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2 **Philadelphia Yearly Meeting**  
3 **Called Session Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business**  
4 **Arch Street Meeting House**  
5 **Saturday, June 24, 2017**

6 The Called Session of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of  
7 Friends convened Saturday, June 24, at 10 A.M., at Arch Street Meeting House,  
8 Philadelphia, PA, to conduct business before the yearly meeting regarding the living  
9 into the 2015 January Minute on addressing racism in the yearly meeting and beyond.

10 After a period of opening worship, Clerk, Penny Colgan-Davis (Germantown MM)  
11 greeted us and introduced the officers: Alternate Clerks: Alison Anderson (Central  
12 Philadelphia MM); Amy Keitzman (West Philadelphia MM & Central Philadelphia  
13 MM); Recording Clerk: John Lavin (Birmingham MM), and General Secretary,  
14 Christie Duncan-Tessmer (Chestnut Hill MM). The Clerk of the Called Session  
15 Planning Sprint: Emily Blanck (Mickleton MM) was also on the facing bench; voice  
16 to text captioning was provided by Ashley Livits.

17 Visitors stood and introduced themselves: Sharon Smith from Southern Appalachian  
18 Yearly Meeting and Association, Hoot Williams from Friends of Jesus Fellowship and  
19 New York Yearly Meeting. Attenders from the yearly meeting stood and introduced  
20 themselves: Fran Sheldon of Providence MM, Chris Hanson of Fallsington Meeting,  
21 Meg Phillips of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Joyce and Sarah Ennis of  
22 Gwynedd Meeting, Sarah Yanuck of Green Street Meeting and a Quaker Voluntary  
23 Service fellow, and Robert Peters of Germantown.

24 **Introduction**

25 Emily Blanck (Mickleton MM), Clerk of the Called Session Planning Sprint was  
26 introduced and reviewed the proposed schedule of work for the day. She emphasized  
27 that we are seeking and living into the Spirit and we are following a road that is still  
28 under construction. She urged patience and love of one another as we struggle to build  
29 that road. The body has learned a lot, including some painful things that we seek to  
30 change.

31 Friends returned to worship and expressed in both prayer and in singing their deepest  
32 desire to find our path beyond the weeds of racism with our openness to the Spirit and  
33 through our Love. We must stop patting ourselves on the back for the work of the few  
34 Friends who have stood up against slavery, discrimination or hate and as a body  
35 rededicate ourselves each day to be the kind of Friends God wants us to be. Friends

36 wanted the water troubled: we must shake ourselves out of complacency and trust that  
37 God will see us through.

38 A Friend related her story as a Young Friend, her desire to go to summer school, and  
39 how much she grew through PYM's program and its counselors. It was a loving and  
40 trusting relationship that she wishes for all our children. She did not understand the  
41 changes and was very concerned about the effects. The changes to staff seemed  
42 unilateral to her and she questioned if the way it was before was truly broken.

43 Another said that process has not addressed the concerns that this called session was  
44 organized for. When Friends Journal asked for people of color to tell their stories, they  
45 felt retribution for giving those stories. The Friend declared love for everyone present  
46 and that we can fix this; we are being held in prayer around the world; we can find a  
47 way to make it work.

48 A Friend asked the body for some tangible things that we can do, make it have some  
49 teeth. Lions carry their offspring with their teeth. We need actions with "loving teeth."

## 50 **Small Groups**

51 Friends then moved to sharing in small groups to listen, to speak, and to hold the other  
52 Friends in their group in the Light. When requested by the Clerk, Friends shared the  
53 following responses out of small groups:

54 In some groups, there was a lack of knowledge of the situation at Upper Dublin and a  
55 need for more information. Others spoke with members of Upper Dublin Meeting and,  
56 while they disagreed, felt that the members cared and felt that a resolution could be  
57 found.

58 Another group shared a story that was interpreted four different ways among their  
59 group of four people, with each having a sliver of the truth. The whole truth only  
60 reveals itself by working through the situation. If the body "outs" someone for being  
61 "at fault," the conversation ends. We must listen to others who are marginalized if we  
62 are truly interested in making ourselves whole.

63 A Friend reported having personally witnessed racism at Upper Dublin. The meeting  
64 speaks of the problem as a problem of process, but the Friend felt it is really about a  
65 Black woman refusing to be subservient and that is racism and "process violence."  
66 Another Friend personally witnessed open mocking, telling that Friend to shut up. She  
67 asked where is God in that? Where are Friends principles? Where is their respect of  
68 others?

