

**Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Monthly Joint Council Meeting
Saturday, October 10, 2026
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

Attendees: Mignon Adams, Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch (Clerk, Quaker Life Council), Frank Barch (Governance Advisory Committee), Meg Barney (Interim Recording Clerk), Emily Blanck (Recording Clerk), Annie Boggess, Kate Bregman, Terry Christensen, Susan Claggett, Terry Cooke, Burt Dallas (Clerk, Administrative Council), Cecilia Filauro (Staff, Executive Administrator), Tad Filippone, Gary Fosmire, Bryn Hammarstrom, Kruskal Hewitt, Barbara Kreider, Chris Mohr (Staff, General Secretary), Debbie Murray-Sheppard, F. Salvador Orellana (Staff, Deputy General Secretary), David Park (Staff, Chief Financial Officer), Kathryn Pettus, Nancy Robbins, George Salloom, George Schaefer (Clerk, Nominating Council), Anthony Stover (Elder), David Unkovic (Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust), and Deb Wood.

Regrets: Carol Alpern, Carleton Crispin, Jessy Eaby, Bethann Morgan, Michael Moulton, Selden Smith (Presiding Clerk), Serita Spadoni, and Tom Zemaitis (Treasurer).

I. Worship

George led opening worship with a reading from “Effective Prayer” by Agnes Tierney, about how turning instinctively to God is good for mind and spirit.

II. Consent Agenda

Council Members asked some clarifying questions and discussed the nature of the consent agenda. Prior to each Council Meeting, Friends are encouraged to read the materials in the Consent Agenda and send their questions to the appropriate Council clerk. Prior to seeking approval of the Consent Agenda, the clerk will ask if council members have any remaining questions. Any items that need further discussion will be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed later in the agenda for further review. Friends approved the Consent Agenda. Future Council meetings agendas will include a brief summary of this practice, as was done with previous agendas.

George reminded council members to fill out their conflict of interest form.

III. New Business

- A. The Council considered three new nominees to the Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust board. David Unkovic, Clerk, ASMH Preservation Trust board of directors, shared about the many updates to the Meeting House building, and

invited Friends to bring their own Meeting to ASMH for their meeting for worship and to receive a tour. He presented Sandra Williams, member of Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia; Hank Hallowell, member of Abington Monthly Meeting; and Thomas Sheridan, attender at MMFP. There was a brief discussion about the nominees. **The Council approved all three nominees to join the Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust Board.**

- B. September Council Retreat: The Council did not officially record the approval of a written minute for the decision to return to Cheyney University for 2027 Annual Sessions during the September Council Retreat. Also, Chris Mohr attended, although the notes stated that he did not. **The Council approved the written minute of the Council's September decision to return to Cheyney University for 2027 Annual Sessions.**

IV. General Secretary Report

Chris Mohr shared his report of his activities and initiatives since July, at the time of his last report.

- A. Because the Sessions Coordinating Committee was laid down, Simone Small Gellizeau, Director of Programs and Religious Life, developed three recommended themes for 2027 Sessions:
- What Love Requires (Elizabeth Hooton) "The Love I bear to the Souls of all Men, makes me willing to undergo whatever can be inflicted on me."
 - Where the Light Leads (Priscilla Cotton) Adapted from her exhortation to "keep to the light, love it, dwell in it... for it leads to God himself."
 - Let Our Lives Answer (Sarah Mapps Douglass) Inspired by her witness and challenge to Friends to live in accordance with the faith we profess.

The Council deliberated on these suggestions. One Friend felt that "Let our Lives Answer" responds well to last year's theme. Another Friend noted that the first quote included suffering, but did feel that it did reflect the integral nature of community in our work toward action. A Friend suggested that suffering is a part of life and that we can hold suffering and love together, because love has to accept all of life. Friends were favorable to and analyzed all three themes and how they reflect our faith at this moment. Some suggested mixing them, "Where the light leads, let our lives answer/speak." Chris recommended to let staff refine these themes without approval of Council. **The Council agreed to let staff refine the theme.**

- B. Chris provided an update on the DHS Lawsuit. As announced this summer, the US Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals turned down DOJ's appeal of our preliminary injunction. Therefore the "sensitive sites" policy continues to apply to worship spaces of PYM's affiliated meetings while the case continues to move ahead in the lower federal court.
- C. The staff is having great discussions on how to improve staff organization. Chris's goals, which he reviewed at the September retreat, will also be published with Joint Council materials on BoardSpot.
- D. Chris is visiting many Meetinghouses and Quarterly meetings. Friends appreciated his visits and the ways that his visits provided important information that supported meetings.
- E. He highlighted a few upcoming events: Friends Finding Friends, a monthly Zoom call on outreach starting 10/22; a discussion of One Pamphlet, One Yearly Meeting on 10/29; and Fall Continuing Sessions on 11/14.
- F. Chris asked the Council to consider approving an addendum to the Youth Housing Overnight Policy to empower the staff at overnight youth gatherings to make appropriate decisions regarding sleeping arrangements of non-binary and transgender youth. The staff members will communicate with parents and the youth, and document their decisions in any unclear situation. There was general support for the flexibility and the guardrails of the policy. One friend discussed the sensitivity of these issues in communicating with parents. The policy will return to Joint Council for approval after refinement.
- G. Chris also asked the Council to provide guidance and support on how PYM should sponsor Collaborative events financially from funds that the General Secretary has access to. This request arose after the Middle East Collaborative requested additional support for a speaker at Arch Street Meeting House on December 12, The Future of Peace, by Israeli and Palestinian authors. The Collaboratives are an element of our community, and can be a way to express our faith and support of our values. Chris believes this is a worthy program to support, because it will reflect the desire that members have called to speak on issues more publicly. He noted that this event supports not only peace and justice, but also the dignity and worth of every person. Council members offered support, and also asked questions of clarification. One member provided encouragement to have PYM prominently support Collaborative events that reflect our faith and serve as outreach.

