

Bellingham Friends Meeting
Approved Minutes
June 12, 2016

Present: John Hatten (Clerk), Ginny Herrick, Nan Macy, Karen Steen, Mary Ann Percy, Susan Richardson, Lynne Lohr, Dorrie Jordan, Wendy Goldstein, Don Goldstein, Dusty Andersen, Susan Richardson, Judy Hopkinson (recording clerk), Lorina Hall.

Following a period of silence, the Clerk reviewed a statement regarding Quaker process in meeting.

2016.06.01 Minutes from May were approved with edits indicated by Don.

2016.06.02 Finance Report - The committee met and everything was good. The second quarter report will be slightly delayed.

2016.06.02 Ministry and Counsel report (see attached)

Would Friends find it helpful for M&C to write the Query either on the chalkboard or to print copies to be distributed by the greeter in addition to being read aloud? After discussion of the relative merits of a white board vs paper vs leaving it the way it is and the relative sustainability of the various methods, M&C will take the input and devise a plan.

2016.06.02.1 The meeting approved the recommendation of her clearness committee that Aurora Fox's application for membership be approved. Friends expressed their joy.

2016.06.02.2 Friends approved combining the July and August Meetings for Worship for Business to be held on July 24th

2016.06.02.3 Proposal for a Quaker campout. The majority of Friends in the room expressed interest in coming to a campout. Excelsior campground is available only for August 27 and 28.

Discussion: It was clarified that the campsite accommodates 50 people. It is located at mile 40 of Mt Baker highway along the north fork of the Nooksack. There is a shelter and vault toilets, drinking water must be carried into the site.

(Note: according to the Forest Service, drinking water is available at the campground) In the past, MFW has been held at the campground and not at our regular location. A sign would need to be placed on the door of Explorations Academy. In the past, people brought their own food and shared a potluck dinner and breakfast the following morning. There is no planned program. We could have plant walks and bird walks.

Ginny H. asked whether there were sufficient funds in the budget (\$250) for this. Joanne C. said the relevant budget category would not accommodate this, but the funds could be found. It was clarified that parking at the campout is included in the fee but parking outside the campground requires a Northwest Forest Pass (A National Park pass - available for \$10 for those over 62 and it lasts a lifetime).

It was noted that Hospitality will not need to organize meals or equipment - each "camper" would bring their own supplies.

Friends approved holding the retreat on Aug 27-28, and immediate announcement of this campout on Aug 27 - 28.

2016.06.02.4 Shall we have a picnic in addition to the campout this year?

Discussion: Several Friends expressed a desire to conserve money and energy by holding only one of these events. Friends discussed the function of the picnic as an event to welcome old Friends. The suggestion was raised that OWG might use a separate picnic in early August as a reunion / outreach event. Don G said the OWG would find that difficult because he and Wendy will be out of town during that early August period. Susan R suggested that individuals can and perhaps should reach out to people.

Friends agreed that we will not hold a separate picnic this year

2016.06.02.5 Guidelines for Committees in Decision-making

It was suggested that the term "Decision-making" be replaced by the Quaker term "Discernment".

A suggestion was made that this be shared with NPYM for consideration for future versions of Faith and Practice.

Some Friends felt that "decision-making" would better communicate to newcomers. Nan M expressed her sense that this is an opportunity to use our own terminology and define it as we progress. She felt it is well worth taking the time to craft this document in clear terminology. She also felt that our understanding of Quaker terms needs attention and expression.

Don G felt that it is not necessary for us all to agree, and that all documents are working documents which can be changed.

Judy H expressed a wish that Nan M might share her wealth of knowledge regarding Quaker process by working on a revision of the document. Susan R felt that the document would benefit from further work on clarifying definitions.

Karen S suggested that we might adopt it as a working draft. A number of Friends felt that was unnecessary since it had already been accepted for approval. Dusty A felt we agree on the intent of the document, although the wording could be improved - but any document can be improved at any time.

Karen S felt that we need agreement on how committees work because previous decisions have not followed good decision making process. John H expressed that the document before us is incomplete and needs work. There is no hurry, but it is needed. Mark H shared that the deficiencies in the document relate to specific Quaker terminology. Terminology is based on experience and Quaker concepts are developed based on many years of understanding. To move forward in ways that do not respect that history would be inadvisable. Don G. felt that the document accomplishes its purpose and reflects what we have been and should be doing.

