

Important Message From Your Clerks and General Secretary

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Dear David,

We are sending you this message in your role as clerk or co-clerk at your monthly or quarterly meeting.

This year, Annual Sessions provided many first-time experiences, even for those of us who have attended sessions many times before. For the first time in the life of our yearly meeting, we worshiped, shared connection, and joyfully considered several important concerns via video conference. And we know there's more to come.

We ended sessions with **three major concerns** before us on which we will act as a yearly meeting in the coming months:

- the proposed Philadelphia Yearly Meeting witness on climate change,
- our movement to address racism, and
- consideration of our membership practices.

We know that as we try to discern the movement of Spirit, we profit from hearing many voices. As a next step toward action in these three areas, we are asking that your whole community consider the linked materials at your September or October Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business and share your wisdom with the yearly meeting.

We are including resources and information on each of these three concerns to assist and support your meeting in this undertaking. The [advance reports and videos prepared for Annual Sessions](#) are essential resources.

## **1. A minute under consideration for possible approval, which proposes that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting adopt a yearly-meeting-wide witness on climate change.**

You might consider how climate change has impacted you and your meeting. Perhaps it would be helpful to discuss ways the meeting has engaged with this concern and what you have done to combat climate change. The yearly meeting will profit from input from every meeting as we move toward discerning we shall adopt this witness as a whole body.

The minute, [also available on the PYM website](#), is as follows:

### **Climate Change Summary Minute**

*Guided by many Friends who have worked tirelessly over the past fifty years, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting adopts a yearly meeting-wide witness on climate change. This corporate ministry is broad and encompasses the work and witness of many people, communities, monthly meetings and organizations within the wider network of Quakers in the Philadelphia region and beyond. A yearly meeting-wide witness on climate change seeks to raise up as many different voices and actions as possible to make progress on the environmental and societal issues at the heart of the climate crisis.*

## **2. A minute originally written and shared widely in 2016 by the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent, a national organization of African American Quakers in the U.S.**

This minute and the conversations it created formed the foundation for establishing the Ujima Friends Peace Center. We revisited this minute as a whole yearly meeting during the July 25, 2020 plenary session on addressing racism, and we invite your community to revisit the minute now as well. [It can be found on the PYM website](#).

The discernment of these Friends can provide a meaningful starting point for meetings to consider their own work.

- What actions has your meeting been inspired to take regarding racism among us?
- What challenges arise for you as you consider racism in the United States in these days?
- How has your meeting been affected?

- What do you feel should come next in our collective work to address racism in our world today?

You can learn more about the [Ujima Friends Peace Center on their website](#).

### **3. The report on the January 2020 Threshing Session on Membership, which the body received and considered during the July 19, 2020 Plenary Session.**

- What does membership mean in your monthly meeting?
- What does belonging to a meeting mean?
- Do the current forms of our membership process speak to the substance of membership as it is understood by your meeting?

As a yearly meeting community, we have begun to re-evaluate the ways in which our membership practices nurture our relationships with one another and the Spirit. We need the wisdom and experience from all meeting communities as we move forward together. We have included some queries which may be helpful in framing your discussion.

#### **Queries:**

- Is it time for our yearly meeting to consider revising our membership practices?
- And, if so, how should they be revised?
- What vision of commitment and belonging are we moving toward in our Quaker community?

We look forward to learning from you about your discernment as a meeting in each of these areas.

**Your input will help shape the agenda for Continuing Sessions on November 7 and how we move forward together.** As we move into the fall, we hope way will open for us to worship with you via Zoom if not in person.

Sincerely,

Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch and Frank Barch, PYM Co-Clerks  
Christie Duncan-Tessmer, PYM General Secretary

**Important Checklist:**

\_\_\_ Share the three concerns with your meeting community by newsletter and in your first fall Meeting for Business.

\_\_\_ Engage in discernment around these three concerns.

\_\_\_ Submit your input to PYM via an online feedback form which we will make available to you **September 30**. This form will remain open to collect data through **October 30**.

\_\_\_ Attend Continuing Sessions.

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