

# Quaker Life Council

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18 November 2016

11:00 am – 2:00 pm

**Present:** Ayesha Imani, Tom Hoopes, Penny Colgan-Davis, Bryn Hammarstrom, Douty-Snipes, Amy Taylor-Brooks, George Rubin, Jim Herr, Olivia Brangan!

**Ex-Officio:** Penny Colgan-Davis (PYM clerk), Zachary Dutton Associate General Secretary

## Agenda

11:00 am: Worship

11:05 am: Introductions/Welcome new members Ayesha Imani and Olivia Brangan/Check-ins

11:20 am: Approval of the Agenda & October Minutes

11:35 am: Continuing Sessions De-Brief

12:20 pm: Break

12:25 pm: Governance/Tom Hoopes: Minutes of Concern Conversation

12:45 pm: Program Committee: Revised Committee Description

1:00 pm: Program Committee: Community Engagement Event Update

1:05 pm: Program Committee: New Collaborative Applications

De-incarceration Collaborative

FWCC and other World Relations working group

1:45 Anti-Racism training update?

Review of Conflict of Interest Policy?

1:55 pm: Closing Worship

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Alternate Clerk Amy Taylor Brooks welcomed all and asked members what their tender hearts knew.

Members reviewed and approved the Agenda with the following changes:

- Start with Minutes of Concern
- Zachary's report be one on post-election actions

Members reviewed and approved October Minutes with the following amendment:

- Bryn Hammarstrom was present

One member asked for minutes to go to members at least a week or before QLC Meetings.

**Continuing Sessions De-Brief: Minutes of Concern:** Tom Hoopes explained that minutes of concern may come from an individual, monthly meeting, quarterly meeting, or PYM groups. There is presently no clear method under the new structure.

Minutes of Concern could become a SPRINT or COLLABORATIVE so that Friends may gather together and act. There should be a gathering of the Spirit that guides actions.

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Minutes of Concern from an individual should be tested by the Monthly Meeting.

A Monthly Meeting should share the concern with other meetings within a Quarter and have the minute tested by the Quarter.

An alternative method is for Meetings or individuals with minutes of Concern to go to relevant Collaboratives or Sprint and act on the minute under its guidance and cooperation. Collaboratives should be centers of networking. They are opportunities of breathing the Spirit's Life into an issue in a way that creates change in the world.

They are ways for Friends to form for deeper connections for each other and the world.

Bridge Contacts and the Community Engagement staff can help link individuals and groups with each other.

There is an additional issue of when should a General Secretary or Clerk speak for the Yearly Meeting to respond to an immediate issue?

-A Clearness working group is working on this issue.

-It is also possible to have threshing sessions that generate ideas and reactions but not decisions. A committee could condense the ideas down to a brief statement or list.

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QLC and Admin Council should check with Quarterly and Monthly Meetings to get reactions about the new structure or reaction to an issue. It can even be done via an electronic poll.

**Gray should email the present minutes to Bruce Haines, clerk of Administrative Council**

**Continuing Sessions De-Brief:** The morning panels were an effective way for presenting how people follow Spirit's leading in their lives. The afternoon was for Interest Discussion Groups sponsored by various Sprints and Collaboratives. It was followed by worship and business. Members appreciated the integration of Young Friends into Autumn Sessions. The day was a healing experience by gathering together as a community of the faithful to Spirit. It gave inspiration and hope to Friends to root their lives in Spirit and Witness. Members were grateful to the planners. 300 Friends of all ages attended.

Zachary hoped that a different location should be found in the future. The Sessions Coordinating Committee is working on the issue. He said that concerns about Westtown as a site are being expressed to the relevant people at Westtown.

George Rubin suggested having Continuing Sessions as a weekend with a local Quarter involved in the hosting and planning of the event.

Penny will pass these ideas to the Sessions Coordinating Committee.

**Reaction to the Election:** Zachary explained that various communities will be negatively affected by the incoming administration and its policies. They have heard that many new faces are showing up at Friends Meetings.

Friends can help by:

- a. Supply Monthly Meetings with queries following Spirit's guidance on peace and social justice and remind Friends to be welcoming.
- b. Form a Sprint to provide support.
- c. Monthly Meetings open their doors to local community action groups.
- d. Encourage Meetings to tell their stories about how they are responding.

