

**Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Monthly Joint Council Meeting
Saturday, June 13, 2026
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

Attending: Carol Alpern, Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch (Clerk, Quaker Life Council), Meg Barney (Recording Clerk), Emily Blanck (Recording Clerk), Kate Bregman, Terry Christensen, Susan Claggett, Terry Cooke, Jeanne Elberfeld (Clerk, Administrative Council), Cecilia Filaurio (Staff, Executive Administrator), Tad Filippone, Lisa Stewart Garrison, Bryn Hammarstrom, Kruskal Hewitt, John Marquette, Chris Mohr (Staff, General Secretary), Bethann Morgan, Nikki Mosgrove (Presiding Clerk), Debbie Murray-Sheppard, F. Salvador Orellana (Staff, Deputy General Secretary), David Park (Staff, Chief Financial Officer), Kathryn Pettus, George Schaefer (Clerk, Nominating Council), Cathy Toner, Deb Wood, Tom Zemaitis (Treasurer), Frank Barch (Clerk, Governance Advisory Committee), Bruce Haines (Governance Advisory Committee), and Terri Whiteford (Elder).

Regrets: Carleton Crispin, Andrew Anderson, Serita Spadoni, Selden Smith (Rising Clerk), Robert Greene, Burt Dallas, Chuck Devers, Jessy Eaby, Michael Moulton,

I. **Worship:** Jean-Marie Barch opened us in worship.

II. **Consent Agenda:** Friends considered the minutes brought forward for the Consent Agenda. Friends approved the Consent Agenda: April Personnel Committee, February Property Advisory Committee, May Finance Committee, April and May Program Support Minutes, and April and May Granting Committee Minutes. We will discuss more about the Pension Plan during the committee reports including a correction to the May Personnel minutes.

II. **General Secretary Report:** Chris Mohr provided a thorough report about his work in the last month as General Secretary. He shared that for Human Resources, they will be using a less-expensive consultant service from iSolved who PYM already contracts with, in a one-year agreement, to review the Human Resources needs at PYM. Tara Rubinstein and Lily Austin will each be leaving PYM to pursue new opportunities. Tara will remain through Annual Sessions. Chris is working with the staff to develop new strategies of accountability and connection to work together in a shared vision. They submitted their grant to the Lilly Endowment to deepen young Adult spiritual growth a day early. This experience also has grown ties with other Quaker groups who have applied. PYM has gotten positive media attention recently.

He is excited about the “Friends Experiment”, a gathering of people with common interests to share ideas for a one-hour Zoom. One person recommended adding a budget event. He shared his experiences and plans to go to other meetings or Quarters in New Jersey. On July 3, 2026, Chris will attend an event at the Constitution Center when Pope Leo receives the Freedom Medal.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Governance Advisory Committee: Proposal to Merge Councils

Frank Barch, clerk of the Governance Advisory Committee, and Bruce Haines attended to listen to feedback regarding the recommendation concerning the Joint Council Experiment. Friends entered into a rich discussion. One Friend asked about the recommendations for the size of the council. One new aspect will be that Quarter Clerks or their proxy will be *invited* to the meetings to *serve* in an ex-officio capacity. A Friend asked about their decision making role and the new name of the group. Frank responded the new name is, “Council.” Generally, ex-officio members are contributors but not a part of the finding of unity. We were invited to explore the definition of ex-officio. One person suggested that ex-officio members should have full authority. Another pointed out that this might undermine the nominating of people, the selection process of members and the term limits. We could limit their time on council. Friends were asked to consider the boundaries for council members and staff. Another suggested that Quarter Clerks could come a few times a year. The Clerk asked us to consider the purposes of bringing Quarter Clerks to join the Council meeting - to bring information, take away information or be part of the process? One friend suggested that the general PYM body does not understand the work of the Councils. This new proposal could be an opportunity to provide education joined with an invitation for more people to join. Another friend feels like this is “opening the doors and windows of the church.” There were more ideas about how to demystify the work of PYM, and include more people, which was needed because of the difficulties of finding full nominating slates from the Quarters. There was a caution that this structure, in contrast to the representative model, should bring people together who are committed to the decision making. Someone recommended that the Quarter clerks be invited to attend from Quarters that don’t have nominating members. There is concern about the workload for the Quarterly clerk. It is important to have personal connections to bring people in and a need to have their perspective on the council, and information about what is spiritually driving their corner of the Yearly meeting. On another issue, someone asked about the term limits for clerks, as the document separates the term of the clerk from their membership to council. The Governance Advisory committee said that this is important to allow for full growth into the clerkship and retain institutional knowledge. Going back to the composition of the council, Friends considered how to solve the issues of access to the council, the importance of quarterly representation, and to discover ideas to connect with quarters more richly. A person brought up the skill sets that PYM needs. Recognizing and

