

## Continuing Session – Eco-Justice Collaborative – March 23, 2021

Jean Marie Prestwidge Barch opened the session, reminding Friends that this is the beginning of our Continuing Sessions. Our Zoom interface allows us to connect across time and space in a different way. Our gathering tonight will allow us to season this work, which will also be on Saturday's agenda. We settled into worship, with some 50 Friends in attendance.

S. Boone Murphy shared the land acknowledgement amid our worship, calling us to recognize the resilience of the native people of this land. Friends expressed that this served as a reminder of how limited our time on earth truly is, and how important it is to be good stewards of this earth while we're here.

Pat Finley introduced the session by clarifying that the purpose of the Eco Justice collaborative is not to supplant the current YM wide witness on racism. Rather, the group believes that work toward eco-justice is aligned with antiracist work. Another concern Friends have raised is that there is a lack of specificity in the goals associated with the Collaborative; this is because the group feels that there are a multiplicity of concerns to work on.

Olivia Brangan, Community Outreach Coordinator for PYM, provided an overview of the technology we are using this evening.

Pat Finley then introduced the members of the Eco-Justice Collaborative. Bruce Birchard (Central Phila), Ruth Darlington (Medford), Ed Dreby (Providence), Pamela Haines (Central Phila), Paula Cline (Westtown), Steve Loughin (Haverford), Margaret Mansfield (Providence), Kathryn Metzker (Haverford), Liz Robinson (Central Phila), Rita Varley (Central Phila), Richard Whiteford (Downington)

Pat then opened the floor for questions. Friends asked to hear the minute that the Eco Justice Collaborative had brought to the YM. After hearing the minute read, a Friend raised a concern that there is no concrete action being asked of the body through this minute, and in absence of that, this minute may not attract widespread attention, which would be of significant value to the work. A member of the Collaborative clarified that the purpose of the minute is to identify what steps other Meetings are taking, since we don't currently know what actions are being undertaken throughout the Meeting. **The minute also gives authority to YM staff to speak publicly on the issue as a matter of religious conviction.**

Another Friend asked the Collaborative to share how they have responded to Friends expressing concerns about this minute displacing the YM wide witness on racism. This Friend feels that the minute articulates the intersectionality of these concerns. Collaborative Friends responded that there had not been a direct response.

Another Friend expressed gratitude for the way the minute articulates the urgency of this concern. This Friend inquired as to how the YM would be held accountable to this minute. A Collaborative member responded that the accountability is to Spirit, and one's relationship with Spirit. Another member shared that their monthly meeting added the requirement of a report to their own minute, to assist in holding themselves accountable.

Another Friend asked to hear more about how this minute supports our antiracism work. This Friend lifted up a concern about the cost of greener energies, which often makes these alternatives inaccessible. Might we be called as a YM to assist in making these alternative energies more affordable for our neighbors? A Collaborative member agreed that solving this issue requires addressing policy at a higher level, to make these resources available to lower income people.

**Another Collaborative member clarified that endorsing this minute would represent a commitment to engage in corporate discernment each year as a YM to determine what concrete action we might undertake. The minute implies that ongoing discernment at the YM and MM level.**

Another Collaborative member shared several examples of how climate change has historically and continues to disproportionately impact communities of color. This Friend also highlighted that addressing the climate crisis would create many good paying jobs for low-skilled workers.

Another Friend reiterated the concern about the lack of clear recommendations in the minute. This Friend asserted that Friends might benefit from suggestions about the kind of advocacy that would be useful, and the nature of individual actions that would be helpful, such as where to invest our money. Collaborative members responded that their monthly newsletter indicates requests for action, and agreed that they might be able to provide suggestions about where to invest. **We heard this commitment also puts the resources of the YM behind this work both at the YM and MM level.**

Another Collaborative member described the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and the legislative advocacy involved in trying to get Pennsylvania into the Initiative. This Initiative would generate significant funds through carbon capture that would support cleaner energy initiatives to promote clean air. There is more information about RGGI in the April Eco-Justice Collaborative newsletter. Senate Bill 119 and House Bill 637 are the bills that prevent the Department of Environmental Protection from introducing additional regulations; Pennsylvania Friends so moved should reach out to their representatives to encourage them to vote them down.

Eco Justice Collaborative members encouraged Friends to check out the webinars on their website, particularly for Friends who asked questions about investments this evening.

With gratitude, sending prayers to Fran Beer and her family, we closed with worship.

Respectfully, Kri Burkander, recording clerk