69 After a brief time of centering worship, Friends adjourned, intending to return after  
70 lunch.

## 71 **Afternoon Session**

72 Lane Taylor (Plumstead MM) welcomed Friends back from lunch and read the 2015  
73 Minute of Action, approved by PYM. Since the yearly meeting committed to move  
74 forward in addressing racism, we have struggled to move forward together. Friends  
75 were asked the following query:

76 **“In this moment in our history as a country and as a yearly meeting, and given**  
77 **our minute of action from January 2015 and our query used at the 2015 fall**  
78 **Continuing Sessions, what is the Holy Spirit calling us to do together as a faith**  
79 **community to heal from our own racism and to dismantle the structural**  
80 **racism/white supremacy in our beloved yearly meeting?”**

81 Friends responses included:

82 All Americans were raised under the notion of white supremacy, i.e., to have white  
83 people at the center and in control. Indigenous people to this land and people of  
84 color’s place has been that of being owned and controlled. We have been raised up in  
85 this, and all of our systems and structures were formed by it. We must know and  
86 understand this if we are serious about addressing our minute. If all Friends  
87 understand that the lens we look through is tainted with the notion of white  
88 supremacy, we can begin to understand that disruption of the status quo may disrupt  
89 our flawed lens and still be true to the Spirit.

90 It was noted that Friends seem to have a problem with people of color being vocal and  
91 direct and a disbelief in what they say. Friends should be mindful of this when  
92 listening to a Friend of Color’s story. A Friend implored the body to witness the pain  
93 we are inflicting and that healing is not always gentle nor does it set boundaries. We  
94 can hold Upper Dublin in our hearts and still say: “No, you may not treat a Friend in  
95 this manner.”

96 Friends have been hurt by racism. It hurts standing up and naming it, but imagine  
97 living it. The body is playing out a pattern that begins when real change begins to  
98 become a reality. Efforts to move forward and go deeper are often met with the  
99 reaction: “Hell no!” PYM experienced moments like this last year, and it has  
100 continued. This is a rut that our yearly meeting must break out of and drag concerns of  
101 racism out into the Light.

102 Multiple Friends suggested endorsing the following Green Street Monthly Meeting  
103 minute:

104 **March 22, 2017**

105 **To the Leadership of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting**  
106

107 **With respect, deep caring and continued affection, Green Street Monthly Meeting**  
108 **announces to you that, at our March 19, 2017 Meeting for Worship with Attention to**  
109 **Business, after long and prayerful consideration, we approved withholding our covenant**  
110 **contribution to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) of \$30,000.**  
111

112 **We are led to take this action because we cannot support a retreat from seeking racial**  
113 **justice. We ask that PYM put an immediate pause to the recent staffing and**  
114 **reorganization changes to make use of all its available resources for an enquiry. We ask**  
115 **that PYM will share with its constituent monthly meetings the process by which it made its**  
116 **decisions and share the implications of those decisions for changing the direction of PYM**  
117 **from the vision that we corporately hold.**  
118

119 **We also feel called to ask that an enquiry be made into the culture of the PYM workplace**  
120 **and its structure, which has resulted in hostility toward truthfully confronting the**  
121 **imperfections in racial awareness to which all of us are subject. We feel called to live into a**  
122 **new way of being in which we trust our African American members who have responded to**  
123 **Quaker expressions of interest in racial justice and who have been willing to instruct us.**  
124

125 **We specifically express our support for our valued member, Marille Thomas, and ask that**  
126 **the reductions in her employment be halted and her previous compensation be**  
127 **reinstated. We commend her to you for her competency in her work and for her actions,**  
128 **prompted by love and hope, to give guidance to broaden our racial understanding. We**  
129 **cherish her clarity and courage and the valuable resource she is for us in our meeting and**  
130 **in the larger world of Quakers. We deplore that she has experienced a painful lack of**  
131 **respect while employed in our Quaker institution.**  
132

133 **We ask that the supervisory committees of the General Secretary, which should be**  
134 **supplemented, examine with the General Secretary her ability to succeed in her role.**  
135

136 **We ask that a climate of safety and transparency be employed in all aspects of the enquiry**  
137 **and that those entrusted to conduct the enquiry include a broad representation of Friends,**  
138 **including Friends of Color, from inside and outside the structure of PYM.**  
139

140 **We also cannot support a retreat from wholeheartedly serving our youth.**  
141

142 **Green Street will review the situation at PYM and make a decision about reinstating its gift**  
143 **at a later date.**  
144

145 **JoAnn Seaver, Clerk of Green Street Meeting**

146

147 Friends received the minute from Green Street with appreciation but, but after some  
148 deliberation, were not in unity to endorse the minute. The clerk of Green Street  
149 Meeting shared that she felt some changes have been made since the minute was  
150 written and looked forward to more. The clerk offered to meet with her to discuss the  
151 situation further, and the Green Street Meeting clerk agreed. It was pointed out that  
152 the minute was a product of Green Street Meeting's careful discernment and that we  
153 had an opportunity to create a minute that grew out of the discernment of those  
154 present.

