

## **Consolidated Notes from the June 7 2015 Gathering at Reading Meeting on Revitalizing the Quarters of PYM**

This document is being shared with all participants at the June 7 gathering by email, and copies distributed to those interested at PYM 2015 annual sessions. The file will also be posted after sessions on the Philadelphia Quarter website (<https://www.quakercloud.org/cloud/philadelphia-quarterly-meeting>).

The document is comprised of three parts:

1. The Summary Minute
2. Notes from Morning Session: lifting up successes ● and questions ○ within our Quarters.
3. Notes from the small interest groups that met over lunch. Topics were derived from the morning sharing.

### **1. Summary Minute of the June 7 Gathering on Revitalizing our Quarterly Meetings**

Members from nine quarterly meetings gathered at Reading Monthly Meeting on June 7, 2014 to affirm the role and importance of our quarters. There was a sense of community and belonging to each other.

We converged upon the truth that regional gatherings can be a place where yearly meeting becomes relevant. The quarterly meeting experience is an inspirational intermediary between monthly meetings and our wider yearly meeting community. When we come together, we collectively fuel our excitement about being Quakers.

We also considered the life in our quarterly meetings as it relates to leadership, youth support, membership, roles and responsibilities, working across our communities, and spiritual enrichment. As we adjourned, we affirmed the value of fellowship, worship, and sharing in love towards the development of new ideas and the seasoning of others.

It is time that we further explore concrete ways to integrate the structure, energy, and community between monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and the yearly meeting.

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### **2. Notes from Morning Session: lifting up successes ● and questions ○ within our Quarters.**

*Successes:*

- Bucks Quarter has quarterly meeting every third Sunday so calendar clashes are at the minimum
- Stapeley potlucks.
- Encourage sojourning in each monthly meeting within the quarter

- Cross-pollination meeting - clerks and members break into affinity groups share activities.
- Traveling throughout the quarter. We are rediscovering each other.
- Quarterly meeting is not separate from us
- We have a Peace Fair, the leadership is done by the youth.
- My daughter never missed a peace fair or Camp Swatara
- The disagreement around Camp Swatara was the initial catalyst for this gathering
- We need to make better use of technology to save meeting time. This gathering was planned online and with conference calls
- We have a lot of energy and hope in our quarter as a natural extension to our close locations. We have three meetings cooperating on peace and environment initiatives. This is where I want to put energy
- We have an overall sense of belonging to each other. We have a homeless ministry spread throughout community churches as well as our meetings. The peace fair continues despite cuts. PYM strategic plan is making it happen. We go to the Grange fair and we provide 60+ greeters.
- On the Goldilocks principle, the quarter is the middle size porridge. The quarters are where Friends community becomes more relevant and where we get to know each other better in rural areas that are at a geographic disadvantage in being far from Friends Center.
- Youth support is good. We need to create opportunities for play, working together, service, supporting testimonies. We had quarter wide unity prior to the (Iraq/Afghanistan) wars
- The annual gathering in the first weekend of May had yearly meeting support. It brought youth from Quarterly meetings, and Yearly meeting and there was a lot of inter-visitation.
- Our Quarter program is sponsored and planned by the host meeting
- We built a high school in Asia.
- We laid a community down
- Music across our meetings created inter-visitation variety
- The Quarters supply ongoing support intervisitation, and worship support
- We have deep sharing in our quarter worship and ministry committee.
- "In spite of our structure" we have not killed Quakerism
- We've had a continuation of activities host coordinator staff cuts
- getting to know friends across committees.
- Camp Swatara
- the MES Strengthening Our Meeting Community Program has deepened worship across the Quarter
- post-coordinator cuts a Quarter care committee was formed. With Camp Swatara Strengthening Our Meeting Community Program, we are now a tighter community.

