



# MEMBERS *One of Another*

## Field Guide for Friends



JULY 23 - 27



CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY



ONLINE OVER ZOOM



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

# ANNUAL SESSIONS

## Field Guide for Friends



JULY 23 - 27



CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY



ONLINE OVER ZOOM

## Welcome to Annual Sessions 2025!

The Field Guide contains information to help orient you to the events, activities, and locations during our time together. The sections below provide details for joining online, commuting, or staying on campus at Cheyney University.

Alongside logistical information, the Field Guide shares how we gather in Spirit-led community, grounded in worship, throughout our days together. Please take time to read the sections on Worship and on Discernment & Expectations. Preparing in the days before opens hearts and minds to the leadings of the Spirit and to joyful fellowship with one another. The Sessions Coordinating Committee, Clerks and Councils, and staff have been planning and anticipating this gathering for months; we are glad you are part of it.

Special thanks to the staff of Cheyney University, who work in partnership with yearly meeting planners

We are glad to gather in person and online for this time of worship, community, and discernment. Thank you for preparing ahead so that our time together begins with ease.

You can find the most up-to-date schedule and program information on the [Sessions Page of the PYM website.](#)

Limited copies of this document will be available on-site at Annual Sessions, to limit paper waste.

***We encourage downloading/printing the Field Guide at home if you want a copy in hand at Cheyney University.***

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# AT SESSIONS

## Joining Online Over Zoom

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### Annual Sessions will take place at Cheyney University and on Zoom.

The first two days of Sessions, Wednesday and Thursday, happen online through Zoom. All registered Friends receive the link.

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are hybrid. Friends can come to Cheyney University or continue joining by Zoom.

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### Zoom Link for All 2025 Annual Sessions Online and Hybrid Events

**Zoom Link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86060993558>

**Meeting ID:**

860 6099 3558

**Helpline: (215) 241-7238**

If you need technical assistance or location-related information during Annual Sessions, a PYM staff member will be available at this number from 8:00am – 8:00pm



# AT SESSIONS

## Cheyney University Campus Map



**Helpline: (215) 241-7238**

If you need assistance or location-related information during Annual Sessions, a PYM staff member will be available at this number from 8:00am – 8:00pm

# AT SESSIONS

## What Friends Staying at Cheyney University Need To Know

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### Check-in

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Check-in will take place on Friday morning beginning at 8:00 a.m. in the Marian Anderson Auditorium. Check-in closes at 5:30 p.m. on both Friday and Saturday.

If you plan to arrive later, please contact PYM Staff ahead of time to make arrangements.

Please wear your name tag visibly at all times so that Cheyney staff can identify you as part of our group.

### What To Bring

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Please note that **dorm rooms do not include linens, pillows, or toiletries**. Rooms are air-conditioned, though the temperature may not be adjustable in every room.

#### We recommend bringing:

- Twin XL sheets or two flat sheets
- Flip flops or shower shoes
- Pillow and blanket
- Towel and hand towel
- Chargers for devices
- Layers for changing temperatures
- Snacks for your room (each suite includes a mini fridge)

# AT SESSIONS

## What Friends Staying at Cheyney University Need To Know

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### Dorm Access Cards

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All guests staying in campus housing must have a campus issued photo ID card to enter the dorms. These cards are issued by Cheyney University and require a headshot photo.

If you do not send a photo in advance, you will need to have one taken on-site by campus staff. This process may take 30 minutes or more and can only happen before 5:30 p.m. Dorm access will not be possible without a card.

### Getting to Campus and Parking

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Cheyney University is located at  
**1837 University Circle, Cheyney, PA 19319.**

If you have a disability, you may park in Lot D at any time. All others may use Lot D for check-in only. **After check-in, you will be directed to park in Lot C (across from Marian Anderson) or Lot E (closest to the dorms).**

### Dorm Room Concerns

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For any issues related to electricity, HVAC, water, or other residence hall facilities, please scan the QR code or use the following link to submit a work request: [Facilities Work Order](#)





# AT SESSIONS

Information For Friends Commuting or Lodging Off Campus

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## Check-in

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Registration check-in will take place in the lobby of Marian Anderson Auditorium, where you will receive your name tag. Please wear your name tag visibly at all times so that Cheyney staff can identify you as part of our group.

## Access for Commuters

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Marian Anderson Auditorium and Ada George Dining Hall will be open to PYM Friends without the need for a physical card. Please wear your name tag visibly at all times so that Cheyney staff can identify you as part of our group.

