

**334th Annual Sessions  
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Held at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA  
Friday, July 25, 2014 – Afternoon Session**

Community Gathering and Announcements

Friends gathered at the appointed hour time of 2:30 pm with the children present and the singing of “This is Holy Ground”. We were led in an exercise by the Youth Program Staff to help us appreciate the gifts that each one of us brings to the session, whatever our age may be.

After announcements, Friends settled into a period of worship.

Introductions and Agenda review

Those on the Clerks table identified themselves: Clerk, Jada S. Jackson (Trenton MM, Burlington Meetinghouse 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); Assistant Recording Clerk, John Lavin (Birmingham MM), Becky Tallarico is the speech-to-text provider.

Elders introduced themselves: Dorothy Reichardt (Kendal MM), Dana Houghton (Woodstown MM), and Alison Anderson (Central Philadelphia MM)

Agenda was revised to give the General Services Report from this morning’s agenda in place of the Interim Meeting Report by Elders.

Epistle reading

The following epistles received were read by members of the Epistle Committee:

Epistle from Bhopal Yearly Meeting in India: The theme of the session is “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” The Meeting is thankful for the completion of the new meetinghouse.

South Central Yearly Meeting held in Texas: “Am I my sisters and brothers keeper?” was the theme created in response to the mass incarceration which is a crisis among some of the states in the Yearly Meeting. State of Monthly Meeting reports were visual representations.

Illinois Yearly Meeting 10-14 age group gave an account of the variety of exercises and insights gained at Yearly Meeting.

### General Services Standing Committee Report

General Services Standing Committee Report given by Clerk, Joe Elliott (Providence MM). Complete report attached. He described the working of the committee and the relationship with the working groups under its care. **Report from General Service is received.**

### Education Standing Committee Report

Peter Lane (Westtown MM) gave the Education Standing Committee Report. Complete written report attached. He highlighted the work of the Quaker Parenting Initiative, the Faith and Play Working Group, Young Friends Program and Children's Session Working Group. With the assistance of slides, he described how the work of the committee is done and reviewed the past years' experience. The report spoke with humility about the committee's actions to intentionally and openly listen and engage concerning last year's proposed, and not adopted, Young Friends Policy concerning transsexual Friends and closed with the observation that the committee is still waiting to see how it will fit into the new structure proposed.

The Young Adult Friends Working Group Report was given Co-Clerk Elizabeth Martin. She described the work of the group in created space for Young Adult Friends to meet. Work done this past year has been the creation of a policy regarding the use of alcohol as sponsored events and their participation in the Intergenerational Spiritual Formation program. The working group has had an increase in participation but still needs another Co-Clerk. A Friend spoke on behalf of the Children's Session Planning Group and the opportunity for Friends to help with that work. Comments expressed appreciation for the work being done and asked for direction in helping to continue the work.

The Clerk expressed her appreciation for the faithfulness in which the members of the Standing Committee around the proposed Youth Programs Transgender Policy.

**The Education Standing Committee Report and the Young Adult Friends Working Group report is received.**

### Worship and Care Standing Committee Report

Lane Taylor (Plumstead MM) presented the report. Complete written report attached. Members of the committee who were present were asked to stand and be recognized for their work. She listed the working and granting groups under their care and highlighted some of the work being done. **Worship and Care Standing Committee Report is received.**

### Minutes

**Minutes of Action from this session were read and approved.**

Minutes of Record from Thursday afternoon read and with clarifications and corrections incorporated. **Minutes of Thursday afternoon were approved.**

Minutes of Record from Friday morning session read by Jim Herr. With corrections and clarifications incorporated. **Minutes of Friday morning session were approved.**

General Secretary Arthur - Remarks and meeting for worship for saying farewell.

Arthur M. Larrabee gave his final General Secretary report. Full report attached. His report was divided into two sections, looking back and looking forward.

The “Look Back”, or the saga of Arthur’s seven and a half years as General Secretary, was divided into three sections, corresponding to the dramatic structure of rising action that builds suspense, climax with solution discovered, and falling action leading to resolution and exit from stage. Rising Action period covered the renovation of Friends Center completed June 2009, starting stories of vitality and growth as a practice, archiving Yearly Meeting records on the web, hosting “Heading God’s Call”, and planning for downsizing of staff. Climax and discovery of solution was the financial crisis and the creation of a balanced budget while laying-off staff. The resolution portion started in 2012 with the end of uncertainty and the feeling that we could sustain ourselves leading to the present transition to new leadership. The motif common in medieval chivalric romances, including that other Arthurian legend, of faithful romantic love supporting the hero through adversity, was transubstantiated in this story to the support of divine love Arthur consistently experienced as expressed by the late renaissance Quaker mystic, George Fox, as “The power of love is over all”.