John H suggested that we continue to season this document for another month. Virginia H agreed that it **continue** to be seasoned and that Friends contact M&C with any suggested changes

2016.06.03.1 Children's committee Report (attached)

2016.06.04 Retreat Planning Committee Report (Attached)

2016.06.04.1 Action Item: Since we are not clear about our purpose in the greater community, shall we have a Threshing session on this during a longer-than second hour? Then come back to the Meeting for business.

Discussion:

Don G. suggested this be done as a worship sharing during a second hour .

Dusty A said that the committee is not wedded to to any particular format

Karen S expressed confusion and said she felt no sense of unity about our purpose.

John H asked whether this could be passed on to M&C for scheduling.

Susan R expressed confusion about whether we should have a single purpose.

Virginia H felt we need a session like this.

Judy H felt that we need a session to allow people to process their own thoughts in the company of Friends to clarify their own minds.

Don G did not feel we could or should reach a decision.

Dusty A said the committee was particularly concerned about our vision for the type of meeting house we want.

Susan R said that helped.

Friends agreed to allow M&C to plan a time and way to address the issue raised

2016.06.04.2 Action Item: Do we want monthly reports?

2016.06.04.2.1 Friends agreed that we want meeting house scouts to report monthly.

2016.06.04.2.2 Would the meeting like to direct the meeting house scouts to look for a short term solution - the Meeting seemed to agree, but this was not clearly decided.

2016.06.4.3 Action Item: Should we form an Ad hoc Committee to study the issue of whether we want to buy or rent for the long term. **Friends agreed to wait on this item until after item 2106.06.04.2.1**

2016.06.05 The Meeting approved changing the Outreach and Welcoming Group to a standing committee with the title "Outreach and Welcoming Committee", and approved the committee job description which had previously been accepted for seasoning.

2016.06.06 Report from QMPC planning committee (report attached). **The Meeting approved the proposed theme.**

2016.06.07 Lynne Lohr asked whether we could ask Explorations Academy or the building owner about finding a way to dim the lights. John H will explore.

2016.06.08 Virginia announced that Rick Larsen has agreed to co-sponsor the HR3713 Sentencing Reform Act, This was a direct result of FCNL lobbying.

John H thanked the meeting for the self-clerking moments.

Ministry and Counsel Report June 12, 2016

1. Query for June (from NPYM Faith and Practice):

“How do our lives testify to our convictions as Friends: What are we doing to share our faith? How do we practice listening to the Truth which may be revealed by others?”

*Would friends find it helpful for M&C to write the Query either on the chalkboard or to print copies to be distributed by the greeter in addition to being read aloud?

2. A clearness Committee for Membership has been set up for Kristen. We are also setting up a support committee for a Friend.

*3. Aurora’s membership has been seasoning this month and needs approval. We will schedule a celebration after her return this fall.

*4. The revised decision making document has been distributed for seasoning and needs approval.

*5. Shall we combine the July and August Meetings for Worship for Business to a single date later in July to avoid conflicting with the Pride Parade, or with Annual Session, and to allow more flexibility for scheduling committee meetings during the summer. We have done this at times in the past when there is no expectation of issues that require addressing sooner. We propose July 24 for this combined MforB.

*6. Would Friends have interest in a campout in late July or early August? M&C felt that a more extended camping time, as we have done in the past, might help build a sense of community even more than a picnic. If Friends are interested in a campout, the dates of August 27 and 28 is the only remaining weekend that is still open at Excelsior. We took the liberty of reserving this date, because the cancelation fee is very low (\$10). The cost is \$125 per night, with a minimum 2 night stay. It is expected that most friends would come Saturday about noon, with a potluck item for dinner, and we could cook breakfast together, but anyone who wants could also use the site Friday evening.

Some Friends may choose to contribute toward the additional expense, but as with our retreats, we don’t want a fee to inhibit anyone from participating.