## Getting to Campus and Parking

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Cheyney University is located at  
**1837 University Circle, Cheyney, PA 19319.**

If you have a disability, you may park in Lot D at any time. All others may use Lot D for check-in only. **After check-in, you will be directed to park in Lot C (across from Marian Anderson) or Lot E (closest to the dorms).**

# AT SESSIONS

## Campus Information for Everyone

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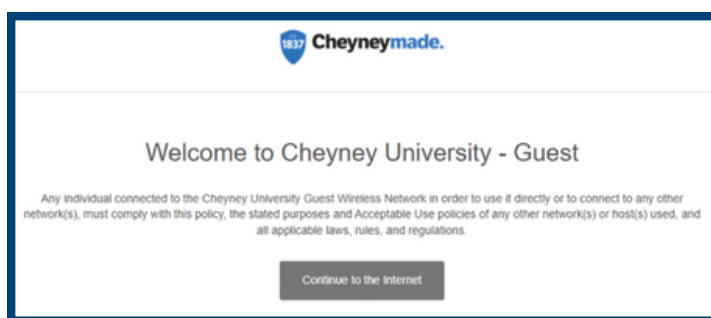
### WiFi on Campus

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- To connect to Wi-Fi while on campus, select the network named **“Cheyney University - Guest.”**

**This is an open network and does not require a password.**

- When your device connects, a splash page will appear.



This is a welcome screen provided by the university.

- On that page, click the button labeled **“Continue to the Internet.”**
- This step is required. If you do not click that button, your device may show a connection, but you will not be able to access the internet.
- If the splash page does not appear automatically, try opening a web browser and visiting any website. This usually triggers the page to load.

Contact the PYM Helpline at (215) 241-7238 between 8:00am - 8:00pm out if you need support or have any questions.

# AT SESSIONS

## Campus Information for Everyone

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### Accessibility

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- Speech to Text transcription is provided during each plenary session via Zoom technology.
- Hold up a “*Speak Louder*” card if you can’t hear your facilitator. Find these at the PYM Welcome Table.
- Golf Carts are available for travel between buildings and circulate during transition times. To request a ride call the Helpline at (215) 241-7238.

### Service Animals

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*We may have service animals accompanying Friends.*

*Reminders:*

- Do not pet the service animal
- Do not distract the service animal in any way
- Refrain from asking the service dog’s handler why a service dog is being used



# AT SESSIONS

## Campus Information for Everyone

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### Safety and Emergencies

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- **If there's an emergency, call 911.**
  - At Cheyney University, campus security is part of the police. If you're on campus, it may be faster to call them first.
- **PYM Helpline:** (215) 241-7238
- **Cheyney Campus Security:** (610) 399-2405
- **Closest Emergency Rooms:**
  - Chester County Hospital Emergency Department
    - 701 E. Marshall St., West Chester, PA
  - Paoli Hospital Emergency Room
    - 255 W Lancaster Ave, Paoli, PA
- **Safety:** Report any unusual or suspicious incidents to the PYM Helpline: (215) 241-7238. **If children have been separated from their family or group, notify a staff member or the adults working with the children's program.**
- **Lost Items:** Contact the Helpline; Lost and Found is located at the Welcome/Registration table. PYM staff are not responsible for lost items during or after Sessions.

# AT SESSIONS

## Living in community

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### Community Expectations

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When we join together for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Annual Sessions we are a community gathered in the discipline of the Spirit. Annual Sessions is a time for seeking, worshiping, learning, eating, singing, and living together. All are asked to respect the sensitivities of other members of the community, whether of our own PYM faith community or those we encounter as we move within the campus itself.

- Personal behavior should reflect our mindfulness that collectively we represent the Religious Society of Friends.
- Parents and sponsors are expected to be pro-actively responsible for their children at all times except when they are signed into youth programs.
- Everyone is asked to help make a safe and supportive community for all — and especially our children.
- Alcohol, illegal drugs, and pets are not permitted during Annual Sessions. (The exception for animals are service animals — see page 10)
- Smoking is not permitted in buildings, including the dorm.

Friends are expected to live up to basic expectations of common courtesy and responsibility. Any Friend who is unable to function according to these expectations may be asked to leave.

# AT SESSIONS

## Living in community

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### PYM Anti-Harassment Policy

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1) Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) is committed to co-creating environments for staff, volunteers, committee members, and program participants which are free of discrimination and harassment. Demeaning actions, words, jokes or comments based on an individual's gender, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, ethnicity, ability, age, gender, gender identity, veteran status or any other reason prohibited by law or central to one's identity will not be tolerated.

2) The Quaker Life Council wrote and approved the above policy statement, and a set of procedures for addressing harassment has been developed to accompany the statement. **The policy and the procedures are posted on the PYM Website.** All appropriate staff are aware of the policy and procedures. If you have experienced harassment or have witnessed harassment, please raise the concern to a member of staff who will aid you in addressing your concerns.



