

Ad Hoc Committee on Grants and Covenants
Fall 2020

History

For several consecutive years, concerns were raised during the budget-approval process about our current process of determining grants and covenants. As these concerns could not be adequately discussed during consideration of the budget, it became clear that the Meeting needed a separate process to discern how our shared spiritual values are expressed through our financial practices.

Thus, in February 2019 an ad hoc committee was formed to propose a process for this discernment. This committee was to consist of the clerk of the Meeting, the Treasurer (convenor), and the clerks of the Finance and Worship & Ministry Committees. The individuals holding those positions at the time were, respectively, Jeff Perkins, Dylan Steinberg, Craig SanPietro, and Rebecca Heider. Tricia Walmsley and Meg Mitchell also volunteered to serve but later were mostly unable to participate. The committee met twice in person and communicated through email.

Accomplishments¹

1. Gathering information about the granting practices of other local meetings.
2. Assembling and distributing information about the history and context of the Meeting's grant-making.
3. Inviting Christie Duncan-Tessmer to present on the work of PYM to help meeting members better understand the value of this organization.
4. Drafting queries to committees and collecting those responses. Responses to these queries were also requested from individuals through the newsletter, but few responses were ever received.
5. Considering these topics through worship sharing during three meetings for worship for business:
 - a. February 2020 about giving grants
 - b. May 2020 about covenants to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and the Philadelphia Quarter
 - c. June 2020, when an unexpected conversation about tuition assistance sprang up

Takeaways

1. The Finance Committee does not feel it is appropriate for them make changes to grants without instruction from the Meeting as a whole.
2. It will be challenging to obtain input beyond the individuals who typically attend meetings for business.

¹ Complete documentation available upon request.

3. There is a strong desire among some committees and individuals for deeper Spirit-led discernment around financial practices, as well as several ideas for how to accomplish this.
4. The ad hoc committee as currently constituted has taken the process as far as it can, and new energy is needed from others to carry out the plan for discernment.

Proposed next steps

1. We recommend that the committee membership be changed to consist of Ellen Deacon and Storm Evans from the Finance Committee and Rebecca Heider from Worship & Ministry Committee, with the hope of finding additional members as Way opens. We invite others in the Meeting to participate as they are led to do so.
2. The scope of discernment would be broadened to include tuition assistance and other areas where our values inform our financial decisions.
3. The reconstituted ad hoc committee would consider query responses currently in hand and solicit additional input where needed.
4. This group would bring, for approval, a plan for the financial discernment process to meeting for business with a schedule to ensure its timely completion.
5. This group would organize and facilitate the discernment process and endeavor to communicate its results to meeting for business in time to be considered in the drafting of the 2021/22 budget.
6. We think that having listening sessions with as many meeting members as possible would be helpful in finding our way forward.
7. This committee will report to meeting for business as needed to assure that this work continues to make progress.
8. We recommend that the 2020 Operating Budget Grants to Quaker organizations be paid now. We had hoped to have had a process for discussing the grants before now, but know that the organizations on the list are worthy organizations that can use the money during these trying times. A list of the grants is attached.