

Notes from PYM Continuing Sessions, November 3, 2018 at Arch Street Meeting

Here are some of the highlights of the recent Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Continuing Sessions. There was a lot of business, so most of the time was spent hearing and responding to reports of a lot of work done by various parts and programs of PYM. Just after lunch, however, there was “All Together Time”, a multigenerational sharing in small groups of what connects us and what differences enrich us. These are the queries which will guide the One Quilt, One Yearly Meeting project where each meeting or entity can make a square. They’ll be put together to make a table skirt to wrap around the Clerks table at Annual Sessions, wrapping them in our warmth. I brought back a square for Concord Quarter to consider making.

We heard from the Multicultural Audit Steering Committee which has produced an RFP (Request for Proposal) to hire a consultant to guide us in the audit process. The Committee has worked long and hard; it was not always easy coming to unity. A link to the RFP and the Steering Committee’s work: <https://www.pym.org/multicultural-audit-committee/>

Nominating Council continues to approach people whose names have been lifted up as appropriate for the Clerk or Assistant Clerk role, but out of 38, none has yet said yes. Some are still in discernment. A working group made up of representatives from Administrative Council, Nominating Council and Quaker Life Council is working on revising the job descriptions of the roles of Clerk and Assistant Clerk to make them more “doable”. If you have thoughts about people (or yourself) for any of these roles, or to serve on one of the councils, talk to Concord Quarter’s Nominating Council Representative, Deb Lyons!

The Bridge Contact program is now up and running. Each meeting and Quaker entity can have a “Bridge Contact” whose role is to share information back and forth between the meetings and PYM. I have volunteered to be one for Concord Quarter as a whole, but each meeting should have one too. Contact Wendy Kane at PYM: wkane@pym.org

Administrative Council shared that among other items, they are working on a revised Staff Voice policy, which is now being reviewed by staff. An earlier policy was developed without enough input from all staff, and led to a listening session at Annual Sessions.

Quaker Life Council had sharings from three of the Collaboratives under their care: Eco Justice, Spiritual Formation, and the Legislative Policy Council. Eco Justice is very active and now has a video which can be brought to meetings. Spiritual Formation has done their program in 60 meetings since 1999, enriching 700 people. The Legislative Policy Collaborative is made up of the representatives appointed to the FCNL by PYM, but is open to others.

Melinda Wenner Bradley (also a West Chester Meeting member!), the Youth Engagement Coordinator, had people share stories from the different programs: Middle School, Young Friends (high school) and Families and Children. Gatherings are coming up soon for all three programs

Young Adult Friends shared three beautiful queries with us: (1) Are there people towards whom we hesitate to trust or love? Where are these hesitations grounded? (2) Do we expect our institutions to be centered in trust and love? What does it look like to support that? (3) In whose hands do we place the work of building trust and love? Should that work be spread among more of us? Why do some of us relinquish it? They continue to work on their leading to demonstrate their opposition to the Berks

Detention Center. They are planning an action on March 23 in conjunction with the next Continuing Sessions.

I think the Yearly Meeting sessions continue to be respectful, but also holding the leadership and those with responsibilities to the priorities that have been stated. I was glad to go and listen carefully, as well as to meet up with F(f)riends I have known over the years. It is always a learning experience to hear how others think, and practice their faith.

Lynne Piersol