



2023 Spring Continuing Sessions Minutes

Held in person at the Arch Street Meeting House and simultaneously on Zoom video conference
Saturday, March 11th, 2023

Worship: We settled into worship at 9:00. Kimani Keaton acknowledged the fact that the land we occupy is the ancestral homelands of the Lenape People. Many of these people were forced from this land. Let us commit to a future where the culture of these people can return to us in ways that can be revealed to us.

Introductions: At 9:30, Presiding Clerk, Melissa Rycroft welcomed everyone—in person and on Zoom. She asked everyone to be patient. People at the table with Melissa introduced themselves including the two Recording Clerks – Jim Herr and Sally McQuail – and the General Secretary – Christie Duncan-Tessmer.

Melissa then introduced Treasurer – Andrew Anderson, clerk of Administrative Council – Jim Waddington, interim-clerk of Quaker Life Council – Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, and assistant clerk of Nominating Council – Tacie Trull. Melissa told us there were three Elders present in person – Bethann Morgan, Paul Kerr, and Yelena Forrester – and six Elders present on Zoom – Ed Solenberger, Bob Dockhorn, .O, Jane Cadwallader, George Rubin, and Phil Anthony.

Melissa urged us to use the people on Pastoral Care if we need them, and she introduced them.

In the Meeting House, there were three Ushers.

Melissa recognized the potential challenges with our technology in this ancient building.

Melissa asked for first-time attenders to introduce themselves. There were quite a few people joining us on Zoom, some from as far away as Florida.

Melissa asked for those from Quaker organizations or other Yearly Meetings. Keith Barton – Western Association of Friends and Big Island Friends in Hawaii, and Deb Wood – Friends Peace Teams – introduced themselves.

Tara Rubinstein, Interim Sessions Coordinator, gave a brief overview of the potential challenges and assistance available on Zoom.

Melissa Rycroft then gave us a brief overview of the meeting for worship with attention to the business of the Yearly Meeting here today. She urged us all to raise our hands if we need to ask a question and to be patient with the complications brought about by the hybrid nature of our meeting.

Presiding Clerk Report: Melissa told us a little about herself and her activities. She worships with Upper Susquehanna Quarter, lives near Williamsport, PA, and has a full-time job. She presides over the 3 times we meet. She tries very hard to keep track of all the monthly meetings, and she would love to visit; she asked us all to invite her. One of her favorite things to do is to meet with the monthly meeting clerks on Zoom regularly. She also loves to meet with the quarterly meeting clerks, coordinators, and staff. She meets twice a month with the clerk's council. And she finds that participating in clearness committees for at-large members brings her the most joy.

Administrative Council Report: Administrative council clerk, Jim Waddington, reported that the council has been spending a great deal of time focusing on the Nominating Council. There are a large number of vacancies on Nominating. Three members of Administrative Council have agreed to sit on Nominating on an interim basis. Jim urged us all to check with our Quarters to make sure they are represented.

There were requests to fill positions in granting groups with people who are not members of monthly meetings in PYM or fill positions with people who are not Quaker. With great deliberation, Admin decided to not approve this at present.

A Friend asked us to consider opening our activities to volunteers from outside of PYM. A Friend asked us to consider why there are so few people interested in service. A Friend asked how we will deal with current members of a committee who are not members. A Friend asked for help in strengthening and enlarging MMs.

Melissa thanked Jim for his report.

Quaker Life Council Report: Jean-Marie Barch, interim clerk of Quaker Life Council asked for questions, assuming everyone had read her QLC report. A Friend asked if there might a way to break up the responsibilities of QLC, which seem overwhelming. A Friend thanked Jean-Marie for being an excellent interim clerk for longer than she might have wished. A Friend asked about the work of the collaboratives.

Nominating Council Report: The Nominating Council report was presented by its assistant clerk, Tacie Trull. She pointed out that it's very hard to have people fill roles in MMs, let alone on PYM. However, some people have come forward. Meg Barney, from Providence MM, was presented as nominee to Quaker Life Council and was approved.

