multiple viewpoints simultaneously, rather than in the serial format we have used for the councils for the past several years. This encourages deeper discernment and more effective participation.*
 - *A key feature in the joint format is the approval of minutes during the meeting. This allows the Joint Council to share the minutes in a news story with the PYM community in the week following the meeting. This supports transparency of our work to all PYM Friends.*
 - *What we heard during the threshing sessions and Worship-sharing last spring inspired the combining of councils for deeper discernment and corporate decision making.*
 - *We need to deeply listen to Spirit through each other, we need to trust, and we need to move forward in unity.*
 - *Corporate discernment is part of our faith, and we are a gathered community.*
 - *Friends are committed to Quaker Process and participating in the governance of PYM.*
 - *More and varied voices were wanted at the table.*
 - *By making decisions together, we all become more deeply engaged and woven together.*
 - Outlining specifics of “experiment”
 - *All members of the three councils will meet for three hours to consider an agenda, crafted by the clerks’ group which includes the presiding and rising clerk, the three clerks of joint council (Admin, QLC and Nominating) and the General Secretary.*

- In addition to the business which needs to be considered on a regular basis, there will be specific space for joys and concerns arising from Monthly and Quarterly Meetings to be offered by any member of council.
 - Joint council meetings also intentionally provide time for learning about our governance processes.
 - The tri-clerks will share responsibility for clerking, using one another's knowledge and expertise to help ground the business.
 - Recording clerks will be present to provide minutes in the face of the meeting for approval.
 - Elders will be present to hold the space in a spiritually grounded way.
 - After three months and six months, the experiment will be evaluated and the trial assessed.
 - We expect to continue this experiment for at least a year. Initial responses from council members have been positive and we as tri-clerks are optimistic that this structure can serve us well.
 - What is the purpose of joint councils?
 - To support:
 - Diversity of Spiritual leadings, social thought, race, ethnicity, age, geography, etc.
 - Inclusion of many in the governance of PYM
 - Equity of voices from across the Yearly Meeting
 - To offer well-seasoned discernment in an effective manner for conducting the business of PYM
 - To support PYM Friends' Spiritual leadings allowing us to deepen worship, worship with attention to business, and our living into our shared Spiritual leadings.
 - To listen PYM Friends into greater unity.
 - What are the goals of the Joint Council?
 - Sharing work to:
 - Understand the rising joys and concerns from across the YM, and support and/or address them if appropriate
 - Bring a variety of skills, expertise, and Spiritual gifts to YM discernment
 - Ensure we are aligned with Quaker testimonies and the leadings of Spirit
 - Celebrate those 'whose shoulders we stand upon'
 - Invite suggestions of criteria to be considered in the interim evaluations of the 'experiment'.
- Future considerations of Joint Council (Dec 2024)- If you have reflections please share them with a council member

- What needs to happen for PYM members to come under the weight of their responsibility to service to the YM?
 - How do we make such service not only something Friends are willing to do and actually see as part of their faith practice?
 - What is JC's role in ensuring Quarterly Meeting's are represented in the nominating function?
 - **What is the essence of a meeting?**
 - The October Council meeting agenda's description:
 - QLC, and to some extent Admin and Joint Councils, have been discussing "What is a Meeting?" As times change and practices change, what is it that is core and essential to being a meeting?
 - This is what Faith & Practice says about meetings:
 - Friends meetings are spiritual communities of people who gather for worship, business and friendship. These meetings are the center of Quaker community life and also the foundation of the structure of the Religious Society of Friends.
- The Friends meeting holds meetings for worship weekly or more often and supports the spiritual, social, educational and material needs of its members. Through active engagement in their meeting, Friends find both a caring and safe environment and the challenge of spiritual growth.
- A Friends meeting offers members a place to test leadings and convictions based on a shared appreciation of individual and corporate spiritual direction.
- Minutes' summary: ...During the October Council meeting we agreed that we can describe a Friends Meeting in many ways and trust that it builds a strong bond and spiritual community of service, worship and action. Council members were challenged to consider what they want to do about the deep conversations around the essence of a meeting that the Councils have engaged in. There was rich discernment about this topic.
- The Council referred the work to Ministry and Care. Ministry and Care is tasked to reflect this broader conversation about how being a meeting (or a member) has changed and consider effective ways to share the conversation with the PYM community. We were reminded that in the future we may want to discuss the way that Quarters work together.
- Invite Friends to take this question back to their Monthly Meeting.

