

332th Annual Sessions
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Held at Arch Street Meeting House
Thursday July 26, 2012 Afternoon Session

The 332nd Annual Sessions of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends reconvened Thursday afternoon, July 26th, 2012 at the Arch Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The announced theme of our 2012 Sessions is “Living the Holy Experiment”

1. At the appointed hour of 1:30 Friends gathered and those on the Clerk’s Table introduced themselves: Clerk Thomas Swain of Middletown Monthly Meeting (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 Arthur Larrabee (Central Philadelphia MM), General Secretary.
2. The Clerk announced the proposed agenda for this afternoon Session. There were no new visitors from other Yearly Meetings.
3. The Clerk then called us into a period of worship with the question presented before us, “How Does God Call Us to Minister in the World? What are the Challenges?” Messages responded to the challenges posed by distractions and peer pressure. We were encouraged to gather as a body and first say “yes” and also reminded that if we speak truth with love some part must die. How do we want others to see us?
4. Friends World Committee for Consultation’s Sixth World Conference of Friends Report (the first in 21 years). The Clerk reported on his own personal experiences in talking with friends from around the world who were invigorated by their attendance. George Ruben (Medford MM) introduced the Friends who were appointed by Yearly Meeting to represent us at the FWCC Annual Gathering this year in Kenya. We from PYM are only a small part of those assembled with over 100 yearly meetings represented and 900 attendees. Libby Counselman (Princeton MM) and Vanessa Julye (Central Philadelphia MM) gave a joint account of their experiences in Kenya accompanied by a video presentation. The experience was filled with fellowship, workshops, cultural exchanges and craft sales along with some high teas and flying termites. It was not free from controversy regarding issues of human rights. Libby shared what she learned about herself, Friends’ practices and projects around the world, and the effect the encounter with the poverty in the Third World had on her. Vanessa spoke of the experience of reconnecting with Friends from prior visits to Kenya and the ability to make new friends. She had the opportunity to engage with an encounter with other Friends on the issue of Gay rights, an issue that was a source of difference among those attending. Jeff Keith (Central Philadelphia MM) spoke of the unity he experienced with other Friends on the issue of non-violence even though there remained large doctrinal differences. Brenda Beadenkopf (Concord MM) spoke of the large number, and the large influence that Kenya Quakers are in that country. The controversy regarding homosexuality and the posting of a minute in support was

explained with the background of it being declared a criminal offense in Kenya and violence against its churches. George closed with the observation that Friends around the world are confronting the question “How do we live God’s Kingdom in a Broken World”.

The Clerk asked Gretchen Castle to rise and expressed the blessing, love and support from the Yearly Meeting as she will start as General Secretary of FWCC.

5. Long Range Planning Working Group Report: Clerk LRPG Thomas Hardy (Green Street MM) introduced the group that was involved with the report to be presented. (report attached) “Who is God calling us to be in the 21st Century” was the overriding question which led to the other questions: How can we be more flexible in creating our response? What is the core that must be passed on? The inter-relation of Faith, Practice, and Structure was described and explained with the assistance of a graphic presentation. Prior attempts to deal with change that were felt necessary to PYM were described as being done without taking into account that all pieces need to work together. What we have constantly said that we want are four priorities, Spiritual Growth and Renewal, Caring for our Community, Witnessing our Faith, Making Ourselves Known. He closed with describing the work that will now be undertaken by the committee to continue to listen and start to respond with short-term structural changes in response to discernment questions. The Clerk closed this portion by charging the committee, on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, to keep the body informed of the progress of the work that they are doing.

6. General Secretary Report: The Clerk expressed appreciation for all the work that Arthur Larrabee has done during the past year on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. Arthur Larrabee read from his report (report attached). Appreciation was first expressed for all the work that the staff has done on these current Annual Session. His report was divided up into two sections, one backward looking, and the other forward looking. The eighteen names of those staff members who had, or were about to be, leaving employment with PYM due to downsizing, were read for all to recognize and to acknowledge the work they did, along with two who are working at reduced hours. The report summarized the work that the staff was engage in to deal with the financial aspect of downsizing and reduced income. He described this past year as personally being the most challenging time in his entire professional career and is glad to be on the other side of what has been a difficult process. In looking forward, we are off to a good start by exceeding our annual appeal and meeting our goal for Meeting Covenants. We will be dealing with a smaller staff with the equivalent of 19 full time staff persons who will need to find new ways of dealing with areas of common concern around the Yearly Meeting. He introduced the concept of describing these areas as common “threads” with the threads being knit together through focused “e-newsletters” and “thread gathering”. As General Secretary, he is looking forward to a year in which he will be able to focus less on crisis of financial issues and more on other issues, some of which he described as continuing competing claims. He closed with the recognition that he needs to continue his work with the help of “Divine Guidance”, as he also sees the work of the entire Yearly Meeting.

7. All Ages Meeting for Business: At this time the children entered and gave a report to the work, and play, that they had been engaged in. Activities include a discussion of the gift giving of William Penn, city planning, and some insights utilizing Lenape words with more to follow tomorrow. The Clerk summarized the "Adult" business as a report to the Children's Meeting.

8. With clarification offered, the minutes were approved.

9. After announcements the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.