Terri Whiteford is released from Nominating Council and JoAnn Seaver is released from Administrative Council. Great appreciation was expressed for their service

Melissa pointed out that members of Nominating Council do not know everyone. She urged all present today to consider open positions and ask Friends they may know. We need a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, and a clerk of Quaker Life Council.

Minutes: Minutes to this point were approved, and we took a brief break.

General Secretary's report: Christie told us that the Yearly Meeting is composed of the interactions across 100+ monthly meetings over a large geographically diverse area. She pointed out that today we are meeting at six locations. For the next five years we will meet on the second Saturdays of November and March for Continuing Sessions. She told us that FCNL is considering taking a stand on the question of abortion and is opening this to Friends around the country.

Christie spoke about the Worship and Care Care Package campaign that was opened in November. There was a matching funds challenge. We reached the goal and the total of the gift was \$50,000. The last donation was a \$300 donation by a new donor. We are thankful for the generosity of the 248 contributors, including 25 new donors.

The care package includes training for monthly meetings for pastoral care committee members; resources for worship experiences: Bible study, and intergenerational, first for the YM community, then for the monthly meetings with the support of mini care packages of resources; and resources for creating communities of practice. Communities of Practice were originally developed by cognitive anthropologists. In a community of practice a group of people who share a common ministry come together and grow together. It is like a playground: kids are climbing, digging in the sandbox, spinning on a carousel. They all share a passion for play, but in different ways. Some are learning how to swing, some are jumping off. The playground ladies are there to help out. This is a community of practice.

Worship & Care, the focus of the Care Package, is a thread at PYM and will be our first community of practice. We have a range of talents and abilities at our meetings. Each person helps build their community and grow individually.

The general secretary invited Friends to share thoughts about What we need to grow together in a Worship and Care community of practice

Friends spoke to the mutuality; we will all be learning from one another. It is the foundation. We assume that we know how to play on the equipment. Sometimes we need help to learn to do it well, and learn new tools to do it effectively. One Meeting had a "puttering day". Several activities and tasks were available on which to work. Friends met others that they did not know well, and enjoyed the day working and socializing. A Friend said that the materials and safety are important. A Friend asked, can we share on Pinterest? A Friend asks how we can do social justice legally and effectively? How can we talk to each other in such a way that we can learn from one another? Can one of the communities of practice be around conflict resolution? Also, how do we include people in this? Can we explore strategies for elder care and child care? How is this different than a thread? Christie said that this is about PYM. Threads are important spheres: Each on one of the five topics. The purpose is to allow us to come together and nurture and grow.

Will there be suggestions that newer attenders are invited to play on the equipment, too? We can learn from the children, who work on different skills on the playground than in the classroom. Can we have playdates with other Meetings? A topic can be a pathway to membership.

Arch Street Meeting House Executive Director report presented by Sean Connolly: In 2011, Arch Street Meetinghouse was designated a National Historic Landmark. In 2022, there were over 34,000 visitors, 140 rentals and community events. Schools visit regularly, and they are partner with the National Park Service. An economic survey was recently completed to look at everything in addition to direct spending in the building. What is the economic impact of Arch Street Meetinghouse? Over \$5,000,000. The average for a historic house of worship is \$1,700,000. Arch Street shares Quakerism with all of these visitors. Arch Street is growing education and rental opportunities. It is one of the most visited Quaker sites around the world. Many Friends find Quakerism through Arch Street. A capital campaign to raise \$4-5,000,000 to improve the building is pending. This will include a fire suppression system, new electrical service, lighting, and heating system, and air conditioning will be added. This is in time for 2026 when Philadelphia will be holding a quincentennial celebration. A Friend pointed out that this Meeting is alive and is home to many, both currently and historically. A Friend asked about climate considerations? They are complying and information will be on the website. A Friend asked about whether enslaved African Americans are buried on the grounds? There are 13,000 unminuted Quaker burials on the site. There is no firm historical evidence as to who is buried there but it is likely.