- Our leadership is proactive, joyful, and has energy
- Quaker Voluntary Service is living in our quarter under the Philadelphia Quarter umbrella. One meeting is their spiritual home.
- We have first Sunday potlucks and worship at Stapeley.
- Quarter meetings. Meet one time a year. How many more meetings can we schedule?
- Deepening and strengthening program through the MES.
- The coordinator position is important for continuity. Finding ways to support each other rather than working alone
- The Quarter structure gives us opportunity to model within and outside the Friends community. "Mini-transition communities" are ideal structures for local resilience and fun
- Feed youth into something Yearly Meeting is already doing and shuttle kids across yearly meeting.

*Questions:*

- We need a centralized calendar to minimize clashes for our events throughout the yearly meeting.
- Can we have "Quarterly meeting Sunday"? Throughout the yearly meeting?
- Create Google groups for each committee so monthly meetings can exchange info. Within the Quarter?
- Can we create spiritual nurture mechanisms so we can know what is happening in other quarters?
- We have had discussions on laying down Quarterly meeting.
- An uncomplicated space needs to be created to be successful.
- Quarters need to work and partner with monthly meetings and be sure that work with the quarterly meeting doesn't compete with monthly meetings.
- Better use of time would create more energy and commitment. Steadfast, faithful commitment.
- We nearly laid down our quarter. We are quietly meeting. We are holding the structure until energy and leading comes forward.
- Are we excited about being Quakers? I want to leave excited today.
- The challenge for quarters is to attract people to "one more event." When people actually *get* to a quarter event (our square dance) people get to have a good time.
- Our kids' activities wax and wane.
- Nominating is like pulling teeth to get people to take that chance.
- Selling quarter property - the quarter is rising. Yearly meeting is to be the influence, and controlled by the quarters.
- We are not effective in drawing more people into the friendly households program.

- Hickman is not being fully lived into.
- We live in a naturally beautiful area that is under threat. We talk, but don't act together as well as we could.
- We have a lack of participation in our quarter.
- I have never been to quarterly meeting other than a program the Grange fair and the peace fair.
- Hard to see the success in a two year cycle, the host meeting sponsors the program. Maybe we should combine with another quarter to create more energy. We do get together but we need to know about issues such as the 18 deaths in one year at one meeting which made putting the program together challenging.
- We have declining numbers. Perhaps consolidating monthly meetings within a quarter would be helpful?
- We need to itemize our camps available across Philadelphia yearly meeting for kids. Baltimore yearly meeting is strong because of the multiple youth camps.
- Quarters should be playing together more and if we were, we would increase participation!
- Quarterly meetings have institutional responsibilities and wisdom. Is it helpful to have them “under our care” and what to do about it?
- Youth activities. YAF are a gap for many monthly meetings. It's a transitory identity.

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### 3. Notes from Small Interest Groups

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of Monthly Meetings, Quarterly Meetings, and Yearly Meeting**

Rob Kuhlman (Abington), Tom Woodward (Concord),  
Jerry Taylor (Bucks), Hollister Knowlton (Phila)

##### *Summary*

The group considered whether there is a “right relationship” among monthly, quarterly and yearly meeting, and whether we are clear about our responsibilities one to the other. There is an awareness and a concern that the YM relates directly to mm’s but tends to bypass the quarters. There is an important role for quarters to play in gathering and strengthening the regional group (through cross pollination meetings, worship sharing on gifts and leadings, called meetings for worship on leadings that can lead to funded projects) and facilitating the YM’s interaction with that group.

There was a yearning for the YM to take on roles that benefit all the quarters and monthly meetings: facilitating virtual communication among the 3 levels by providing infrastructure, training, resources (eg a unified calendar with YM, QM and MM events

color coded? and possible linking of meeting and QM facebook pages?). Might there be a coordinator of Quarters at the YM level?

The question of how Quarters are funded and staffed is inconsistent among the 13 quarters, with some receiving mm PYM covenants and taking from that the amount needed for the Quarter-discerned budget, while a few quarters struggle via separate fundraising efforts. Some Quarters have no coordinator or paid staff, others have paid project leaders and/or coordinators who range from 10 hrs per week to full time.