155 A member from Green Street Meeting movingly shared her experiences both as a  
156 Friend and as a member of the yearly meeting staff. Her plea was to not back away  
157 from this difficult work but to embrace it as spirit-led.

158 The Clerk then asked Friends to search for a way forward to address the situation at  
159 Upper Dublin. Avis Wanda McClinton and other Friends visiting have declared their  
160 personal experiences of racist behavior. A Friend suggested refusing to accept Upper  
161 Dublin's covenant. Another suggested PYM affirm Avis Wanda McClinton as a  
162 member of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. A Friend proposed that a minute of censure  
163 of Upper Dublin be written. A Friend stated that while we all live under the cloud of  
164 racism, releasing a member from membership passed a threshold and PYM should not  
165 accept the removal of Avis Wanda McClinton from membership. We should ask  
166 Upper Dublin to reconsider. A Friend suggested a "sit in" at Upper Dublin.

167 A member from Upper Dublin disputed Friends assertions that their action was from a  
168 place of racism. She noted that most Friends present have not visited their meeting or  
169 know firsthand what has transpired and challenged the claim that the divide is based  
170 on the skin color of the member. She invited everyone to come and meet Friends in  
171 the monthly meeting and judge for themselves and not by posts on Facebook or  
172 secondhand information from someone else.

173 A Friend asked if anyone present believed that anyone on the outside of our walls  
174 cares about what we are doing today. While we are struggling here with white  
175 privilege inside PYM, we are not doing anything to address the racism in our culture  
176 that is all around us.

177 The Clerk felt that the body wanted to respond, but was unsure what that message is.  
178 She asked a group of Friends to take what was said in the Meeting and discern if there  
179 was a minute that the body is prepared to approve. Those Friends proposed the  
180 following minute:

181 **PYM knows that members of our body have experienced actions that are based**  
182 **on the racism which pervades our society. We know of two recent incidents that**  
183 **occurred in the staffing change in the PYM office and the removal of a member**  
184 **from Upper Dublin meeting. We acknowledge that these are just two incidents**  
185 **that have happened and are not an anomaly in the yearly meeting. PYM**  
186 **acknowledges that these incidents are a pattern of systemic racism in the**  
187 **community that has lasted centuries. The systemic racism is not a part of the**  
188 **Religious Society of Friends, rather it is endemic to the culture that we live in, in**  
189 **this country. The Body of PYM bears the responsibility for these incidents. We**  
190 **apologize and acknowledge that we are responsible for the impact that these**  
191 **incidents have had on specific members of our community. We seek to use this as**  
192 **an opportunity to live into the fullness of the blessed community and recognize**  
193 **that we are not there at that beloved community. We, as a body, commit**  
194 **ourselves to specific actions, such as undertaking an institutional multi-cultural**  
195 **audit.**

196 Initially, the Clerk read the body as being in unity with the minute, but was quickly  
197 corrected by others at the Clerks' table. She apologized and called for more worship  
198 and, after a period of discernment, asked again if the body approved the proposed  
199 minute. Friends were not in unity with the minute. Interest was expressed in what an  
200 institutional multicultural audit is, and the Clerk promised to create a document  
201 describing the various forms these "audits" take.

202 The Clerk thanked all for their time, as the day had run almost two hours past the  
203 announced ending, and for the commitment all Friends had brought to this very  
204 difficult work. She acknowledged that Friends had experienced deep conflict today,  
205 but also recognized the opportunity to listen to others. We acknowledge the hurt and  
206 brokenness our actions have caused and commit to work to live into the Spirit and the  
207 love that radiates from it.