Options for parks if Friends prefer outdoor worship picnic option (July 31, Aug 7, Aug 14, are options):

7. Upcoming Second hour Schedule:

June 5 - Potluck with Outreach and Welcoming activity

June 12 - Meeting for Worship for Business

June 19 - SEC on initiatives

June 26 - Alice on revised Faith and Practice

July 3 - Potluck

July 10 - No second hour. Consider attending PRIDE parade

July 17 - No second hour. NPYM Annual session

July 24 - Meeting for Worship for Business

Guidelines for Decision-making

Bellingham Friends Meeting

Seasoning, March 2015-June 2016

Bellingham Friends Meeting* recognizes that our monthly business meeting** is central to the spiritual connectedness and functioning of our worshiping community. “The Quaker method for reaching decisions involves searching for the right corporate decisions and arriving at the 'sense of the Meeting' or unity,” according to the *North Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice*. “The commitment to search for unity depends upon mutual trust, [and] implies a willingness to labor and to submit to the leadings of the Spirit. ... Friends seek divine guidance, are patient with each other, and are concerned for the good of the meeting as a whole. Friends allow adequate time for deliberate and prayerful consideration of the matter at hand. Friends attend meetings for business open to the leadings of the Spirit.” Friends wait upon the spirit to move forward; without unity, Friends may choose to hold over an issue, refer it to a committee for a recommendation, or have a second hour or threshing session, worship sharing, or clearness process as they wait for clarity to emerge.*** Memberships, nominations, annual budgets, and other weighty decisions are generally held over for a month of seasoning before being approved. While the prayerful and Spirit-led participation of attenders is welcome, Meeting members are responsible for the decisions of the Meeting.

Crucial to the proper functioning of our Meeting is the connection between the monthly business meetings and our committees, which help carry out our collective leadings. Committees also use the Friendly discernment process, above, to carry out the work of the Spirit, as charged by the Meeting. Standing committees have written job descriptions which are approved by the Meeting, and generally make regular reports to Meeting for Worship for Business. Sometimes committee members have reached unity and ask the Meeting to consider

Children's Program Committee Report

Meeting for Worship for Business, June 12, 2016

1. Interviewed Dora at the start of our May 16 Meeting, at which point the committee had interviewed three candidates, with the hope of hiring two to share the childcare position over the summer: Anna Row, Annika Olsen, and Dora Kovacs. We hired Anna right away, and had some discernment around Annika and Dora. Ultimately, Annika decided she was not going to be available enough, and didn't feel entirely comfortable with caring for such a wide variety of ages and personalities at one time. We ran background checks, as per our policy for all childcare hires. We have not yet made a final determination regarding Dora, but hope to do so this week.
2. We made plans for the Children's Program for the annual retreat. Monique attended our meeting for this portion of the discussion.
3. Discussed the best way to organize adult volunteers to lead the children's worship. Kristen set up a "signupgenius.com," list: an online service that sends out emails with a link recipients can click to go to a page where they can sign up for a Sunday that works for them. We have enough volunteers to have someone prepared to teach every Sunday June-July-August. If Friends use the signupgenius, it will send e-mail reminders to Friends who have signed up. Otherwise, we urge Friends who are volunteering to work with the kids to use the regular signup sheet and/or contact Virginia so she can make sure we have someone for each Sunday this quarter.
 - a. Thanks to our regular Children's Program volunteers for this quarter:
 1. Eric Bablinkas
 2. Virginia Herrick
 3. Dusty Andersen
 4. Rob Dillard
 5. Susan Richardson
 6. Wendy Courtemanche

Report from Spring 2017 Quarterly Meeting Planning Committee to Bellingham Friends Meeting MfWfB, June 12, 2016

The ad hoc Spring 2017 Quarterly Meeting Planning Committee, a joint committee including members from Bellingham and Lopez Island Friends Meeting, met in late May to consider possible themes for the Spring 2017 session of Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting, scheduled for April 21-23 at Lazy F Camp and Retreat Center.

We considered several possibilities, one of which involved discerning our leadings to serve. In this context, we began to envision a plenary panel with a diverse group of Friends speaking about their leadings and how they are pursuing them. These leadings could be: serving their own Meeting, food production, community service, etc. An important aspect would be how to balance leadings with pre-existing obligations. Another important aspect of the theme is from the point of view of nominating committees or their equivalent: How do we cultivate service in the life of the Meeting? An interest group or worship-sharing session could center around representatives from various meetings sharing experiences with trying to solicit participation. Nancy Bieber's recent book, *Decision-making and spiritual discernment: the sacred art of finding your way*, is relevant.

