



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

11.21.2020 Quaker Life Council Minutes

Eleventh Month 21, 2020 (using Zoom format)
Decisions and other follow-up actions **are shown in bold.**

Key points from the Joint Session of the PYM Quaker Life, Administration, and Nominating Councils Clerked by Frank and Jean Marie P. Barch, 34 participants

General Secretary Duncan-Tesmer summarized recent staff work in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Filling the new position for HR and EDI was a long process to find just the right person (see Oskar Castro's report from last month's notes). Now a review and refinement of internal personnel policies is underway to be as clear as possible and optimize opportunities for EDI.

Anthony Stover, Clerk of QLC, welcomed Bryn Hammarstrom, back from recent heart surgery! Anthony then went over QLC's mission and summarized its recent activities. He asked for suggestions for a new youth member and hopes that it can work more closely with the other councils.

Jim Waddington reported for the Administrative Council that is responsible for the business and fiduciary functions of PYM. It is reviewing property, committee charges, and governance structure as well as developing a handbook of best practices for property stewardship at all levels of the YM (especially old graveyards and meetinghouses).

Terry Whiteford reported for the Nominating Council on its role. It is working now to fill in some vacant officer and council member positions. They especially seek diversity and new ideas. We all can help identify people who can fill key positions.

Jim Waddington then reported on efforts by the three council clerks to develop consistent messaging. This has led to a possible SWOT analysis to identify "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" about all three councils' work. This work will likely occur this coming winter and coordinate closely with the governance sprint. Several people suggested opening this process up to the broader PYM community for transparency and accountability.

PYM Co-clerk Frank Barch explained the recent letter about organizing a sprint to consider membership and belonging. Since this issue crosses the scope of all three councils, the



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sprint will be organized under the Council Clerks' Group. Specific proposals are needed for the wider PYM body to respond to. Each council is invited to refine the sprint's charge and to nominate possible sprint members. Young Adult Friends' letters in 2016 and 2019, as well as New York Yearly Meeting's recent changes, form a strong basis for this work. Let's create an attractive and nurturing environment, not something deadly and obsessed only with crisis. "Let's create a world of opportunity in which we all want to engage."

In addition, a concern emerged to support people in crisis (especially people of color) during the current Covid-19 pandemic. How can we stay focused on the "micro" where the current need is, not just the "macro" that tends to generalities? Groups that La Tonya Thames-Taylor belongs to have the following practice – take care of each other first, then do outreach later. Can we do both? The YM does have funds for emergency grants.

Ayesha Imani expressed gratitude for this morning's ministry. She hopes that we can be more nuanced in helping all types of oppressed people as the early Christians did in Acts, for "every member according to their needs."



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QUAKER LIFE COUNCIL, by Zoom

Follow-up actions and decisions **are shown in bold.**

PARTICIPANTS – Sue Dietz, Melanie Douty-Snipes, Zachary Dutton (Associate Secretary), Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Bryn Hammarstrom, Ayesha Imani, Guinevere Janes, and Anthony Stover (clerk). Guests – Grace Sharples Cooke, PYM Assoc. Sec. for Advancement and Relationship, Jean-Marie Prestwidge-Barch, and Melissa Rycroft (rising PYM clerk).

Absent – Kate Bregman, Margaret “Marge” Dawson, Tom Hughes, and Susan Kight.

Christie introduced Grace.

REPORT FROM GRACE SHARPLES COOKE, -- Grace spoke to a PowerPoint illustrating “Communications and Fundraising at PYM.” She listed her team and showed statistics on website viewing growth. The most visited website page last year was the Spiritual Formations Collaborative sample opening retreat. (This year it was Faith and Practice.) The website was redesigned earlier this year. The hot topic is featured in “the box.” 2-4 new stories are posted a week. Events load by the date. The goal is connecting through stories and news. It showcases famous and less well-known Quakers, both in PYM and elsewhere.

