



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

Quaker Life Council Meeting of 21 October 2017

Present: Gray Goodman, Bryn Hammarstrom, George Rubin, Jim Herr (Ad Hoc Clerk), Cate Marion, Karen Winner, Ayesha Imani, Kri Burkander (electronic)

Ex-Officio: Penny Colgan-Davis (PYM clerk), Zachary Dutton (Associate Secretary for Program and Religious Life), Christie Duncan-Tessmer (General Secretary)

Regrets: Kate Bregman, Olivia Brangan, Melanie Douty-Snipes, Lane Taylor (clerk), Amy Taylor Brooks, Andrew Anderson (Treasurer)

Agenda

11:00 am: Worship

11:05 am: Introductions/Check-ins: Rose and Thorns (30 minutes)

11:20 am: Approval of the Agenda & the September Minutes

11:35 am: Upper Dublin Sprint Update (*Cate Marion*)

12:20 pm: Break

12:30 pm: General Secretary's Report (*Christie*)

1:00 pm: Committee Updates (*Committee Clerks and Representatives*)

1:30 pm: Annual Sessions De-Brief

2:00 pm: Closing Worship

Minutes

Members began with worship. Jim Herr agreed to serve as Ad Hoc clerk. Members shared high moments and low moments in their lives in the last month.

Upper Dublin Discernment Sprint Update: Cathleen Marion: Members met with several Friends who provided background information to the situation.

The goals of the team are:

1. Serve the PYM community as they listen to all parties connected with the conflict.
2. Find an appropriate consultant to all parties.
3. Discern from gathered information how PYM can be more spiritually grounded.
4. Add conflict resolution resources to PYM.
5. Clarify PYM's role in aiding MM and QM regarding situations of conflict.

QLC Members asked questions and shared insights about how to let the rest of PYM know what work is being done on this tender issue. Members agreed that having a small, core group addresses a concern about the size of the discernment team. The core group can keep the rest of the Sprint up to date with information. The rest of the Sprint can help by attending when they can, asking questions, and holding the core group in the Light. The Sprint will make a presentation at the November 4th Continuing Sessions and check-in with Upper Dublin Monthly Meeting and Avis Wanda McClinton before Continuing Sessions.

A specific concern was expressed by members about Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting's consideration of a minute from Green Street Monthly Meeting regarding the conflict.

At Annual Sessions, QLC agreed to take on the task of addressing the conflict and asked for Friends to give QLC time to do its work. QLC planned to compose a written account of the incident.

Friends were saddened that there was not patience within PYM to wait for QLC's work to be completed.

It is important for Friends to focus on what they are in favor of as opposed to focusing on what they are against.

Query: How do we build Spirit's Beloved Community based on our shared values?

Members minuted deep appreciation to the Sprint for their ongoing efforts.

General Secretary's Report: Christie Duncan-Tessmer:

1. **The Annual Fund:** The raised amount rose for the first time since 2013. There was staff turnover midway through the last fiscal year which affected the results of the Annual Fund. Grace Sharpless Cooke provided significant support in moving the 2016-7 Annual Fund forward. An informal review of the last month of giving showed that 60% of the contributions were for increased amounts. 20% who gave had not given last year.
2. **Trip to the Middle East:** Since she has returned, Christie has spoken to groups about her experience. She will speak about the trip at Continuing Sessions. She is happy to speak to Monthly Meetings or Quarterly Meetings. She will write an article for Friends Journal. On her trip, Christie saw a striving for justice and power in the Middle East and in the USA. She noticed a co-opting of religion for extreme actions. At meetings in Egypt, local people spoke about their worry over the devastating consequences of religious extremism in their communities. They asked the members of the National Council of Churches travel group to do something to help them. Christie learned to keep the actions of the Israeli government separate from Judaism.

She spoke about a conversation she had with an evangelical Friend and how they viewed the difficulties of the Arab-Israeli conflict from different perspectives. Being Friends gave them a spiritual bridge to listen to each other.

3. **PYM Structure:** The staff of PYM help bring PYM together in two ways. One way is bringing Friends together across meetings. PYM Sessions, Collaboratives, and Sprints, Youth Programs, Volunteers, and Resource Friends are examples. The staff help nurture these various aspects of PYM. The second way is by connecting individual Friends and meetings directly to PYM. Examples include multiple forms of communication. Bridge Contacts is a program that has not yet been begun. Bridge Contacts are the people who know what is happening in their own Monthly Meeting but also know what is going on in the Yearly Meeting.