# AT SESSIONS

## Living in community

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### Gender Pronouns

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It is important not to assume someone's pronouns as it allows people to define themselves and not be addressed by terms based on someone else's assumptions. **Pronoun stickers are located at the Welcome Table**; you are invited to add your pronoun(s) to your name tag.

### Youth Guidelines at Annual Sessions

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- Youth should be supervised at all times. When Youth Programs participants are not in their programs, they need to be in the care of a parent or designated adult.
- Youth Programs participants must be checked in/out in writing by a parent or designated adult.
- Parents or designated adults are responsible for their children when they are not signed into childcare and programs, and during times when the programs are not in session.



# Letter from Presiding Clerk

## Dear Friends

I am so glad you'll be joining me at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's 345th Annual Sessions. We'll be gathering at Cheyney University and on Zoom, hopefully in ways that are accessible to as many Friends as possible across the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Your decision to attend Annual Sessions reflects not obligation, but our shared love for the yearly meeting. When we gather together as a beloved faith community in worship and fellowship with each other, we are Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

This year's theme, Members One of Another, reminds us that we belong to one another in Spirit and purpose. As it is written in Romans, "We are all members of each other, connected to each other with the purpose of serving each other." (Romans 12:15, First Nations Version)

While I hope you'll take part in all the events of Annual Sessions, please note that each day includes worship, including the opportunity to join with the whole Yearly Meeting at All Together Worship on Sunday morning at 9:00 AM.

I look forward to seeing you in the room or on the Zoom, in worship and in fellowship, at the 2025 Annual Sessions.

In peace, mercy & justice,

Nikki Mosgrove  
Presiding Clerk

# Philadelphia Yearly Meeting **ANNUAL SESSIONS**

**All events take place online over Zoom**

➞ **WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2025** ➞ **1:00 PM - 9:00 PM**

Time	Event
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm	<b>Spiritual Formation</b>

Friends are encouraged to start the Sessions week with an opportunity for grounding and learning with the Spiritual Formation Collaborative. Together we will explore the topic Enabling the Presence of Spirit at Meetings for Business. We will have readings and small and large group discussions based on William Taber's *Four Doors for Meeting for Worship*.

6:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>Keynote Address:</b> <i>How can we sing God's song in a strange land...in such a time as this?</i> (Psalms 137:4, Esther 4:14 and 16)
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Join Friends to share with Dr. Ayesha Imani an opportunity to be guided by Spirit about how to bear witness with true authenticity to the gospel given to us. What do we do right here, right now, in the midst of our pain, nearly paralyzed by fear, fighting despair, witnessing our world in peril? Let us open our hearts and minds and allow ourselves to draw inspiration from the presence of the Divine and the legacy of our ancestors.

## Dr. Ayesha Imani



Convinced over 40 years ago that Christ had indeed come to teach His people Himself, Ayesha Imani, has been on a Quaker faith journey to be true to her personal relationship with the Divine, true to her commitment to Black liberation, and true to a Quaker experience rooted in a spirituality that affirms her Africanity. Ayesha is one of the founders of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent and Ujima Friends Peace Center. She and is a member of both Ujima Friends Meeting and Unity Monthly Meeting – a Pan African Quaker community in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.





# ANNUAL SESSIONS

**All events take place online over Zoom**

⌚ **THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2025** ⌚ **9:00 AM - 10:00 PM**

Time	Event
9:00 am - 10:00 pm	Waiting Worship
10:00 - 11:30 am	Lectio Divina Bible Study: Members One of Another
<p>Join Salvador Orellana, PYM Deputy General Secretary, for a time of shared reflection on Romans 12:1–6a, where we’ll listen for how Spirit moves through Paul’s image of the body of Christ. The verse at the center of our study reads, “So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” Together, we’ll explore what that means in the life of faith and in the life of our yearly meeting.</p> <p>This study follows the rhythm of Lectio Divina, a practice of reading Scripture slowly, with space for prayer and silence. Salvador will guide us in listening with open hearts, noticing what rises in us as we hold the words.</p> <p>As members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, our lives are already knit together in ways we may not always know.</p>	
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Affinity Group: Friends with Disabilities
<p>Affinity groups invite Friends with shared identities to gather for an hour of conversation and connection. If you are a Friend with a disability, we hope you will virtually join!</p>	





# ANNUAL SESSIONS

**All events take place online over Zoom**

→ **THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2025**    → **9:00 AM - 10:00 PM**

