

332nd Annual Sessions
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Held at Arch Street Meeting House
Friday, July 27, 2012 Afternoon Session

The 332nd Annual Sessions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends reconvened Friday afternoon, July 27, 2012 at about 1:34 at the Arch Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The announced theme of our 2012 Sessions is “Living the Holy Experiment.”

1. The Clerk, Thomas Swain (Middletown MM Concord Quarter), greeted us and gave a brief rundown of our agenda for the afternoon.
2. Visitors from other Yearly Meetings included Barry Crossno of South Central Yearly Meeting, General Secretary of Friends General Conference (FGC) and Gabriel Ehri, North Pacific Yearly Meeting, currently attending Chestnut Hill MM.
3. Clerk laid before us the following query for our consideration: “How does God call us to minister in the world? What are the challenges?”

A Friend asked us to consider the *joys* of ministry in truth and love. Another Friend suggested there are unpredictable ways to minister, and she told us of the healing she experienced. We were urged by another Friend to search for the truth and speak it in love to each other. Telling us about a crisis in her family, a Friend told us that gladness and joy need to be found in the face of challenges in the world especially as we consider our great privilege. A Friend quoted Isaac Penington to remind us that we can work together to provide alternatives to the oppression and difficulties in the world around us with love and joy and strength. And with this, the Clerk invited us to take up the business of Meeting.

4. In our morning session we considered a minute from the PYM Sessions Working Group which addressed charging fees for attendance at PYM Sessions. Clerk had asked a small ad hoc committee of Arthur Larrabee, Jackie Bowers, and Gretchen Castle to prepare a new minute on this subject to reflect considerations from the morning.

In our discernment, there was a spirit of affirmation that Annual Sessions are a core purpose of our Yearly Meeting. In this light, we want to do all we can to make our Sessions as accessible and free of barriers as possible. We want to come, and to invite others to come with us, without concern for cost. We ask that General Services Standing Committees, Financial Stewardship and PYM Sessions Working Group come under the weight of this concern as they prepare future budgets.

We approved this minute. A Friend urged us to consider our carbon footprint when planning for Sessions. And another felt heartened to realize that, as we look to spend money for Annual Sessions, Friends are recognizing that the money must be taken from something else.

5. Ron Ploeg (Willistown MM), Treasurer, and Andrew Anderson (MM Friends of Philadelphia), clerk of Financial Stewardship Committee came forward to present and

discuss our budget.

Ron gave us an overview of the difficulty over the past year to resolve great financial challenges and to come up with a sustainable budget. He showed us the balance sheet as of May 31, 2012, and pointed out the fact that most of the money showing on the books is in restricted funds and is mostly unavailable for General Fund usage. When he showed us a statement of income and expense for FY 2012, he was able to tell us that we went from a projected loss of \$225,000 to a positive figure of \$35,000 in five months. Ron then reviewed activities that were accomplished to move toward financial wellness. These included creation of clear boundaries between unrestricted and restricted funds, establishment of approval procedures for moving money between reserve accounts and general fund and creation of an operating reserve to handle cash flow issues. Still in progress are creation and passage of a sustainable budget, inclusion of a contingency reserve to protect against income insecurity, the monitoring of actual financial performance throughout the year to make adjustments as needed, the improvement of financial reporting, and engagement in long range planning.

Clerk said the Financial Stewardship Committee has been extremely active—meeting at least twice a month, sometimes more—to create a budget. Andrew then gave great appreciation to Lola George, Jack Mahon, Jackie Bowers, the Clerk, and Arthur Larrabee. He also thanked all those here who have come through with our contributions to make this a positive year. Andrew told us that we are a spiritual people having a financial experience, not a financial people having a spiritual experience, and we reflect many theologies but just one budget. He then told us about some of the processes involved with creation of the budget. The numbers used have been as accurate as possible. To find the budget number for this year, the committee used the concept of a three-year projection. Recognizing we needed to make hard choices, the committee decided to make this year the one in which the pain is experienced rather than stretching it over several years. This meant we went from 40 full time employee equivalents 2 years ago to 19 now. Andrew led us in a moment of recognizing those real people who served us with their best and have had to be let go. There is also a need to remove from the PYM budget the portion devoted to the Burlington Meeting House. We are now in a transition year to find a better way to use Burlington.

Clerk recognized in meeting great appreciation for the work the Financial Stewardship Committee has done.

In response to a question about the use of Burlington for Young Friends, Linell McCurry said it is not being used as a rental facility at this time because there are too many expenses, including staff. During this transition year, the base cost of the building will be determined. A Friend explained that the committee to consider the future of Burlington is working to find a positive way forward. A Young Friend told us that many in her age group hope to again be able to meet there. Another Friend gave us a list of the many Quaker groups who have used the Conference Center. And another drew our attention to the Burlington Meeting House and Conference Center endowment that is close to \$900,000. A Friend who is a member of the Burlington Worship Group said the group would continue to meet, whether or not they have the meeting house available to them.

A Friend asked about the Quarterly Meeting staff. Arthur Larrabee explained that the

Financial Stewardship Committee decided the YM could no longer afford this portion of the budget.

A Friend urged us, and the Long Range Planning Committee, to develop a plan that considers some of the bigger questions. Andrew explained that creation of this budget, reducing expenses to “get the ship off the rocks,” used God’s reset button. It is now up to us to decide where to sail. Another Friend suggested that we might find many ways to grow.

Clerk urged us to consider that this budget is extremely realistic, sustainable, and a good basis for the future. **He then heard that meeting approved the budget.**

6. The young children joined us and we heard from Ben Camp and the three groups of young children. The youngest group made more gifts similar to those used as communication in both directions between William Penn and the Indians. The middle group continued on their project of making a city out of cardboard. And the oldest group traveled back in time to 1750. Tomorrow the group will go to Pennsbury Manor and will not join us after business meeting.

7. These minutes were read and approved.

8. We adjourned, intending to meet at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, July 28, 2012.

Jim Herr, Recording Clerk

Jane Keller, Assistant Recording Clerk