

**Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Monthly Joint Council Meeting
Saturday, October 11, 2025
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM EDT**

Attending: Andrew Anderson, Carol Alpern, Jean-Marie Barch (Clerk, Quaker Life Council), Emily Blanck (Recording Clerk), Kate Bregman, Susan Claggett, Terry Cooke, Burt Dallas, Chuck Devers, Jeanne Elberfeld (Clerk, Administrative Council), Lisa Stewart Garrison, Bryn Hammarstrom, Kruskal Hewitt, John Marquette, Nikki Mosgrove (Presiding Clerk), Michael Moulton, Debbie Murray-Sheppard, Carter Nash, Kathryn Pettus, George Schaefer (Clerk, Nominating Council), Selden Smith (Rising Clerk), Serita Spadoni, Christie Duncan-Tessmer (Staff, General Secretary), Cecilia Filauro (Staff, Executive Administrator), F. Salvador Orellana (Staff, Deputy General Secretary), David Park (Staff, Chief Financial Officer), Sally McQuail (Recording Clerk), Anthony Stover (Elder), Ashanta Washington (Staff, Director of Human Resources & Inclusion), and Deb Wood

Visitors who attended for an agenda item: Lisa Ogletree (Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust), David Unkovic (Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust)

Regrets: Meg Barney, Cathy Toner, Tom Zemaitis, Terry Christensen, Carleton Crispin, Jessy Eaby, Robert Greene, Bethann Morgan, Chloe Rosenthal

I. Worship

Jeanne Elberfeld opened worship with a reading from the Bible (Luke 10:38-42) to remind us to bring both our Mary and Martha to our business.

II. Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust Appointments

The Council approves Emily Blanck for appointment to the Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust and the re-appointment of 6 existing members.

III. Consent Agenda

The Council receives and approves the consent agenda. Bryn Hammarstrom was appointed by the Upper Susquehanna Quarterly Meeting for Nominating. Bethann Morgan, Sue Dietz, and Jerry Taylor were appointed to the Program Support Committee. Lisa Garrison was appointed to the Granting Committee; Karen-Lee Brofee was appointed to the Personnel Committee, Burt Dallas to the Property Advisory Committee,

and Frank Barch as Clerk of the Governance Advisory Committee. We received committee reports from the Program Support Committee, Finance Committee, Granting Committee, and Personnel Committee.

We reviewed the procedures for the new practice of the Consent Agenda.

IV. **General Secretary Report**

Christie Duncan-Tessmer gave her final report as General Secretary. She is excited and confident about Chris Mohr following her as General Secretary. As the first General Secretary transition in this new governance structure, Christie provided reflection and guidance to the Councils about the highlights and lowlights in the relationship between Councils and the General Secretary during her tenure. She currently feels well supported in the governance and hopes that the new General Secretary will continue to get support. She described her spiritual development using a metaphor that her sense of the spirit has moved from the image of a flowing river toward being a sculptor grinding away at the stone. She also reminded the Councils to sustain the strategic directions, and to hold them as a space of continuing revelation for us and our community. She reminded us that the Quaker Life envelope is a financial tool for councils to support their work.

V. **LGBTQIA+ Public Statement**

Sprint members revised the approved statement to offer a variation that can be sent to public places. *The Council approves the new press release and the sprint's plan to distribute it.* The Presiding Clerk and General Secretary will develop a cover letter to accompany the press release. One friend highlighted the long, hard work that some individuals offered to help this happen. Another friend noted the challenges for trans children and how supportive institutions are losing funding. A friend expressed concern that we be mindful that we are clear in this communication. This fits into our belonging strategic direction. A friend reminded us that we could also keep in mind our testimonies and spiritual grounding, "Who we are and whose we are."

VI. **Guidance on Advocacy and Lobbying**

Due to a change in IRS practice that allows religious groups to speak to political matters, a small ad hoc group approved at Sessions made changes to the guidance. *The Council approves the changes that the group made to the guidance.* Nikki Mosgrove and Jeanne Elberfeld met with representatives from PYM Collaboratives, who were invited (voluntary participation) to beta-test the Guidance on Advocacy and Lobbying since April 2025. There were misunderstandings and concerns among these groups, although they liked the guidance. It is important for Council members to attend the next listening

meeting on Monday, October 20, at 7:00 pm. There is still no unity. One friend said that we should clarify the difference between policy and practice. Even without full unity, it can be a guide for Friends. One friend reminded us that it is important to be listening with an open heart. Another reminded us that age is an issue. It may be a good time to pause to allow Friends to handle the complications of the outside world and the importance of the elections. Friends praised Jeanne's leadership, listening, and patience, and reminded us how long it takes us to come to a clear understanding as a community and requires deep listening. One friend asked us to consider adding time to the Continuing Sessions agenda on how we can be faithful friends in this time that we are living. Nonviolent peace is our response, and to use that to move from fear to courage. The clerks will send an email update after they meet to reflect what they decide.

VII. Annual Sessions Location and Theme

Nikki Mosgrove presented the Sessions Committee recommendation: In the upcoming year, we will continue with the same theme and return to Cheyney University. Kate Bregman, John Marquette, Selden Smith, and Jeanne Elberfeld volunteered to help plan Sessions.