#### *Raw notes*

- ❑ What is the “right relationship” among mm, qm, ym?
  - ❑ Currently, relationships look like a triangle with one at each point, and YM relating to MMs but not QMs
  - ❑ Are we horizontal perhaps with MMs feeding into QMs into YMs?
  - ❑ What is the responsibility of the YM to the Quarters and vice versa?
  - ❑ What is the (best? Right?) role for the 13 Qtrs in PYM? All are at different levels, stages...is there an ideal?
- ❑ What’s best means for MMs to find out what others are doing? Connect people around issues? QM and YM can assist via Qtr Cross Pollination meetings (multiple committee clerks/members meet on same day in small groups), Thread Gatherings ideal - intra qtr?
- ❑ Media/Communication:
  - ❑ Could YM role be to facilitate virtual interaction among all three levels, providing infrastructure, training, resources?
  - ❑ Could YM provide one unified calendar w/mm, qm, and ym events color coded?
  - ❑ Facebook pages – is there an advantage to a single site for PYM that contains all, or links to all? (FGC now hosts web sites for mm’s and qms)
- ❑ Finances: PYM covenant – traditionally PYM covenant goes thru quarters.
  - ❑ Example: Abington QTR has a budget (created by Qtr Finance Committee and approved by coordinating committee), which includes the PYM covenant as well as Qtr expenses for two staff (summer youth camp and home care). After Qtr needs are taken out, remainder of covenant is forwarded to PYM. (Bucks similar)
  - ❑ PQM mm’s send directly to YM and a smaller amount to QM, which becomes QM budget with need for supplementation.
- ❑ Staffing Quarters: range from coordinators (10-40 hr/wk), project leaders, to no staff.
  - ❑ Might it be useful to have a support person for Qtrs at YM level?
  - ❑ Funded projects/activities – arises at MM level, qtr discerns it as a larger issue, creates a structure, then funds it.

- ❑ Called meetings for worship at quarter level – (Ex: Abington Qtr: Unami brought issue of fossil fuel divestment, Richland brought modern slavery). These have been powerful. (divestment one led to action by qtr trustees. Jeff Perkins spoke and did Q&A)
- ❑ How rigid must quarter boundaries be? Some are hesitant to connect w/nearby mm not in our Qtr.

### **Declining Membership**

Charlie Spadoni (Concord), Alex Miller (Caln), Mike Mrozinski (Abington),  
Bruce Harrison (Concord), Joan Broadfield (Chester), Shirley Smith (Caln)

#### *Summary*

The problem of declining membership at some meetings occurs across quarters. There is need for more intervisitation, emphasis on the value of membership instead of its burdens. A good web site can help, lifting the burden on parents to serve as First Day School teachers, holding a camp or retreat for members of constituent meetings.

As for laying down a meeting, it is suggested that every meeting adopt a plan for possible eventual liquidation, much like a will and that if a monthly meeting is thinking of laying itself down, that the Quarter can help with seasoning the decision. A laying down can strengthen neighboring meetings by releasing Friends to attend there. Yet, there have been meetings down to one member who have revived, eg, Reading.

#### *Raw Notes*

##### Problems:

- ❑ What is the true number of members? What is the value? Do you get something out of it?
- ❑ Negative: Meeting “in-group” versus “out-group”
- ❑ Committee structure time commitments tend to dissuade membership
- ❑ Insufficient intervisitation

##### Solutions:

- ❑ Abington Quarter: week-long camp for members of constituent meetings subsidized by quarter and monthly meetings
- ❑ Web site: attracts potential members
- ❑ Hold First Day School without parents as teachers. Paid instructors?

##### End of road:

- ❑ Each monthly meeting should adopt a plan for liquidation much like a will.
- ❑ If a monthly meeting thinks it might need to be laid down, it should be seasoned by the Quarter.
- ❑ If a meeting is laid down, members will feel more welcome in remaining meetings.
- ❑ Don't necessarily give up - Reading Meeting survived.