honoring the skill sets of Friends will ensure the Council has a balance of representation. This proposal will come back to conversation at Annual Sessions. One friend noted that friends with gifts in practical skills almost always come with spiritual depth as well. We could meet in the breadth of the PYM geography, as well, to connect to the Quarters

The clerk asked if this proposal is ready to bring to the body. Friends felt there was some 'buffing' that needed to happen, but there was unity to recommend moving to a single council. Next we can then move the Council to enter into the work of how to accommodate the desires that have been expressed today to broaden our connection across the Yearly Meeting, especially the Quarters. **At Annual Sessions, the proposal will be presented to move from the current structure to a single Council.**

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. AI Policy

With AI functionality becoming increasingly embedded in software & the internet, there is a growing need for a documented policy to regulate usage of AI tools by PYM staff members and by governance groups. This encompasses quality of work, data and security concerns, ethics, and environmental impact. Friends shared a range of thoughts and concerns. A code of ethics would be an important place to start and drive decisions about AI; this could reflect the environmental, spiritual, personal, and social costs of AI. **A sprint will be created to develop this policy.**

B. Committee Appointments and Reappointments

Council is responsible for peopling the Committees. For the past few years, Clerks of Councils carried this work. Friends reviewed the current list of committee numbers to see the vacancies. In July, Council will consider a roster of committees and committee reappointments. Every Council member should feel the weight to add people to the committees in the next month.

C. Appoint At-large Nominating Council Members/Draft Nominating Report for Annual Sessions

The Nominating Council shared its report including adding Burt Dallas as Administrative Council Clerk and Selden Smith as Presiding Clerk. A PYM rising clerk and a PYM recording clerk still need to be found. Other names are listed in the report that will be brought to Annual Sessions. We will review and approve these names in July.

VI. Approve Minutes

Friends approved the Minutes to this point.

V. COMMITTEES

Personnel minutes of May 14, 2026 will be returned to the committee to be adjusted to better explain that the Pension Plan reimbursement to PYM is for the plan's administrative costs and to clarify that the reimbursement is separate from the Pension plan amendments.

A. Finance Committee

1. Tom Zemaitis shared the recommended amendments to the Pension Plan. They will have no impact on current beneficiaries.

In 2020, the PYM Pension Plan extended a one-time buyout to employees as a lump sum within a limited window of time. Amendment 2 permits the use of a lump sum window. The defined benefit plan was formally closed to new participants in February 2021 and switched to a separate 403(b) plan with individual employee contributions and employer match. Amendment 3 to the plan memorializes the process by which the plan was frozen and clarifies the rights of those members who still use it. Amendment 3 also keeps all participating organizations who were offering it in 2020 to remain financial sponsors of the Pension until all monies are paid. **The Council approved the amendments.**

2. Covenant Sprint

The Covenant Giving Sprint report was shared. The sprint offered four queries to guide discernment on covenant giving:

1. What is your understanding of the role and purpose of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and its representation of our monthly/quarterly meeting, and wider Quaker community?
2. How does our covenant relationship contribute to the life of the monthly/quarterly meeting and deepen our connections across our yearly meeting?
3. What are the challenges to and opportunities for enhancing the covenant giving of our meeting, and what are we doing to address these?
4. How are we contributing to the covenant relationship with the yearly meeting? Examples include attending programs, volunteering, sharing news, coming together at sessions, financial support, etc.