There is also a weekly e-mail going out to 2,800 PYM folks. (Maybe 1/3 read it.) PYM also posts on Instagram and Twitter. Staff conduct analytics to see which features are most popular. People really like pictures of old meetinghouse interiors. PYM has been on Facebook since 2009, but with only 2,000 followers now.

Good media is key to good fundraising. Fundraising goals include inclusivity. People give from a place of connection and generosity. There are several fundraising events and programs from Annual Fund to “Quakers Got Talent.” One foundation is helping get the movie *Quakers, The Quiet Revolutionaries* out to schools, meetings, and retirement communities. Endowments are also important to certain people. The Legacy Fund is a new way to welcome personalized gifts over \$1,250.

Printed appeals come out in September, December, and the spring, with feedback tools to keep relationships live. PYM members can opt-in or opt-out of getting communications. (Western Quarter doesn’t want PYM solicitations.) Recent feedback was rich and varied, especially for folks who don’t have wi-fi. It included lots of thank-yous!

This outreach seems to be benefiting the YM. 832 people have become ongoing donors. 2020 goals were exceeded by \$20,000. “Generosity is not tied to wealth.” Grace does in-person visits when it is possible.



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“Every donor is a big donor in their heart.” People give as they are led. Building relationships in small groups really helps! Some key donors don’t even live in the PYM area.

In the discussion people asked for Grace’s PowerPoint and offered their thanks. One asked why pictures of people are minimized – Grace explained that pictures of people only occur when they give permission. Also, in group pictures, it is easy to inadvertently leave people out. How is connection fostered in this Covid era? For Instagram the pictures need to be compelling. People love pictures of people in worship. Yet we must honor the sacredness of worship (and in some traditions, photographing worshippers is prohibited). Open and rich communications are important for the vibrant health of the YM. **Let’s make sure all our meeting and council members opt-in for the PYM weekly News and Events.** Keep an eye out for their prayer issue this coming Thanksgiving Week. We thanked Grace for the special caring spirit that she brings to this important work. She ended by thanking us for the work of our council and our willingness to use valuable weekend time for this work.

We began and ended the rest of this session with centering worship.

WELCOME – How long can we go? To 1:30 pm if possible. **We selected key items for today and postponed others for next month. Anthony also noted that Julia Carrigan is leaving the QLC.** We would welcome another young person for that perspective to replace her.

REQUEST FOR NAMES FOR THE SPRINT ON MEMBERSHIP AND BELONGING – Jean-Marie, speaking for the Ministry and Care Committee, reported that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission idea is “loaded.” We can create a space for transformation (but not guarantee reconciliation). M&C is working on a clearness process-like procedure. They have an excellent position statement and useful queries and hope to empower monthly meetings that are likely to need support in this endeavor. There will need to be training in this process. The M&C report is due out soon.

What can the QLC do to help? Name names for the February sprint as recommended in the co-clerks’ recent letter. **Melanie and Guinevere are interested in participating.** Jean-Marie hopes to move this process forward with urgency. Others will provide her with additional names.

NEWS FROM BRYN – He is still recovering in the hospital after a heart operation and hopes to be home early next week. **We send him our prayers for a full and quick recovery!**

CHECK IN – HOW ARE OUR LIVES POST-ELECTION, IN THESE PANDEMIC TIMES? – We’re all winding up a very strange and mysterious year. It is a blessing to be connected to the layers of our Quaker world. It’s great to be here. Grace’s presentation illustrated how colorful and lively our yearly meeting can be. We cannot take our family’s health and well-being for granted any more. I



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am “well and overwhelmed with gratitude.” It is a blessing learning about our constituent meetings and their various needs. It is easy feeling overwhelmed.

We thanked Anthony for his faithful leadership and flexibility as our clerk.

NEXT MEETING – Dec. 12, 2020, 10 a.m. for the joint session, 11 a.m. for our session.
(Guinevere will not be able to attend.)

These QLC minutes were read and approved on Nov. 21, 2020.