In “Looking Forward” Arthur spoke of the challenges that we are confronted with, such as the decline in stated membership and attendance at Sunday Worship. Membership level since 1955 unification has been in decline but the decline has substantially flattened out in recent years. Covenant income is down, as is annual giving. We are okay for now but there is reason for long term alarm. If our income does not rise with the expected inflationary rise in expenses, we are not sustainable. We need to do the best we can do and then leave the rest to Spirit. Arthur provided a number of possible scenarios from the gradual demise of the Religious Society, to the arising of a reenergized people. The vision of the Five-Year Plan for PYM which we will be considering can lead to a reenergized and rekindled Quaker community. He closed with the assurance, “And the power of love is over all”.

The chivalric theme was continued with the presentation of a vase with eight yellow roses and one white rose, commemorating the yellow roses that he gave to his staff when he started. These roses were also symbolic, the yellow roses symbolizing joy, friendship and love, one for each year of service, plus some overtime. The pure white rose symbolic of the pure love for PYM with which he did his work and overcame adversity, or as he put, dealt with tribulations and potholes. Clerk, Jada Jackson, read the following minute of appreciation to the meeting after which we settled into a period of sharing out of the silence.

**Minute of Appreciation for Arthur M. Larrabee**

Often there is a call from our Yearly Meeting for assistance and leadership. Few times has our call been answered so soundly. Arthur has acted as the Executive Director of our non-profit organization of PYM, taking the leadership role and authority in hiring, releasing and directing staff. He has been our representative to other agencies and denominational organizations such as the National Council of Churches, Friends Fiduciary, Friends General Conference Executive Board, and others. He has taken an ex-officio role at our Standing Committee meetings, directing appropriate staff as necessary.

He has offered his professional skills to address unique Yearly Meeting concerns, namely the transitioning of operations of the Burlington Meetinghouse and Conference Center, the Comly Fund in relation to Friends of Central Philadelphia MM, and the Greenleaf Fund. This represents some of the work he has done, but not the grounded spirit with which he has accomplished these tasks. He has taken on his duties with a depth of love and grace that mirrors his love of our community. He has worked, not as just an employee, but as a faithful servant. He has been available to offer advice, expertise as needed and to be a prayerful presence.

It is with mixed emotions that we look to celebrate his transition from this formal role: We rejoice in knowing that his love and communion will continue as he will remain an active member of our community. He is just moving to the other side of the facing bench. He will be missed.

To our faithful Friend, Arthur, we wish you love, peace, rest and excitement as you enter this new chapter.

Friends shared their experience of Arthur's love of the Yearly Meeting, the channel of love that he served as, the constant presence and support that he provided, and his modeling of a servant/leader. An ode to Arthur was sung by a Friendly troubadour.

The sharing portion of the celebration ended at 5:20 pm with the **approval of the Minute of Appreciation for Arthur M. Larrabee** and an unabashedly, unusual standing ovation.

We departed for the celebration picnic with the intention to gather again at 9:30 am Saturday morning.

Submitted by,

David Rose, Recording Clerk  
Jada S. Jackson, Presiding Clerk

## General Services Standing Committee Report to Annual Sessions 2014

Within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting there are a number of functions that might be called “paperwork or strictly office work.” General Services Standing Committee (GSSC) provides oversight for some of these working groups.

The method of oversight is by the appointment of a General Services Standing Committee liaison to each of the working groups and granting groups under its care. These liaisons attend the meetings and otherwise keep in contact with their assigned working groups and attend the meetings of the GSSC that are held approximately eight times throughout the year. During the standing committee meeting, the liaisons bring forth information relative to the status of their working group(s) activity. At each meeting two of the working groups are highlighted for a more complete report of their activities. In this way, the whole General Services Standing Committee is kept informed of all activities of all of working groups and granting groups under its care.

The information that follows in this report are the composition and general charges, personnel and meeting schedules of the General Services Standing Committee and its working groups.

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position/Liaison to</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
Joe Elliott	Providence	Clerk	2014
Ruth Seeley	Germantown	Financial Oversight WG	2016
Doug Meaker	Quakertown	Recording Clerk- GSSC Financial Stewardship Committee Sessions Planning WG	2016
Penrose Hallowell	Horsham	Development WG	2017
Elizabeth Martin	Central Philadelphia	Personnel Services WG	2016
George (Skip) Corson	Gwynedd	Pemberton Fund Pusey Trust Fund	2016
Storm Evans	Chestnut Hill	Meeting House Trust Fund	2015
Harry Williams	Crosswicks		2016
John Hunt	Friends of Philadelphia		2014

**Function:**

- Oversight of the various working groups designated under its care.