The Queries are crafted in the manner of the queries used to form Spiritual State of the Meeting reports and responses. The queries can provide a way for Monthly or Quarterly Meetings to consider their spiritual grounding for their financial decision making and be a part of the wider Quaker community. A friend noted that Query Two is a question that comes from the benches, and asked whether it highlights the need for education. Friends expressed gratitude for the queries to help bring

opportunities for voices to share their insights. Chris shared his work to bring stronger education outwardly to the Yearly Meeting, and to perhaps bring together the queries that the Covenant Giving and MM/QM Role in Governance sprints are offering for discernment. A friend asked if this could be a new section in Faith and Practice. Another friend shared the strength of Query four to consider Quaker practice in the covenant. **We received the report with gratitude. The participants of the Sprint are relieved of their duty with gratitude.**

During the July meeting, we will discuss how to distribute the queries.

B. Personnel Committee

1. Child Safety Policy 2nd Reading: Chris Mohr shared the revised safety policy noting the guidance of Salvador, reviews by others, and editing by lawyers. The policy is materially the same as before. Once it is formalized and approved, it is important to share with the meetings and members. A friend recommended a small reordering or rewording of the sequence of reporting incidents of abuse. **The Child Safety policy was approved with slight changes.**

2. Ad-hoc Sessions Planning: Planning of sessions are proceeding. Please encourage Friends to attend Annual Sessions online, in person, or as a meeting. Nikki shared the basic outline of the business meeting agenda at Annual Sessions.

3. Ministry & Care Committee - Draft Spiritual State of the Yearly Meeting Report

The report on the Spiritual State of the Meeting is drafted and shared. They presented it differently than in the past. It will still be worked on over the next month. A friend asked how the Meeting reports will be shared at Sessions. They will be available online to read. Someone recommended simplifying the rich and dense paragraphs into highlights online and then linking to the full language for the reader to explore.

4. Listening Sessions Prior to Annual Sessions, on Joint Council's Transition from Experimental to Permanent: There was an intention to have a Breakout group to discuss the topic of Listening Sessions at Annual Sessions, but we are short on time today. So the clerks ask that we all consider the best way to offer Listening Sessions. The value of Listening Sessions is to enter into richer discernment. A person thought that if they're all on Zoom it may hinder engagement; it would be good to have something in person. It was recommended that there be a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) resource help to unpack the proposal in preparation for the listening sessions. We welcome Council members to send queries to the clerks to stimulate conversation during the Listening Sessions.

VI. SPRINTS

A. **Friends Counseling Service Sprint and Sessions Strategic Planning Sprint**

Chris recruited a few people to join both sprints, but more need to be found.

VII. News From Around the Yearly Meeting

- A. Wilmington MM had their annual Berry Festival, opening their doors, and offering food, fun, and community gathering. The Joint Quarterly Meeting of Concord and Western Quarter will be held next month.
- B. Abington Quarter is moving their October meeting to November permanently to free up space and time to celebrate World Quaker Day on Sunday, October 4th.
- C. Abington MM had a screening of "Becoming Benjamin Lay" in May.
- D. Southern Quarter has four meetings, two of which don't have clerks. They are very weak right now. They've met and worked together to figure out how to support each other and the Quarter in a revitalized spirit.
- E. Concord Quarter will have a called meeting to discuss what needs to be done at this moment about issues like ICE and voting rights. Soon Western Quarter will have a discussion of the pamphlet on Racial Wounding and Racial Justice.
- F. Norristown is having a presentation on ICE activity. Many members of Foulkeways, including non-Quakers, will attend.

VIII. Recap Public Communication

The recap will focus on Annual Sessions, highlighting the important discernment and value of Friends being together.

IX. Minutes were approved.

X. **POSTLUDE:** Council members attending in person are invited to stay for Arch Street Meeting House's production "A Quiet Roar: The Unparalleled Lives of Bayard Rustin & Sarah Mapps Douglass" at 12:30 pm.

An immersive performance will bridge the stories of Bayard Rustin and Sarah Mapps Douglass, two phenomenal Black Philadelphian Quakers who walked the halls of ASMH a century apart. Yet, both struggled with racial injustice, political activism, and their experiences within the Quaker faith.

This 45-minute interpretive program brings their writings and experiences back to life, highlighting the often-overlooked intersections of race, faith, and freedom.

Launching Memorial Day 2026, the program will run on Saturday mornings and afternoons from May 25, 2026, to Labor Day, September 7, 2026. <https://www.historicismh.org/events-at-asmh/aquietroar-6-13-2026-pm>