V. Old Business

- A. Governance Advisory Committee: The Council received a revised proposal from the Governance Advisory Committee to reorganize the councils. Frank highlighted the differences from the earlier proposal, including that the combined council will be called PYM Council, the Nominating Committee will report directly to the body, “at-large members” of nominating committee were changed to “PYM Council representatives”, and clarifications were offered for how the tri-clerks could divide up their responsibilities. The Council discussed the revised proposal.
- B. A Friend asked how future Tri-Clerks would be identified. Would the Nominating Committee bring forward names for serving as tri-clerks directly to the body or first to the Council for approval and then to the body? George Schaefer reminded Friends that this is our current Nominating Council practice as described in the Governance Handbook. Some council members felt the tri-clerks are equal, “organic” members of the Council, whose work is to develop and implement the agenda. It was suggested that the Council recommend two clerks (not the Nominating Committee clerk who is one of the tri-clerks) and then take the names to the body for approval. However, this suggestion was not approved.
- C. Council determined that the revised proposal be returned to the Governance Advisory Committee for further revision to reflect this discussion. **It was agreed that edits can be sent to the Council members by email. It was hoped the work will move forward to enable the proposal to be brought to Fall Continuing Sessions for approval.**
- D. Approve Minutes To This Point: **The Council approved minutes to this point.**
- E. The Council shared minutes of appreciation filled with gratitude and appreciation for Friends who concluded their PYM Governance service: Chuck Devers, Cathy Toner, John Marquette, Andrew Anderson, and Robert Greene. Terry Cooke and Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch are working on a minute of appreciation for Jeanne Elberfeld that will be ready for Fall Continuing Sessions. **Friends approve sending these minutes of appreciation to Fall Continuing Sessions.**

VI. Committees

- A. **The Council approves the appointment of Kathy Reilly to Granting Committee.**
- B. **The Council approves New Committee Liaisons: Barbara Kreider for Finance, Meg Barney for Ministry & Care, and Nancy Robbins for Personnel.**

VII. Sprints

- A. Friends Counseling Service Sprint: Chris shared a brief update from the first meeting. At the meeting, the group began discussing the high-level thinking of how PYM should steward this and other social services work as well as supporting meetings in providing pastoral care.
- B. Artificial Intelligence Policy Sprint. Chris shared the draft charge to the sprint, drafted by Salvador Orellana. This sprint should set policy for PYM governance and provide high-level guidelines to staff on the use of AI. There was support for the charge and proactively taking on these changes. It was noted that there is a new Pendle Hill pamphlet on AI: "Quakerism and Artificial Intelligence: Faith in the Age of New Technology, #501." **The Council approved the charge of the sprint.**

VIII. Considering PYM Collaboratives

The Council considered two Queries about PYM Collaboratives after this emerged as an important point of discussion at the Fall Retreat.

- How do we describe the role of Collaboratives in the life of the Yearly Meeting in ways which are coherent with our governance structures and understandable to our members?
- How might the role of Collaboratives evolve?

Council Members offered many different comments. Friends noted the need to make Collaboratives known to members. Collaboratives come from the word, "collaborate," and they are a way that many people work together with the same passion. Collaboratives are "super charged interest groups" and provide a relationship of like-minded people to each other and to the resources of PYM. Yet it is hard to gather these like-minded people across the Yearly Meeting when people don't quite understand it.

Collaboratives were compared to barbershop quartets, a group of people from different places singing together at their own range as a way to sing loudly to the world. How do we become aware of the various Collaboratives? How do we communicate their witness of our concerns? They are channeled through the Program Support Committee, but they need more care from Council, especially to enhance their visibility. The PYM website is a good place to find the Collaboratives. The Councils could invite collaboratives to the Council meetings to increase awareness. They could continue to have a place in Sessions, such as tables at the

tabling fair. The staff liaison to the Program Support Committee for the Collaboratives, Claire Kinnel, could be a voice for the Collaboratives.

Six of the seven collaboratives address peace and social concerns. While Collaboratives can come together for anything, we seem to be drawn to activism and spiritual life. Should we embrace Collaboratives as a place for our witness and spiritual expression? The word “Collaboratives” is not clearly listed on the website homepage. The combining of the Councils will mean that all of us will need to hold the Collaboratives as our work, not just Quaker Life Council.

IX. News From Around The Yearly Meeting

- Last year the play “The Return of Benjamin Lay” ran at a theater in Mount Airy. The actor who played Lay, Mark Povinelli, and the writer, Marcus Rediker, will be going to Newtown, Middletown, and Radnor Meetings, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, 15th-17th October, to share scenes from the play. These are listed on the PYM Calendar.
- The Haverford School is proposing expansion of their sports fields right to the edge of the Haverford Friends meetinghouse. The meeting is also deeply concerned about a report in the *New York Times* that a Haverford College Professor is in detention for alleged antisemitic actions against a colleague.
- Green Street’s reparations program, which most recently involved support for a loan fund for Black first-time homebuyers in the Germantown neighborhood, was covered by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and picked up widely.

X. Recap Public Communication

The Council agreed that the public communication of our meeting will focus on two topics: Collaboratives and the Governance Advisory Committee proposal.

XI. Evaluative Reflection on Today’s Meeting

The council reflected on their work today. Friends agreed this should be a regular practice.

XII. Approve Minutes

The Council approved the minutes.

Closed in worship at 12:20 pm.