**Meetings:**

4:30 pm – 6:30 pm, on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesdays starting in October and through June, with exceptions for several Philadelphia Yearly Meeting holidays. Meetings are held in the Arch Street Meeting House and by members joining by conference calls. Occasionally a whole meeting is held by conference call. Members report the status, progress and needs of the groups they serve as liaisons. By prior arrangement, either some working groups ask the clerk or the clerk asks them to be on the agenda for work on a particular topic under their care.

**Sessions Planning Group**

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is charged with having at least one annual session where all members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (members of their monthly meetings) may attend. In recent years Friends have held annual sessions that extend beyond one day and have made provisions for those attending to use overnight accommodations and meals. Business required to operate the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is presented and approved in the manner of Friends. There are also speakers on a variety of topics, workshops with topics of interest and importance to Friends, gathering for enjoyment, and child care appropriate to the ages of the children involved.

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
Ken Park	Providence	Clerk	2015
Doug Meaker	Quakertown	GSSC Liaison	2016
Lane Taylor	Plumstead	Assistant Clerk	2016
Jocelyn Park	Providence	Member*	2014
Carla White	Chestnut Hill	Member*	2014
Chris Schanno	Springfield	Member	2015
Tom Peterson	Richland	Member	2016
Pat Coiner	Providence	Member	2015

\* Agreed to reappointment

The terms of service of the above list expire for this group end on October 1, rather the date for members of other committees. This allows for the closing of the just ended session and time to begin plans for the next year’s session.

**Other Members:**

Jada Jackson – Clerk of PYM

Becca Bubb – Alternate Clerk of PYM  
 Steve Olshevski – Alternate Clerk of PYM  
 Tricia Coscia – Annual Sessions and Volunteer Coordinator  
 Christie Duncan-Tessmer – staff to this working group; incoming General Secretary to PYM  
 Arthur Larrabee – General Secretary to PYM

**Function:**

- Plan and carry out the annual session of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.
- Set policy for the annual session.
- Permanent group membership listed above and it is augmented by ad hoc volunteers for specific aspects of each session.

**Meetings:**

5:30 pm to 8:00 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at Friends Center, 1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia; or conference call or Google group.

**Financial Oversight Working Group (FOWG)**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
Joyce Moore	Unami	Clerk	2015
Ruth Seeley	Germantown	GSSC Liaison	2016
Ron Ploeg	Willistown	PYM Treasurer	2015
Scudder G. Stevens	Kennett	Member*	2014
Pat Williams	Haddonfield	Member	2015
David Morrison	Lancaster	Member	2015
Fred Melroy	Medford	Member	2014
Linell McCurry	Lansdowne	PYM Staff	N/A
Vacant	–	–	2016
Vacant	–	–	2016
Vacant	–	–	2016

\* Served three terms

**Function:**

- Review funds for appropriate investment and application, i.e. within Friends principles.
- Prepare reports as needed.
- Report annually to Interim Meeting on fund status.
- Arrange for, receive, review external audit.
- Oversee accounting, reporting and banking practices of PYM.

**Naming issues for further recognition:**

Needs more members especially with the following skills: business, investment, legal knowledge, and good general skills.

**Meetings:**

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month except July and August, in the Arch Street Meeting House.

**A change in responsibilities:**

During its meeting on February 2, 2011, General Services Standing Committee (GSSC) approved the revised responsibilities listed below for the Financial Oversight Working Group (FOWG). GSSC brings these changes to Interim Meeting because the original was approved by Interim Meeting. GSSC proposes that any future changes to FOWG responsibilities be approved by GSSC.

**Financial Oversight Working Group Responsibilities:**

Approved by Interim Meeting September 27, 2007

FOWG approved 1-19-2011

GSSC approved 2-2-2011

1. Review the financial statements of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on a regular and ongoing basis for accounting functionality and investment performance in conjunction with the Treasurer and the Financial Stewardship Committee.
2. Oversee banking and investments.
  - a. Recommend opening and closing of bank and investment accounts.
  - b. Meet with investment advisors concerning investment performance.
  - c. Act as liaison with third party trustees.
    - i. Monitor investment activity and spending rate distributions of third party trustees.
    - ii. Meet with trustees to discuss Philadelphia Yearly Meeting concerns.
3. Oversee Yearly Meeting designated and restricted funds.
  - a. Review documents to determine whether funds are donor restricted as to original contribution and/or income and gains on a rotating basis. One-fifth of the funds will be reviewed every year.
  - b. Monitor and receive concerns about the current use of funds respecting restrictions and designations and consistency with purposes. Intervene to prevent uses of funds that are contrary to donor-imposed restrictions or instructions from Yearly or Interim Meeting.
4. Oversee the accounting functions and Finance Office operations.
  - a. As a part of this process, a Finance Office staff representative will attend Financial Oversight Working Group meetings.
  - b. Ensure compliance throughout the financial structure with internal controls, management processes and adherence to procedures.
5. Advise the Financial Stewardship Committee in the preparation of the investment income side of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting budget.