After considerable discussion, we reached tentative agreement on the following theme: **Discerning our leadings: worshiping with our lives.** Although we are continuing to season it and may make minor wording changes when we meet next on July 1st, it is our expectation that we will stick with this theme in substance and we are requesting its pre-approval in June by both Bellingham and Lopez Island Friends Meetings so that in early July we can begin work on creating a flyer for distribution at Fall Quarterly Meeting in September and also on fleshing out our plans for the plenary session.

We also reached agreement that the Planning Committee will be co-clerked by myself and Karen Gilbert. Judy Meyer has stepped forward as our Recording Clerk.

--Don Goldstein, Planning Committee Co-clerk

Other committee members are Sharon Trent, Mark Hersh, and Susan Richardson from Bellingham and Karen Gilbert (co-clerk) and Judy Meyer (recording clerk) from Lopez Island. Karen Steen from Bellingham and Lucas Limbach from Lopez also participated in our initial meeting but do not expect to continue on the committee at this time.

Retreat Planning Committee Followup Report and Recommendations

Met June 6, 2016, Virginia's house. Whole committee was attending: Virginia, Sharon, Joanne, Dusty, and Mimi, who came in a bit late.

1. Overall: Guidelines for future retreats. We need to think about first aid kits, and in particular to include antihistamine (Benadryl) and baking soda. Stop Sting. Band Aids, antibiotic ointment, ace bandage, butterfly closures.
2. Leave extra hour at the end because it always takes longer than you think. Schedule was too tight. Leave at least one hour for cleanup.
3. Ask Hospitality to make a list of things brought, things not needed, etc.

Brainstorming: Themes that persisted.

1. Words for Being Quaker:

Loving (experience of being in Quaker community): compassionate, welcoming, accepting divergent points of view, respect, kindness

Testimonies: committed activism, discipline of silent worship, expectant waiting, grace, forthright engagement, faithful, patience, reflection, mindful living (testing individual leadings).

2. The Meeting as representing the Religious Society of Friends in Community

Living our process (Quaker decision-making)

Speaking truth to power,

Compassion in action

Letting our lives speak

Participating in the community: activism

Setting an example of how to create a community of peace and equity: Cooperation and collaboration.

Creating a still point: Quiet place where people can come to.

Open to community, witness, exemplifying. Diversity accepted and valued.

What does it mean to you to be part of our worshiping community?

Trust, friendship, love and peace, personal support, shared values, feeling needed, appreciated. Safe place to explore differences, raising children with support and safety.

Where are we led, Spiritually and Geographically?

6/4/16 afternoon session. John Hatten and Mary Ann facilitated. Worship Discussion. There were several Friends who did not speak at all during the worship discussion, but whose loving presence helped ground us in our shared commitment to our Quaker values and our love of this Meeting.

Query #1: How is the spirit leading us to express who we are and make manifest our purpose through our meeting place?

Friend A: There is a difference between how meeting is to be in our community vs. how individuals show up in our community. The Spirit can lead individuals, but also our meeting collectively.

Friend B: Leading of Spirit: Show who we are in a loving way and to accept conflict, and imperfection in a loving way to move forward. This is our gift to the rest of the community.

Friend C: Two words occur to me: Haven and Host. Welcoming people is in testimonies: Haven offering a place of simplicity, peace, equality and safety. (This is not dependent on owning a building.) Hosting: Community, Integrity, Reaching Unity (an umbrella term for Quaker process), Sustainability/Simplicity. By being a host is the piece that would benefit from having a dedicated, accessible space.

Friend D: Struggle with the query's wording. Me? Collectively?

Friend C: The intention was us as a meeting, collectively. The way we decide what to do is to consider individual leadings.

Friend E: And each of us contributes our measure of the Light.

Friend D: Spirit can inspire us collectively, insofar as each of us clarifies our piece of the truth. From that comes collective movement. Listening. Hearing, allowing connections to happen.

Friend F: Personal leading in the "infant stages." Friend is looking at starting a Friends' Middle School. Outreach in the community. Such an endeavor might intertwine with BFM's search for worship space/ and increase awareness of us in the community.

Friend G: Synergy - individual leadings supported by the community. Could manifest through our meetinghouse. Some individuals might be led to "go deep" to support a new meeting place. Bigger presence in our community.

