



# Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

*of the Religious Society of Friends*

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*12.11.21 Quaker Life Council Minutes*

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Twelfth Month 11, 2021 (using Zoom format)

## JOINT SESSION OF THE PYM QUAKER LIFE, ADMINISTRATION, AND NOMINATING COUNCILS (10:00-11:00 A.M.)

We were welcomed and clerked by PYM co-clerks Frank and Jean-Marie Barch with 22 other participants. We started with worship and a provocative poem. Then we had a discussion of ways to better connect with our monthly meeting communities, led by General Secretary Christie Duncan-Tesmer who reviewed some of our recent discussions. Should we visit all meetings, or just those who want visitors, or those with special needs? Do we all do this -- or just certain Council people? What is the best platform for a visit?

Key ideas in this morning's discussion included:

- Listening to MM concerns is more important than having a unified or consistent message.
- It was suggested to start with the mid-sized meetings and work into larger and smaller as appropriate.
- Health and safety protocols around covid-19 create complications.
- Instead of a unified message, let's start with a unified pool of information.
- Only those who feel led should do this kind of outreach.
- Using unity as a mark of success is misleading. Conflict may be a sign of healthy community.
- The councils include folks from 30 MMs (so 70 are not represented).
- In-person visits can be much more effective than virtual ones. Yet Zoom helps eliminate distance.
- Outreach a month or more before annual sessions could be especially effective.
- Establishing relationship takes consistency, at least 2 or 3 "touches" per year.
- Can we create a structure that allows the Divine spark, rather than just make this an obligation?  
However, a pattern of outreach, even if not always Spirit-led, can be effective, too.
- We can work through the database names of people already receiving the PYM newsletter.
- For larger meetings that give large covenant funds to PYM, they may want to know more about what PYM does – bring it home to them, reciprocate the covenant.
- ListenWg is an act of love, and loving follow-through will be key to success.

Christie also reminded a few of us who still need to fill out the PYM Conflict of Interest form. PYM has gotten a \$30,000 grant for outreach. Part of this may be small grants to MMs.

We closed in expectant worship.



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## QUAKER LIFE COUNCIL (By Zoom)

Follow-up actions and decisions **are shown in bold.**

PARTICIPANTS – Marge Dawson, Sue Dietz (acting clerk), Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Robert Greene, Guinevere Janes, and Rose Ketterer.

Ex Officio Members – Jean-Marie Barch (PYM Co-Clerk), Christie Duncan-Tesmer (Executive Secretary, part), and Zachary Dutton (Assoc. Sec. for Program & Religious Life).

Absent – Tom Hughes, Sue Kight, and Anthony Stover.

WELCOME – Anthony is busy with his job today. Yet even the few of us can be effective.

CHECK-INS – We shared our current situations of moves, health, jobs, the trials of recent trips, educational opportunities, things that inspire, holiday plans, and current projects.

REFLECTIONS ON 2021 (what did we do well, what can we do better?) – We are getting better at understanding our mission and span of responsibility. But our dropping numbers indicate a problem. We talk a lot without much forward action – most decisions are just reactive. How active should we be in moving the major annual sessions issues forward? One example is the EcoJustice Collaborative who is working to put into effect the approved statement with its possible complex financial issues. As new sprints are set up for short-term actions, a lot of listening will be necessary.

One Friend is concerned about current threats to voting rights, hoping we can support MM actions to broaden them. Another finds it frustrating reaching out to other Quakers on this issue. How much as a yearly meeting can we go into politics? Another major concern here is the proliferation of gun violence. So many groups are trying, but the deaths go on.

We have shifted from being “in the work” to overseeing and coordinating the YM’s program work. The proposed reporting schedule is a big step forward. Honoring our structure (and improving it as needed) may help us be more effective. We need to see what no longer serves us and strengthen ways to support those doing the work. Are we opening doors rather than saying “Oh, that’s not what we do.”?

STARTING THE PROCESS TO SET 2022 PRIORITIES/GOALS FOR COMMITTEES – Let’s default to “What do you need?” rather than first offering suggestions. We need to actively foster the YM’s work in anti-racism, EcoJustice, youth activities, and supporting small meetings. Let’s avoid top-down prescriptions, but instead offer tender listening and support.



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We need to get clear on available funds to make sure both large and small concerns are getting their appropriate support.

MINUTE OF APPRECIATION FOR JOURNEY'S END FARM CAMP – This camp recently closed. None of us know enough to craft a minute. But PYM could send a short letter to the farm owners acknowledging the many Quakers who have been well served by this camp over many years. **We approved that a short letter from the PYM General Secretary will suffice.**

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES -- **Steve read the minutes and they were approved with thanks.**