

**Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Monthly Joint Council Meeting
Saturday, July 12, 2025
9:00 AM – 12:42 PM EDT**

In Attendance: Andrew Anderson, Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch (Clerk, Quaker Life Council), Emily Blanck (Recording Clerk), Kate Bregman, Terry Christensen, Susan Claggett, Terry Cooke, Chuck Devers, Sue Dietz, Christie Duncan-Tessmer (Staff, General Secretary), Jeanne Elberfeld (Clerk, Administrative Council), Cecilia Filauro (Staff, Executive Administrator), Robert Greene, Kruskal Hewitt, John Marquette, Bethann Morgan, Nikki Mosgrove (Presiding Clerk), Sally McQuail (Recording Clerk), Debbie Murray-Sheppard, Carter Nash, David Park (Staff, Chief Financial Officer), Kathryn Pettus, Nancy Robbins, Chloe Rosenthal, George Schaefer (Clerk, Nominating Council), Selden Smith (Rising Clerk), Serita Spadoni, Cathy Toner, Ashanta Washington (Staff, Director of Human Resources and Inclusion), Deb Wood, Tom Zemaitis (Treasurer), F. Salvador Orellana (Staff, Deputy General Secretary)

Visitors who attended for an agenda item: Jackie Bonomo (Climate Witness Stewards) James Hayes (Stone House Group), Margaret Huettner (Stone House Group), John Hayden (Climate Witness Stewards), Tara Rubinstein (Staff, Event and Sessions Coordinator)

Regrets: Jessy Eaby, Ron Inskeep, Neil Holzman, Meg Barney, Carleton Crispin, Michael Moulton

I. Worship & Welcome

George Schaefer opened the meeting in worship and welcomed everyone with joy.

II. Meeting for Learning

The Meeting for Learning focused on the Climate Benchmark Report. Salvador Orellana led a progress update on the Climate Benchmark project, conducted in collaboration with Stone House Group consultants James Hayes and Margaret Huettner. The report reflects PYM's efforts to understand and reduce its climate impact. During the presentation, James and Margaret explained the importance of having a Climate Action Plan and described the Stone House Group's process for assessing emissions using data on energy, water, waste, travel, food, and paper. PYM's net accumulated impact to date is 206 metric tons of emissions. As

data collection concludes, the consultants will soon provide recommendations. Some recommendations will include strategies addressing both short- and long-term goals. For example, they may suggest more sustainable travel options, such as choosing airlines that use sustainable aviation fuel. It was recommended that, when sharing this information with the broader PYM community, the presentation should contextualize the data.

III. Sessions Survey Responses

The Sessions Survey Sprint completed its work to get feedback from Friends on Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Sessions events. They have submitted their final report. Tara Rubinstein presented the results from the 157 survey responses. The survey invited respondents to imagine ways to make Sessions an exciting and meaningful event. Key findings highlighted the importance of opportunities for connection and commuting flexibility. Many appreciated the option to attend online through a hybrid format, though many also expressed interest in participating in person for at least part of the time. Respondents prioritized having Sessions offer a meaningful and relevant experience. In Meeting for Business, participants strongly desire time for significant corporate discernment and fewer reports. While responses about youth programs were limited, parents expressed enthusiasm about connecting with other Quaker families. Staff followed up with people who have not been attending Sessions. Some missed how Sessions used to be, while others had never attended and felt unconvinced about its value. The next planned step is to establish a second sprint to develop recommendations for the future of Sessions. Joint Council members emphasized the need to gather more input from the broader PYM community by sharing stories and fostering connections among Friends. Despite significant effort, Sessions are not yet clearly meaningful for enough people, and better communication is needed to reinvigorate interest.

The Joint Council approved the charge for the Sessions Strategic Planning Sprint and delegated its implementation to the Clerk's Group.

IV. Current Implementation Process of the Strategic Directions

Christie Duncan-Tessmer led a discussion of the fifth Strategic Direction - Functioning, the final installment on the Strategic Directions and to keep them at the top of our mind. "Functioning" focuses on simplifying governance and administration so that we can focus on God's work and sustaining our community. In addition to the great amount of work on this over the last decade,

there is still more work to be done toward the destinations: The first Destination is to be clear on Meeting and Council roles in PYM and the second is to orient all Friends appointed to PYM positions. We operate in Yearly Meeting with the support of governance groups to provide a container for community groups to bring our ministries to fruition. It was recommended that the councils consider visitations by their members to help promote greater understanding of how Yearly Meeting functions.