- a. Anticipated investment returns are provided by Friends Fiduciary Corporation for funds held by it.
- b. Income from third party trusts is estimated by the Finance Office based on the announced spending rate and investment balances.
6. Prepare the annual budget for the Financial Oversight Working Group.
7. Work with the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Treasurer to appoint the independent auditor. Meet with the auditor about the audited financial statements and management letter, if any. Recommend acceptance of the audit to Interim Meeting. Work with the Treasurer and others to present the audit to Interim Meeting in a format that is clear and understandable.
8. Members provide support to Monthly and Quarterly Meeting Treasurers, Trustees and Finance Committees.
  - a. Treasurers meetings
  - b. Treasurers handbook
9. Report to Interim Meeting annually on designated and restricted funds.

**Development Working Group**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
Ralph Henninger	Plymouth	Clerk	2016
Penrose Hollowell	Horsham	Appointment GSSC Liaison	2017
Patricia Stover	Quakertown	Reappointment	2017
Richard Morse	Harrisburg	Member	2015
Holly Olson	Middletown at Langhorne	Member	2016
Patricia Stover	Quakertown	Reappointment to 1 <sup>st</sup> term	2014
Maia Simon	Trenton	Member	2015
Jennie Sheeks	Central Philadelphia	PYM Staff	N/A

**Function:**

- Review funds for appropriate investment and application and report. Report annually to Interim Meeting on funds status.
- Arrange for, receive and review external audit.
- Oversee accounting, report and banking practices of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

**Meeting schedule:**

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month except July, August and other conflicting holidays, in the Arch Street Meeting House.

**Naming issues for further recognition:**

Needs additional members. Particularly skills needed in business, investment, general skills, legal knowledge.

**Personnel Services Working Group**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
David G. Jones	Birmingham	Clerk	2015
Elizabeth Martin	Central Philadelphia	GSSC Liaison	2016
George Pickering	Middletown at Langhorne	Member	2015
Robert LeFever	Newtown	Member	2014
Paula Cell	Germantown	Member	2017
Tricia Coscia	Yardley	PYM Staff	N/A
Vacant	–	–	2016
Vacant	–	–	2016

**Function:**

- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has a number of employees and this committee keeps track of the legal aspects and appropriateness of personnel policies and makes recommendation concerning them.
- Review and develop personnel policies including:
  - Salary ranges
  - Hiring procedures
  - Fringe Benefits
  - Evaluation procedures
  - Review job descriptions

**Meeting Schedule:**

One meeting face-to-face; about five other meetings through the year by conference call.

**Pemberton Fund Granting Group**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
Alison Cadbury Senter	Moorestown	Clerk	2016
George (Skip) Corson	Gwynedd	GSSC Liaison	2016
Connie Brookes	Haddonfield	Member (resigned)	2016
Nancy Werner	Lansdowne	Member	2014
Bob Horvay	Mickleton	Member	2014
Maceo Davis	Kennett	Member	2015
Margaret Wood	Towanda	To be appointed	2016
Nicholas Gutowski	–	PYM Staff	N/A

**Function:**

- Review grant applications
- Make appropriate grants
- Follow up reports and conduct follow up investigations
- Follow up reports from and for the Pemberton Fund

**Meeting Schedule:**

Four times a year, as per Skip Corson.

**Meeting House Trust Funds Granting Group**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
Charles Cole-Quigley	Birmingham	Clerk	2016
Storm Evans	Chestnut Hill	GSSC Liaison	2015
Mary Day Kent	Chestnut Hill	Member	2016
Amy Jarrett	Horsham	Member	2014
Doug Humes	Newtown Square	Member	2014
Walter Evans	Doylestown	Member	2014
Helen File	Byberry	Member	2015
Tom Wells	Fallsington	Member	2015
John B. Winterbottom	Solebury	Member	2016
Bill Bolger	Mt. Holly	Member	2015
Nicholas Gutowski	–	PYM Staff	N/A

**Function:**

- Review applications and make grants from the Meetinghouse Trust Funds. The funds are for the construction related to meetinghouses and other Quaker institutions both within and outside of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.
- Perform follow up visits to verify grant work has been done properly.

**Meetings:**

Two times a year, usually the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of March and September during the day, at 2:30 pm and usually at the Arch Street Meeting House. Much of the work is however done between meetings by individual members or small informal meetings of the working group. Such groups visit sites before and after the work is done.