The Governance Committee will meet Tuesday and consider people who could serve on two Sprints. The first to help meetings deal with an influx of new attenders and be aware of available resources. A second Sprint to help meetings move beyond the sadness and shock they may feel and discern the promptings of God within and outside their meeting.

Members who think of individuals for the Sprints should send the names to

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Zachary Dutton. Melanie Douty volunteered and encouraged Friends to write to the Electoral College and hold them in the Light. Non-violent communication workshops throughout the area would help.

Ayesha Imani asked what actions PYM can take responding to the needs of poor white folks. She spoke movingly of a food pantry her school set up and the large number of poor white people who came for food. There is work that Black Friends can do but also work that White Friends must do.

**Program Committee:** Members thanked Zachary Dutton for the following description of the Program Committee:

The Program Committee of the Quaker Life Council is a group of people who look for purpose and belonging. They listen for what is moving the people in our community toward meaningful lives followed with integrity. They dwell in worshipful landscapes that help us reveal who we are and who we can become. With love, care, and accountability, the Program Committee partners with staff to provide resource and renewal so all collaboratives and Quaker Life Council sprints may be \_\_\_\_\_ , networked, broadly relevant, and effective in achieving their goals. The Program Committee meets on a monthly basis, including community engagement staff, to help chart a path of loving stewardship that celebrates gifts and leadings, follows the life of the Spirit, and opens us to new possibilities.

The new description adds the additional responsibility of supporting the

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community engagement staff as well as regularly checking in with the progress and the status of the Collaboratives.

**QLC Members APPROVED the above description.**

**Program Committee Report:** Jim Herr brought forward the applications of two groups as Collaboratives:

- a. De-incarceration Collaborative: Friends sensed that the application needs concrete statements about what the group will do to help PYM Friends to act on the issue to reducing the incarceration rates in the United States.
- b. FWCC and other World Relations Collaborative: Friends sensed that there was no description of what the group will do to educate PYM Friends about FWCC and interfaith dialogue.

**QLC Members APPROVED sending the applications back to the Program Committee and for the Committee speak to the two groups about how to strengthen their applications. The Committee can contact Triscia Coscia and her colleagues for help.**

Ayesha Imani expressed interest in the committee.

Amy Taylor Brooks said that the Governance Committee will look at the QLC committee structure, update it, and send out the present committee

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membership to QLC members.

**Funding Committee:** Bryn Hammarstrom said he was willing to continue to serve on the committee. Meetings can be made via phone.

**General Secretary Report:** See embedded report. Christie spoke about the following highlights:

Adjustments have been made in the health insurance by increasing the number of affordable offerings to cover more spouses and children.

Christie has been delegating more responsibility to the Associate Secretaries. It allows them to work more closely with the Councils.

It gives Christie time to connect with organizations outside of PYM.

Bryn Hammarstrom asked when should Penny Colgan-Davis, clerk of PYM represent PYM at inter-faith gatherings and when should Christie, the General Secretary? The Governance Committee will consider this issue.

**Conflict of Interest :** Amy Taylor Brooks noted that the QLC needs a description of the statement before they can act.

**Anti-Racism Training:** Plans will be forthcoming shortly.

Members ended with a period of worship.

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Respectfully submitted, Gray Goodman, Recording Clerk

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## General Secretary Report on Staff Activity to Councils Finances

- Closed out the books for FY16
- Completed our second annual gathering of facts and figures and tiny stories for an InfoGraphic to describe the completed fiscal year.
- Prepared for audit and completed onsite work with auditors
- Prepared the fall appeal which will be in the mail in the next week
- Continued transition to new database: completed data extraction and translation so that it can be imported to the new system and began importation. Staff training is scheduled for December 7.

## Program

- Continuing Sessions! Our third Continuing Sessions was held at Westtown School. The logistics have become quite smooth, the balance of activity and downtime was far less hectic than earlier sessions. Numbers were lower than last year's attendance count.
- Hosted a meeting of the Monthly Meeting clerks with Penny at Providence Meeting. My favorite highlight: 3 problems raised by 3 clerks addressed and

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solutions found in 15 minutes.

