



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

5.16.2020 Quaker Life Council Minutes

Decisions and other follow-up actions **are shown in bold.**

Key points from the joint session of PYM Quaker Life, Admin, and Nominating Councils from 10-11 a.m.

-- Clerked by Jonathan "Jack" Rhoads, Germantown Mtg.

-- The 2020 annual session agenda is being planned (Zachary Dutton has details). Technology offers an opportunity to include more people. Business is the core issue (esp. budget and nominations). Sessions will be spread out, one thing at a time. Workshops will occur in the evenings. Some business sessions will occur beforehand in June and July. To publicize Annual Sessions, there will be a postcard, trifold, and then full program to all PYM members. (One concern is including people without the right technology.) Planners are coordinating with other YMs, FGC, and other groups.

QUAKER LIFE COUNCIL, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Participants – Kate Bregman, Julia Carrigan, Margaret Dawson, Sue Dietz, Zachary Dutton (staff), Melanie Douty-Snipes, Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Bryn Hammarstrom, T. J. Jourian (PYM staff), Susan Kight, Cathleen Marion, George Rubin, Anthony Stover (clerk). (Absent: Ayesha Imani.)

Welcome – We started and ended with gathering silence. Our new recording clerk, Steve Elkinton (Chestnut Hill Meeting) was introduced.

A. How are we managing during this pandemic? – In general, we are well. Most meetings are using Zoom effectively (some like it, some don't). Small meetings, especially, are struggling. Yet this Covid 19-era and its disinformation is scary and sorrowful. Psychically, we can't get through this alone, but need the support of friends and family – and community. Morning daily worship with Pendle Hill has been a true blessing. Upper Susquehanna Quarter plans to meet monthly on Zoom. Zoom has been a God-send for committees and worship. Some of us miss our singing groups! Some are getting deep cleaning accomplished. Gardening helps us keep sane. Staff are very grateful to be part of our empowering community in this era. In short, "It's kind of nice and kind of terrible."

B. Staff Report by T.J. Jourian, PYM Events & Resources Coordinator, attached in Appendix A – He came to PYM in December and enjoys building a "community of practice" – especially organizing events (annual and threshing sessions). He's been amazed watching the Annual Sessions Planning Committee do its work, emphasizing what is essential. Soon, the virtual annual sessions will be publicized. He enjoys supporting thread gatherings and threshing sessions (including follow-up thank-you notes). Future events may be hybrid, merging face-to-face with virtual participation emphasizing equity and access. There are two Friends in Fellowship events planned for May 28 (South African visitors) and June 10 (Artificial Intelligence and Ethics).



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T. J. also works closely with "Resource Friends" who are trying to figure out how to be better known and used throughout the YM. Issues around social justice and anti-racism are needed everywhere. Each of the five threads will have a "landing page" on the PYM website. He was drawn to work at PYM especially to work on peace and social justice. This has included a recent training in micro-aggressions. He is also cooperating with AFSC's role in the Poor Peoples' Campaign and learning how to counter "Zoom-bombing."

Discussion included appreciation for his work, advanced documents for details, virtual events, his role in the rest of the agenda, poor publicity for Friends in Fellowship events, reaching Friends who are not yet well connected to the YM, limiting social justice just to the factor of racism (it relates to many aspects of oppression and discrimination), being overwhelmed and feeling powerless by the issues that face us, a better understanding of how racism affects our whole world, making the PYM website more user-friendly, and the key role of each meeting's "bridge contacts." We still need a glossary of our new organizational terms. Are these new names really working? Are they distancing the YM from constituent monthly meetings?

C. Updates from the Program Committee -- Cathleen M. reported on its fruitful May 4 meeting. The Anti-Racism Collaborative application was approved with a \$500 budget. Some of their proposed activities may overlap with Resource Friends in this same area. T. J. appreciates that there to be some overlap, and this can be resolved through discussions. **The QLC endorsed the Program Committee's decision and approved the creation and funding for this new collaborative.**

In addition, the Program Committee discussed its mission and the obstacles in creating new collaboratives. Asking for reports isn't enough. Ongoing nurture is more of a challenge. One way may be to strengthen the Bridge Contacts, meeting by meeting. The Program Committee also seeks to clarify its mission, simplifying its roles. Originally (as stated in the QLC corollary handbook), QLC gifts and needs were to pass through Program Committee for approval, but this process recently changed in practice and has led to recent awkwardness. We seek to have all QLC funding requests again be processed by the Program Committee before coming to the QLC (and yet, there may be exceptions, especially if there is an urgent need). The process should be clearly articulated. **Our charge statement and relevant policy will be reviewed during our June meeting.** Cathleen continues as clerk until September, and new members are currently being identified.

D. Announcement from George Rubin – The check for the Ujima Friends Peace Center has been cut in the amount of \$15,000.00 as recently agreed to by the QLC.

E. Agenda Design Moving Forward -- Anthony gave some background. Zachary added that each Council once had its own governance committee – the other Councils have combined theirs, and ours became the "Agenda Committee." Since our only role now is to set the agenda, do we really need a committee? We have two options: We can let a small committee of the clerk, staff, and



recording clerk form the agenda -- or open it up to the Council. Anthony S. invited any member to join in this effort.

Discussion: Waiting until the end of a Zoom meeting is asking too much. Everyone is encouraged to send in items to the clerk ahead of time. Many agenda items grow out of earlier discussions. In many meetings, the clerk sets the agenda with as much input as offered. Anthony noted that we often don't get through our agendas, so we must balance time available and the many possible agenda items. Remember, in our agenda building and discussions we are speaking for the whole YM, not just our personal issues.

