

Program Committee Report to the Quaker Life Council

The first topic in this report is to explain what the 'Program Committee' is. It was created out of the reorganization design back in 2014. In my opinion, the name is the most non-descript generic name that we could possibly come up with. The plan is to find a new name that better describes the work we are doing in the near future.

The Program Committee is responsible for nurturing and supporting the many spirit-led groups operating within our Yearly Meeting. Part of this work is making sure these groups get the financial and administrative support they need. Another part of our work is helping these groups navigate the bureaucracy of the Yearly Meeting. The Program Committee is under the stewardship of the QLC. The groups we support are:

1. Collaboratives – These are groups of Friends working together across the Yearly Meeting on a common cause. The current collaboratives include Eco-Justice, First Contact Reconciliation, Legislative Policy, Middle East, Spiritual Formation, Anti-Racism, India Friends, and Nuclear Disarmament.
2. Bridge Contacts for Monthly Meetings, Quarterly Meetings, and Worship Groups. These are people serving as communication liaisons between Yearly Meeting activities and Monthly Meetings.
3. Resource Friends – These are Friends that have particular expertise that they are willing to share with others. The most recent example is for people willing to help with the technical issues around opening up Hybrid Meetings. Other groups we would like to establish include Religious Education, Ministry & Care, Anti-Racism, Climate Change/Eco Justice.
4. PYM Representatives to other Quaker Organizations with attention to how to hold them, build community with them, and set expectations from PYM. These include AFSC, FCNL, FGC, FWCC, Friends Pension Plan, and Quaker Earthcare Witness.
5. Thread Gatherings (5 of them planned for the coming year).
6. Young Adult Engagement (18-35 yr olds).

Who we are:

1. Andrew Anderson – Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia
2. Olivia Brangan – Wrightstown (Staff)
3. Kate Bregman – Central Philadelphia
4. Sue Dietz – Medford Meeting
5. Zachary Dutton – Central Philadelphia Meeting (Staff)
6. Bryn Hammarstrom – Wellsboro
7. Jamie McVickar – Downingtown Meeting
8. Steve Olshevski – Radnor Meeting (Clerk)
9. Betsy Crofts – Newtown Meeting
10. John Marquette – Lehigh Valley Meeting
11. Wendy Kane – Newtown Meeting

The priorities in the past year have been:

1. Understanding our role. The past year has been one of reorganization for this committee. I became Clerk last Fall and many new members joined at the same time. Staff is helping us understand all of the many groups we are supporting. As we develop a clearer understanding, our intention is to update the QLC Corollary Handbook with a refreshed description and clarification of duties.
2. Keep the spiritual fires burning in the spiritual movements we are supporting/nurturing. There is a lot of great work being done. Our focus has been on the collaboratives; understanding their needs and providing the needed support to keep their spiritual energy burning brightly. Highlights include:
 - a. Spiritual Formation – This committee has been bringing spiritual formation work to us for 21 years. The biggest challenge was converting a 9-month in-person program to be delivered virtually. In addition, they offered a weekend retreat last October, a session leading to 2020 annual sessions, and continue to offer full 9-month sessions and introductory sessions for monthly meetings.
 - b. Eco-Justice - Since January 2020, EJC has been working intensively with the PYM leadership, council clerks, general secretary, and PYM clerks. At least twenty MMs have approved the minute to make the climate crisis a meeting-wide concern. In addition, there was a broad outreach to help members understand the importance of addressing this concern through newsletters, webinars, forums, and political advocacy for stewardship of the Earth, along with a compendium of written materials and resources to support our climate minute.
 - c. First Contact Reconciliation – The focus of this collaborative is to bring Spiritual listening, engagement with local Lenape Tribal Nations/ Peoples as well as “Indian Country” truths and share Friends’ labors of espousing historical t/Truths (sometimes painful), healing, and acts of social engagement/ justice through speaking engagements, deep listening to indigenous voices, consulting with Friends groups and building relationships between us.
 - d. Legislative Policy – Conducted a very successful virtual workshop in April titled Pathways to Ending Gun Violence: Legislative Solutions. More than 120 people registered for this event that gathered Friends from more than 30 meetings of PYM. The seminar shared information on how to make progress on the issue of gun violence and trained Friends on how to lobby legislators for change. Nine members represent PYM on the FCNL General Committee in the annual meeting.
 - e. Middle East – there are four foci for 2021 - Further support intersectionality efforts connecting Palestinian rights issues to Black Lives Matter movement, Familiarize and clarify how we may support Boycott Divestment and Sanctions, further connect Why Palestine Matters curriculum to a wider audience of PYM Friends, and connect to FCNL and legislative priorities for the new congress. They presented two virtual workshops for the PYM Runway to Annual Sessions 2021
 - i. The Middle East Conflict as a Global Issue of Injustice was presented in May.
 - ii. The presentation of a film as a beginner of examination of the injustices in the Israel-Palestine, on the ground realities. Wrestling with Israel – Palestine: Equality, Rights, Justice, and the Future.
 - f. Anti-Racism (ARC) – created in May of 2020 this collaborative is full of energy in addressing racism within our Yearly Meeting. They conducted interviews with 82 meetings and worship groups across PYM to ascertain what their m/wg was doing in terms of antiracism work. Thus

far, they posted one resource list on our website and hope to have a second one, focused on antiracist actions to take, published shortly. They offered a report to Spring Continuing Sessions 2021. Two Friends represented ARC on the Addressing Racism Panel Discussion. Two Friends provided eldership for the Anti-Blackness Thread Gathering. Many attended the Truth and Transformation Thread Gathering as well as other PYM events. The next steps include creating a Thread Gathering to be held between Fall and Spring Sessions, taking part in the Collaborative Fair as part of the Runway to Annual Sessions, and reaching out to other Collaboratives to imagine how we can work together on antiracism.

- g. India Friends - Indian Friends are a tiny minority of a small minority. It means a great deal to them to be connected to the worldwide Quaker community. The focus is to work with other international Yearly Meetings to improve the facilities and funding of Quaker schools in India and to ensure that Quaker values continue to be inculcated to a new generation.
 - h. Nuclear Disarmament is currently in need of Friends with the energy around this concern to help move this forward.
3. Determining how this committee can provide the best value for the members of the Yearly Meeting. This is more a strategic goal, exploring what Yearly Meeting can do to make the spiritual life of Friends across Monthly Meeting boundaries, as fulfilling and fruitful as possible, and in so doing, show real value to all members of the Yearly Meeting. One assumption here is that there are Friends working on leadings within their monthly meeting that feel called to take this leading to the next level. The Yearly Meeting needs to be in a position to recognize that and support setting up the support structure necessary to allow that concern to take light among us.

Acknowledgment of staff

One final note: the committee wants to acknowledge the dedication and service provided by Zachary Dutton and Olivia Brangan in recognizing the importance of the Program Committee to the life of the Yearly Meeting and providing excellent help and guidance to the members of this committee. The success we have is due to them taking a stand for the importance of this work.

Respectfully submitted – **Steve Olshevski**, clerk of Program Committee