



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

1.16.21 Quaker Life Council Minutes

First Month 16, 2021 (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 The session of 35 participants was clerked by Frank and Jean Marie P. Barch.

- We introduced ourselves by Council.
- Christie Duncan-Tesmer gave her General Secretary's report. The anti-racism thread gathering will occur Jan. 23. PYM has also issued a statement in response to the recent insurrection attack at the Nation's Capitol. She gave us a tour of the newly organized PYM website and its services and "subscribe" links for various subject-matter newsletters.
- Discussion: Can Friends from other YMs be included in our thread-gatherings? Sure! How are thread topics chosen? They are determined by staff, based on what they hear. Some meetings also initiate them. Please alert PYM to meeting-based events. Many of us in reading the GS's report are impressed by all its layers, moving parts, challenges, and accomplishments.
- We were reminded to attend the 3-council "retreat" Jan. 30. Please fill in the requested forms ahead.
- We were asked to consider this query: What do we, as Council members, bring to the work of PYM that is different from what we bring as YM or MM individuals?
Discussion: Knowledge of the YM's structure and responsibilities. (Sometimes a council only gets part of us, for others it brings out new talents.) We have appreciation for the YM while being a communication conduit with our meetings. We feed in local thinking, being eyes and ears. We are bi-directional, linking our meetings and the councils to each other. Greater opportunity for cross-pollination with other YMs. Serving as a channel of peace and prayer. We are volunteers working together on our spiritual journeys, "What are we doing for others?" Every step brings us in touch with more people to love. It is urgent to renew the life of Quakerism -- for it to become a welcoming safe space to build a diverse equitable community.



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QUAKER LIFE COUNCIL, by Zoom

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

PARTICIPANTS – Margaret “Marge” Dawson, Sue Dietz, Melanie Douty-Snipes, Zachary Dutton (Associate Secretary), Ayesha Imani, Guinevere Janes, Susan Kight, Steve Elkinton (recording clerk), Bryn Hammarstrom, and Anthony Stover (clerk).

GUESTS – Christie Duncan-Tesmer (PYM General Secretary), Jean-Marie Prestwidge-Barch (PYM Co-Presiding Clerk and Clerk, Ministry and Nurture Committee), and Melissa Rycroft (rising PYM clerk).

ABSENT – Kate Bregman, Robert Greene, and Tom Hughes.

We started and ended this session with centering worship.

WELCOME – Anthony welcomed everyone. He apologized for the late distribution of background documents.

REQUEST FOR BIOGRAPHIES -- Christie asked us each to post our short biography for the PYM website. She'll send us to necessary form.

SESSIONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE -- **We approved that an Administrative Council representative have a standing seat on the Sessions Coordinating Committee.** Joan Broadfield would like to resign from the SPC but will do so only will after consulting with the that committee's co-clerks and full committee.

TRUTH AND TRANSFORMATION PROCESS – Jean-Marie, as clerk of the Ministry and Care Committee, updated us on what has become the Truth and Transformation proposal. A “Truth and Reconciliation” process -- as suggested at annual sessions in 2019 -- turned out not exactly to be what is needed for the YM, so the M&C Committee discerned its own process as presented in their draft paper. Deep listening will be key. M&C hopes to present this at the February 27 thread gathering for review and refinement.

Several members of this Council could not respond to the paper since they only just received it. Ayesha suggested that background assumptions should be clearly stated. How can woundings be explained in ways that are fully honest even if that is hurtful to the accused? The current queries seem limited to merely describing the hurt of the wounded; and the accused person is not asked for much, either. The process must create safe space to fully share the truth on all sides. Both accused and accuser need to be seen as whole persons. This is difficult work.

Bryn asked that the background history be fully described. He also reinforced Ayesha's concern that the queries are currently unbalanced for full reconciliation. Melanie reflected on the corporate process as this developed over the years; there is “so much truth to be told.”



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Jean Marie summarized what she has heard here today: Whatever process is developed needs to create ample space for truth to be fully heard. It needs to be refined as described in the written proposal. There may need to be broader and deeper queries to make this happen.

Guinevere is troubled that the process as described looks like it keeps white people from feeling uncomfortable. In her work with New England YM, she cited the book *My Grandmother's Hands* with its techniques for interracial healing. She hopes for a process that puts both sides in a wounding situation into the hands of God, however that can be done.

Christie is deeply appreciative of this work and hopes the thread gathering can move it forward. She cited the proposal's sections that ask if a conflict/wounding cannot be resolved and how T&T committees are set up. She suggests that this process be cited earlier in the proposal.

Bryn added his discomfort at the terms "accuser" and "accused," shouldn't they face the same queries?

Ayesha asked will anti-racism helpers be only Quakers? Christie confirmed that they should be.

Anthony wrapped this up stating that it is a work in process. He asked that these concerns (as well as others that may arise when Council members read the full proposal) be sent to Jean-Marie so that the Ministry and Care Committee can revise the proposal over the next month. Given that, are we comfortable sending it forward? (Bryn felt his comments need only be considered, not necessarily made into revisions.)

Jean Marie appreciated our "fresh eyes." She has found these comments very helpful. The Committee believes that the telling and hearing of truth is transformational. Next steps will be to take our comments back to the M&C committee to be folded into the proposal. She wants the thread gathering to test the queries. She would like to bring the revised proposal to us for review at a future Council meeting. This proposal is intended to be a guideline, not a prescriptive tool, and be used for any situation where people don't feel heard, not just racial wounding.

UPDATE BY PROGRAM COMMITTEE – Sue and Melanie reported that the Program Committee is advisory to QLC. The new clerk is Steve Olshevski. They have reviewed their responsibilities and functions, overseeing the collaboratives, resource friends, bridge contacts, sprints, and representatives to other organizations. They also distribute funds on behalf of this Council as requested by threads and collaboratives. Now most of the collaboratives have submitted their reports. Sue raised the issue of how threads were/are established and tracked – now its clearer than it used to be. She would like more guidance on how funds are applied for.

THE 3-COUNCIL WORKSHOP will be on January 30. We should all have gotten preliminary materials and sent in our responses to the queries to the facilitator. It would be nice to have 100%



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participation by Council members. (One Council member complained about late mail. If we don't receive our packets by Jan. 25th, please alert Anthony, and he will deliver it personally.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jan. 18 – Ujima Resource Day giving out food, clothing, shoes + local social programs

Jan. 30 – 3-Council Retreat

Feb. 20 – Next Quaker Life Council meeting

HOW ARE WE FARING IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES? – Ujima's Kwanza Celebration was a joy! With Zoom, Ujima's worship circle is widening way beyond expectation. We offered our condolences to Marge who lost her husband recently. Many of us are grieving the deaths of loved ones and deeply anxious about events at the national level. We also rejoice at the birth of new family members. These feel like timeless times. Some of us are wrestling with our local Quaker communities. In rural areas, there has been a lot of gunfire recently. Media that promote hatred must be confronted, (it's been going on for years). Mental illness also stalks many of us. Worship-sharing, support committees, spiritual companions, and volunteering nurture many of us. Working and walking outdoors empower us. Let's hold each other in the Light.

These QLC minutes were read and approved on Jan. 16, 2021.