Caln Quarter Meeting minute of Christian Nationalism presented by Jim Herr, Caln QM Clerk: This minute originated at Lancaster Monthly Meeting. A concern rose about the rise of Christian Nationalism becoming popular. Members of Lancaster wanted to do something with a broad base. Lancaster Meeting distributed the minute to all of the monthly meetings in PYM to encourage Friends to write to their newspapers and legislators to raise the alarm about Christian Nationalism. A Friend asked what the purpose is today? The minute has been presented to Quaker Life Council. It will be included with these meeting minutes. Each Meeting can determine what they will do. We are not bringing this for action by the Yearly Meeting. A Friend said that this minute is being actively discussed in several meetings. A Friend asked about how this minute relates to our policy of our limits on lobbying? We are not lobbying any bill, it is a concept. A Friend hopes that everyone present will take this minute back to their meetings for consideration.

Approval of minutes.

Meeting closed with a period of silence.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Herr
Sally McQuail



Nominating Council Report to Spring Continuing Sessions

Nominating Council Members

Name	Monthly Meeting	Quarter	
Ron Inskeep	Gwynedd	Abington	Quarter Representative
		Bucks	Quarter Representative
		Burlington	Quarter Representative
		Caln	Quarter Representative
Joan Broadfield	Chester	Chester	Quarter Representative
Deb Lyons	West Chester	Concord	Quarter Representative
Michael Lane	Westfield	Haddonfield	Quarter Representative
		Haverford	Quarter Representative
Jeff Rosenthal	Central Philadelphia	Philadelphia	Quarter Representative
Carleton Crispin	Woodbury	Salem	Quarter Representative
		Southern	Quarter Representative
		Upper Susquehanna	Quarter Representative
		Western	Quarter Representative
Suzanne Day	Westfield	Haddonfield	At Large
Nancy Robbins	Third Haven	Southern	At Large
Alice Maxfield	Wrightstown	Bucks	At Large
Tacie Trull	Salem	Salem	At Large
Jim Waddington	Salem	Salem	At Large (temporary)
John Marquette	Lehigh Valley	Bucks	At Large (temporary)

Appointments

Quaker Life Council			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Meg Barney	Providence	Chester	July 31, 2026

Releases and Completed Terms

Nominating Council			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
Terri Whiteford	Downingtown	Caln	

Administrative Council			
NAME	MONTHLY MEETING	QUARTERLY MEETING	TERM END
JoAnn Seaver	Greene Street	Philadelphia	July 31, 2023



Administrative Council Report to Spring Continuing Sessions

Since the November Continuing Sessions, the Administrative Council has continued to undertake its ongoing work, including the approval of appointments to the councils and committees for which it has responsibility. The Council has also received regular reports from the Finance Committee and approved matters brought to it by the Committee. Following the process approved last fall, the Nominating Council appointed Tom Zemaitis as assistant clerk of Administrative Council.

In addition to its ongoing work, the Council considered several matters brought before it, as follows.

For some time, we have been under the weight of the difficulties being experienced by the Nominating Council. Nominating is severely under-populated, both for members appointed by quarterly meetings and those appointed by Administrative Council. Also, with the end of the term of the former clerk, there is no clerk currently serving. Administrative Council has engaged in extensive discussions of how to address these circumstances over several meetings. As an interim measure, three members of Administrative Council have agreed to serve on Nominating Council on a temporary basis, until other new members can be identified. Also, the clerk and assistant clerk of Administrative Council will be reaching out to the leadership of quarterly meetings that are not currently represented on Nominating Council to assess why no representatives have been appointed and to encourage the quarters to make appointments.

We considered a request by the Granting Committee to create a fund to support contributions to social justice causes. Because of legal limitations that restrict the way in which funds under the care of the Granting Committee can be distributed, we could not approve this request. However, we encouraged the granting groups to take into account social justice issues in making grants that are permitted under law.

