

## **Philadelphia Yearly Meeting**

**329<sup>th</sup> Annual Session**

**July 29<sup>th</sup> –August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

**DeSales University**

**Friday Morning, July 31, 2009**

The Sixth-day morning session of the 329th Annual Sessions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 7th Month 31, 2009, reconvened at DeSales University, Center Valley, PA.

After our morning worship and a brief break, **the Meeting assembled at the appointed hour** and settled back into open worship.

**Clerks Table recognized:** The Clerk, Thomas Swain (Middletown Monthly Meeting, Concord Quarterly Meeting), urged us to realize the strength of the spirit and to not fear our urgings to speak. He introduced Alternate Clerks Patricia McBee (Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting) and Dana Kester-McCabe (Wicomico River Monthly Meeting), and Recording Clerks Jim Herr (Lancaster Monthly Meeting) and David Rose (Lehigh Valley Monthly Meeting). The Clerk told us the General Secretary, Arthur Larrabee (Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting), would be joining the clerk's table later in the morning. Our speech to text was provided by Florita Hobaugh.

**Visitors** included Elizabeth Gates, a member of Lancaster Monthly Meeting, representing the world office of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), and Brenda Beadenkopf, who introduced herself as a dual member of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and Indiana Yearly Meeting.

**An epistle from Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association** was read. Eight Friends shared their spiritual journeys as part of the theme of the gathering “Out of the Harbor: Our Voyages of Faith.” They carefully considered a revision of their Faith and Practice. The meeting considered concerns of gay and lesbian individuals, and they approved a minute to stand against torture.

**Report from Interim Meeting:** Clerk introduced Jada Jackson (Trenton MM) faithful clerk of Interim Meeting for three years. She expressed thanks to Tom Armstrong, Alternate Clerk for two years. And she expressed deep appreciation that her tenure with Interim Meeting had allowed her to see parts of herself she never knew existed. Jada then presented the report of Interim Meeting’s 2008-2009 term. She remembered that we are all held by God and are holding others in the spirit. This feeling of being held helped the Meeting to deal with challenges this year brought on by the nation’s economic difficulties. Interim Meeting, charged by Yearly Meeting to conduct an evaluation of the General Secretary, Arthur Larrabee, found him a great benefit to the Yearly Meeting. The Meeting moved its meeting time to Saturdays. There were minutes of travel for Elizabeth Gates (Lancaster MM), and a minute of ministry for Viv

Hawkins of Central Philadelphia MM. There was a minute of Concern from Princeton Monthly Meeting and Burlington Quarterly Meeting concerning Quaker Practice. Interim Meeting made moves to assist in a new way of doing business as brought on by the Governance Report. Carefully and prayerfully considering the situation of Priscilla Adams of Haddonfield MM, a war tax resister, the Meeting decided to reject the IRS request to cooperate with a levy on Priscilla's salary.

This **report was accepted** by Yearly Meeting.

Clerk Thomas Swain proposed a **minute of appreciation for Jada Jackson's tenure** as clerk of Interim Meeting. "We recognize the gifts Jada Jackson has shared with us in her role as clerk of Interim Meeting during these last three years. Her faithfulness has held us all and strengthened our ability to work together in carrying out the business of our Yearly Meeting. We are thankful for her years of service." Meeting **approved**.

There was short **break** at 10:20 AM, from which we returned with a brief period of open worship.

**"Burning Concerns"**: Clerk introduced this next section of our meeting, to bring forth "burning concerns." Our tradition has been for members to bring their concerns to their Monthly Meetings where the concerns are seasoned. If considered, the issues are then brought to the Quarterly Meeting where they are further seasoned and then brought to Yearly Meeting. This method worked well for the Heeding God's Call Gathering for Peace. There were two Quarterly Meetings who brought concerns to Annual Sessions Planning group this year.

**Southern Quarterly Meeting** asked us to consider: work with local homeless shelters, the issue of immigration, and our planet's ecological challenges. They also wanted to express appreciation for the Center for Deepening and Strengthening and to Friends involved in Quaker Quest.