V. **General Secretary Report**

Christie Duncan-Tessmer shared a few highlights. She shared the progress on the “PYM Explained” booklet. She is working on her transition away from General Secretary, giving more duties to others, to make it smoother for the new General Secretary.

VI. **New Business**

A. **Fiscal Year 2026 Budget**

David Park and Tom Zematis recommended that Joint Council release the budget approved by the Finance Committee. David shared this budget with the Council. The CFO, Treasurer, staff, and Finance Committee collaborated to produce a budget reflecting a realistic estimate of PYM’s financial situation. The budget now separates Arch Street Meeting House Trust budget, in addition to budget for restricted funds, and unrestricted funds. For last year and the current year, actual results have resulted in a deficit of net income not captured in the budgets, due in part to macroeconomic changes and rising costs in areas such as salaries and insurance. This year’s budget has been developed using a process that we anticipate will result in a more reliable budget. The budget presented shows a deficit of approximately half a million dollars. However, reserves and unbudgeted sources of income are available to cover any shortfall, and the goal is to reduce the deficit over the year by increasing income and reducing costs. Plans to increase income include efforts to better align Monthly Meeting covenants with the Yearly Meeting budget and new development initiatives led by Joe Kirkenir.

Joint Council approves to release the budget to the Yearly Meeting for a decision.

B. Preview of the Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

Jean Marie Prestwidge Barch shared a preview of the Spiritual State of the Meeting report and noted that it reflects some of the lack of input that we saw in the Session's sprint. Half as many Monthly Meetings responded with reports as last year, and some gave brief reports. The council discussed the challenge of getting up-to-date information about Monthly Meeting contacts.

VII. Old Business

A. Congressional Letter & Lawsuit

Christie updated the Joint Councils on the Congressional letter and the Department of Homeland Security lawsuit.

B. Council Structure

Jean Elberfeld highlighted important parts of the Governance Advisory Committee. She amplified that the report noted there was support for the experiment about meeting efficiency, and an eye toward making it permanent. Some Friends who did not speak at the last meeting provided a more critical response to the joint experiment. This information will also be shared at Sessions, and in the early fall, the council will discuss next steps at the September retreat.

VIII. *Joint Council approved the minutes.*

IX. Ongoing Business

A. Nominating Council

Nominating Council has delved deeply to find new appointments and is continuing its work. The Councils express gratitude for the work of Ron Inskeep, Sue Dietz, Neil Holzman, and Robert Greene.

B. Sessions

i. Report from the Councils to the body

Jean Marie has asked for recommendations on how to present our report and what should be included in the report. They may end up singing if we don't have other suggestions. A Friend suggested that they present the report as a role-play exercise. Recommendations on content include adding the Council experiments, Council orientation, what we learned from the

process of the lobbying policy, emphasizing the spiritual state of the meeting, the rapid response to the lawsuit, and the follow-up actions, and discernment on the hybrid format. The report should connect discernment to the meaningfulness of the work as a throughline. The presentation should reflect a “TADA!: Target audience discernment approach,” by focusing on “What is the goal?” Friends suggested inviting everyone in through the report. Friends discussed the nature of meaning, discernment, and inclusion of the body.

ii. Register

Jean Marie encouraged everyone in the Joint Council to register for Annual Sessions and to inspire others to do so. As Joint Council members it is important to be there to listen.

C. Committees

Joint Council accepts several committee releases and recognizes their gifts and thanks them “with our whole heart.”

D. Sprints

i. Meetings' role in PYM Governance

Selden Smith and Debbie Murray Shepard are co-clerking the Sprint. They are in the process of finding individuals to join the Sprint.

ii. Covenant Direction

The finance committee is forming a sprint to strengthen communication to meetings regarding financial covenants to PYM.

X. News From Around the Yearly Meeting

Third Haven shared the good news that they have begun work to make their meeting ADA compliant and upgrade their meetinghouse. A Friend shared gratitude for the second “Safe Spaces” Zoom meeting on July 9. Medford Meeting’s child programs have increased from 1 to 12 children recently. The President of Cheyney will give an opening welcome at Annual Sessions.

XI. Recap Public Communication

The Joint Council decided that PYM News should share the Climate Benchmark and the sessions survey as a way to convince people to come to Annual Sessions.

The communication should be framed with a sense of our community and how to be faithful to do our spiritual work together in this time.

XII. Approve Minutes

Joint Council approved the minutes with gratitude.

XIII. Closing Worship

George Schaefer closed the meeting in worship at 12:42.