208 After a period of worship, Friends adjourned, intending to meet again for Annual  
209 Sessions in July.

210 Respectfully submitted,

211 John Lavin

212



# Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

*of the Religious Society of Friends*

## Report from Penny Colgan-Davis, PYM Clerk, on the June 2017 Called Meeting

Dear Friends,

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for joining us last Saturday at our Called Session and for all of the prayers that were sent our way from those who could not be with us. While the day was long and intense and sometimes difficult, it was also filled with love and hope and deep commitment to learn from our past wrongdoings in order to move closer to the beloved community we all yearn for. While we are all not on the same page or of one mind yet, we feel we have drawn closer together in our wish to support each other's transformation and we see a new direction forming for our yearly meeting. That direction, simply stated, is that we have two *huge* tasks ahead of us:

1. To educate and train ourselves to *see and hear racism* when it rears its ugly head, whether in our personal interactions or in our institutional structures and practices, and to develop the courage and skill to address it effectively, with love, *immediately*.
2. To get out into our community, our city, our world and work effectively to end all violence and injustice. Our neighbors, fellow citizens and all those impacted by injustice *need* us to be present, daring and forever committed to this work.

We will soon send out the minutes from the Called Session for review and comment, but, in the meantime, here is some of what we attended to.

We began with open worship, filled with many messages about how racism can be seen in our interactions, in how we treat each other and in the very structures we have created within our faith communities. We learned that most of the structures our religious and political societies have created are there to maintain the power and supremacy of white people and that, throughout our history, these structures have caused great harm and damage. Our shared work is to *see* those structures and patterns of behavior for what they are and to transform

ourselves, our interactions, our structures and practices and our way of being in the world in profound ways. These were messages of both deep sadness and great hope, and they moved us all.

We then met in triads, using an activity arrangement by Friend Niyonu Spann that she calls, *Heart Listening*. The *Heart Listening* activity is based on a similar design that she first experienced with Master Teacher, Darya Funches. Friend Amanda Kemp also uses this activity in her anti-racism work. Each person has an opportunity to speak without interruption, while one other in the triad listens deeply and the last person holds them both in the light. Many Friends expressed deep appreciation for this time to listen and learn.

After lunch, we met as the body in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Our Community, focused on the query: In this moment in our history as a country and as a yearly meeting, and given our minute of action from January 2015 (attached in Appendix A) and our query used at the 2015 fall Continuing Sessions (attached in Appendix A), what is the Holy Spirit calling us to do together as a faith community, to heal from our own racism and to dismantle the structural racism/white supremacy in our beloved yearly meeting?

We labored with two minutes, one brought forward for endorsement from Green Street Friends Meeting (attached in Appendix B) by one of its members. While we did not reach unity, PYM leadership and the clerk of Green Street Meeting agreed to meet to work on the concerns contained in the minute that still need resolution.

The desire for a second minute rose up from the body, one that would speak to Upper Dublin Meeting's treatment of its only African American member who has been released from membership. A small group adjourned to create a minute for consideration. This minute is attached in Appendix C.

In the end, the body could not reach unity, and a commitment was made by the leadership that we would continue to work on it at Annual Sessions. Please address comments on this minute at <http://www.pym.org/called-meeting-reflections/>. There was support expressed for the Multi-cultural Institutional Audit mentioned in the proposed minute, although many present did not know what that meant. The Clerk asked for permission, which was granted, to create an explanation of such an audit and to begin work should the body approve moving ahead at Annual Sessions.

A dominant theme arose throughout the day: When a Friend of Color states that he/she/they has/have been treated in a racist manner, it is our responsibility to believe the report and to address it immediately. Many times over, Friends of Color reported not being believed, which

only deepened the hurt and damage. As one Friend said, “We must look for the sliver of truth in such statements and act.”

It is clear to us that all of our meetings, and PYM have work to do. We need to continue to educate ourselves about structural, interpersonal and institutional racism and to help Friends develop the courage and skills to address it effectively. We invite Friends with expertise in this area to join us in this work. We also need to strengthen PYM resources to help meetings when they are in conflict. No meeting and no person should have to face racism alone; we are a community and we should stand together to address it whenever it rises up. Finally, we all need to conduct an inventory of our practices to ensure that they are inviting, inclusive and transparent. That is one point of a multi-cultural audit.

We leave you with two queries we hope you will bring to your meeting and that the meeting’s response will be posted on the PYM website to educate us all:

1. What are we, as a meeting, doing to identify and address racism *within our meeting*?
2. What are we, as a meeting, doing to end injustice and violence in our communities, our city, our world?

We hope your responses will be specific so that other meetings, with a will but not a way, can learn strategies that might be effective. You can post them at <http://www.pym.org/called-meeting-reflections/>.