The description of the job for Director of Advancement and Relationship is ready. The next position to examine will be the Meeting Engagement Coordinator.

Program and Funding: The committee approved a \$1000 grant for bringing Chris Crass, an anti-racist speaker, to the Arch Street Methodist Church for two PYM events on 17-18 November 2017.

Governance Committee: No report. **Karen Winner agreed to serve on the committee.**

PYM Clerk Update: Penny Colgan-Davis: The Steering Committee for the racial audit of PYM is being formed. Many of the people asked have agreed. Clerk and assistant Clerk have not yet been determined. Suzanne Day will be setting up a Sprint to examine the role of the minutes at PYM and the responsibilities of the recording clerks. They will make a recommendation at the March Continuing Sessions. There will be anti-racism workshops at November Continuing Sessions. There will be a workshop to train people to give similar anti-racism training at their monthly meetings.

Annual Sessions De-Brief: Survey results indicated displeasure with the food. There was a sense that the buildings were too far apart and the Committee is striving to have it at a central location at TCNJ. Golf carts use will be more effective. Spiritual Formation will meet in advance at the site, possibly with staff to help ground themselves spiritually before the rest of PYM arrives. The Planning Committee wants to build back in the multi-generational time. Members shared insights about the awkwardness surrounding the outgoing epistle on the final day. In general, Friends felt that the Gathering was not as contentious as the 2016 Summer Gathering. More people trusted the Spirit of God to guide them than in the past.

Announcement: Inter-ethnic + inter-faith Thanksgiving Meeting for Worship at Medford Leas Retirement Center 7pm, 19 November 2017.

Friends minuted appreciation to Jim Herr for his willingness to serve as Ad Hoc Clerk.

Members closed with a period of worship.

Next Meeting, Saturday, 18 November 2017, Spirit willing.

Respectfully submitted,

Gray Goodman, Recording Clerk

General Secretary Report on Staff Activity to Councils September, October 2017 Business & Finances

1. Ended the fiscal year on 9/30. The annual fund received it's last check dated 9/30 in the second week of October. The final annual fund figure is higher than the previous year for the first time since 2012.
2. We reviewed donor patterns for the final annual fund campaign. The trend was that ~60% of contributions were an increase from the previous contribution and ~25% had no change. 20% of the contributions were from donors who had not given in the previous year. Note that all data extraction must be done by hand while we're in transition with databases.
3. Successful completion of Burlington Meeting House transfer to Burlington Quarter who is energized by the opportunity of having the meetinghouse in its care.
4. Reviewed the impact of the 1% Administrative Fee PYM receives from the restricted granting funds. Found that the cost of administering the granting program is still closely related to the income from the fee. Continued to explore possibilities for refining the policy in a way that attends to both the financial impact on the granting funds and the cost of administering the funds.
5. Continued to manage processes for transferring the Niesche bequest to PYM from the banks that have held the funds while there were family members receiving the income. Half the money has arrived at Friends Fiduciary. The other half will be arriving soon.
6. The Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust staff and leadership met with PYM staff to map out cooperative practices for fundraising and sharing resources to strengthen each of us and to avoid getting in one another's way.

Program

1. Launched Resource Friends with the first training for the first set of Resource Friends, with a focus on justice and effective action. The training was facilitated by Training for Change. This is a flagship program of the new structure for which groundwork was laid over the previous year.
2. Set the groundwork for a series of events to take place this year: Friends in Fellowship. This will be eight evening events over the course of the year that invite Friends with similar professional (or otherwise) interests to come together in fellowship with hors d'oeuvres and a speaker. The subject areas include Medicine & Research, Law, Environment, Agriculture & Farming, Arts, Healing & Wellness.