**Pusey Trust Granting Group**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Ends</b>
Pamela Costanzi	Willistown	Clerk	2014
George (Skip) Corson	Gwynedd	GSSC Liaison	2016
J. Harry Hammond	Centre	Member	2015
Carter Nash	Harrisburg	Member	2015
Robert Hernblad	Friends of Philadelphia	Member	2015
Carol Walz	Mt. Holly	PYM Staff	N/A

**Function:**

- Makes grants from the income of the Mary Pusey Trust. There are about \$36,000/year of restricted funds to be distributed.
- Review grant applications, make grants and conduct follow up visits for use of the grants from the fund.

**Meetings:**

Approximately once per year, in the spring, at Arch Street Meeting House. Also conducts site visits; estimated to be about 30 hours per year. This group selects the year and the donation recipient for the year from the list in the will.

Joseph Elliott  
 Clerk, GSSC  
[josephwelliott@hotmail.com](mailto:josephwelliott@hotmail.com)

## **Education Standing Committee Report to Annual Sessions 2014**

Our committee is:

Connie Beetle, Pamela Carter, Lisa Collins, George Crispin, and Peter Lane (acting clerk)

Working Groups in our care are:

- Children's Session Planning Group (Nicely under way)
- Children's Spiritual Life Committee (Not currently active but area folks are ready to respond to meetings' needs when asked; see [First Day School Consultants](http://pym.org) on [pym.org](http://pym.org))
- Committee on Friends Education (Very active; Report available online with Sessions advanced documents)
- Faith and Play Working Group (Very active; Report available online with Sessions advanced documents)
- Middle School Friends (Carrying on nicely)
- Nonviolence and Children (Active; see safe classrooms workshops listed on [pym.org/calendar](http://pym.org/calendar))
- Post Secondary Education Concerns Working Group (Nicely active)
- Public Education Concerns Working Group (Not active)
- Quaker Parenting Initiative
- Quaker Pilgrimage to England (Very active; 2014 Pilgrimage returns July 20)
- Young Adult Friends Working Group (Very active; Report available online with Sessions advanced documents )
- Young Friends Program (Carrying on nicely)

The above working groups appear as drop-down tabs on PYM's website so you can check them out yourselves to see more about what they do. Ordinarily, we would have liaisons who would have one of these groups as their responsibility and would keep us informed. Alas, we are so few now that we can't sustain this effort. We are doing it by asking each working group what they need from us. We do have funding that can support the work of some of them and we give spiritual support otherwise. We are responsible for a budget that is part of the larger PYM financial picture. I think there are no longer any Yearly Meeting staff members who directly support us in these works.

We have met, face-to-face, only a few times this past year and our energy has been spent dealing with the pain coming from the request for and the attempt to write a "policy" on how transgendered Young Friends would be cared for in the programming done for them by PYM. As you remember, a lot of time and energy went into this issue a year ago. Some of this is receding now but we are still in the process of the

reconciliation that was asked for last year. Part of the fallout from this flap is that some of the members of our committee have left. One thing we learned at the 2013 Sessions was the wish by Young Friends, “No decisions about us without us.” Yes, we get it and we hope to be joined by Young Friends in the committee soon. An update on the reconciliation process is posted in the [News](#) section of [pym.org](http://pym.org).

When we’ve been asked to decide about other matters like financial support requested by our working groups, or position changes within PYM staff, we have “sensed the meeting” via email.

We wait respectfully to see what role we will play in the new plan.

Peter Lane  
Acting Clerk  
[julipetlane@mac.com](mailto:julipetlane@mac.com)

## **Worship and Care Standing Committee Report to Annual Sessions 2014**

Dear Friends,

With great joy and gratitude, the Worship and Care Standing Committee serves the Yearly Meeting by providing oversight and guidance to six working groups and four granting groups, all of which provide the support of spiritually and emotionally-enriching programs to the Yearly Meeting, its Meetings, and its members. For the first time in a number of years, we feel that we are currently at a capacity that allows us to optimally serve our groups by providing steady and consistent liaison relationships, although our members and our liaisons are not as numerous as they have been in past years. As a result, we do remain open for new, enthusiastic membership. We treasure the working relationships that we have with our working and granting groups, and the essential and valuable roles that they play in our decision-making process.

The working groups under our care are the Friends Counseling Service, Meeting Enrichment Services, the Meeting on Worship and Ministry, the Ministry for Racial Justice and Equality, Spiritual Formation, and The School of the Spirit.

The granting groups under our care are the Aging Granting Group, the Family Planning Granting Group (funded by the Natalie Clifford Barney Trust), the Greenleaf Granting Group, and the Jeanes Granting Group.

