

332th Annual Sessions  
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Held at Arch Street Meeting House  
Saturday, July 28, 2012 Morning Session

The 332<sup>nd</sup> Annual Sessions of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends reconvened Saturday morning, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Arch Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The announced theme of our 2012 Sessions is “Living the Holy Experiment.”

1. A little past the appointed hour of 10:00 a.m. the Clerk rose and asked those at the Clerk’s Table to introduce themselves: Clerk Thomas Swain (Middletown MM, Concord Quarter); Alternate Clerks Steve Olshevski (Radnor MM) and Sallie Jones (Birmingham MM); Rising Clerk Jada Jackson (Trenton MM and Burlington Worship Group); Recording Clerks David Rose (Lehigh Valley MM) and Jane Keller (Pennsdale MM); and General Secretary Arthur Larrabee (Central Philadelphia MM).

2. Friends from other Yearly Meetings re-introduced themselves with the additions of Jay Marshall (New Castle MM, Indiana YM) and Scilla Wahrhafting (Pittsburg MM, Erie YM). The Clerk read a Traveling Minute for Scilla from Pittsburg MM. Endorsing her Minute was approved.

3. Sallie Jones read the Epistle from Pacific YM that is attached. PYM Friends resonated with many of the conflicts and tensions reported by Pacific YM.

4. Prior to settling into worship, the Clerk reviewed the agenda items to be discussed. He commented on the trust that he felt yesterday when trying to find clarity with an issue that the Session was dealing with and yet felt a fear of that trust. He asked the body to question whether they might also have a fear that arises when we experience the God in us. He then restated the query that has opened each session: “How Does God Call Us to Minister in the World? What are the Challenges?” Friends then settled into a period of worship with many messages that responded to the statement made by Clerk.

5. Interim Meeting (Report) The Clerk introduced the topic with some background regarding the establishment of the Elders. Allison Anderson (Central Philadelphia MM) read the report that is attached with some clarification on their role provided by Dana Houghton (Mullica Hill MM). She repeated the observation from yesterday that we are a spiritual body which has had a financial experience and reviewed the issues that have been addressed at Interim Meeting and the outcomes, both Spiritual and Financial, of having come through this experience. Much more Trust is present, both experienced at Interim Meeting and evident in the way we have addressed issues at these Sessions.

6. The Clerk said that this is the time for us in Session to consider topics that fall under the area of “Renewing”. The General Secretary has been under the weight of creating a presentation on “What We Hold in Common”. Arthur Larrabee read his presentation which is attached. He spoke of the difficulty that Friends have had in defining themselves in other than terms of what we are not and offered nine separate statements

of beliefs that he presented to the body for response and discernment. Following the presentation, the Clerk asked the body to consider the following questions: How might this be helpful to us? Should it be referred to a Standing Committee for further work and discernment? Can we say as a body how close these statements come to our own understanding? Numerous expressions of gratitude were given to Arthur for having written this as part of the following responses:

- *One other way forward if the body is so moved, can accept it with celebration.*
- *It would be helpful if it were available for discussion by Monthly Meetings.*
- *We are asked how we minister in the world, not to the world. Grateful to have words to describe what we feel so deeply.*
- *Appreciation expressed to Arthur for presenting to us clearly a personally held belief. On how it will help us: As a member of Outreach, concerned that it help us keep people out. This Friend did not feel that we should approve it as a body.*
- *Document has proven helpful in an outreach event where volunteers are asked often what Friends Believe.*
- *If we have nothing to say, we are lost. If all you can say is the Inner Light, you are not saying much.*
- *We need to speak our Truth so that others can recognize it.*
- *Posing a question about Quaker's beliefs limits the answers to those that have to do with belief. Others questions about belief come from an experience where that is what is most important.*
- *Great beginning stage. We need to limit this statement to Philadelphia Quakers. Gender neutral language is important. God as a term has cultural connotations of masculinity.*
- *Inner conflict is sometimes experienced, which is likely shared with other Friends. What we believe is a large part of the discernment of becoming a Friend. This has been asked when living abroad about what do Quakers believe and one Friend has formulated a response that is very similar to the ones presented. While such statements from the group can be helpful, another Friend has benefited from needing to find her own words.*
- *What brings us together is more than just a creed or belief.*

The Clerk acknowledged that he was interrupting a discussion that needs to be continuing. It will be continued in the afternoon session, and more immediately, over lunch.

7. Following Announcements, the Clerk adjourned the Session at 12:10 p.m., intending to reconvene at 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

David Rose,  
Recording Clerk