Time	Event
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business
<p><b>Agenda Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nominating Slate</b> – The body is asked to approve new committee members serving the yearly meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Budget Approval</b> – The body is asked to approve the yearly meeting budget.</li> <li>• <b>Guidance on Advocacy and Lobbying</b> – The body is asked to discuss the Guidance on Advocacy and Lobbying.</li> </ul>	
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Affinity Group: Friends of African Descent
<p>Affinity groups invite Friends with shared identities to gather for an hour of conversation and connection. If you are a Friend of African Descent, we hope you will join!</p>	
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm	Communities of Practice
<p>A community of practice is a collection of people who share a common passion – or ministry - and they learn and grow together. This real-time conversation is an opportunity to meet Friends, share stories, and exchange resources around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry and Care</li> <li>• Peace and Social Justice</li> <li>• Governance and Stewardship</li> <li>• Outreach and Communication</li> <li>• Religious Education</li> </ul>	
8:30 pm - 10:00 pm	Young Adult Friends Fellowship on Zoom



# ANNUAL SESSIONS

## Hybrid Format at Cheyney University and on Zoom

→ **FRIDAY, JULY 25, 2025**

→ **8:00 AM - 11:00 PM**

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am	Onsite registration opens at Cheyney	Marian Anderson Lobby
9:00 am	Youth Programs Begin	Student Center
9:00 am - 10:00 am	Waiting Worship	Choir Room
10:30 am - 12:00 pm	Memorial Meeting for Worship	Choir Room

Memorial Meeting for Worship is a special time of honoring Friends from our Meetings who have passed away in the last year. We celebrate the gifts they shared and hold their memories in the Light.

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch	Ada George Dining Hall
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch Fellowship for Zoom Participants	Zoom Only
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Creative Writing and Percussion Workshop	Choir Room/On-site Only

Join Artist in Residence, Tim Simmons, for a creative workshop on listening and sharing our stories through creative writing and percussion instruments.

## Timothy Simmons, Artist in Residence



Timothy Simmons, a member of Old Haverford Monthly Meeting in Havertown, PA, is an educator, multi-instrumentalist, writer, and artist who loves to explore the intersections between language, music, and art through storytelling, dynamic musical interplay, improvisation, and an unabashed love of the groove.







# ANNUAL SESSIONS

## Hybrid Format at Cheyney University and on Zoom

→ FRIDAY, JULY 25, 2025

→ 8:00 AM - 11:00 PM

Time	Event	Location
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Marian Anderson Auditorium

### Agenda Items:

- **LGBTQIA+ Minute** – The body is asked to approve a minute that affirms our commitment to the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- **Joint Council Update** – The Joint Council, which provides guidance and governance to the Yearly Meeting, shares an update on topics of importance to the body.
- **Climate Witness Stewards** – Friends serving as Climate Stewards share about what the Yearly Meeting is doing to address climate change, and offer calls to action for individuals and Meetings.

2:00 pm	Youth Programs Continue	Student Center
5:30 pm	Dinner	Dining Hall
5:30 pm	Affinity Groups: Quaker Parents and Quaker Grandparents	Dining Hall

Affinity groups invite Friends with shared identities to gather for an hour of conversation and connection. These two affinity groups meet separately. If you are a Quaker parent or a Quaker grandparent, we hope you will join!



# ANNUAL SESSIONS

## Hybrid Format at Cheyney University and on Zoom

→ FRIDAY, JULY 25, 2025

→ 8:00 AM - 11:00 PM

Time	Event	Location
6:30 pm -	Youth Programs   Movie Night	Student Center
6:45 pm - 8:45 pm	<b>Keynote Address:</b> <i>Quaker Action – Resist, Build and Persist</i>	Marian Anderson Auditorium
<p>Friends will learn from AFSC General Secretary Joyce Ajlouny as she share's how the American Friends Service Committee, grounded in Quaker values for over a century, works globally to challenge unjust systems and build peace especially at this critical moment of rising repression and authoritarianism, and the world's catastrophic failure of conscience as war and genocide rage unchecked. Through its framework of Resisting injustice and championing immigrant rights, demanding Palestinian rights and a ceasefire in Gaza, and challenging runaway military spending; Building sanctuary, mutual support, and just peace; and Persisting in courageous, principled action as it has for nearly 11 decades, AFSC offers a vital witness. Joyce will issue a powerful call to action, inspiring us to join, as "members one of another", this faithful, collective Quaker witness.</p>		
9:00 pm -	Table Fair and Snacks	Band Room
<p>Friends on Campus at Cheyney can head to the table fair to learn more about the important efforts happening by PYM Collaboratives, Sister Orgs and other Quaker groups.</p>		
10:00 pm -	Young Adult Friends Fellowship	Dorm Lounge

## Joyce Ajlouny, AFSC General Secretary



A Quaker leader who is committed to help bring peace and justice to oppressed and vulnerable communities globally, Joyce has a depth of experience in international development and relief and 30 years of non-profit management experience. She joined AFSC in 2017 after serving as director of the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine for 13 years.