Friend H: Meeting has reached a tipping point. We are growing. We would be enriched to have a space that can accommodate our next step. Takes faith and trust: "Lean in." List of essentials and deal breakers: Energy without depletion, space for children, visibility, collaborate with others. Hold the space for others who may be seeking but don't know how to find us.

Friend E: By being more visible and public we would need to be more faithful. We are complacent with routine. "Lean in" to that "growing edge" of who we can be. Recognize what some have been sensing - outgrowing our space. The hound of heaven is nipping at our heels. Spirit/grow into all we can be. What does God require of us? Look at query with that

in mind.

Friend I: Born the royal “we” - meant single person speaking for many. Learning about self and leaving the “we” out of it. Confusion - we can get mixed up. Boss at the top vs consensus.

Friend J: In Fairbanks, meeting about our size had a lot of buildings that belonged to them via inherited, and they had so many more “Jobs” than they had people to do them. The buildings had all been given for free, and yet were a burden to the focus on things of the Spirit. No matter the place, when I’m in Quaker worship, the worship is always the same.

Friend K: Portland owns their meetinghouse and is the largest meeting in our region. So many tasks, it was often shorthanded. Ownership is a lot of work and responsibility. Even though they are a large meeting, they are often short on help. Vandalism. Meeting of the building rather than the spirit.

Friend D: Friends who prioritize inward experience have been perceived as “fearful.” Friends who prioritize outward presence have been perceived as “missing the point.”

Friend E: In one sense, MFW - doesn’t really matter what the space looks like. Cornfield, cave, rundown house.

In another, the space we occupy is key: there is more I feel we are called to, and the space we occupy matters.

Friend B: We don’t have to agree. We have an opportunity to do deep listening and incorporate our differences. Be curious about that of God within those with whom we disagree.

Query #2: What qualities in a meeting place would facilitate our expression of our purposes?

Friend L: Accessibility - have to be able to get into building easily.

Friend M: Accessibility by bus and easy to find.

Friend N: Easy for people to get around in it. Natural lighting. Simple feeling - not too many distractions. Acoustics.

Friend K: Reasonably easy to find. Humble yet open.

Friend O: Space so when reading or eating they don’t get squashed.

Friend M: Dedicated space for children.

Friend I: buffer (for sound) between worship space and children’s space.

Friend H: Space for library and learning.

Friend A: A space that is accessible 24/7.

Friend D: 24/7: if we own, that would be built in. If we rent, want to have access during certain hours, maybe 12 hours per day.

Friend U: Sense of stability is important - a sense of roots to be there in future.

Friend G: Sense of the spirit that comes out of this. Spirit led, not fears.

Friend C: It's a matter of scale, Finding a meeting place that is not too big, too complicated or too much of a project.

Friend O: Parking.

Friend N: Beautiful, while simple.

Friend P: (Facetious) Back to the land. 40 acres, lake, stream, etc. for \$2.00. Think about long range vision. Moses was waiting for a generation who had not been slaves. May need to wait. What do we have to do to be ready? Short range: rent for now. Continue the discussion so when way opens we will rise to the occasion.

Friend H: Story of "leaning in." Ran the spring fair at the resource center. Put ideas on list. On list were ponies & goats - hard to find and secure but both happened. Way opened. We need to let some things go to faith and be ready.

Friend A: We can't always wait for everything to be right. Our kids are growing up fast. What can we create? Let's not wait forever.

Friend Q: Way opens.

Friend D: What about rent to buy?

Friend K: Whether we rent or buy, we would have to deal with problems such as the homeless. Conflict on welcoming them. Or keeping them away. Problems can arise.

Rent to own always involves a balloon payment at the end. I apologize for being too fearful. But we need to hold this in the Light.

Friend B: I didn't mean to say that we shouldn't express fear if we feel it, but that we should claim our own feelings.

Friend C: Yes, and we should take care to name our own feelings, not label other people's.

Friend M: Group leadings worry me. Individual leadings - are what he (the friend speaking) has experienced. He felt we were ready for Bell Towers. Now he's not so sure. Being ready revolves around being financially and spiritually ready. We might consult with the South Seattle meeting. He suggested a small group might approach South Seattle.

Query #3: What components of a meeting place are most important?

Friend B: Affordability - a price goes on faith. A leading is personal. Community leading means unity. Do we want to own a meetinghouse? Re-examine and commit so we will be ready. Look at all possibilities of affordability. We have reached a point with the meetinghouse fund where it was questioned what we should do with all the money we have accumulated.

