



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

9.19.2020 Quaker Life Council Minutes

Ninth Month 19, 2020 (using Zoom format)
Decisions and other follow-up actions **are shown in bold.**

Key points from the Joint Session and Orientation for New Members of the PYM Quaker Life, Administration, and Nominating Councils

Clerked by Frank Barch and Jean-Marie P. Barch

We acknowledged the death yesterday of Ruth Bader Ginsburg who fought for all our rights. We have lots of newly appointed members of our various councils. Last fall there was a day-long retreat as an orientation to the councils, now we are on Zoom over two months.

This orientation focused on governance and strategic direction, in short, listening for the Divine throughout our community. PYM is the 2nd largest yearly meeting in the world (after Britain). Be brave in using language that works for you.

The Quaker Jeopardy session was a little too rushed and random, but a good way to spark discussion.

The Seven strategic directions for PYM were discussed in small groups, also rushed. Will PYM be ready for the coming world and its upheavals?

Christie Duncan-Tesmer, General Secretary, reported that Annual Sessions this past summer were creative and innovative – and most of it worked! PYM staff is continuing to think outside the box being flexible and responsive. The 2019-2020 fiscal year is almost over. There are no budget crises – but more donations will be most welcome.

“Prayer is a place of precious habitation when there is much commotion in the world.”
(John Woolman)



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QUAKER LIFE COUNCIL, 11:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. by Zoom

Participants –Kate Bregman, Margaret “Marge” Dawson, Melanie Douty-Snipes, Zachary Dutton (Associate Secretary), Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Bryn Hammarstrom, Tom Hughes, Ayesha Imani, Guinevere Janes, Susan Kight, and Anthony Stover (clerk). Guest -- Jean-Marie P. Barch (new PYM co-clerk and Clerk, Ministry and Care Committee),
Absent – Julia Carrigan and Sue Dietz.

We began and ended this session with centering worship.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS GUINEVERE JANES AND TOM HUGHES – We introduced ourselves and shared a bit about ourselves. Some of us are life-long Friends, others newcomers. Many of us are heart-sick and grieving this morning at the news of the death of Ruth Bader Ginsberg. We rejoiced that clerk Anthony S. is well on his way to recovery from recent surgeries. We also shared our various committee functions (Program, Membership Development, Governance, Sessions Coordinating, Youth Programs Advisory, and Ministry and Care). Most QLC members are expected to be on one or more of these committees. Details can be found on the PYM website.

MINISTRY AND CARE COMMITTEE – Jean-Marie B. reported that the Committee is looking deeply at a truth and reconciliation process to ensure that it is appropriate to this yearly meeting. (The request for a truth and reconciliation process came out of annual sessions several years ago.) It needs to be a process that “enfolds all of us,” even if some are skeptical. What is the purpose of this process, what guideposts along the way are needed, and might it be better as a truth and transformation process? How will it be the most helpful?

Discussion: The Discernment Committee’s queries will be considered. The outcomes are not assured or even known at the beginning of the process. The process, not the outcome, should be our focus. We need the appropriate “vehicle” to ensure that the process works as it should. This is a long-term process and must be handled carefully. Having Ministry & Care handle this is good for grounding and credibility. It will be key to clarify the scope and expectations of this effort. Friends should seek accountability to the original intentions.

SESSIONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE – Zachary updated us on the new membership roster (Tom Hughes will be replacing Steve Olshevski); its next meeting soon with the new co-clerks; planning for Continuing Session in November just after the possibly contentious General Election; and how staff can help broaden engagement and supporting (but not making) decisions.

REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS OF OUR WORK AS A YEARLY MEETING ON THE THREE PLENARY ISSUES (Membership, Racial Justice, and Climate Change) -- These three plenary sessions continue long-time discussions within our community. **We were asked to read the notes from these sessions and glean out action items that should arise out of them – to be discussed in October.** How can we move forward rather than just talk in circles?



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For example, the Administrative Council is developing a sprint group to address racial justice across the entire Yearly Meeting organization. It is also developing a response to the 2016 minute about state-sanctioned violence from the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent (FFOAD). All three of these issues are actually interconnected and need to be addressed that way. Currently, we are weighed down by so many issues – so how can we stay spiritually grounded in all of this?

The 2016 minute explores the intersectionality among race, class, and greed. It calls for haven-like peace centers (like Ujima), peace forces joining police and community members, and disarmament, as well as de-escalation training. How can the YM work on these issues? The recent letter, with this minute, that went out to all PYM meetings was intended to get all of us better engaged. Some meetings are slow in addressing the minute, but others are eager. **The excellent interviews leading up to the Plenary sessions this past summer should be made available to meetings also.** (Zachary will work to get them into our Google Box.) Ujima FPC is working as a model for positive and sensitive, spiritually-grounded social outreach.

APPROVAL OF PROGRAM COMMITTEE CLERK, STEVE OLSHEVSKI -- He was formerly clerk of Radnor Meeting, is a retired data specialist, and served earlier as yearly meeting alternate clerk. **We approved this appointment.**

MINUTES OF APPRECIATION for Emily Blanck, Wade Wright, George Rubin, Cathleen Marion, and Amy Taylor Brooks – **The documents were approved and will be sent out by the clerk or staff.**

UJIMA GRANT – YM staff will be transferring the approved funds once the bank numbers are exchanged.

JULY MINUTES READ AND APPROVED – **These were approved as submitted.**

REVIEW OF DISCUSSION TOPICS FROM RECENT PAST QLC MEETINGS

Support for small meetings – Camden Friends is small, the average age is over 70! How can such a group be re-vitalized? Many older Friends resist Zoom and even in-place socially-distanced worship. Many don't even know what to do now. Some could be invited to worship on Zoom with larger meetings. The YM's Membership Development Granting Group is also addressing this issue. **(Guinevere offered Susan current information about grants, membership development, etc.) We need more time to talk about this issue – it might be an ideal sprint opportunity.**

The other issues, Adult RE and Meetings and the Pandemic, **will be discussed at a future meeting.**

NEXT MEETING – **October 17, 2020**

These QLC minutes were read and approved on Sept. 19, 2020.