When we reported to Interim Meeting earlier this year, we shared that the Spiritual Formation Working Group had been exploring a Leading to offer inter-generational sessions. Currently, this leading has blossomed to include both programming and the lively participation of Young Adult Friends. The opening date for this program is September 27, 2014.

The Temperance Fund has been transferred from the Peace and Social Concerns Standing Committee to the Friends Counseling Service, which is now able to use the fund to help financially support Friends who are in the process of, or are seeking, recovery.

The Ministry for Racial Justice and Equality (MRJE) is currently exploring with us (and in conjunction with Friends General Conference), the possibility of PYM (through the MRJE and our Standing Committee) serving as a co-host of the 2016 White Privilege Conference, which will be taking place in Philadelphia. If there are Friends who are lead to volunteer in this endeavor, please speak with me (Lane Taylor).

Lola Georg and the Meeting for Worship and Ministry are currently working to facilitate quarterly gatherings on Extended, On-going Worship throughout the Yearly Meeting, in rotating locations throughout our geographically-diverse region. This work is in response to the many PYM Friends who have called out to us and to others, as well, for more and deeper Worship. We are delighted to report that this great work has continued to thrive.

The Aging Granting Group is currently looking for a Friend who is willing to step into the role of Clerk of their group. Friends who may be willing to serve in this capacity should speak with me (Lane Taylor).

We look forward to sharing more news and updates from our working and granting groups as we continue to hear from and work with them; it is one of the most joyful aspects of our service.

In closing, we would like to share that on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, we had the honor of supporting Meeting for Worship at the Trans-Health Conference that took place in Philadelphia this past June with the following Minute of Support:

"The Worship and Care Standing Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting endorses and supports that the time and space set aside at the Trans-Health Conference (June 12th-14th) at the Philadelphia Convention Center be under the care of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, with the help of PYM staff and volunteers to hold the space."

In Loving Service,

The Worship and Care Standing Committee

Lane Taylor, Clerk, Plumstead Friends Meeting, [lane.liz.taylor@gmail.com](mailto:lane.liz.taylor@gmail.com)

Jerry Belew, Middletown Friends Meeting

Kate Bregman, Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting

Chuck Devers, Salem Monthly Meeting

Evan Draper, London Grove Monthly Meeting

John Ellsworth, Gwynedd Monthly Meeting

Rose Ketterer, Newton Monthly Meeting

Jim Morrissey, Reading Monthly Meeting

Tom Rie, Gwynedd Monthly Meeting

Margery Rubin, Medford Monthly Meeting

## **Report of the General Secretary July 25, 2014**

Dear Friends,

It's great to be here with you this afternoon. I'm in high Quaker energy; I'm feeling the love and the power in this community, and I'm saying "Yes!"

I love our yearly meeting. I love the welcome and the warmth of our spiritual community. I love the meetings for worship and the meetings for business, the teaching and the learning, the hugs and the affection, and I love the feeling that in some deep way we belong to each other, that we matter to each other, and that life is deeper and richer and more meaningful because we are together, not only this week but all year around.

And the power of love is over all.

Friends, my time as General Secretary is coming to an end. August 31 will be my last day in office and for me it is a time of mixed emotions. I am sad to be leaving a job that I have loved, and one that has afforded me so much fulfillment. But on the other hand, it also feels just right to be stepping down at this time. We are in a good place as a Yearly Meeting, although there are challenges ahead which I will speak later in my talk, and now it is time for new leadership.

I could not be more pleased with the selection of my successor, Christie Duncan-Tessmer. She will be a terrific new leader in our yearly meeting, bringing fresh insights and new perspectives to the work. I am pleased that she will be able to assume leadership in a time of financial stability, with a strong staff and a more rightly sized organization. She has my blessing.

Thank you for the opportunity I have had to serve our Yearly Meeting. It has been a blessing to me.

This afternoon, I'd like to focus on two themes. First, I'd like to look back, in a spirit of celebration, at a few of the highlights of the last seven and a half years. And then, second, I'd like to talk about what I see as the challenges which lie ahead of us. I expect to speak for not more than 30 minutes.

## **Looking Back in a Spirit of Celebration**

As we look back, I'd to invoke George Fox who would sometimes exclaim, "And the power of the Lord was overall."

Perhaps these are not the words that some or many of us would use today. Although these words work well for me, for this talk I want to change the phrase. I want to say, "The power of love was overall."

It is a paradox, as I look back over the last seven and a half years, I can talk about the tempests and the potholes, but I am also bold to say that the power of love was over all. I have begun to think of the last seven years and a half years as falling roughly into three periods, each having dominant concern: an early period, a middle period, and a later period.