# ANNUAL SESSIONS

Hybrid Format at Cheyney University and on Zoom

➡ SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2025 ➡ 8:00 AM - 11:00 PM

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am	On-site registration opens at Cheyney	Marian Anderson Lobby
8:30 am - 9:00 am	All Ages Worship	Marian Anderson Auditorium
9:00 am	Youth Programs Begin	Student Center
9:00 am - 12:00 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Choir Room
<p><b>Agenda Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DHS Lawsuit Update</b> – The suit challenges an immigration enforcement decision that interferes with and could significantly impact freedom of religion. Updates will be shared on the progress of the suit.</li> <li>• <b>Singing Together</b> – Friends take an interlude to join together in song.</li> <li>• <b>Creating Safe Spaces in our Meetings</b> – Discussion and discernment in small groups*: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Direct action</li> <li>◦ Building relationships</li> <li>◦ Advocacy with elected officials</li> <li>◦ Education</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>*Zoom participants please notify PYM Staff which small group you would like to participate in.</i></p>		
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	LGBTQIA+ Affinity Group	Ada George Dining Hall
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch	Ada George Dining Hall
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch Fellowship for Zoom Participants	Zoom Only



# ANNUAL SESSIONS

## Hybrid Format at Cheyney University and on Zoom

➞ SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2025    ➞ 8:00 AM - 11:00 PM

Time	Event	Location
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Creative Writing and Percussion Workshop	Choir Room/Onsite Only
Join Artist in Residence, Tim Simmons, for a second installment of the creative writing workshop on listening and sharing our stories through creative writing and percussion instruments. It is not required to have joined the workshop on Friday.		
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Tour of Historic Cheyney University's Campus	Meet Outside Ada George Dining Hall (on-site only)
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Water Sprinklers for All-Ages Outdoor Play <i>Weather Permitting</i>	Marian Anderson
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Youth Programs Continue	Student Center
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Choir Room

### Agenda Items:

- **Safe Space Discussion Follow Up** - How are we led as a body to create safe spaces in our meetings?
- **Singing Together** – Friends take an interlude to join together in song.
- **Arch Street Meeting House Report** – Learn about exciting developments at ASMH.
- **General Secretary Report** – What is the big picture of PYM? How can understanding this picture help your Meeting?



# ANNUAL SESSIONS

Hybrid Format at Cheyney University and on Zoom

➞ SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2025    ➞ 8:00 AM - 11:00 PM

Time	Event	Location
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Dinner	Ada George Dining Hall
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Dinner Fellowship over Zoom	Zoom Only
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Quaker Fun Night (Onsite Only)	Marian Anderson
8:30 pm - 11:00 pm	Young Adult Friends Fellowship	Dorm Lounge

## Quaker Fun Night

Choose one activity, or stop by them all. **Activities are for all ages and abilities!**

- **Kickball** – join a team for some Friendly athletics!
- **Drum Circle with Tim Simmons** - make joyful noise with the guidance of our Artist in Residence! No prior experience required.
- **Arts and Crafts** – work with Friends to create a visual story project, or bring your own craft project.





Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

# ANNUAL SESSIONS

at Cheyney University

➞ SUNDAY, JULY 27, 2025

➞ 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am - 2:00 pm	Checkout Begins	Dorm Lounge
9:00 am - 10:00 am	All Together Worship	Marian Anderson Auditorium
Friends are encouraged to join All Together Worship from home, from your meeting, or on-site at Cheyney. This worship experience is designed to center our youngest Friends while providing a time of worship that is meaningful for all.		
10:00 am - 12:00 pm	Youth Programs	Student Center
10:00 pm - 12:00 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Marian Anderson Auditorium
<b>Agenda Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Space will be held to be used as needed based on previous days business items.</li><li>• Approve Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Epistle</li><li>• Children and Youth Epistle</li></ul>		
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch	Dining Hall
1:00 pm	Final Checkout	Dorm Lounge



# WORSHIP

## Guidelines for Vocal Ministry

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## Guidelines for Vocal Ministry

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Meeting for Worship is central to our experience as Friends. As our meeting grows in numbers and vibrancy, it is important that we are each aware of the responsibility we bear for the quality and depth of our worship, and specifically for vocal ministry. We are reminded that “it is no light matter to break the living silence. This should be done only with a sense of humility, awe, and reverence.”

