

**334th Annual Sessions
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Held at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
Thursday, July 24, 2014 - Afternoon Session**

Community Gathering and Announcement

Friends gathered for Annual Session at the appointed hour of 2:30 p.m. to the singing of "This is Holy Ground" which had been taught by the Youth Program Friends at the end of the morning session. The quote of N. Jean Toomer, from which the theme of the session "Worship is the Door to Love" is taken, was read. Youth Program staff led Friends in an exercise to illustrate that once we enter that door, our every act can be a prayer. We were then asked to enter into worship sharing and consider how the exercise and sharing with each other affected us. Worship closed with the singing of "This is Holy Ground".

Worship and Introductions

After a period of centering worship time, those on the Clerks table introduced themselves: Clerk, Jada S. Jackson (Trenton MM, Burlington Meeting House Worship Group); Alternate Clerk, Steve Olshevski (Radnor MM); Alternate Clerk, Becca Bubb (Abington MM); General Secretary, Arthur M. Larrabee (Central Philadelphia MM); Recording Clerk, David Rose (Lehigh Valley MM); Assisting Recording Clerk, Jim Herr (Lancaster MM); Assistant Recording Clerk, John Lavin (Birmingham MM); and Becky Tallarico is the speech-to-text provider.

Friends who are at Annual Sessions for the first time were asked to identify themselves and were recognized.

Epistle reading

Becca Bubb presented the slate for the PYM Annual Session Epistle Committee. They are: Eric Peterson (Norristown MM), Sara Palmer (Central Philadelphia MM), Teresa Jacob Engeman (Kendal MM), Carolyn Schodt (Chestnut Hill). **Meeting approved slate as presented.**

Excerpts of Epistles received from Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, Iowa Yearly Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting, and North Carolina Yearly Meeting were read by Eric Peterson.

Living our Faith: Giving Life to our Minutes

Patricia Finley presented a report “Living our Faith: Giving Life to our Minutes” (written report attached) which arose out of a concern about minutes which are adopted by Yearly Meeting but not acted upon afterwards. The urge to respond to a crisis situation often does not go beyond creating a minute. A proposal created by Arthur Larrabee to create a clear process for adopting what he termed “Foundational Minutes” with some questions to consider were contained in the report. Friends present were asked to focus on question #5 and discuss within a small group: “Do we need to always make a statement or take action as a unified body or do we sometimes want to leave it to the passionate few who are lead [sic] to act?” This question was expanded to include the question: “What are minutes for?” Friends were asked to submit comments after reflection and discussion to Patricia Finley via e-mail, text, or by notecards provided. A time was provided for the sharing of comments. Comments will be reported back to Interim Meeting by Patricia Finley.

Report on Quarterly Meeting Revitalization

Hollister Knowlton presented the Report on Quarterly Meeting Revitalization with those involved in the creation of the report coming to the front row. This report arose from a Gathering held on June 7th at Reading MM with thirty-three participants from nine different quarters. Summary of the report was read by Holly Olson. (Written report and summary attached.) The complete report will be available on the PYM website. Friends were encouraged by the clerk to respond to the report to the address provided.

Report to Annual Sessions of Quarterly Meeting Revitalization received.

Reading of Minutes

John Lavin read the Minutes of Record from Thursday morning session. With additions, clarifications and corrections received and recorded. **Minutes of Record for Thursday morning approved as amended.**

David Rose read the Minutes of Decision. **Minutes of Action approved as read.**

Closing

Afternoon session closed with a period of worship at 5:05 p.m. We departed with the intention to gather again at 9:30 a.m., Friday, July 25th.

Submitted by,
David Rose, Recording Clerk (Lehigh Valley MM)
Jada S. Jackson, Presiding Clerk

Living our Faith: Giving Life to our Minutes

The General Secretary has conceptualized a Foundational Minute and an adoption process:

Our General Secretary has described a clear process for adopting a “foundational minute.” Which he defines as: “....a broad and comprehensive statement of concern, on a significant matter, reflecting something that the Yearly Meeting cared about. It would be widely seasoned within the Yearly Meeting. All members would have an opportunity for input. The minute, when adopted, could then be the basis for subsequent action by the Yearly Meeting, Interim Meeting, standing committees and staff.”

1. A quarterly meeting, or a PYM committee, brings a significant concern to Interim Meeting and asks Interim Meeting to authorize the preparation of a Foundational Minute.
2. If approved, a task group is formed to prepare such a minute. The task group would include those who brought the concern as well as others who might be added by reason of their experience, expertise or interest.
3. The Foundational Minute would include the following:
 - a. A comprehensive statement of the concern
 - b. A history of the concern and what has been done to date within the Yearly Meeting
 - c. The spiritual foundation for the concern, rooted in Quaker faith and practice, answering why Friends should be involved
 - d. Options for addressing the concern
 - e. Specific proposals
 - f. A request for Yearly Meeting action and support
4. The Foundational minute comes back to Interim Meeting to be further seasoned and the question answered: “Is this minute ready to go to Yearly Meeting?”
5. If Interim Meeting judges that the minute is ready to go to Yearly Meeting in annual sessions, it is placed on the agenda of our next annual meeting.
6. If Yearly Meeting discerns that the Foundational Minute is satisfactory, it would approve sending the minute out to all monthly and quarterly meetings for discernment and seasoning. Comments and concerns would be directed to the task group which would consider them for possible incorporation in the “final minute.”
7. Following seasoning and discernment, the Foundational Minute would come back to the Yearly Meeting at its next annual meeting for final action.

To Arthur Larrabee’s list I would add the creation of a searchable database of PYM minutes, available to monthly meetings and that there be documentation available describing the scope of the seasoning.