- In light of technical and demographic changes, what are the qualities and activities that create Quaker community?
- **Term limits for service**
 - 2, 3-year terms
 - Offer opportunities for service that align with Friend’s skills, talents, gifts, interests, and time available to volunteer
 - A mechanism to ensure diversity and new insights as different Friends populate the groups.
 - Leadership authority is time limited for the term leaning into the testimonies of equality and integrity.
 - Multitude of opportunities for service to the YM-
 - Collaboratives
 - Sprints
 - Granting groups
 - Councils
 - Talk about specific opportunities including
 - Friends Counseling Service Advisory board,
 - Program Support Committee.
 - Integrity of living into the stewardship of PYM within the consistent term limits for all (Equality)
 - Opportunity for Service on Nominating Council as representatives from the Quarters

Proposed Benchmarks for PYM’s Climate Witness

August 2024

Proposed Benchmark

1. Measure the carbon footprint of Yearly Meeting operations, gatherings, and facilities.
Complete by: July 2025
2. Identify how the Yearly Meeting could be carbon net zero by 2030
Complete by: December 2025
3. Invite monthly meetings to strive to reach 50% carbon reduction for members and meetings.
Complete by 2030 or sooner, if possible.

Invitation to PYM Meetings

PYM Presiding Clerk is inviting Monthly and Quarterly meetings to give time to seasoning the proposed benchmarks in preparation for their coming before the body for consideration. This process will allow Friends to attend business sessions of the yearly meeting with hearts and minds prepared for discernment.

We are looking for thoughts and discernment around this, but that doesn’t necessarily mean it requires a minute. If you would like to share anything from your discernment, send it to Nikki's email. The following are queries from the presiding clerk which may be helpful to set context. The decision we will be making in the fall is specifically about setting carbon footprint benchmarks.

- How is my Meeting addressing Climate Witness?
- How is my Meeting educating itself about climate issues?
- Does my Meeting know how climate change affects communities of color in our region/state/country?
- How does measuring our carbon footprint impact the world around us?

Key Points

1. These benchmarks will be brought forward for consideration for approval at Continuing Sessions, November 9, 2024.
2. They were recommended by PYM’s appointed Climate Witness Stewards at Annual Sessions 2024. Climate Witness Stewards are appointed by PYM in part to “Hold the yearly meeting accountable to its commitment to a yearly meeting-wide witness on climate change and climate justice” and to do this they are charged with recommending “annual benchmarks and activities to be adopted by the body.”

3. The PYM body approved Addressing Climate Change as a witness that the entire yearly meeting – each Friend, household, meeting and PYM generally – be under the weight of (March 2021).

The body approved a framework for supporting our witness the following July. It asks us to address climate change in five specific ways, including by decreasing our carbon footprint. The other four ways are through our activism, education, finances and mourning loss and instilling hope.

4. In the event that the benchmarks are approved:
 - a. The councils would be responsible for completing benchmark 1.
 - b. The councils would be responsible for ensuring benchmark 2 is met.
 - c. Monthly meetings would be responsible for progress on benchmark 3.

Additional Resources

To learn more about PYM’s Yearly Meeting Wide Witnesses: <https://pym.org/witness>

To learn more about Climate Witness Stewards: <https://www.pym.org/witness/climate-witness-stewards/>

To learn more about what Friends are doing related to Climate Change: <https://pym.org/witness/news> (scroll down to climate)

To learn more about the five ways we are asked to address climate change: <https://www.pym.org/climate-playbook>

Timeline

How did we get to the point of considering these benchmarks?

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1965-2022 | PYM minuted our concern over climate change x times |
| July 2014 | PYM approved identifying a few specific witnesses we are called to as a full body. These are not to be delegated to a committee or other group to do on our behalf but we all, every Friend, every household, every meeting and the whole yearly meeting, is asked to find where they can be engaged on behalf of the yearly meeting. |
| July 2020 | The presiding co-clerks of PYM invited Friends and meetings to begin considering approving Addressing Climate Change as a yearly meeting wide witness |
| March 2021 | PYM approved Addressing Climate Change as a yearly meeting wide witness |
| July 2021 | PYM approved appointing Climate Witness Stewards to hold us accountable as well as a framework for supporting our witness in which all Friends, households, meetings and the yearly meeting were asked to consider our |

own actions in terms of

- a) Activism
- b) Education
- c) Carbon Footprint
- d) Finances
- e) Instilling hope and mourning loss

September 2022 The first slate of Climate Witness Stewards was approved.

July 2024 The Climate Witness Stewards recommended this benchmark
Measure the carbon footprint of Yearly Meeting operations, gatherings, and facilities.

Complete by: July 2025

Identify how the Yearly Meeting could be carbon net zero by 2030

Complete by: December 2025

Monthly meetings strive to achieve a 50% reduction in carbon for members and meeting houses.

Complete by 2030 or sooner