The early period was dominated by our renovation of Friends Center. This was a project we undertook in collaboration with our partners, the AFSC and CPMM. It took us two years and then some. When I took office Interim Meeting had not yet approved PYM's participation. It did so later that year when it approved Plan H. We began with projected budget of \$12.5 million and twice increased the budget to a total of \$15 million. We raised \$8 million and borrowed \$7 million. It was a sweet moment when we moved into our newly renovate space in June of 2009.

During this same period, other good things were happening.

At Interim Meeting we began the practice of inviting people to share stories of vitality and growth within our Yearly Meeting. In one sense, this may seem too small to mention here, but for me it is a big thing because it makes the statement that there are good things happening within our community that deserve attention and to be celebrated even if our membership numbers don't keep abreast of our enthusiasms and good works.

We began the practice of getting all Interim Meeting and Yearly Meeting materials up on the website, with the result that we now have a complete electronic archive of Yearly Meeting materials going back to the early 2000s, easily accessible to everyone.

The Greenleaf Fund was established.

We hosted, at the Arch Street Meeting House, a major conference: "Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace." This was a most successful, week-long gathering sponsored by PYM, the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church, USA. It had a major impact on many of us and I am still in the energy of it.

We launched PYM Today, our new Yearly Meeting magazine to take the place of PYM News.

And we began to deal with a challenging financial situation as we prepared the FY 2010 budget, planning for the downsizing of staff.

The middle period came to be dominated by our financial crisis.

At summer sessions in 2010 and 2011 our treasurer reported substantial General Fund deficits and in the fall of 2011 Financial Stewardship began to grapple with the fact that we that we had a crisis on our hands. By June of 2012, after an extraordinary amount of hard work on the part of many people, plans were in place to resolve the financial crisis and a month later, a balanced and sustainable three year budget was presented to the Yearly Meeting and approved. Unhappily, over a period of two years, it was necessary to reduce our staff to its present level of 20 FTE's.

During this same period, other things were happening:

- The William Penn Lecture was revived.
- The administration of the Friends Education Fund was moved to Friends Council on Education.
- The establishment of the Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust was approved.
- We launched the first edition of PYM Today Online.
- I had the opportunity to attend the 6<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Friends in Kenya with my partner and wife, Nancy van Arkel, also an appointed PYM delegate.
- The first Thread Letter and first Thread Gathering were launched.

The later period of our recent history began to emerge after annual sessions in 2012, two years ago, and continues to this day. For me it is characterized by a process of finding a "new normal" and gestating a long range plan.

In the summer of 2012, we were just emerging from a financial crisis, but in my report to the Yearly Meeting a year later, I was able to list seventeen positive events that had occurred during the course of the year and I observed, quoting now, "a persistent feeling of unsettledness and stress which had been a hovering cloud for several years had dissipated."

At the end of my 2013 report last year, I suggested that we were in the process of finding our way to a new normal, finding a new equilibrium with a smaller staff and with fewer resources, but with a strong sense that we are now more rightly sized and that we could sustain ourselves at our present levels.

Other things are worthy of mention:

- Our new website was launched and has been very favorably received.
- A break-through occurred in resolving a log jam with respect to operations at the Burlington Meeting House and Conference Center.
- I was able to attend Britain Yearly Meeting sessions in May of 2013.
- We have a brand new PYM Directory, some six months in the making.
- And Christie Duncan-Tessmer was chosen to be PYM's new General Secretary.

In summary, we've done a lot over this period of time.

Our staff is stronger than it has ever been. Our programs are in good shape. I am grateful that the Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust is up and running and that the Friends who are managing the Burlington Meeting House and Conference Center are operating successfully. We seem now to have turned our financial situation around. For the last two fiscal years we have generated a modest surplus and we anticipate a modest surplus again this year. A surplus is healthy. It will allow us to restore some of our reserves and give us some cushion against future exigencies.

And the power of love was over all.

## **Challenges**

I now want to move into the second part of my talk. We have much to celebrate, but we also face challenges and my report would not be complete or balanced without including them as well.

These are the sobering facts which underlie the challenges ahead of us:

- Both our stated membership and our attendance at meetings for worship has declined.
- Our financial support from monthly meeting covenant contributions is down as is the annual fund.

I'd like to take a minute to deal with each of these data points.

## **Membership**

When talking about membership, I will be using adult membership numbers and the most current numbers are for the year ending December 31, 2013.

Since 1955, the year when the Hicksite and Orthodox yearly meetings reunited there has been a substantial decline in our membership, but that decline, although it still persists, has now substantially leveled off.

In 1955 we had 13,100 adult members. Today, we now have 9400, a decline of 3,700 or 28%.