“The meeting for worship is the heart of the Religious Society of Friends.”

Faith and Practice, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (2018)

**The following are offered not as infallible rules, but as suggestions that reflect the cumulative wisdom of our Quaker tradition.**

Meeting for Worship cannot prosper if it is isolated from the rest of our lives. Friends traditionally have been encouraged to come to worship with “hearts and minds prepared” by a daily discipline of devotional reading, prayer, or meditation. Some Friends may find it helpful to enter directly into Meeting, deferring any social encounters until after worship. Others find it important to interact socially with Friends prior to Meeting. Regardless, all Friends are reminded to be prompt in their attendance at the appointed hour, and to minimize any coming and going after the start of worship.

Meeting for Worship begins when one or two Friends have assembled. As you enter and join in worship, take time to “center down” and enter fully into the spirit of worship. Gently let go of distractions, stilling the mind while opening your heart to the workings of the Spirit.

# WORSHIP

## Guidelines for Vocal Ministry

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### Guidelines for Vocal Ministry - *Continued*

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Meeting for Worship begins when one or two Friends have assembled. As you enter and join in worship, take time to “center down” and enter fully into the spirit of worship. Gently let go of distractions, stilling the mind while opening your heart to the workings of the Spirit.

“Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all with the measure of the light which is pure and holy may be guided, and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, --not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”

Letter from the Meeting of Elders at Balby,  
1656

Come to meeting with neither an intention to speak, nor a determination not to speak, but rather with an attitude of openness to the leadings of the Spirit. If you do feel moved to speak take a moment to test your leading. Traditionally, questions like the following have helped in this process of discernment: Is

this message from the Spirit, or somewhere else? If it is from God, is it meant only for me, or for the entire Meeting? Even if meant for the entire Meeting, is now the right time?

Genuine ministry is often preceded by a physical uneasiness, a “heart pounding weakness,” from which our name Quaker is derived.

Remember that silence is not just the space between messages, but a deep and living communion with the “Spirit which gives life.” Your silent prayer and openness to God are themselves a form of ministry that enriches the Meeting community. Allow adequate time between spoken messages, so that all may fully listen, and truly hear the previous message.

Vocal ministry “carried on in a spirit of debate, lecturing, or discussion [can be] destructive to the life of the Meeting for Worship. It is rarely helpful to answer or rebut what has been said previously. Friends moved to vigorous support of causes need to find brief and sensitive ways to voice their insights,” including outside of Meeting for Worship (PYM Faith and Practice, p. 20)

# WORSHIP

## Guidelines for Vocal Ministry

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### Guidelines for Vocal Ministry - *Continued*

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In vocal ministry, brevity is greatly valued. If you speak, do not feel compelled to explore all the implications of your insight. Rather, leave room for the Spirit to work through the next person, building on your words and possibly extending them in an unexpected direction.

Inevitably, not all vocal ministry will be equally meaningful to all present. Remember that ministry that does not speak to you may nevertheless be valuable to others. If you find yourself struggling with another's words, learn to listen for the Spirit behind the words.

In regard to any impulse to speak a second time during worship, Friends have traditionally counseled restraint. Partly this is a matter of equity (since most present will not speak at all, none should speak more than once), and partly a recognition that to offer genuine vocal ministry is a weighty matter, requiring a degree of spiritual discernment and obedience beyond what most of us can muster twice in a single hour.

Finally, remember that our manner of worship is ultimately a mystery under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Each Meeting for Worship is a spiritual adventure, unique and unpredictable. Let us remember in humility that "the end of words is to bring us to the knowledge of things beyond what words can utter" (Isaac Pennington, 1670).

#### **For further reading on vocal ministry, see:**

PYM Faith and Practice (1997), pp. 17-20

Thomas Kelly, "The Gathered Meeting"

Howard Brinton, Friends for 300 Years, chapter 5, "Vocal Ministry"

Douglas Steere, On Speaking Out of the Silence, Pendle Hill Pamphlet # 182

John Punshon, Encounter with Silence, pp. 83-91.

Worship & Ministry Lancaster Friends Meeting Lancaster, Pennsylvania 1998 (revised 2008)

# PYM DISCERNMENT

Preparing for Annual Sessions in the following ways will help us listen better as we seek unity wherever the spirit leads.

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## Advance Documents

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### **Read advance documents provided by the yearly meeting:**

An important part of the process of corporate discernment takes place earlier, in the committees of PYM, which are charged with seasoning an issue before it is brought to sessions for consideration. Advance material might include background information - or information regarding the process, resources, and methods used to season and develop recommendations. If available prior to the start of sessions, reports are provided electronically after online registration and posted on the PYM website. Reports are made available in hard copy on the resource table on the day of sessions. Before Annual Sessions, Friends need to read and reflect on the information provided to form thoughtful questions or insights that help lead the PYM body to unity.