Friend A: Part of it is how the property feels. Some people approach issues from an "I feel" perspective, others, "I think," Important to value both.

Assorted Friends:

Plenty of space.

Location reasonably accessible - easy to find.

Acoustics. Children's space that does not cause conflict.

Community space. (Kitchen, social hall.)

Accessible without an elevator.

Friend K: elevators very expensive to maintain.

Assorted Friends:

Some kind of a mud room for coats, boots, etc. Also bathroom accessibility, not just for wheelchairs but for other mobility issues.

Sustainable/financially and in harmony with nature: natural environment, trees, garden, grass.

Room to grow. Space will not make us but can allow us to grow. Nurture children through their growth.

Place to hang a sign.

Friend S: Wherever we meet, it needs to sustain us spiritually as a community. The environment, the upkeep, the maintenance need to be manageable for our community. Second, we are root-bound where we are. We need room to grow. There's so much that's untapped in this room. With a better space, we have room to become who we are.

Also important to include Junior Friends and Young Friends. Quaker Meeting shouldn't be a place we "age" out of. We need a place where people like Monique can find us!

Friend E: There is a 4 city experiment for Quaker Voluntary Service in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Boston, and Portland for friends who are 24-26 years old to nurture and be nourished. We could have one in Bellingham.

Assorted Friends:

Office space to administer such projects.

Concern for high school kids not going on to more school. Many travel along the I-5 corridor who have given up. Grounds and support for them.

Bringing in a new generation is important.

FCNL: \$8 million goes to youth. None to senior or adult programs.

Grant funding? There are Friends here who have managed buildings, written grants, worked with homeless populations, worked with the elderly.

Search for future projects such as youth and senior care.

Friend U: We need to identify key questions to reach clarity, so we are prepared for the next opportunity. How do we use what we learn today?

What do we need now, 5 years from now, 10 years from now? Maybe we should be planning to build!

Friend C: Can Meetinghouse Scouts come up with properties to look at, or at least report to MfWfB regularly about things they looked at?

Friend C: First, there is more than 1 way to look at donations. Some want to make regular donations to the building fund, even when there is no specific building. Friends may want to consider that idea, in light of our community's interest in a meetinghouse someday. Meanwhile, let us identify issues around which we do not have unity. By the time we do have unity, if Friends have been making regular donations, more will be possible.

Second, one way to address areas of disagreement would be to form some ad hoc committees that can meet regularly. Committees should be made up of Friends with expertise and access to information, as well as Friends who feel deeply about the issues. Use problem-solving dialogue within the committees and hold the issues in the Light, then bring seasoned suggestions to MfWfB. Committees must use Quaker process. Some possible questions would be: 1) What are we trying to provide to the community? Why do we need a Meetinghouse? 2) How do we feel about financing a purchase, given the future of our economy and the planet?

Friend N: The Bell Tower committee did have those discussions.

Friend C: The Bell Tower committee had all kinds of issues coming to it, through the lens of "feasibility." Instead, these ad hoc committees could focus on one or two areas of concern, discuss the issue in depth, and bring recommendations to MfWfB. The diversity of issues is too much for one committee.

Friend E: How would it be different?

Friend C: 1) Before, we had one committee that was supposed to address feasibility, but as more and more issues arose from our threshing sessions and second hours, the committee attempted to respond to those concerns. 2) Not everyone with strong feelings was on the committee, so the committee was really not able to address all the concerns adequately. 3. Plus, there just wasn't enough time.

Friend U: One of the things that would be different is the time pressure wouldn't be there. Last time there were too many issues and not enough time.

Now, we can discuss each issue so we can be coherent.

The BTS Exploratory Committee was centered on whether the purchase was feasible.

Let the Retreat Planning Committee review notes and find where we do not have unity.

Friend U: The BTS ad hoc exploratory committee did not have unity. We worked together through dialogue and problem-solving to approach unity.

Friend C: True, but under time pressure, many Friends who had concerns did not come to the BTS Ad Hoc exploratory committee, and instead felt disempowered and isolated. In fact, the committee, too, sometimes expressed feeling that way.

My hope is for a better process, without the time pressure, and dividing the load among more committees, which encompass the Friends who have strong feelings.