## Supporting Our Youth

John Hayden (Caln), Paula Cell (Phila), Ed Solenberger (Upper Susq), Brad Alderfer (Abington)

### *Summary*

This group looked at the various levels of youth programs in Quarters (from none to vibrant) and asked how Quarters, and the meetings that comprise them, might collaborate to support and connect to the youth programs at the yearly meeting level and in their quarters.

They explored the importance of youth camp experiences and asked whether meetings and quarters could help promote all of the various camp opportunities.

One of this group's conclusions was to increase a focus on the role that youth camps have in the development of a youth community

### *Raw Notes*

- ❑ PYM Youth Programs support/exchange of/between QM/MM youth programs
  - ❑ The focus of this part of the group's discussion was on youth programs other than religious education. PYM has established youth programs for elementary age through about 35 year old. Some Quarterly Meetings have youth programs established. However, each Quarter's youth programs are different from one another. There is a range from no youth programs to long-standing programs. Some Monthly Meetings also have established youth programs.
  - ❑ Given this range of youth programs across Quarters and Monthly Meetings, what are the opportunities that Quarterly Meetings have to support youth programs?
  - ❑ Can there be collaboration between Quarters and Monthly Meetings to ensure that youth have a place to occasionally gather together, even across Quarters?
- ❑ What's the process for developing Youth Programs?
  - ❑ Some Quarters and Monthly Meetings do not have established youth programs.
  - ❑ How do you get started? What resources are available at the Yearly Meeting or from other Quarters to assist in starting a youth program?
  - ❑ What kind of training is needed?
- ❑ How do we engage our existing camps?
  - ❑ Youth camps were observed to be an important place for youth to gather in be in community with other Friends of similar age. Baltimore Yearly Meeting's youth camps were cited as a successful example of youth camp programs.
  - ❑ Across Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, private camps have been the traditional locations for Quaker youth camps such as Camp Onas (Ottsville, PA) and Camp Dark Waters (Medford, NJ).
  - ❑ Can Quarterly Meetings help publicize and support Quaker youth camping programs in addition to the promotion provided by PYM staff?

- ❑ Providing for more connections to youth camps on the YM website
- ❑ Quarterly Meetings seldom exchange information. More rare occasion is coordinating programs or other organizing efforts beyond information exchange. What can Quarters do to build an interconnected network?
- ❑ One of this group's conclusions was to increase a focus on the role that youth camps have in the development of a youth community

## **Fostering Leadership**

Arthur Larrabee (Phila), Howard Cell (Phila), Holly Olson (Bucks),  
Jed Smith (Caln), Irene Oleksiw (Caln)

### *Summary*

This group had a strong interest in providing an ongoing support system for those who serve, including spiritual support committees for quarter clerks, and through a YM Thread Gathering on Quaker Leadership. There was a real sense of the importance for leaders to experience their role as a joyful opportunity rather than a burden.

It is incumbent on ourselves as ministers to help Friends identify and tap into their Gifts, which may be to pursue leadings or to take on leadership roles.

### *Raw Notes*

- ❑ Provide ongoing support system for those who serve
  - ❑ \*\*Quarter Meeting leadership support committee
    - ❑ Spiritual Support group can be very helpful for a Clerk to use as a sounding board and to sort through difficult situations
  - ❑ \*\*Create Thread Gathering on Quaker Leadership
    - ❑ for those who seek leadership support and training
    - ❑ Experiential (practice dealing with scenarios one might encounter) and structured (guidance similar to clerk training)
    - ❑ consciousness raising on leadership as a joyful opportunity as opposed to a burden
    - ❑ change the way we think of leadership
    - ❑ how does it work differently in a Quaker setting versus a secular situation
    - ❑ how can we incorporate the Quaker leadership approach in our work and community endeavors
    - ❑ servant leadership
- ❑ Spiritual Leadership
  - ❑ incumbent on us as ministers to help Friends tap into their gifts
  - ❑ leadership can take many forms, pursuing leadings or taking on leadership roles

## **Working Across Communities**



Pat Finley (Haverford), Paula Kline (Concord), Tom Grabe (Phila)

### *Summary*

There was energy in this group for creating a focus for a gathering this fall, perhaps starting with one Quarter, but also inviting representatives from all others. The proposal is a focus on Resilience and Climate Change with special attention to sustainable food and energy practices (as the Transition movement does.).