Over the last 15 years, however, since 1998, when we last reorganized, we have lost only 100 adult members or 1.1%. The bad news is that there has been a decline. The good news is that in the most recent 15 years, that rate of decline has substantially flattened out.

## **Attendance at Meeting for Worship**

Over the last nine years our Meeting Enrichment Services Working Group has done a once-every-three-years survey of those attending a meetinghouse on a Sunday in April, whether for worship, for business, religious education or otherwise. The last survey was done in 2013. The idea is that these numbers may give us a better idea of our health than our membership numbers.

In the nine year period, 2004 to 2013, there was 10% decline in adult attendance. The decline was a total of 300, from 3,000 in 2004 down to 2,700 in 2013. There was an even greater decline in the number of young people attending over the same period of time, 21%.

Another piece of information uncovered by the Meeting Enrichment Services surveys is that over the same 9 year period, ending 2013, 35 meetings had an increase in attendance, while 63 meetings had a decrease. For 7 meetings attendance remained constant.

Further, the surveys show that our smaller meetings are getting smaller. Thirty percent of our meetings now have 10 or fewer attenders; nine years ago it was just 18%.

## **The Covenant and the Annual Fund**

Our monthly meeting covenant income is down. For the last three years it has been budgeted at \$1.25 million. Last year we came in under budget by \$17,000 and this year we expect to be under budget by \$40,000. This year our Annual Fund income is also down. We have taken in \$30,000 less than we did last year.

We're okay for now, Friends. The stock market is up, we've been able to save on our expenses and we've taken in small amounts of unexpected income. We have had modest surpluses for the last two years and we expect a modest surplus this year. We have been able to begin restoring our reserves. I am not sounding a short term alarm. But it is a longer term alarm. The mathematics is very simple. Normal inflationary pressures will cause our expenses to rise between 2% to 3%, and if our revenues do not rise by a commensurate amount, or if they decline as they have been doing, in the end, we will not be able sustain our current level of operations.

Sometimes I can feel gloomy about the numbers. But then I remind myself, "the power of love is over all," and I let go. It is not our calling to indulge gloominess. Our job is to be faithful to the best that is in us and then to let go.

When I teach Friends decision-making, I talk about what makes for good participation on the part of individuals in the meeting. In a meeting for business, or in any Quaker context, our job is to speak and then to release; speak and let go. In Quaker practice, unlike in other decision-making models, the releasing is as important as the speaking. It is when we release that we open the space for Spirit to move among us, either in the silence or in the contributions of others. Quaker decision-making will not work if there is no releasing.

It is the same with our life together as Quakers. Our job is to be faithful to the best that we can do, even when things seem gloomy, and then to release the outcomes to God and Spirit. We have no idea what God has in store for his people called Quakers. It may be that our time as Quakers in our present form will run out. It may be that our membership and our financial capabilities will continue to slowly erode, dwindling over time, and eventually come to an end. It may be, however, that there will arise among us someone, or many, whose light shines so brightly, whose groundedness in spirit is so deep, and whose charisma is so compelling that we will experience a reawakening and by God's grace find new ways to think about our faith and practice, discovering new ways to serve God and humankind. It may be that there will be a less dramatic turnaround and we will find ourselves in new circumstances almost without knowing how it happened.

We don't know what will come. Our job is to be faithful to what we know and to the best that we can do; our job is to release all of our labors to God and to Spirit and to Love, and then our job is to welcome life on its own terms, whatever it brings us. It is in this place that we will know peace.

And the power of love is over all.

Dear Friends, I have come to the end of my talk.

I have wanted not only to celebrate some of the seven and a half years we've traveled together, but also to call attention to some things that I think should cause us concern.

Again, I say thank you for the opportunity I have had to participate in this work. This is work that many have accomplished but about which I have the privilege to speak.

I have been grateful for the leadership and support of the two clerks under whom I have served: Thomas Swain and Jada Jackson, each of them has given huge amounts of time in service to our Yearly Meeting and to each of whom we owe a debt of thanks.

I am grateful for the PYM staff with whom I've had the opportunity to work and for the many ways they support the work and vitality of our yearly meeting.

The title of the Long Range Plan which we will consider tomorrow is "Re-kindling Our Fire. I'd like to close with the vision which is a part of that Plan:

"We envision a vital and growing Philadelphia Yearly Meeting- a faith community committed to deepening spiritually, welcoming newcomers, building supportive and inclusive community, and providing loving service and faithful witness to the world."

I unite with this vision and it is my hope is that we will all be able to unite with it.

I want to be part of re-kindling our fire.

I'm saying "Yes, let's go there together."

And the power of love is over all.

Arthur M. Larrabee  
General Secretary