-Scavenger Hunt: Launched the first phase of the first ever yearly meeting scavenger hunt in which we began collecting suggestions for items/experiences to hunt.

-The Youth Program Sprint has moved forward taking based on the experience of the visioning session (a new structure success!)

-The Community Engagement Team began holding a stand up meeting to check in four days a week.

-The Sessions Coordinating Committee approved a plan for March Continuing Sessions that explicitly includes multiple generations.

-Friends Meeting-School Care Relationship Gathering was sponsored by the Committee on Friends Education and supported by staff. The Triad includes of the MM Clerk, Head of School and School Committee Clerks.

-Administrative, youth and community engagement staff visited several campuses seeking the next site for our annual sessions.

## **Communications**

-Faith in Practice, Volume 2, Issue 1 is on its way to your home. The plan to increase print publications (while not increasing the budget line) to three per year is working in its second year. This issue is 4 pages longer.

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-The banner on the front page of the website is about to change so that it is more in synch with the current climate. It will feature quotes from Faith & Practice that are relevant to today.

-We completed the necessary and boring background work to ensure the website can be safely updated with the latest version of WordPress

-We sent an email to PYM members over the names of the Presiding Clerk and GenSec post-election inviting Friends to sink into worship together.

-PYM Today Online began its evolution to be more in keeping with the style of our other print and electronic publications. It focuses on the calendar and news sections of the website simply sharing the information that is already there and putting it right into the hands of our community (literally when they are reading it on their phones). The layout will change again when the database is operational because we will be using a new platform that integrates with the database.

### **Staffing and Administration**

-The Personnel Committee approved a health care plan that includes silver, gold and platinum options. The silver plan is free for employees and their dependents. The cost of the other two options is a percentage of the employee's base salary allowing the cost impact to be relative between employees regardless of their salary.

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-A Community Engagement Communications QVS (Quaker Voluntary Service) position is in place, supporting the function of getting stories from our meetings and community posted on the website (this has been in place since the beginning of the fall but I'd not reported it).

-The Communications Director needed to be out for two weeks due to family needs. We missed Naman and will be glad when he returns but pre-planning allowed communications to function well during his absence.

-Shifts in staff meetings: We began a discussion of how to adjust all-staff meetings to ensure that they meet more of the needs of staff by decreasing their reliance on the General Secretary. We also began a new meeting called the Directions Meeting. The Directions Meeting, as it has evolved, includes one person from each staff team with particular focus on ensuring diversity in age/race/level of position. It focuses on the big picture of where we are moving as a staff and cross fertilization and collaboration.

-Annual reviews are in motion

### **Anti-Racism**

-We have recognized the need to be clear about the ways in which we will continue to ensure that our work on anti-racism remains vibrant. One way of doing that is to include it as a topic in my monthly report.

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-SAT (Staff Administrative Team – the senior staff) re-began meeting twice a month to learn more about racism through reading or watching something. We call this SATstudy. The first item on our list is an episode of the NPR podcast Code Switch titled “Can We Talk About Whiteness?”

-The week after the election we had a staff lunch with space to share our feelings and experiences since the election which unfolded as deep worship sharing.

**General Secretary Visits and Connections**

- Monthly Meeting Clerks Gathering at Providence Meeting
- Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust Fundraiser
- Continuing Sessions
- Friends General Conference Central Committee Meeting in Maryland
- Friends Committee on National Legislation Annual Meeting in Wash. DC
- National Council of Churches Fall mtg. of the Governing Board in Charleston, SC
- Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia meeting
- Friends Fiduciary Finance Committee meeting

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Quaker Life Council

Threshing Session

30 July 2016

**Present:** Tom Hoopes, Lane Taylor, Cate Bregman, Gray Goodman, Robin

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Harper, Hollister Knowlton, Jim Herr, Deb Wood, Viv Hawkins, Holly Olson, Rick Dow, John Hayden, Michael West. Boris Simkovich, Amy Ward Brimmer,

15 Friends gathered at the PYM summer gathering on 30 July 2016, Saturday to share insights about how to address minutes of concern, traveling minutes, and letters of introduction.

When ready, the Quaker Life Council will pass on their insights to Quarterly clerks as well as put it on the PYM website.

