



## **Meeting Ritual Research Committee Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: Why is the Fraternity launching this committee now? Is this the first time an alteration to Ritual is being considered?**

Similar committees were appointed in both 1971 and 1991 to study and research Ritual. Within the last 10 years, multiple Pi Phi chapters have submitted proposals and adaptations to meeting Ritual. In fact, some chapters do not say/recite Ritual because of the religious overtones. For decades, chapters have requested to use their own version of Ritual to meet their members' needs. Grand Councils have listened to these chapter concerns and in many cases, have granted permission for chapters to substitute with a Pi Phi song or poem. Grand Council chose to pursue the opportunity for a committee to take a broad and deep look at how this impacts our sisterhood and consider if there are ways to evolve our current practices to be inclusive of every member.

### **Q: What is the goal of the Meeting Ritual Research Committee?**

The goal of the Meeting Ritual Research Committee is to hear from the membership. The committee is working to explore the history of Meeting Ritual and New Member Meeting Ritual through the context of our membership, gaining insights and hearing perspectives from Pi Phis across our sisterhood. They are gathering data, researching and gaining an understanding of the impact our Ritual has on our members in creating an inclusive sisterhood, where every member feels welcome, is supported, and knows they belong. Through focus groups and surveys, the committee strives to speak to each collegiate chapter, alumnae club and all members wanting to provide their thoughts through various modes of communication. Once the committee has gathered a broad range of perspectives and analyzed the data, they will provide Grand Council with a report of their findings and the recommendations they have regarding meeting Rituals.

### **Q: How was the committee selected?**

Grand Council appointed committee members from a pool of nearly 300 members who expressed interest through the all-member communication survey. They aimed to appoint a committee with diversity in age, chapter, location and Pi Phi experiences and with members who can objectively serve. After conducting a blind review of all applicants and interviewing dozens of sisters, Grand Council [appointed 12 Pi Phis](#) to serve on the committee.

### **Q: Why is the committee comprised of only alumnae? How will collegians contribute to the work of the committee?**

The opportunity to serve was offered to all Pi Beta Phi members, collegiate and alumnae. While conducting interviews, Grand Council observed a demonstrated commitment and capacity to serve from many qualified alumnae members and considered that current



collegians have a scope of understanding limited to their chapter rather than a broad Fraternity perspective. Parallel work was being conducted to determine the methods of the committee's work, which will include feedback from both individual collegians as well as every collegiate chapter. Not having a collegian on the committee does not change the collegiate voice being represented. The committee is committed to getting feedback from each collegiate chapter—and we are confident the collegiate point of view will be represented through the research and findings. Feedback from every member, chapter and club will be essential to the success of this committee and the members look forward to engaging with collegians to garner their thoughts on the role of Ritual for current members. There are also committee members who support collegiate women day-to-day whether by directly supporting a chapter or working in higher education.

**Q: What is the time commitment for a committee member?**

The committee was charged with creating a schedule that works best for them and has opted to meet biweekly, with research and assignments to complete between meetings—which is estimated to be 6-8 hours a week. The committee members were appointed to serve through the end of the project, with no specific end date in mind. The committee will be afforded enough time to hear from any Pi Phi who wants to express their feedback.

**Q: Why consider evolving meeting Ritual when non-Christians could join another organization?**

At no time has Pi Beta Phi been a religious organization.

Pi Phi membership is open to all religious affiliations, as outlined in the Non-Discrimination Policy: Pi Beta Phi Fraternity does not discriminate in its operations or membership selection practices on the basis of race, religious affiliation, national origin, physical ability or sexual orientation. Nor will Pi Beta Phi tolerate such discrimination by its chapters.

Ritual is not something commonly discussed during the recruitment and New Member processes. In fact, the pledging ceremony—where newly recruited Potential New Members become Pi Phi New Members—does not have any religious references. Because of that, most collegiate members do not know about the Christian tones throughout Meeting Ritual until they are initiated and join their first chapter meeting.

According to the 2021 Annual Member Evaluation, 35% of 12,000 collegians surveyed do not identify with a Christian religion. According to the 2021 Member Satisfaction Survey, 19% of 3,000 alumnae respondents do not identify with a Christian religion.

**Q: Was Ritual a part of Pi Phi's founding?**

Meeting Ritual was written by a collegiate member of D.C. Alpha, Anna S. Hazelton, 23 years after Pi Beta Phi's founding. It was written in 1890 and officially adopted in 1893—although it had been in use between 1890 and 1893.



**Q: How can I be involved in this process?**

It is the committee's goal to hear from as many members as possible with this endeavor. All members are encouraged to indicate how they would like to be involved in this initiative. Members may select from a variety of options, including participating in an informational webinar, future focus group or survey, and subscribing to regular updates on this initiative.

**Q: Is this committee considering all ceremonies and traditions such as Initiation or Pi Phi Grace?**

Currently, the committee's charge is to research meeting and New Member meeting Ritual. As they speak to members, they may hear the impact of other traditions and ceremonies and could incorporate these findings in their final report. However, their charge remains meeting Ritual.

**Q: When is Meeting Ritual utilized?**

Meeting Ritual is most utilized to open and close chapter meetings. Some alumnae clubs also utilize Ritual to open and close their meetings. Pi Beta Phi's Convention meeting sessions are opened and closed with Ritual, and Pi Beta Phi's Grand Council, Pi Beta Phi Foundation Board of Trustees and Pi Beta Phi Fraternity Housing Corporation often utilize Ritual to open and close their meetings.

**Q: Will any proposed adaptations be voted on at Pi Beta Phi's 2023 Convention?**

At this time, both the committee and Grand Council do not expect the work of the committee to be concluded by Convention 2023; rather, the convention body can expect an update on progress at the event. Once the work of the committee is concluded, they will provide recommendations to Grand Council based on their findings and suggest next steps, which may or may not necessitate a vote from the membership.

**Q: I continue to hear about changes that promote inclusion and belonging, but I'm really feeling left out. Do I not belong to the organization I joined and don't want to see changed?**

When things we hold dear to us change, or are proposed to change, feeling excluded can be a common response. Please know, we understand change is hard and pushing members away from Pi Phi is never the intended goal. Rather, there are opportunities to have more members experience what Pi Phi has given you. There are chapters and members who have not recited Ritual due to religion, and having this committee offers Pi Phi an opportunity to research this impact, hear from our members and potentially propose ways we can bring our entire sisterhood together in sharing similar language.