## Seek To Release

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### **Listen attentively and be spiritually receptive during sessions:**

All those attending PYM sessions should seek to release whatever preferences or opinions they may have about an issue before it is considered. Friends should be open to the leading of the spirit, as they would in a meeting for worship. The goal of this decision-making process is to discern God's will for PYM regarding the topic under consideration. Unity, rather than unanimity, is the goal. We consider ourselves to be in unity when we share in the search for Truth, when we listen faithfully for God, when we submit our wills to the guidance of spirit, and when our love for one another is constant. The Quaker business method is a discipline that requires all present to be focusing on worship and discernment of the matter at hand. All members share responsibility for maintaining a spirit-led meeting, for the wise use of the allocated time, and for a steadfast search for Truth.

# PYM DISCERNMENT

Preparing for Annual Sessions in the following ways will help us listen better as we seek unity wherever the spirit leads.

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## Friends Who Feel Led to Speak

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### **When led to speak, be brief without repeating messages of other Friends:**

Friends who feel led to speak should ask to be recognized by raising their hands; in Zoom business meetings, Friends should raise their electronic hand. Once recognized by the Clerk, either wait for an usher to bring a microphone to you when in person, or, when on Zoom, unmute yourself. When offering spoken ministry, try to sum up what you have to say in as few words as possible. Speak simply and audibly. Each contribution should be heard in silence. Audible indications of approval or disapproval of spoken ministry are not part of Quaker practice.

After each contribution, allow a pause for reflection. If you have tested your ministry and feel that the PYM body needs to hear it in order to reach unity, then follow your leading to raise your hand and wait to be called on to speak.

The clerk listens for the sense of the meeting in the insights Friends offer and determines when to propose it to the group. After the sense of the meeting is proposed, members may offer suggestions for its improvement. The clerk then tests the sense of the meeting by asking whether the group can unite with it. If so, the meeting records the sense of the meeting the decision in a minute that is immediately read back to and approved by the meeting.

In Zoom meetings, we will only use the chat to communicate with Tech Support as will be outlined in our tech introduction at the opening of each session. For example, if someone is unable to share a message verbally, the message should be typed in the chat directly to an appointed staff person who will share that message (with attribution) when recognized by the clerk. We avoid split attention and parallel processes by not using the chat as a way to communicate in discernment.

# PYM DISCERNMENT

Preparing for Annual Sessions in the following ways will help us listen better as we seek unity wherever the spirit leads.

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## Session Minutes

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In March 2018, PYM agreed to return to the practice of documenting, reading aloud, and approving minutes during sessions. The traditional practice creates a sense of spiritual unity within the PYM body and eliminates delays in communicating information and decisions.

PYM session attendees play an important role in ensuring that we have sufficient time for discussion and discernment during sessions. Faith and Practice reminds us, “the meeting community itself uses defined processes to reach clearness in decisions and to guide the actions of the meeting. Spirit-led decision making is central to the life and health of the meeting.”

Exercise self-discipline when minutes are read for approval. Refrain from expecting to hear any specific comment included. Reflect on whether the minute is good enough and adequately captures the essence of the deliberation and sense of the meeting. Do not expect the minutes to be precisely as you would have drafted them. If you are clear that a change is necessary, raise your hand and wait to be called on by the clerk.

The PYM Sessions Minutes Sprint team was tasked by the Administrative Council in 2018 to develop and distribute training and orientation materials that can be used by monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, as well as at PYM Sessions. The Minutes Sprint plans to invite monthly meetings to participate in identifying the training and orientation materials needed and will solicit input on best practices in use today and ask for input on draft materials.

Document prepared by PYM Sessions Minutes Sprint, July 2018  
Updated for Zoom and hybrid meetings, June 2022



# PYM DISCERNMENT

## Addressing Minutes of Concern

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Minutes of concern are those statements approved in the course of the spiritual discernment of a body of Friends, such as a monthly meeting, that convey religious commitment regarding past or present issues in Quakerism or the larger society.