VIII. Consideration of Initiatives to Create Safe Space: Breakout

There was a small group breakout with a query: Since Spring Continuing and Annual Sessions' focus on safe spaces, how is the idea of creating safe spaces at your Monthly Meeting being received and acted upon? After the break, the small groups reported out.

IX. *The minutes were read and approved.*

X. Consideration of Initiatives to Create Safe Space: Report Back

One group reported that there have been a variety of approaches, including some that involve programming and developing policies. They asked if there should be a policy for Annual and Continuing sessions. Meetings seem to be getting more people coming to their meeting with more expansive gender identities, and to support this, they will spread the word that they are safe spaces. Another group thought they were doing well in creating a safe space. They questioned the way that the meetings were 'receiving' the PYM focus. Another group focused on the physical and mental safety of attendees. The last group said that their meetings were addressing the concerns well, and emphasized the importance of belonging. We want to be mindful of polarization and engagement. Sessions should be a safe space for all. Who are we welcoming? When we reflected on the Strategic Directions, creating safe space fit into all of the directions: Belonging, Connecting, Functioning, Communicating, and Witnessing.

XI. General Secretary Transition

Nikki Mosgrove reported that Chris Mohr was approved at a Called Meeting as the next General Secretary. He will begin his term at Fall Continuing Sessions on November 8, 2025. When he has taken his position, he will have a meet and greet with the Councils. There was appreciation for Christie's work in this role.

XII. PYM Operations Carbon Footprint

Salvador Orellana shared about the progress of the Stone House Group report on the carbon footprint of PYM. They have offered a very general recommendation, so Salvador has requested more specific recommendations that will be more helpful in guiding PYM's work on this matter. The new report will be ready at Continuing Sessions and will be sent to the Council beforehand by email. This reflects our Witnessing, Communicating, Connecting, and Functioning directions. This specifically fits the destination of setting benchmarks in the Witness strategic direction.

XIII. Committees

A. Governance Advisory Committee

The Governance Advisory Committee has recommended a revision of its Charge.
The Council approves the new charge.

B. Finance Committee Distribution Rate

The council approved a 2025 distribution rate of 4%. It is, and has been, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's longstanding policy to seek a total return for the investment assets held by it and entrusted to it, whether the return is to be derived from capital appreciation, earnings, or distributions with respect to the capital or both. PYM has elected to, and intends to continue to be, governed by Section 5548(c) of the Pennsylvania Nonprofit Corporation Law in the determination of "income" from such assets.

XIV. Sprints

A. Covenant Sprint

David Park reported that the Covenant Sprint has met and has a clerk. They learned about the history of PYM covenants and about other approaches. The next step is for them to go to find Friends to input about Covenants. They will plan the way to implement it. One friend noted that some meetings are handling their rise in budgets from inflation by taking funds from their covenant.

B. Monthly & Quarterly Meeting Governance Sprint

Selden Smith shared a report from the sprint. After two meetings, the sprint is gelling, establishing that there are obstacles to Yearly Meeting carrying out its role. Everyone must be a part of the meeting and its excitement. They had grief that there was so much disconnect between Monthly Meetings and PYM. This sprint needs to hold close that it is important to build connections. They noted that some of the Yearly Meeting is hierarchical and above the Monthly and Quarterly meetings, and some feel that there is a lack of interaction despite an abundance of tools. The Property Advisory Committee has begun to gather, and would like to be openly available to the Monthly Meetings at Continuing Sessions. They would like to be a listening organ, as a way to connect with the Monthly Meetings. One friend said that we may want to consider changing our name. The presiding clerk reminded us that the agenda recommendations should come to her and that the agenda for Continuing Sessions is largely decided at this point.

XV. Property Advisory Committee

Council approved Terry Cooke as clerk of the Property Advisory Committee.

XVI. News from around the YM

- A. On October 4, Third Haven held a Carriage Shed sale and raised more than \$6000 and shared it with one global and one local organization.
- B. Another friend suggested that we grant small meetings funds to engage them in the life of the yearly meeting and help them grow. And that in giving that to them, it would connect us.
- C. State College Meeting will celebrate its centennial in two weeks.
- D. Central Philadelphia has a working group to mourn the children who were lost to Quaker Indigenous Schools. They had t-shirts bought from an Indigenous person and had a sale. They will donate profits to an Indigenous organization.
- E. Next weekend, Salem will have its 350th celebration, and Mount Holly will soon celebrate its 250th year.
- F. Elizabethtown College has appointed Jeanne Elberfeld as a Peace fellow to talk to the school. She will speak on October 28.
- G. Abington Meeting had a great community celebration for World Quaker Day.

XVII. Recap Public Communication

- A. What shall we put in our newsletter? We will highlight the press release on PYM support for the LGBTQIA+ community and its distribution to the public. And we

are encouraged to consider writing an article about the spirit of our meeting.
Andrew and Jeanne will write an article together to reflect that.

XVIII. Minutes were read and approved.