**Bucks Quarter** brought concerns about communications within the Yearly Meeting. The Quarter's Oversight Committee offered suggestions to improve the situation: clearly identify items requiring action, use all available resources to foster Monthly Meeting and Quarterly Meeting action, and develop a data base to better know how to reach the intended audience. This led to a question for all: "what would communication within a Yearly Meeting look like to you if it followed this model?"

A friend urged us to remember that not all members of Yearly Meeting are connected to the internet. Another friend recognized the lag time in communication with the Yearly Meeting. She said it can take 3 months for individuals to receive information and then 4 months for information to get back. The coordinator for Salem Quarterly Meeting said the main problem he feels is the distribution of too much information. He urged prioritization of requests. A new member of Interim Meeting urged Meeting to provide a bullet point summary. Another friend urged consideration of a category of communication that would indicate an emergency. A friend asked us to consider the spirit-led nature of our communications.

Our **next question** to consider was “if our Yearly Meeting is to do important business between our Yearly Meeting sessions, if we would like to inspire more friends to be involved, if we are to be a real community, a vital Quaker family, what kind of communications will we use or move toward?” Several friends asked us to remember the power of electronic communication, particularly its power to engage younger friends, and a consequent reduction of our carbon footprint. A friend urged us to remember the importance and vitality of our Monthly Meetings as teaching ministers. Feeling overwhelmed by the scope of the question, a friend focused on the importance of radical Quaker witness as communication. A friend, as clerk of a Monthly Meeting, expressed that she felt communication from Yearly Meeting on three points at a time was too much. She would have preferred them to come one by one, prioritized. This friend also urged brief, attractive electronic communication from the Yearly Meeting. A friend urged us to open and broaden our communication, a relatively easy function of electronic messages. We were urged to consider the use of cell phones and text messaging, again to engage younger people. A friend reminded us of the importance and power of small groups meeting together.

The **next query** was “What do members of your Monthly Meeting respond to? What process or method has worked well in your Monthly Meeting to engage its members of important concerns.” A friend expressed her feeling that there are many methods of communication, but the true business of Yearly Meeting can be handled best in sessions such as this. We heard that a small Meeting codified members by the best way they can

be reached. A friend proposed a data base to clarify the resources of individuals' talents. A friend talked about the challenges of inviting new attenders to the life of the Yearly Meeting. Another friend asked us to consider mechanical changes, such as a Quarterly Meeting block of time, to make things run more smoothly. A friend asked "why aren't we on fire? What is keeping us wet?" She pointed out that only two Quarterly Meetings responded with burning issues, and the query went to all. She wants us to consider why we are a community.

With this, the Clerk reminded us to **use the spirit as our guide to speak**. A friend recognized the concern of Yearly Meeting to question its methods of communication. However, there are many things that must be directed by the spirit. Neither "brainstorming" nor technology may call forth this highest level of communication. The friend asked us to consider several places in scripture and Quaker history where individuals thought, and then waited for God to communicate with them. He urged us not to forget the tremendous power that allowed George Fox to launch his words into the world, and he reminded us that silent remembrance of this power is time well used. Another friend said that we do not need more cleverness in our communication, but to be together more so we can love each other more. A friend asked us to use the model of discernment in worship as the model for our communications. A friend asked us to reconsider our mental image of our Yearly Meeting, not as a pyramid, but as a circle with many interconnected points. At this point, in a spirit of worship sharing, a friend said, as a member of the staff of a Quarterly Meeting, she has felt this

matter of communication with the Cherry Street staff as a burning concern. Another friend expressed her feeling that God is always talking with us. To her, the burning concern for consideration was one of justice, our relationship with the homeless.

The **clerk closed the session** by posing a request that we consider this meeting during our meeting on Sunday morning—finding ways to take the richness of this gathering back to our homes. He then said as a summary that we do not have to be afraid to draw closer together and in that way intensify our communication.

We **adjourned** with intention to meet again at 7:00 this evening.