

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

The 332nd Annual Sessions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends reconvened Saturday afternoon, July 28, 2012 at about 1:35 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 expressed appreciation for our ability to follow directions. There was joy and laughter. And the Clerk laid before us the query for our consideration: "How does God call us to minister in the world? What are the challenges?"

In response to a Friend who asked us if there is anything for which we would go to jail, a Friend responded that she would go to jail for the belief that there is that of God in every person. Another Friend urged us to rely on our individual experience of God within and let it shine. A Friend said since she retired and asked God for direction, she has felt constantly guided, though at times she has felt the rug pulled out from under her when she has chosen her own direction. Another Friend said we are called to minister in the world with the added dimension of our Quaker ancestors and generations in the future. Several Friends spoke to the statement of Quaker belief from the morning, including one who said she prays for that of God in others, another who said this may be part of the *Faith and Practice* revision, and one who said the statement seemed to come as a leading from Arthur Larrabee. A Friend then urged us to smell the fragrance of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Clerk asked us whether we needed to continue to consider the statement from this morning. A Friend said it is important to make it clear that this is not a theological or creedal statement. Another Friend said she cannot forget the large number of members of PYM who are not here and it seems unreasonable to send this document out as the beliefs of "Philadelphia Friends." Another said it might be better to speak of experience rather than belief. A Friend expressed hope that this document would stimulate everyone in YM over the next year to explore and recognize what we have in common and in difference, and to not use the document as an alternative to doing the daily work of finding our relationship to God within.

A Friend stood without being recognized. Jada Jackson urged us to hold him and each other in the light and truth.

Clerk proposed a minute to pass this statement of belief on to the Worship and Care Standing Committee. In response to a Friend who is concerned that this cannot be used without consideration of members not here, Clerk said he is not asking us to accept this document, but to send it to a committee for further seasoning. A Friend urged us to recognize that we are all ministers. Another Friend suggested that this not be released at this time, but be seasoned through Central Philadelphia MM and Philadelphia Quarter. Another Friend expressed concern that this seems to be on a path toward

approval. As clerk of Worship and Care Standing Committee, Ben Lloyd said the Committee may or may not consider this document, but it is in the world now for anyone and everyone to consider. His sense was that this needs to rest. Clerk agreed and expressed gratitude to Arthur for his work.

2. We settled into worship from which Tom Hardy (Green Street MM), clerk of the Long Range Planning Group, referred us to the Group's report distributed earlier and to its website. In order to do the work of planning, the group began with the question "Who is God calling us to be in the 21st Century?" Tom presented a diagram, an incomplete triangle with "faith," "practice," and "structure" at the corners. All the pieces work together, sometimes well, sometimes not so well. At times PYM is perceived as a faith community, at other times as an organizational structure. The Group is determined to consider both parts. Melanie Douty Snipes asked us "what do you need as an individual to support the practice of your faith?" We broke into small groups to discuss our replies. Those who were able to do so, texted their answers. At the end of about 10 minutes, Tom said this is just a beginning. Many more responses are requested on the PYM/Long Range Planning website or to PYMLRPG@gmail.com. Tom said Long Range Planning is not about changing the names of committees, it is a request for a prophetic voice from within our community to be heard. The question is "how bold can we be?" And with this we settled into a time of worship sharing. A Friend reminded us that prophets are not appreciated, but there is a power that comes to us, when we have given up hope and feel "all shut up," that speaks to us in love. Another Friend expressed great appreciation for the group's work and the fact that the diagram is similar to a musical triangle, which makes a beautiful tone because it is not complete. A Friend said the main thing that leapt out to him from the query was the need for community. Another urged us not to take ourselves too seriously—it is not about us, or even the Religious Society of Friends, but about trusting the deep, bottomless Spirit and trusting, in utter humility, that we can see God.

The clerk expressed gratitude for the work of the Long Range Planning Group.

3. These minutes were read and approved.

4. We adjourned, intending to meet at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, July 29, 2012.

Jim Herr, Recording Clerk

Jane Keller, Assistant Recording Clerk