Some questions:

1. What are the substantive issues of our time? A couple substantive issues from the past were slavery and nuclear disarmament. What would be a **critical** substantive issue to consider for the next six months or year?
2. Would we have a hierarchy of minutes, the substantive and a lesser more immediate form? If yes how would lesser minutes be handled?
3. Should we have a seasoning body, responsible for making certain the minute is clear and for distributing it to all monthly meetings for discernment and comment? Ought we have a deadline such a sometime before sessions? Would this body also determine which minutes were significant?
4. What about urgent world issues such as the current continuing violence in Gaza? Can we make timely interpretations of our testimonies, in order to make public statements about war, as we did after 9/11?
5. Do we need to always make a statement or take action as a unified body or do we sometimes want to leave it to the passionate few who are lead to act?

For questions about this report, please contact:

Patricia Finley finleyp@temple.edu

Quarterly Meeting Revitalization Report to Annual Sessions 2014

Report to 2014 Annual Session from June 7, 2014 Gathering of Quarters

In May 2013, at their annual weekend retreat at Camp Swatara, Caln Quarter heard of a potential change in the PYM youth program. The PYM youth program had intersected with Caln Quarter's annual retreat for the last third of a century. With some potential changes in the PYM youth program, Caln Quarter faced a question of its purpose and possible change. A small group of Caln Quarter Friends contacted other quarters and asked about their activities. Each quarter has a different level of engagement and vitality. Out of these short explorations, a leading arose to invite Friends from across the Yearly Meeting with a passion about the life of our quarters to a gathering.

Friends involved in quarters (clerks, coordinators, ex-coordinators, and others) were invited to an organizing conference call in January. Within a few weeks, an ad hoc group had formed and we had determined a location, developed an agenda, distributed a flyer, and started to consider logistics.

Planners mentioned a number of ideas, felt needs as the planning progressed:

1. fostering inter-visitation and cross-communication
2. creating community among our quarters
3. identifying what we have in common as quarters that is different from monthly meetings or yearly meetings
4. hearing about the life of our quarters
5. providing small group opportunities of clerks, coordinators, clerks of committees
6. addressing the challenges of getting participation in our quarters
7. identifying and requesting resources of Yearly Meeting to support our quarters
8. discussing youth issues
9. utilizing meeting enrichment services
10. exploring how we might all support one another and create a new vision of what our quarters can do and be
11. determining whether quarters can generate a critical mass and quarterly meeting identity for our youth (elementary through Young Adult Friend) by organizing regional gatherings and transporting our youth to PYM youth programs
12. asking whether the historical purpose of the quarter is still valid today, and in what ways the purpose of a quarterly meeting has changed over time
13. exploring ways quarterly meetings might join together in some specific efforts by region (like the Tri-Quarterly gathering in NJ)
14. discerning whether quarterly meetings could have a stronger role in identifying leadership in the yearly meeting (perhaps revitalizing this role in some quarters is more to the point)

Reading Monthly Meeting was chosen as the gathering location because of its geographic centrality in the yearly meeting: about equidistant from Wellsboro Monthly Meeting (Upper Susquehanna Quarter) and Wicomico River Friends Meeting (Southern Quarter).

The Gathering took place on June 7, 2014 at Reading Meeting with 33 participants from nine quarters (Abington, Bucks, Caln, Chester, Concord, Haverford, Philadelphia, Upper Susquehanna, Western). The agenda included limited time for worship during the six hours of time together. In the morning, a threshing session yielded six topics. Over lunch, sub-groups formed around these six topics for further discernment. The sub-groups reported out and a summary minute was read. The six sub-groups were:

1. Roles and Responsibilities of monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and yearly meeting
2. Declining Membership
3. Supporting Our Youth
4. Fostering Leadership
5. Working Across Communities
6. Spiritual Enrichment/Formation

Handouts of the notes from the six sub-groups are available.

A Summary Minute of the June 7 Gathering was developed. [attached]

We felt the June 7 Gathering was meaningful for the following reasons:

1. We had a start to sharing ideas across quarters.
2. We shared a desire to continue to meet over time and develop the ideas gathered at this meeting.
3. The scale of quarter work is meaningful because quarters are more local to monthly meetings, therefore more connected in practical and cultural ways than Yearly Meeting and its cross-pollination of practices. Social activism and spiritual support at the quarter level can be informal and fluid.
4. We are interested in exploring ways that the work from the June 7 gathering can plug into the larger work of the yearly meeting.
5. We want to get clearer at all levels as to how all of our work plugs into the larger work between monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings.
6. We believe that: "It is time that we further explore concrete ways to integrate the structure, energy, and community between monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and the yearly meeting."

A future Gathering of Quarters will continue enlivening and expanding the themes based on the work started on June 7.

Questions about this report should be directed to:

John Hayden

jbhayden1@gmail.com

Summary Minute of the June 7 Gathering on Revitalizing our Quarterly Meetings

Members from nine quarterly meetings gathered at Reading Monthly Meeting on June 7, 2014 to affirm the role and importance of our quarters. There was a sense of community and belonging to each other.

We converged upon the truth that regional gatherings can be a place where Yearly Meeting becomes relevant. The quarterly meeting experience is an inspirational intermediary between monthly meetings and our wider yearly meeting community. When we come together, we collectively fuel our excitement about being Quakers.

We also considered the life in our quarterly meetings as it relates to leadership, youth support, membership, roles and responsibilities, working across our communities, and spiritual formation. As we adjourned, we affirmed the value of fellowship, worship, and sharing in love towards the development of new ideas and the seasoning of others. It is time that we further explore concrete ways to integrate the structure, energy, and community between monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and the Yearly Meeting.