3. I served as a member of a delegation that the National Council of Churches sent to the Middle East. We visited religious and civic leaders in Lebanon, Egypt, Israel and Palestine. I wrote letters back to PYM while there which can be read at www.pym.org/news. I've spoken at several meetings about the trip and will continue to do so about the trip.
4. Printed, bound and mailed a copy of the new approved Faith & Practice to every monthly meeting
5. Logistics planning and implementation for the Fall Continuing Sessions.
6. Facilitated setting up logistics for the upcoming MM Clerks gathering and phone call
7. Most members of the program staff attended the TransHealth conference

Communications & Technology

1. Reviewed the timeline and needed resources for the successful transition to a new database. Adjusted the timeline, clarified priorities and added additional supports such as a closed door office space for the intensive data clean-up work.
2. Renewed our contract with Raisers Edge, the data base we're transitioning away from, to ensure coverage and support through the transition period.
3. Managed most data needs by referring to one mega-report and by hand while the database is in transition.
4. We are continuing to move our data to the cloud with the goal of no longer needing to pay for servers and their maintenance. Accounting and staff document storage has already moved. The new database will be cloud-based.
5. The sprint to publish the new Faith & Practice has formed and started their work with staff support from the Director of Communications & technology.
6. Mailed to each monthly meeting the annual packet of information about events and programs offered through PYM.
7. Continued to gather and write stories from monthly meetings to feature in the fall issue of Faith In Practice. There are a lot of good stories in our community

8. Mapped out big picture of communications in the coming year. The database transition continues to be the biggest priority. Other priorities include refining and augmenting communications support for collaboratives, bridge contacts and resource Friends and laying technical foundations for more effective use of electronic communications and social media.

Staffing and Administration

1. AFSC has supported PYM's HR work around posting job openings and processing applications. Additionally, we have contracted with an HR temporary staff firm and as a result Nikki Mora has started as PYM's temporary HR Coordinator
2. Reviewed job descriptions of new positions with staff and moved closer to being ready to post the Associate Secretary position.
3. Staff transitions in the last six weeks include: Richie Shultz left the position of Community Engagement Fellow, a grant funded position that ends Dec 31, for a full time position with another organization. The remainder of the grant will be staffed by Gage Beemish. Gage was our QVS Fellow for the past year, a position that ended after Annual Sessions. Hannah Mayer transitioned from the Young Friends Coordinator to the Young Friends Facilitator position. Tara Rubenstein's position as Interim Middle School Friends Coordinator ended Sept 30. Meg Rose's position as Interim Children's Program Coordinator ended and she was hired after a search process as the Young Adult Friends Engagement Coordinator.
4. We are in the final stages of the search for the Youth Engagement Coordinator and nearing the final stages for the Office Administrator.
5. Edits and updates to the Employee Handbook by HR staff is concluded. It will next be reviewed by staff and then it goes to the Personnel Committee. The grievance policy is being fast-tracked for approval ahead of the Employee Handbook.

Anti-Racism

1. Working with Pennsylvania Council of Churches regarding taking the initiative of being in relationship with the black churches, all of which have fallen away from relationship with PACC
2. Unconscious Bias workshop by AFSC staff for staff involved in searches and the Personnel Committee

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3. Meeting with Green Street meeting members and PYM leadership regarding Green Street's minute
4. In response to a request \$4,000 has been made available for a portion of the cost of registration for FGC's Friends of Color Retreat.
5. Phone meetings with the staff and the Steering Committee for the National Council of Churches (NCC) initiative on addressing and ending racism in this country about the goals of the initiative. My participation has emphasized the importance of bringing in congregations and individuals who won't be travelling to DC and how to engage Quakers.

Visits and Meetings

1. Meeting for worship followed by Community Lunch with Darby Meeting, 10/1
2. Meeting for worship, Green Street Meeting, September 23
3. Midweek worship with the worship group that meets at Middletown Preparative, October 19
4. Quakertown meeting in northern NJ to worship, join them for potluck and to present pictures and stories about my trip to the middle east, October 15
5. Meeting with Southern Quarter meetings at Third Haven for dinner and conversation about the delegation to the Middle East, Sept 19
6. Superintendents and Secretaries Gathering at Quaker Haven Camp Sept 24-27
7. Phone call with the GenSecs of our close yearly meetings: BYM, NYYM, NEYM
8. Pennsylvania Council of Churches meeting in Harrisburg.
9. Philadelphia Interfaith Religious Leaders Meeting
10. A "meet and greet" for the new Head of Ramallah friends School at Pendle Hill with other PYM Friends who have an interest in the middle east, Palestine & RFS.
11. Board meeting of Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust
12. Phone meetings with the staff and the Steering Committee for the National Council of Churches (NCC) initiative on addressing and ending racism in this country

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13.Friends Center Board Meeting