These Committees can form and members can rotate on and off. There is no need to be rigid. We need to be flexible enough in our ad hoc committee process that all Friends feel

heard and we find our way to MfWfB and make unified decisions there.

Friend T: 1. What do we need NOW? 2. What do we have unity to plan for in the future?

Friend I: How much is in the kitty? (Answer, various Friends: \$150,000 in meetinghouse fund.)

Friend(s) ??: The danger is inconsistency between committees. They need to be coherent. Multiple committees are hard to visualize as working. Maybe we could look at other meetings who have gone through this. How would this be better?

Friend U: I want to answer that. One thing that would be different is being out from under the time pressure. Second, the ad hoc exploratory committee was always looking at 15 issues at any one point in time: anything from soup to nuts. We can chunk the issues down and look at them more deliberately and include more Friends, more perspectives.

The central issues: a place to start, is around whether we want to go through a bank. Then, do we want to rent or own? What kind of location are we seeking?

Friend C: Volunteers for committees contact Dusty or Virginia here, or M&C members later.

3 proposed committees:

1) Short-term plan for seeking a new location. What are the priorities among our many wishes, for a new short-term space?

2) What is a Meetinghouse for? Why do we want a Meetinghouse?

3. Are we interested in owning? If so, do we feel comfortable financing, and if so what type of financing feels appropriate? If not, what kind of long-term rental arrangement would be most appropriate and feel most Friendly to us?

What about our identity as a Meeting: Are we just a collection of individuals, or do we have an identity as a Meeting?

OVERALL: There was a lot of agreement in this portion of the retreat. We agree about who we are, what we are doing here. There was very little written down that contradicted anything else written down.

Small group worship sharing:

In unity, regarding leadings and ... listening for the inner light. But some small groups not aware of Meeting acting as a group. Everyone identifies as Quakers. Yet our meeting is packed with activists. Some Friends didn't want to be activist as a group.

ONE ISSUE where we do **not** have UNITY: Do we have and/or want an identity as a Friends Meeting in the community (are we recognized as a group in the community and do we want to be?) ... and /or do we want to ACT or SPEAK as a group in the community?

ANOTHER ISSUE: Question of visibility. Is physical visibility important? Or is it just walking our talk?

This ties into the query that we did not get a sense of the Meeting about: How do we make manifest our purpose through our Meeting place ... if we are not clear about our purpose in the greater community?

Action Item: Threshing session on this during a longer-than second hour: Then come back to the Meeting for business.

Action Item: In the short term, we heard a lot of discontent with Explorations Academy, and we did not hear any strong objection to moving. We believe the Meeting may have unity about seeking a new place to Meet.

We also heard a lot of Friends express a desire for a "dedicated space." But what is feasible? Perhaps consider monthly reports from Meetinghouse scouts?

Action Item: Form an Ad hoc Committee to study the issue, for the long term, of whether we should buy or rent? This committee could then address whichever remaining issue is relevant: To finance, or not to finance, in the context of the global economy and climate change, etc. OR What qualities are most important in a long-term rental, and what kind of sublet arrangements (if any) would speak to our Meeting?

7. Rachel Van Boven

If you would like to use a curriculum or a lesson already planned, please let us know! If you'd like a member of CP Committee to be present at the first time you facilitate Children's Program, just let us know. We're happy to help! If you cannot make it to the Sunday you signed up for, please contact Virginia or Kristen. They will contact a substitute for you.

- b. Thanks to our children's program substitutes:
 - 1. Kristen McLewin
 - 2. Sharon Trent
 - 3. John Hatten
- 4. Virginia has set up a SurveyMonkey to ask Friends to identify areas of expertise and/or interest they might be willing to share. This has not generated many responses so far, though we very much appreciate those few who have responded! The queries are:
 - a. What are some topics or skills you know more about than most people?
 - b. What are you passionate about?
 - c. What do you like to do in your spare time?