Our thanks to the Called Sessions Planning Sprint, Emily Blanck, Joan Broadfield, Penny Colgan-Davis, Mary Crauderauff, Bob Dockhorn, Melanie Douty Snipes, Amy Keitzman, Carter Nash, Lane Taylor, Inspira Williams, and Sarah Willie LeBreton, for their hard work to create a day of learning, to the PYM staff for their endless logistical support, to the Arch Street Meetinghouse staff for their loving hospitality and to all who came in person or in spirit. Our time together was powerful. We shared, we listened, we learned, and we have committed to our own transformation and that of our faith communities. That is a day well spent!

## **Appendix A**

### **Minute of Action Approved at the January 2015 Called Meeting**

Friends tested and affirmed the work of our clerks and our elders, since being tasked during Annual Sessions in July 2014, to help discern a way forward in addressing many -isms including-racism, sexism, genderism and classism. Friends also heartily affirmed that as a Yearly Meeting we:

- Commit to increase our consciousness as Friends about the intersection of privilege and race in our culture and spiritual community. We know our knowledge is often limited by our own experiences and that we have much to learn from each other and from outside resources.
- Commit to move forward with our entire community. The yearly meeting is the community of all our individual Friends and monthly meetings and this work needs to be done with the involvement of all of us.
- Commit to integrate this work into what we do in an ongoing way at the yearly meeting level. We want this work to become part of the fabric of what we do whenever we get together as yearly meeting members and attenders.

### **Query Used at the fall 2015 Continuing Sessions**

What is God calling PYM Quakers to do next to end racism and white supremacy in the Religious Society of Friends and beyond?

## Appendix B

March 22, 2017

To the Leadership of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

With respect, deep caring and continued affection, Green Street Monthly Meeting announces to you that, at our March 19, 2017 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, after long and prayerful consideration, we approved withholding our covenant contribution to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) of \$30,000.

We are led to take this action because we cannot support a retreat from seeking racial justice. We ask that PYM put an immediate pause to the recent staffing and reorganization changes to make use of all its available resources for an enquiry. We ask that PYM will share with its constituent monthly meetings the process by which it made its decisions and share the implications of those decisions for changing the direction of PYM from the vision that we corporately hold.

We also feel called to ask that an enquiry be made into the culture of the PYM workplace and its structure, which has resulted in hostility toward truthfully confronting the imperfections in racial awareness to which all of us are subject. We feel called to live into a new way of being in which we trust our African American members who have responded to Quaker expressions of interest in racial justice and who have been willing to instruct us.

We specifically express our support for our valued member, Marille Thomas, and ask that the reductions in her employment be halted and her previous compensation be reinstated. We commend her to you for her competency in her work and for her actions, prompted by love and hope, to give guidance to broaden our racial understanding. We cherish her clarity and courage and the valuable resource she is for us in our meeting and in the larger world of Quakers. We deplore that she has experienced a painful lack of respect while employed in our Quaker institution.

We ask that the supervisory committees of the General Secretary, which should be supplemented, examine with the General Secretary her ability to succeed in her role.

We ask that a climate of safety and transparency be employed in all aspects of the enquiry and that those entrusted to conduct the enquiry include a broad representation of Friends, including Friends of Color, from inside and outside the structure of PYM.

We also cannot support a retreat from wholeheartedly serving our youth.

Green Street will review the situation at PYM and make a decision about reinstating its gift at a later date.

JoAnn Seaver, Clerk of Green Street Meeting

## **Appendix C**

**The below minute was considered, but not adopted, at the Called Session of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting held on Saturday, June 24, 2017.**

PYM knows that members of our body have experienced actions that are based on the racism which pervades our society. We know of two recent incidents that occurred in the staffing change in the PYM office, and the removal of a member from Upper Dublin meeting. We acknowledge that these are just two incidents that have happened and are not an anomaly in the Yearly Meeting.

Pym acknowledges that these incidents are a pattern of systemic racism in the community that has lasted centuries. The systemic racism is not a part of the religious society of friends, rather it is endemic to the culture that we live in, in this country.

The body of PYM bears the responsibility for these incidents. We apologize and acknowledge that we are responsible for the impact that these incidents have had on specific members of our community. We seek to use this as an opportunity to live into the fullness of the blessed community, and recognize that we are not there at that beloved community.

We, as a body, commit ourselves to specific actions. Such as undertaking an institutional multi-cultural audit.