We received requests from two committees to loosen current membership requirements to permit the appointment of members who are not Friends or members of PYM. After careful consideration, we concluded that these requests are not appropriate at this time and they were not approved.

We considered a minute from Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting proposing that PYM use the term "impending climate crisis" when speaking of climate change. After a presentation in support of this minute from a representative of the quarter, we concluded that any such change should first be considered by the Climate Witness Stewards. That consideration is ongoing.

We approved a recommendation from Quaker Life Council to standardize terms of service on councils, committees and granting groups to three years and to limit to two the number of consecutive terms that may be served. We also approved a recommendation from the General

Secretary that standardizes the end dates of terms to occur at Annual Sessions and states how terms are to be determined for appointments that occur between Annual Sessions.

Finally, we approved a proposal from staff that we collect demographic information regarding council members. Doing so will permit PYM to provide aggregate data on diversity and make councils aware of their own demographics. This will allow us to focus on how well we are representing our full community in our governance structure.

Faithfully submitted,

Jim Waddington, Clerk



Quaker Life Council Report to Spring Continuing Sessions

Since last reporting to Fall Continuing Sessions, Quaker Life Council has continued to work to clarify procedures and responsibilities of the Council, and worked to enhance understanding of and relationship with the committees under our care. The council is pleased to report that support for Sessions Coordinating Committee has been undertaken, and is grateful to Susanna Davidson, former co-clerk, for assuming the clerking of that group. We express gratitude to Cathleen Marion for her service as co-clerk for the past three years, and note that she has agreed to remain on the committee as a valued member, bringing her understanding of the group's history over the last several years and her dedication to the success of sessions. The council is also striving to achieve clarity about how best to support Program Committee as that body undertakes responsibilities for the stewardship and support of many programs of the yearly meeting. Ministry and Care Committee continues shepherding Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports and reports a significant upswing in receipt of reports from monthly meetings, even at this early date. More active participation by the Council with collaboratives bringing questions of policy for consideration means that the Council is in better touch with the work for which it carries overarching responsibility. The schedule of reports from committees, has been useful to help the Council maintain awareness of the ongoing work, which proceeds under our care.

As I close, I want to offer a little bit of a commercial message for your information. Friends may not be aware that while Nominating Council brings forward Friends for service on the Councils, Quaker Life Council carries responsibility for helping to bring friends with appropriate gifts and interests to the work of the committees under the Quaker Life Council's care. If you are a Friend, or know one, who might have the gifts and the interest to serve the yearly meeting please feel free to bring that name to Quaker Life Council's attention. Also members of the Council strive to know the interests and gifts of a broad range of friends, we always need the eyes and ears of others in the yearly meeting to make sure that we are bringing forward people who have the needed gifts and desire to serve.

Submitted by Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch Interim Clerk, on behalf of the Council



A Minute of Concern from Caln Quarterly Meeting on Christian Nationalism

As Americans and Quakers, we are alarmed by the Christian Nationalism movement, which falsely asserts that the United States was founded as a specifically Christian nation; that it is necessary to be a Christian to be a true American; and that Christianity should thus be favored and actively supported by the state. In truth, the right of freedom of conscience, assured by the separation of church and state, is enshrined in the First Amendment. Christian Nationalism movement ultimately seeks to erase that boundary. This goal is now being overtly promoted by a number of current office holders and candidates for office. It is a grave threat to freedom of conscience and threatens to incite strife between Americans of diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic heritages.

We affirm the right to the free, peaceful expression of religious conscience in all its diversity, and call upon Friends to seek common ground with our fellow citizens. We therefore encourage Friends to inform themselves about the dangerous goals and methods of Christian Nationalism. We further ask that this Meeting, all Quakers, and all citizens, make clear to their government representatives — by phone, text, email, letter, and in the voting booth— our rejection of the divisive doctrine of Christian Nationalism.