1. Typically, a minute of concern comes to the yearly meeting community through a quarterly meeting. On occasion a minute of concern may be submitted to the yearly meeting directly from a monthly meeting or worship group. Additionally, a group within PYM may submit a minute of concern directly such as a collaborative, a continuing care retirement community, a community of Quaker youth or young adults, etc.
2. The quarterly meeting clerk (or clerk of the group within PYM) brings the minute of concern to the yearly meeting community by submitting it to the Presiding Clerk of PYM, after the concern has followed the guidelines in PYM's Faith and Practice.
3. The clerk of PYM will bring the minute to the PYM Governance Leadership (Council clerks, PYM clerk, and Treasurer).
4. The Governance Leadership will direct the minute to Quaker Life Council, Administrative Council, or both.
5. The council(s) responsible for the minute will season the minute of concern and discern how the minute will be acted upon.
6. Transparency and timely feedback about the discernment process is important. Therefore, following initial discernment, a report of council decisions and actions shall be shared with/sent to the clerks of monthly and quarterly meetings including the content of the minute received and actions proposed at the yearly meeting level.
7. Friends then carry forward ministry of the concern with the guidance, support, and accountability of the monthly meeting, quarterly meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting together.
8. A timeframe should be established for reporting about the work in ministry and continued discernment should happen regarding whether the calling for this work continues.

"Issuing Letters of Introduction and Addressing Minutes A Review of PYM Governance Processes"  
Approved by the Quaker Life Council and the Administrative Council  
of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, December 2019

# ANNUAL SESSIONS EPISTLE

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## The Committee

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The Epistle Committee is composed of 5-7 Friends who write the outgoing epistle during Annual Sessions. Friends who are not currently serving in PYM Governance or in other roles at Annual Sessions are encouraged to volunteer for service on the Epistle Committee.

The Elders, in consultation with the Presiding Clerk, will identify a clerk. The clerk will work with those who volunteer to form a committee.

These names are presented for approval at Annual Sessions during the first Meeting for Business. The commitment to serve ends when the approved epistle is delivered to the Recording Clerks and PYM staff at the conclusion of Annual Sessions.

### **Expectations for epistle committee members:**

- Members will attend as many events and activities during Annual Sessions as possible.
- Members will collaborate, write, and revise the epistle. Members will seek and incorporate feedback during the first reading in Meeting for Business and in supplemental listening sessions.
- The Epistle Committee will present a draft of the epistle on Saturday evening or the second to last Meeting for Business. The committee will receive feedback during and after the first reading. The committee will incorporate feedback as it deems appropriate.
- The Epistle Committee will present a final version of the epistle to the body in session during the last Meeting for Business. During the final reading, the committee will accept significant and important corrections that substantially impact the content of the epistle.
- Members will select and read epistles from other Quaker organizations in the time slots available as scheduled.

# ANNUAL SESSIONS EPISTLE

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## The Epistle

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An epistle is a letter sent to Quakers throughout the world that describes how the spirit moved among the body during Annual Sessions. The epistle is a religious document that seeks to summarize the spiritual experience of Annual Sessions. The audience includes other yearly meetings and Quaker organizations outside of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's outgoing epistle is distributed through a variety of mechanisms, including Friends World Committee for Consultation.

- The epistle should be readable by Friends of all ages and around the world. The epistle writers are encouraged to “use shorter sentences and simpler vocabulary” **as explained by Emily Provance** (NYYM)
- The epistle writers should use a **Readability Calculator** to analyze the epistle during the writing process.
- The epistle will not be perfect. We are imperfect people with imperfect processes. The epistle should be “good enough” to convey a sense of how the spirit was present in Annual Sessions.
- The epistle is not minutes. The recording clerks take minutes and Friends are encouraged to read those for documentation and decisions of the body in session.
- The epistle is not a travelogue. The epistle should not contain a recitation of all the events and activities that took place during Annual Sessions.
- The epistle is not intended to replace attendance at Annual Sessions for members of PYM. All members of PYM are encouraged to attend Annual Sessions, connect with those who are attending, and review the minutes.
- The epistle will not include all the feedback or suggestions received by the committee. Committee members will use discretion when reviewing the content proposed by the body.

# ANNUAL SESSIONS EPISTLE

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## The Epistle - *Continued*

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**From FWCC:** “An Epistle articulates a collective sense of experience and how God has moved among Friends during a gathering, be it a yearly meeting session or an FWCC Section meeting, or a Young Friends gathering. It is approved by that group during a meeting for business. It is typically shared with yearly meetings so that they might read some of them out in meeting or publish some for people to read. It was historically, and continues to be, an important way for Friends and others to learn about each other in that which is eternal. They help us appreciate that we are part of a world family of Friends.”

**Members of the body who wish to contribute to the epistle are encouraged to volunteer to serve on the committee.** Those who have feedback on the draft epistle should share that feedback during the identified opportunities. Members of the body are discouraged from “*wordsmithing*” the final draft, but instead focus on the substance of the epistle.

Examples of epistles are available on the FWCC website:

[https://fwcc.world/resources\\_cpt/epistles/](https://fwcc.world/resources_cpt/epistles/)