

Continuing Sessions – November 3, 2018

We began our morning with an acknowledgment of the people whose land we gather on today, the Leni-Lenape, shared by Boone Murphy. Julia Carrigan and Mary Dunham shared the query for today's session: "How do we as Quakers ground ourselves in trust and love?"

Alternate Clerk Chris Lucca, serving as Presiding Clerk, introduced himself and the rest of the facing bench. We welcomed visitors and those attending for the first time, as well as thanking elders and staff for their service. We were introduced to Ashley who is providing our closed-captioning speech-to-text service.

Nominating Council

Betsy Bayardi reported on behalf of the Nominating Council. She brings greetings from Melissa Rycroft, who is healing at home and would welcome any prayers from the body. The committee has met several times since Annual Sessions, and reviewed 38 names of Friends during that time. There is only one name being brought forward today: Emily Blanck, Mickleton Meeting has agreed to serve on Admin Council for a three-year term. This nomination was approved.

The Council's report describes some of the concerns that Friends have expressed regarding service to the Yearly Meeting. One theme is that Friends feel more connected to the work of their monthly and quarterly meetings than that of the Yearly Meeting. Others reported feeling put off by what they believed was bad behavior of Friends at previous sessions, and the belief that it was not handled well. Lastly, many Friends expressed that they already feel overcommitted with other Quaker and family obligations.

In response, Nominating Council is working with Admin and Quaker Life Councils to consider the roles we need filled, and how they might be reorganized to be more accessible to those with busy lives. We were invited to share with our monthly and quarterly meetings, and social media, if we have a good experience today, to encourage others to join in the work of the Yearly Meeting. We are all PYM; we must remain committed to each other and to continuing to work through our conflicts, trusting each other and God that we will be stronger on the other side.

Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch stood to share her understanding that she would be nominated to serve as PYM representative to Friends General Conference for a three-year term. The body approved her nomination.

There was some confusion regarding our presiding clerk going forward. It was clarified that our Alternate Clerk will continue to serve as Presiding Clerk until Nominating Council brings forward a nomination for Presiding Clerk.

Administrative Council

Bruce Haines, clerk of the Council, shared the Council's report. We accepted the report with gratitude.

A Friend asked about the Staff Voice policy and expressed a concern that the policy not result in a practice of censorship or censure. This concern will be brought back to personnel committee as they continue to discern, with staff input, a revised policy.

Quaker Life Council

Amy Taylor Brooks, serving as Interim Clerk of the council, shared her report. She expressed her gratitude for the invitation to serve, despite her many other commitments. She feels well-nourished and well used through her service to the Yearly meeting, and noted that this service has changed her. While the opportunity to engage at a deeper level sometimes causes trepidation, the discomfort makes room for growth in the Spirit.

A Friend asked about the current status of the work of the Discernment Team. It was noted that the Team's recommendations helped to inform Annual Sessions, but that QLC will revisit the Discernment Team's report to see what additional action might be taken.

Friends accepted this report.

Amy introduced the conveners of several collaboratives under their care, who shared updates on their work. Wade Wright reported on behalf of the Spiritual Formation Collaborative; Deb Heile reported on behalf of the Legislative Policy Collaborative; and Pat Finley reported on behalf of the Eco-Justice Collaborative. Lastly, Friends were invited to consider Friends who might have gifts to lend to the Youth Programs Advisory Committee, which is now forming.

General Secretary's Report

Christie Duncan-Tessmer, our General Secretary, presented her report, highlighting the many ways in which the Yearly Meeting is nurturing relationships across meetings and individuals throughout the yearly meeting. Each highlight was accompanied by a story from a PYM staff member. Our website and calendar are helpful in sharing information, and Friends are encouraged to continue to use the calendar and post information about events on the website. We heard stories about the Calendar, Resource Friends, Bridge Contacts, Thread Gatherings, and Youth Engagement. Friends accepted this report.

Multicultural Audit Steering Committee

The agenda was reordered to provide ample time for this report and discussion. tonya thames taylor, clerk, reported on behalf of the committee, joined by members of the committee on the facing bench. Members introduced themselves and shared some reflections on their service on the committee. The Clerk highlighted the accomplishments they have made since Annual Sessions, including holding a retreat and developing their RFP. We were challenged to think not just about the RFP, but about what we will do with the results of the audit. How will we move forward?

We broke before the conclusion of this business at 12:45pm, recognizing that despite pushing back our agenda to accommodate this lengthy discussion, we needed a break.

We resumed, refreshed, at 1:30pm with All Together Time, during which we gathered in multigenerational groups to share about our similarities and differences, creating a paper quilt. We resumed business at 2pm, taking up the report from the MASC. The body received this report without further discussion.

Youth and Young Adult Programs

Melinda Wenner Bradley reported as a Youth Engagement Coordinator. Her report is attached. There are more than 40 participants in the Youth programs at today's session, ranging in age from 2 ½ to 18 years old. We took a moment to notice how many of us in the room have been touched by the PYM

youth programs over our lives, as children, middle school Friends, Young Friends, Friendly Adult Presences, and parents or grandparents of children. Melinda also shared her deep history with this building and this room, and her sense of feeling grounded in community here. She challenged us to live into better inclusivity in our work, making childcare a priority for our committee work in our monthly and quarterly meetings so that more parents can be involved.

Eleanor Barbe, Jeff Rosenthal, and Mary Tierney reported on behalf of the Young Adult Friends program. They led us first in a worship sharing with queries about how we as individuals nurture love and trust in each other and institutions, noticing our hesitations and the ways in which we hold ourselves responsible for that work. They shared their corporate leading to work with those mobilizing to Shut Down Berks County Detention Facility, as well as efforts to combat xenophobic policing practices. Lastly, we heard What Kind of Times are These, by Adrienne Rich (below). We accepted their report.

What Kind of Times are These, by Adrienne Rich

There's a place between two stands of trees where the grass grows uphill
And the old revolutionary road breaks off into shadows
Near a meeting-house abandoned by the persecuted
Who disappeared into those shadows.

I've walked there picking mushrooms at the edge of dread, but don't be fooled
This isn't a Russian poem, this is not somewhere else but here,
Our country moving closer to its own truth and dread,
Its own ways of making people disappear.

I won't tell you where the place is, the dark mesh of the woods
Meeting the unmarked strip of light –
Ghost-ridden crossroads, leafmold paradise:
I know already who wants to buy it, sell it, make it disappear.

And I won't tell you where it is, so why do I tell you
Anything? Because you still listen, because in times like these
To have you listen at all, it's necessary
To talk about trees.

Friends expressed their gratitude for the service of Chris Lucca, his generosity, sense of humor, and patience with the body. Friends also expressed their appreciation for everyone who came to Sessions today, for their dedication to the work of our beloved community.

These minutes were approved.

Submitted by Kri Burkander, Recording Clerk