



## **Eco Justice Collaborative**

### **Philadelphia Yearly Meeting**

April 17, 2020

To: Terri Whiteford, Anthony Stover, Christie Duncan-Tesmer, Andrew Anderson,  
Zachary Dutton, and Olivia Brangan

Dear Terri, Anthony, Christie, Andrew, Zachary, and Olivia:

Thank you all for meeting with members of the Eco Justice Collaborative on April 2<sup>nd</sup> to discuss our efforts to bring a Minute on the Climate Crisis for consideration to Annual Sessions in July. The Climate Minute was presented at a Thread Gathering held at Germantown Monthly Meeting in January. (The minute and its history are attached.) Those present at the gathering agreed to take the minute to their meetings for approval and since then it has been approved by a dozen meetings and we have heard from more that are considering it.

We have faith that approval of this minute at Annual Sessions would enable us to help PYM meetings and their members take spiritually grounded and effective action on the climate crisis, which we believe Friends feel truly called to do.

As we discussed before, the climate crisis is multifaceted and there is no single project or approach that will suffice to address it, nor is there a single project that will interest all monthly meetings. Consequently, Eco Justice wishes to use a systems approach to its work and support many kinds of projects and actions by different meetings.

#### **Our work would certainly include at least three kinds of projects:**

- a. Education, networking, and support: informing communities about the climate crisis and how to move forward. Recently, Gwynned Meeting requested our assistance with their work on land use, agriculture, and carbon sequestration. They would like to connect with other meetings with the same interests, as well as find educational and material support.
- b. Leading by example: Many meetings have installed solar panels on meetinghouses, switched to renewable energy. We hope to promote the idea of installing charging systems for electric cars at Quaker meetings, schools, and retirement facilities. Meetings should be acknowledged by PYM for their actions and such activities should be publicized widely, externally.
- c. Advocacy work: Use a Climate Action Network to help us support FCNL, legislation at the state and federal level, and other related public policy actions.

**Our initial thoughts about how PYM could support this work include:**

- a. Help us create a PYM “Climate Action Network” of interested meetings that we could then share resources with and inform meetings about specific legislative actions at state and national levels.
- b. Create an interactive web platform to share information about what different meetings and individuals are doing, thus helping to inform and inspire others.
- c. Provide opportunities at Annual and Continuing Sessions to make brief reports, conduct workshops and engage speakers.

We would like to discuss this proposal in more detail with you, starting with Andrew Anderson (thank you, Andrew, for agreeing to be our contact!). Assuming that you approve our request to present our minute and outline our initial plans at our (digital) Annual Sessions this summer, we need to start planning how we would best do that—and then review our initial ideas with you. Thank you for your work to help Friends find more effective and purposeful ways to act on the climate crisis, as individuals, as meetings, and as the yearly meeting. We look forward to working closely with you on this.

Sincerely,

Patricia Finley, and Ruth Darlington, Co-clerks

On behalf of the Eco Justice Collaborative

Bruce Birchard  
Burt Dallas  
Pamela Haines  
Paula Kline  
Stephen Loughin  
Margaret Mansfield  
Steve Olshevski  
Liz Robinson  
Rita Varley

## **MINUTE to ADDRESS the CLIMATE CRISIS AS ONE OF PYM's TOP CORPORATE WITNESSES**

In 2018, climate scientists told the United Nations that the effects of climate change were occurring much sooner than expected. They warned that, unless carbon emissions are cut by 50% in about ten years, i.e., by 2030, and then to net-zero by 2050, humanity will probably experience a global climate catastrophe of incalculable severity before the end of this century.

We know that while all will suffer, the most vulnerable populations will face certain calamity. Institutional racism has already harmed communities of color, as manifested in part in environmental injustice. Continued exploitation of the earth's resources has already caused mass extinctions and put life as we know it at risk. Conflicts due to rising sea levels, food insecurity, water scarcity, and mass migrations are already causing horrific injustice and threatening world peace.

For these reasons, our historic testimonies for peace, justice, integrity, and stewardship call us to make climate justice a clear and urgent concern for corporate witness, and for all manifestations of our Yearly Meeting to take *immediate and resolute action*.

### **BACKGROUND: Timeline of Yearly Meeting action minutes on climate change:**

1972: The Yearly Meeting adopted its first query on concern for the sanctity of life on Earth and reverence for all creation: ***“Query #10—Are you concerned that our increased power over nature should not be used irresponsibly but with reverence for life and with a sense of the splendor of God’s continuing creation?”***

1989 and 1993: The Environmental Working Group urged the Yearly Meeting to heed its own query on the environment, to recognize care for the earth as a religious concern and an extension of our testimonies on peace, justice and simplicity.

1998-2015: PYM approved seven minutes recognizing our commitment to caring for the earth as an expression of our faith. Excerpts from these minutes include:

- ***The world is God’s creation. How we treat the earth and all its creatures is basic to our relationship with God, and of fundamental religious concern to the Society of Friends***
- ***We unite in urging individual Friends, monthly meetings, and other Friends’ organizations to seek Divine Guidance in understanding how to reduce our own use of energy and material resources, to support strong international agreements for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to participate in a transition to less damaging technologies in our industries, agriculture, buildings and transportation.***
- ***We call upon the Yearly Meeting, in all its manifestations, to seek ways to hold our members lovingly accountable to live in God's world in a more environmentally sustainable fashion and to join other like-minded groups and organizations in supporting this concern.***

- ***We charge ourselves to examine all of our facilities and programs so as to continually ask, as a religious community, how we can live in God's world in a more environmentally sustainable fashion. . . [we] charge all Standing Committees and the working groups under their care to explore the implications of climate change and energy concerns for their work.***
- ***PYM encourages its Clerk and empowers the General Secretary and Councils as they are led to pursue opportunities and communicate publicly on behalf of PYM in support of strategic and effective efforts to abate climate change, as appropriate to their positions of leadership.***

For many years, individual Friends and Meetings have taken action in response to these minutes and their own leadings, and Friends organizations, including AFSC, FCNL, FWCC, QUNO and QEW, have spoken out about the threat of climate disruption to world peace, to civil society, and to our most vulnerable populations. Although our Yearly Meeting has supported specific actions to address this crisis, we have not made protecting the future of life on earth an on-going corporate witness.

Today we witness violence and the injustice of family separation at our southern border, raging fires in the west, and destruction by hurricanes and tornadoes, including Hurricane Maria that has so decimated Puerto Rico. Yet terrible as these have been, they are nothing compared to the suffering of future generations if our society fails to address the global climate crisis in the next decade.

The Yearly Meeting's Strategic Direction on corporate witness and social action states: ***"As seekers of Truth, we expect to be called to action. Together as a PYM community we will witness to the Light, contributing to transformational work in the world. We will encourage and support one another in taking risks together as we make an impact on our society. We will enhance our effectiveness by focusing our corporate action, on fewer, clearer corporate goals."***

Eco Justice Collaborative January 2020