



Quaker Life Council Report to Annual Sessions, July 2023

The PYM Quaker Life Council currently nominates and oversees five committees and groups: Program Committee, Sessions Coordinating Committee, Youth Program Advisory Committee, Ministry & Care Committee, and Friends Counseling Service Advisory Committee (as well as any Yearly Meeting programs not otherwise assigned). In turn, the Program Committee coordinates and advises on the work of nine collaboratives and various sprints. By designation from the Council, the Program Committee also receives requests for and approves expenditure of most of the funds assigned to the QLC. To better stay abreast of this large span of responsibility, the Council recently inaugurated a regular monthly schedule of reports from each of these groups.

We have now had more than a year with this system and have found it helpful to hear from the committees on a regular basis. This allows the Council to provide more meaningful and informed care of the work. We are thankful to have attentive and dedicated clerks or conveners in place for these groups and good communication between the groups and the Council.

The Council's efforts to coordinate, facilitate and offer guidance to the committees under our care has been a work in progress. We continue to have only a small number of Friends in service and find that there is more than ample work for the time we have available to devote to it. We continue to have hybrid monthly meetings, and thanks to the use of Zoom, several Friends who could not otherwise attend are able to participate in the work of the Council. A scheduling shift that has involved all three councils now makes it possible for the officers of the Yearly Meeting to be present in our meetings; the presiding clerk, the general secretary, the chief financial officer, and the treasurer meet with each council monthly, allowing for better communication and coordination of the work. In addition, the three councils meet together monthly, facilitating coordination and allowing time for shared discernment where needed.

One of the concerns lifted up when we approved at-large membership in the Yearly Meeting for Friends was that we would have an influx of applicants. This has not proven to be the case; however, the Council is aware that the Ministry and Care Committee, which holds the at-large membership process in its care, has been able to offer clearness and pastoral care to Friends considering at-large membership -- whether or not they have then gone on to seek membership through this path.

The Council has considered and recommended potential changes to our reimbursement policy, supporting an effort to make reimbursement for travel expenses incurred in doing work for the Yearly Meeting less complicated and more available than heretofore.

We have engaged in seeking creative ways to bring forward nominations for the committees under our care.

We have received a request from the Addressing Racism Collaborative for ongoing funding for Ujima Friends Peace Center; and after due consideration, we forwarded that request to Finance Committee for their further discernment and action.

We were pleased to receive a proposal from the Youth Programs Advisory Committee to lift up a sprint that would develop plans for an Elder-Young Adult Mentoring Program. The Council affirmed lifting up the Sprint and will continue to support this program as it moves forward.

The Council is pleased that the Ministry and Care Committee has committed to tracking the needs and gifts in monthly meetings across the Yearly Meeting and connecting meetings to available resources where possible. This method (using the Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports as a source of information) will allow support and assistance to be provided in ways and places where they are needed and wanted and also encourage monthly and quarterly meetings to share their gifts and talents with one another. The Yearly Meeting should be a living corporate collective closely linked to each monthly meeting. The PYM programs that lie under the purview of Quaker Life Council have much to offer toward that goal.

The Council has also spent time considering the Queries from Governance Committee – most importantly the one which asks us: “How well do we do our work?”

QLC has welcomed a few new members and several other Friends have expressed interest since our last report to this body; we continue to hope for a more fully populated Council.

Key accomplishments during this past year have included:

- Examining and reconfiguring the full span of our responsibilities and ways of doing business,
- Improving communication with the committees and collaboratives under our care,
- Improving preparation and distribution of meeting agendas,
- Collaborating and consulting more closely with PYM staff, and with Administrative Council

Submitted on behalf of the Quaker Life Council
Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, Interim Clerk