



Climate Witness Stewards

Report To 2022 Annual Sessions

Last year the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) committed to a yearly meeting-wide witness on climate change. This historic decision came at a crucial time, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other scientific experts around the world were calling for a significant reduction in greenhouse gasses within the decade to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. We are at a moment when the urgent need to act is matched by growing support from people around the world for taking action. This crisis, no question, can lead to human extinction unless we act now and with intelligence, wisdom, and heart. As the pace of the multiple events of climate change has accelerated, more and more of us are being impacted and have begun to respond with actions to mitigate our own personal contributions as well as demands that corporate and government policymakers take significant steps to avert the worst. The sooner we act to curb CO₂ and methane emissions, the more human lives and those of other species (all of whom have significant co-evolved roles in keeping planetary life balanced and functioning) will be spared.

Last month the Joint Councils of PYM appointed five climate witness stewards to move the Yearly Meeting's climate change work forward. We are charged with fostering "an environment that enables and promotes the climate change witness in a Spirit-led, trustworthy and transparent manner." We are honored to hold this position of trust and are committed to the work of this witness, recognizing that climate change is an urgent existential and moral crisis that calls on the energy, talent, and spirit of every one of us.

Given the urgency of the climate crisis, we call on the Yearly Meeting to use all tools at its disposal, including reducing our own carbon footprint while advocating for local and national policies that move us toward net zero, educating ourselves and the wider community about the issues and solutions, making sure our finances support the work that needs to be done, and providing a spiritual community of support. In the tradition of Friends witnessing to the truth of our times, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting should take every opportunity to make strong public statements, both on our own and in concert with other faith communities, about the need to act.

As your climate witness stewards, we will support this witness in a number of ways, including:

- Establishing regular communications with MMs and QMs. We have already sent an email to all monthly meetings, reminding them of the climate change sprint report and asking them to identify climate change liaisons.
- Setting annual benchmarks and making regular progress reports to the Yearly Meeting
- Reporting to the PYM governing councils.

- Committing to climate change programs at every annual sessions and continuing sessions.
- Ensuring that all yearly meeting decisions take the climate change witness into account.
- Consulting with PYM leadership to prepare public statements addressing the urgency of the climate crisis and recognizing the spiritual imperative to act and the need for strategic policy changes to prevent the worst effects of climate change.
- Making recommendations about allocation of yearly meeting resources commensurate with a corporate witness on climate change.
- Ensuring that our witness on racial justice remains a focus of our climate change work.
- Encouraging and facilitating cooperation with other faith and community groups

Identified goals for the coming year:

- That the yearly meeting leadership make a public statement as soon after annual sessions as feasible reaffirming our yearly meeting-wide witness and calling for strong action on climate change. At least two other statements should follow during the year in response to the latest developments.
- That the yearly meeting recruit/appoint at least two additional stewards with the goal of providing greater diversity and broader geographic representation.
- That the PYM website features the climate change witness prominently, making resources and reports readily accessible and user friendly.
- The Yearly Meeting immediately set up a committee which would plan how to make PYM operations carbon neutral by 2025. Planning and evaluations should be completed within one year.
- The Yearly Meeting also develops concrete resources to facilitate Monthly Meetings becoming carbon neutral.
- That climate change programs and workshops will be part of the remaining 2022-2023 continuing and annual sessions.

Acknowledging that monthly meetings are at various stages of action on climate change, we intend to promote the development of a variety of resources that will support the work of monthly meetings. Many monthly meetings have already taken important steps to respond to the climate crisis. We applaud them and want to facilitate making their work a resource for other meetings.

As the Climate Change Sprint Report says, “the Climate Crisis and our response to it is deeply linked to our testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship.” We look forward to working with all of you, as thoughtful and engaged **stewards of Creation**, to limit further suffering and to build a just and loving world.