We approved letting Anthony, Zachary, and Steve set the agenda, especially if a few minutes are given at the end of the earlier monthly meeting to brainstorm future agenda items. The agenda will be issued ahead so that Council members can revise it.

F. Building the June agenda – Items suggested include:

- Supporting small meetings: Can “Quaker life” be sustained virtually for small and medium-sized meetings? When can we have socially-spaced events on our meeting house grounds?
- Adult RE: Adult religious education should be passed on as a concern for the new Ministry and Care Committee.
- Future events: Can we promote a socially distanced presence at meeting houses to host key annual sessions?
- Self-evaluation: Are we fulfilling our call as the Quaker Life Council? We might have a review meeting during annual sessions -- yet this could lead to Zoom fatigue. Let's have it before or after annual sessions.

These minutes were read and approved before the meeting ended.

Appendix A – Events & Resources Coordinator Staff Report

Sessions and Sessions Coordinating Committee

- Attended and attending monthly Sessions Coordinating Committee meetings
- Worked with Olivia Brangan to finalize schedule for 2020 Spring Continuing Sessions, originally to take place at Westtown School on March 28
- Visited the Westtown School campus to assess available spaces and maximize accessibility for attendees
- Worked with Melinda Wenner Bradley to communicate Youth Program needs with Westtown School staff per available staff and spaces
- Took lead on promotions and publicity through Constant Contact and Facebook
- Communicated event's transition to virtual setting to PYM community and provided day-of tech support



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- Helped create robust schedule for 2020 Annual Sessions, originally to take place at The College of New Jersey, July 28 – August 2
- Reached out to and maintained ongoing communication with Marcelle Martin and Naomi Madaras as the two speakers for the event
- Communicated event's transition to virtual setting to PYM community, as well as speakers
- Attended South Eastern Yearly Meeting's Virtual Gathering (April 8-12) to connect and observe; Worked with others to redesign schedule for PYM Annual Sessions
- Updated promotions plan; working in conjunction with Roma Narkhede as she creates social media plan

Supporting Events

Thread Gathering and Threshing Sessions

- Religious Education and Youth Programs Thread Gathering, Wilmington Friends Meeting, Saturday, December 7
- Eco-Justice Thread Gathering, Germantown Monthly Meeting, Saturday, January 18
- Threshing Session on Membership, Haddonfield Meeting, Sunday, January 26
- Diversity and Inclusion Thread Gathering, Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Saturday, February 1
- Governance and Stewardship Thread Gathering, Saturday, February 22
- Mental Health and Wellness Thread Gathering, Lancaster Friends Meeting, Saturday, March 7

What support looked like this year:

- Before event:
 - Publicity and promotions through print, email, and social media
 - Organizing and supplementing materials and supplies as needed; making necessary copies of documents and name tags
 - Checking in with facilitators, primary organizer, and/or host Meeting representatives as necessary
 - Welcome email to registrants with directions, schedule, and any other necessary specifics
- Day of event:
 - Provide day of support with sign-in table, set up, and break down
 - Put up signage for direction, child-care location, etc.
- Post event:
 - Follow up with thank you letters

2021 Thread Gatherings

- Have identified dates and locations for 3 Thread Gatherings between January and March
 - January 23 – Chestnut Hill Meeting
 - February 6 – Haverford Meeting
 - March 6 – Moorestown Meeting
- Next steps:
 - Work with colleagues to identify potential workshop leaders



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- Connect with and confirm workshop leaders
- Place on PYM calendar

Friends in Fellowship

- Would have been providing similar support to a host of FiF events in March and April, which have been postponed
- Will be providing support to two FiF events that will be held virtually
 - Thursday, May 28th – Stories of Hope and Courage: Quakers from South Africa
 - Wednesday, June 3rd – Ethical Artificial Intelligence: A Design Solution
- Support looks like:
 - Updating information on website
 - Publicity and promotions
 - Providing tech support during the events

Resource Friends

Social Justice Resource Friends

- Met with members of Social Justice Resource Friends individually to assess efficacy
 - Conversations led to decision to fold the group and come back to recreating in the future
- Using current moment as opportunity to reach out to various individuals in PYM community to assess interest in coalescing an Anti-Racism Resource Friends

Support Religious Education & Youth Work and Ministry & Care Resource Friends as needed

Resources

Working to make the website an accessible location for resources organized by the five threads:

- Religious Education
- Ministry and Care
- Peace and Social Justice
- Outreach and Communication
- Governance and Stewardship

Supporting Peace and Social Justice Work

Microaggressions Sprint

Following a training session with Prototype Entities in December 2019, staff identified addressing microaggressions as a leading to respond to develop protocol and any additional emergent recommendations to staff and Ops Team

- Formed sprint in February
- Have met twice (March 5th and April 2nd; next meeting scheduled for May 18th)
- Hosted a read-in of current grievance policy on March 11
 - Identified inconsistencies and places for revision
 - Will be coming back to this when Christie returns
- Hosted a discussion on April 8 about changing name of weekly “stand-up” meeting
 - Changed name to “Wednesday check-in”



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- Have evolving list of beginnings of recommendations

Poor People's Campaign

- A revival of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign
 - Quakers in Philadelphia have a historic connection to the support of the PPC; many Quakers through American Friends Service Committee were involved
- AFSC partnering with PPC organizers for 2020 events; reached out to PYM for support
 - Help connect interested PYM community members to AFSC's efforts through recently hired organizer to spread the word
 - Attended YAF Retreat in January for this purpose; YAF wrote and approved a minute announcing their support of PPC and encouraging other Quaker communities to follow

Navigating Virtual Hate

- Attended webinar on the topic hosted by University of Southern California's Equity Center on April 9th
- Created a Navigating Virtual Hate document for staff and PYM community to address surge of hate incidents online through what is called "Zoombombing"