

**Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Called Meeting Minutes  
January 10, 2015 1:00 p.m.  
Arch Street Meeting House**

Friends gathered at the appointed hour for the Called Session on racism and settled into worship.

Clerk Jada Jackson (Trenton MM, Burlington Meeting House Worship Group) introduced herself. Rising Clerk Penny Colgan-Davis (Germantown MM), Alternate Clerk Becca Bubb (Abington MM), Alternate Clerk Alison Anderson (Central Philadelphia MM), Recording Clerk John Lavin (Birmingham MM) and Assistant Recording Clerk David Rose (Lehigh MM) introduced themselves. The elders who sat on the facing bench were acknowledged and thanked for holding this meeting in prayer.

The Clerk welcomed the large body of Friends and visitors to Arch Street who gathered in the Spirit under the weight of the need for change, justice, and equality for everyone. There was recognition that over 400 were in attendance from over 75 monthly meetings. In framing the day's called session, the clerk reminded us of events during our 2014 Annual Sessions. During Annual Session the unmet concern of "isms" – sexism, racism, classism – in our congregation and society was raised. Friends acknowledged that the work of this concern was greater than the body could meet during sessions. The body minuted the clerks and elders of PYM to help discern a way forward. Although not stated, there was an expectation that the clerks and elders would labor on our behalf for the year between Annual Sessions. The called session is to test their work since last annual sessions. If affirmed, the clerks and elders will continue with the intent of a fuller sharing at the 2015 Annual Sessions.

The Clerk reviewed the Agenda (available on the PYM website\*). The Clerk pointed out the intentional care supports: the three special spaces after the rise of meeting, and the Friends assisting with Pastoral Care. These Friends were asked to rise to be known by the body. "There is no altar to lay ones concerns and be free of them come Sunday." The clerks and elders are looking to test with the body the discernment of the clerks and elders with regard to race and privilege. The clerk asked Friends to expect that their hearts will be changed. This work will require us to behave differently, a paradigm shift. Hence, this called session was uniquely designed. There will be no opportunity to passively listen to a presenter, during this meeting Friends will be searching their hearts. Friends will be doing the work, just like we will need to do in our hearts and in our monthly meetings. Recognizing for many the agenda might raise discomfort the clerk asked Friends to turn to each other and say: "I did not know this was the plan", and then "I am here for you, God is here with us, and we will be okay."

During the clerks and elders discernment it became clear to them what is expressed in a term known as “intersectionality”; that the “ism”, forms of oppression and discrimination, are interrelated. When working to address one “ism” we impact others, while respecting that working on one does not release us from the necessary direct work on the others. At Annual Sessions a group of about 30 Friends gathered under the banner of racism and have been meeting regularly since July, naming themselves the “Undoing Racism Group”. The Clerk asked those Friends to rise to be recognized and shared that space has been provided at the rise of today’s meeting to meet with these Friends. Since Annual Sessions, the clerks and elders have been discerning and it is clear that although all of the “isms” raise concern, racism is the one as a community we are being led to address as a community. It is for testing this leading that we are gathered.

The Clerk asked elder Scott Rhodewalt (London Grove MM) to lead the body in an exercise to prepare Friends for their breakout group session. He explained that privileges are not earned but just given. They are usually invisible and unquestioned. Scott asked Friends to write down on the note cards handed out during registration their personal privileges out of worshipful, self-searching reflection. Friends were told that they would not have to share what they have written and the cards will not be collected. After a period of time, Scott then shared some examples of privileges held by our clerk and himself. He then explained that all privileges are not equal in the power they possess within our society. “Intersectionality” recognizes that there are many different roads of different sizes, from highway to paths. Each one represents a privilege or “ism”. These roads all intersect. Of all of these, whiteness/white privilege is the interstate super highway.

The Clerk then asked Friends to reflect on the query: “How might I use my privileges to address racism?” and invited Friends to write their responses on their cards. Friends sat with the query before moving to their breakout.

Friends broke out into 12 breakout groups throughout the meetinghouse, mainly by quarterly meetings for approximately an hour. Several quarterly meetings with smaller attendance were combined. A copy of the instructions and queries given to each breakout group is available on the PYM website\*.

After Friends returned to the West Room from their breakout sessions, the clerk assured all that the following week via the email addresses given during registration, all attendees will receive a copy of the breakout group notes on the queries considered during the session is available on the PYM website\* and pertinent information, like the Undoing Racism Group’s webpage.

The Clerk tested if the body was prepared to affirm the work presented by the clerks

and elders:

- *Increase our consciousness as Friends about the intersection of privilege and race in our culture and spiritual community.* We know our knowledge is often limited by our own experiences and that we have much to learn from each other and from outside resources.
- *Move forward with our entire community.* The yearly meeting is the community of all of our monthly meetings and individual Friends and this work needs to be done with the involvement of all of us.
- *Integrate this work into what we do in an ongoing way at the yearly meeting level.* We want this work to become part of the fabric of what we do whenever we get together as yearly meeting members and attenders.

Friends reflected on the work that they have accomplished today and what statement they might affirm. Friends felt that the body must learn from, but not lean on the work of our treasured Friends of the past such as John Woolman, and Lucretia Mott. The body must sharpen its focus on what concrete steps God is calling us to make.

The reality of where we need to go is a spiritual gift and when we go out to deal with any “ism”, we meet those that are different, we recognize we are working to achieve our own wholeness with everyone. We recognize that this is obviously clear that this is God's work. We are God's people and how can we not be doing this work? A Friend raised a concern that there are some in our yearly meeting that may not be ready. Friends must be willing to accept that some of us are not willing to accept that.

At the conclusion of today's Called Meeting, a Minute of Action was approved as follows:

***Friends tested and affirmed the work of our clerks and our elders, since being tasked during Annual Sessions in July 2014, to help discern a way forward in addressing many '-isms' including-racism, sexism, genderism and classism. Friends also heartily affirmed that as a Yearly Meeting we:***

- ***Commit to increase our consciousness as Friends about the intersection of privilege and race in our culture and spiritual community. We know our knowledge is often limited by our own experiences and that we have much to learn from each other and from outside resources.***
- ***Commit to move forward with our entire community. The yearly meeting is the community of all our individual Friends and monthly meetings and this work needs to be done with the involvement of all of us.***
- ***Commit to integrate this work into what we do in an ongoing way at the yearly meeting level. We want this work to become part of the fabric of what we do whenever we get together as yearly meeting members and attenders.***

Meeting ended with a period of deep silent worship with gratitude for the work already done and a commitment to the work ahead.

Two Notes:

1. Recognizing that often when doing anti-racism work it is helpful to some Friends to have space to process and reflect afterwards. Spaces were provided for Friends of Color to meet and White Friends to meet. There was also a space for Friends to meet with the Undoing Racism Group, which formed at last Annual Sessions. Childcare was extended for those attending any of these spaces which opened 15 minutes after the rise of meeting.
2. A traveling minute for Friend Sharon Smith of Asheville Friends Meeting, Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association of the Religious Society of Friends was presented to the clerk after the meeting. However, the clerk did endorse and return it.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Lavin, Recording Clerk, PYM  
Jada S. Jackson, Clerk, PYM

(\* Documents referred to in these minutes are available on the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting website at [www.pym.org/annual-sessions/called-meeting-january-2015/minutes](http://www.pym.org/annual-sessions/called-meeting-january-2015/minutes)