### **Minutes of Concern**

Regarding minutes of concern, Friends considered the following questions:

- a. What is the procedure?
- b. Who does it?
- c. What have other Yearly Meetings done?

Members offered the following insights and suggestions:

1. Quaker Life Council should be under the weight of guiding the minutes of concern to an appropriate COLLABORATIVE or SPRINT if possible.
2. If the above option is not available, QLC needs to establish an alternative procedure.
3. Minutes of concern should be clear with a specific suggested action.

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4. The body presenting the minute of concern should be willing to be under the weight of the minute (taking a leading role in whatever action is requested).
  
5. If a Quarter is not active, is a monthly meeting allowed to present a minute of concern to QLC?
  
6. Have a clearinghouse so that a Friend, monthly meeting, and/or quarterly meeting can find out what other bodies are presently working on.
  
7. Have a directory of past minutes of concern for reference
  
8. Who would determine to have a called meeting if a number of similar minutes of concern rise in a variety of Quarters?
  
9. Quarters should all have lists of emails for representatives of the monthly/preparative meetings to quickly pass on information from QLC and larger bodies.
  
10. There are a variety of expectations that different Monthly Meetings place upon individuals with minutes of concern. Is this appropriate or should there be a standard procedure?

**Traveling Minutes for Religious Service and letters of introduction**

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1. What should the submitter expect for support and time it takes for a response from PYM? How to advertise the ministry?
  
2. If there is travel for religious service outside of Yearly meeting, a minute of travel should go first to the monthly meeting, then the Quarterly meeting and then on to where?
  
3. There is a Collaborative for individual calls to ministry . QLC will work with the Collaborative for clarifying a procedure.
  
4. There are a variety of expectations that different Monthly Meetings place upon individuals with minutes for religious service
  
5. Make sure the practices and procedures of QLC follow Faith and Practice

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The following lines are from the 15 July 2016 edition of PYM Faith and Practice p51 :

Minutes of Travel for Religious Service As in the past, Friends today can find themselves under a sense of divine leading to travel in support of an important public witness or to nurture the religious life of Friends families and meetings. In carrying out such leadings, they find it useful to take with them a formal minute for religious service from their meeting.

A meeting should issue such a minute only after the concern has been laid before its committee on worship and ministry, a clearness committee, or such other group as the meeting may suggest and has been favorably recommended to the monthly meeting for approval. A minute for religious service, signed by the clerk, states clearly the nature, scope and duration of the proposed service and affirms the meeting's support of the Friend(s) concerned. The meeting issuing such a minute should consider whether it is under an obligation to ensure, insofar as possible, that the proposed service is not hampered by a lack of funds or other support.

A Friend who proposes to travel under religious concern may find, as have Friends in the past, that it is a source of strength and comfort to be joined by another Friend sympathetic to the concern and able to share counsel and encouragement.

A minute of travel for religious service, after being adopted by a monthly

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meeting, is usually  
25 submitted for endorsement by the quarterly and yearly meetings,  
especially if the Friend expects to travel beyond the bounds of the yearly  
meeting.

Friends traveling with such minutes are customarily welcomed by those  
among whom they visit and invited to share their concerns with appropriate  
gatherings. It is also customary for minutes of travel for religious service to  
be signed at the conclusion of the gatherings by the person(s) presiding.

Upon the completion of the service proposed, a minute for religious service  
should be returned promptly with a verbal or written report to the meetings  
that had earlier reviewed the concern and minuted their support.

### **Letter of Introduction**

1. Presently, introduces the person by the clerk of the Monthly Meeting  
going to a particular meeting.

### **Faith and Practice p.51:**

Friends intending to travel benefit from obtaining a letter of introduction  
from their home meetings. Such letters usually state the fact of membership,  
give some account of the individual's participation and witness in the affairs  
of our religious society, and express such greetings as are deemed

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appropriate. Letters are signed by the clerk and duly noted in the minutes of the monthly, quarterly or yearly meeting. Since Friends travel for a wide variety of purposes, letters of introduction do not suggest specific obligations either on the visitor or on those visited and may be issued by the clerk without formal consideration by the meeting. Such letters are often endorsed by those visited and used to send greetings back to the visitor's home meeting.