The group also proposed that PQM's Quaker Voluntary Service project be lifted up across the entire yearly meeting. And that the roles of elders be lifted up and encouraged by engaging with retirement communities within our quarters.

### *Raw Notes*

- ❑ Quarter promote Quaker Voluntary Service throughout the yearly meeting
  - ❑ Quarter as lens
- ❑ Propose Fall Gathering to focus on local resilience and climate change with special attention to sustainable food and energy practices.
  - ❑ To be organized by EJWG (Eco-Justice Working Group) with representatives from each Quarter
- ❑ Lift up the roles of elders especially retirement communities
- ❑ We would like to see that as concerns similar to the above are lifted up, the YM is agile enough to support....provide adequate resources to maintain momentum and be effective.

## **Spiritual Enrichment and Nurture**

Wade Wright (Upper Susq), Gail Woodbury (Phila), Margaret Wood (Upper Susq),  
Amelia Diamond (Abington), Jane Keller (Caln)

### *Summary*

Much of the focus was on spiritual nurture, and worship into action, across meetings and individuals and the community at large.

On spiritual gifts: The group talked about the importance of naming spiritual gifts in each other as a way of binding and growing community. We spoke of appreciating gifts as an interior process that can change as present moment changes. We mentioned the need to try and differentiate spiritual gifts, gifts of grace, from learned skills or personal interests.

On spiritual formation outreach: Although secondary to the point of reaching even further into neighborhoods (people of color), we mentioned that we can focus on identifiable groups: connecting with the aging / retirement communities, or young adult Friends (a Spiritual Formation program set for Fall 2014).

Spiritual Enrichment happens by inviting Friends to speak on their daily life's work. One example was a Water Program presented one month as the entire agenda of an Abington Quarterly Meeting for Business. An arborist spoke of trees' relatedness to water. The India project has drilled a well for a village in India. Sewage and pollution was presented by 2 Friends who work in that concern

### *Raw Notes*

- ❑ How do we bring people to God at both the Meeting and Quarter levels?
- ❑ On the positive side, using spiritual language has increased, e.g., mystical, ministries, finding allies
  - ❑ the concept of transition towns is growing in popularity and crossing many ministries (ecology, AVP, slow food, youth).
    - ❑ there are themes that cross quarter boundaries
  - ❑ Real things really happening from a spiritual base and being transparent.
  - ❑ People are searching for their own spirituality beyond the churches.
  - ❑ Educating ourselves to commitment. (What does it mean to be a member vs an attender?)
  - ❑ A previous resistance to religious language trending toward "listening in tongues," that is, listening for the spiritual voice in spiritual vocabularies other than our own
  - ❑ Quakers are claiming our gift of holy listening to the Spirit and to each other
  - ❑ In their various programs, Meeting Enrichment Services (formerly Deepening and Strengthening) and Spiritual Formation Program are creating space for listening to one another.
  - ❑ We are recognizing spiritual gifts as something greater than learned skills
  - ❑ We can use the practice of Identifying Gifts as a meeting and QM resource, and yet aware of reluctance to lift one "over" another and concern that this reluctance diminishes us and meeting ministries.
    - ❑ Spiritual Formation can help bring that piece to meetings and quarters.
- ❑ How do we make our meetings look more like and be more connected to the neighborhoods in which they are situated (and to people of color)?
- ❑ Again, Transition Towns may be a way and a Quarterly meeting is good size for initiating a Transition program among meetings.