Paper copies of this survey are on the table, or you can respond directly by emailing Virginia. Responding to the survey does NOT equal volunteering to teach the children. ☺ It *might* lend itself to that - and we're always happy to incorporate a one-time volunteer into the schedule - but it might just help us create some kind of intergenerational program, or make us aware of the resources we have within the Meeting. Thank you for participating!

approving their proposal. Other times committees are unable to reach unity and bring questions and requests for guidance to the Monthly Meeting. In either case, any participant in Meeting for Worship for business is welcome to raise a question, keeping in mind the Quaker practice of only speaking once to an issue, minding the Light, and assuring that the question is inspired by a concern for the best interest of the Meeting as a whole. Unless specifically charged by the Meeting to take right action on its behalf, neither committees nor individual Friends speak or act for the whole Meeting without bringing their concern to the business meeting for discernment. Financial donations and endorsements of organizations and individuals are approved and minuted at Meeting for Worship for Business.

Committees are created by the Meeting to do the work of the Meeting, but they are not empowered to substitute their own decisions for those of the Meeting as a whole, except in limited ways as noted above. Whether standing or ad hoc, committees make recommendations and provide due diligence in seasoning concerns and proposals. Their faithful discernment may bring the Meeting a clear, thought-out proposal, saving time and avoiding bogging down the Meeting for Worship for Business. However, the Monthly Meeting is the fundamental unit of the Religious Society of Friends, and all significant decisions are made in accordance with Friends' time-honored practice of finding the sense of the Meeting. Friends appointed to committees are given latitude to discern the inner workings of their committee, but significant changes in committee job descriptions, the formation of standing subcommittees, or other substantial changes to or actions by committees should come to the Monthly Meeting for approval. If any member of a committee feels that an action or decision is "substantial," it should be in the committee's report to the monthly business meeting.

To welcome Friends old and new to join in our discernment practices, and to enhance the smooth functioning of our committees and our Meetings for Worship with Attention to

Business, we offer the following guidelines for communication between committees and the Monthly Meeting, and within committees:

1. Friends begin and end Meetings for Worship for Business with a period of silent worship. Committees are encouraged to use a similar process at their meetings, and reminded to “mind the Light” as they go about the work of the Meeting. Committees are encouraged to minute their meetings and give regular reports to the Meeting.
2. Be kind, joyful, patient and loving with one another in all decision-making. Humor, trust and compassion are essential.
3. If a Friend has a concern, they are encouraged to bring it to the relevant committee by approaching the committee clerk and asking to be placed on the agenda of the next committee meeting. Or they may bring the concern directly to Meeting for Worship for Business, if the issue is not appropriate to any single standing or ad hoc committee or if the concern cannot be addressed in a timely manner by the relevant committee.
4. Members bringing a concern directly to meeting for business are encouraged to contact the clerk of Meeting in advance and give a brief description of their concern.
5. Committee meetings are open to all Meeting attenders wishing to contribute to the work of the committee. If there is business of a confidential nature to be discussed by the committee, guests may need to leave while those matters are discussed.
6. Friends wishing to attend any committee meeting are encouraged to contact the clerk of the committee and let the clerk know if they have anything to be added to the agenda, and also to contact the host. Clerks are encouraged to arrange the agenda considerately to accommodate the guest's agenda item (i.e., during the portion of the meeting mutually convenient to committee and guest.)
7. Friends may ask a committee to consider their concern, even if they are not able to attend the committee meeting themselves. They may submit the concern in writing.

a. The Friend who brought the concern to the committee can expect to be informed of the committee's discernment and any recommendations.

b. If the committee decides to lay down the concern, the Friend can expect to be informed, so if they wish can take their concern to a different committee or business meeting.

8. If committees have a matter of an urgent nature to bring to Meeting for Business, they are encouraged to try to address it in a timely fashion so that they can come to the regularly scheduled business meeting. If that is not possible, urgent issues that come up unexpectedly can require the clerks of Meeting or Ministry and Counsel to hold a Called Meeting for Business as soon as possible.

* **We are part of** a denomination historically known as the Religious Society of Friends of Truth. The formal name of our meeting is Bellingham Friends Meeting.

** The monthly decision-making meetings of Bellingham Friends Meeting are usually referred to as "Meeting for Worship for Business" or "Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business." However, in the interests of clarity and brevity, they are sometimes referred to in this document as "business meeting" or "meeting for business." These terms are interchangeable.

*** For additional guidance on Friends' practices for handling controversial or intransigent issues, please refer to the **NPYM Faith and Practice** section of **Chapter 5 The Monthly Meeting: "Friends Method of Reaching Decisions,"** with special attention to sections on "*Sense of the Meeting*," "*Unity*," "*Threshing Sessions*," and "*Serious Differences of Opinion*."