

## **Remembering Forward: Reflecting, envisioning and planning our future**

**March 15, 2025 Retreat at Ransom Fellowship Hall at Warren Wilson College**

**Friends,**

**Thank you to all who joined the retreat gathering to begin the discussion around what is next for the Meeting. The attenders were broken into small groups to answer questions and then shared their responses in a large group circle. Below you will find the transcribed notes from the small group discussions. If you were unable to join us, please consider the question from the 3 sessions and email your responses to MJ. Your wisdom and perspective are valuable! A follow up discussion will be March 30 during forum.**

### **Small group - Session #1**

#### **Questions:**

Who are we now, as a Meeting, post Helene?

What do we value?

What is important to us?

**Sm group responses:** (as transcribed from what the groups wrote up and shared in larger circle)

~we are stronger as a group, deeper bonds

~we are more focused on worship

~what we value and what's important to us - nature, color, accessibility, being welcoming, living within our means, open & inviting, good size, larger hallways, feeling from people not places, secluded in nature, a sense of coming home, being in the larger community, water nearby

~without a permanent space, "meeting" has come to mean our community of people, not the building in which we meet. This feels true

~we value community, social activism, inclusion, diversity, continuity, sustainability, space for truth, consensus, openness, flexibility and growth, young people, practicality

~we are frazzled, tired, aware, "purple", comfortable, questioning

~we are more drawn in, connected to each other in caring way, wanting to step up more

~we value silence, care and concern for each other, time to "marinate"

~current location (St James) some feel cut off, no choice, want a place near nature, shift to afternoon meeting time - more possible to engage

~we are caring, beauty, love, understanding, spiritual growth, connection

~after Helene - we are fragmented, traumatized, healing, acknowledging grief

~what is important to us is expectance for letting go of worries and finding deeper connection, for openness, for a calm, listening, patient environment, unification

~we value spirituality and social action, deep understanding and respect for Quaker process, shelter from the chaos and polarization of the world, sharing stories/past - respect for the past, small enough to be able to know everyone, mystery

~we are stronger and closer

~people are dying or moving away, but also some new members are joining

~prefer face to face, emotionally

~we value emotional safety, community, friendships, experienced wise elders, truth telling, integrity, compassion, transparency

~underneath it all, we are wanting a container of safety

~we are mature spiritually, we carry core with us, we are academics, 2/3 retired, 1/3 engaged with family or work obligations

~we worship from experience, not creed - that is basis. Can be nurtured from sense of home, consistency

~we value a sense of home, consistency vs ownership

~we want to be a refuge - offering it and accepting it, how do we do that? we are a group that wants to do a lot but struggles.

~we are too big to be transient

~some feel relief at not having a building - owning a property was a massive hinderance to us as spiritual community - bogged down with tech or dealing with flood potential - became an albatross on spiritual need

~home doesn't have to mean OWN a space. 50-60% of donations were spent on building - not wanting ownership - just consistency.

~yes, we spent a large % on paper but what about the value of nurturing our community - sitting outside for worship. If not that space, what space? Don't think FEMA will come through,

~need consistency, still suffering from Quaker process, loss of that building and how we got there. Don't see purchasing in our future, need to be adaptable

~space for availability and use wants, worship space Sunday mornings. Others love afternoon worship

~how do we serve by using our academic strength?

## **Small group - Session #2**

### **Questions:**

Where do we see ourselves as a Meeting in 2 yrs, 5 yrs, 10 yrs? What is our vision, our desires as a Meeting?

What do we need to move in the direction of our desired future?

What are our hopes? Must haves?

### **Sm group responses:**

~future - oasis for old ways, sustainability, ability to be a refuge, nature

~able to contribute to the community - share our space, cooperative space

~indoor and outdoor, windows that bring nature inside no matter the weather

~solar panels, eco village

~a place we can be a part of consistently but not be alone

~a place to stay but let it evolve

~accessibility for handicapped and help for hearing (t-coil)

~what we need is a mission statement for what we all want, in a home and as a community, invitations to others, a budget, access

~must haves and hopes - consensus (not losing people because of this), network, mission stmt patience and action

~future - be there for aging friends and those in the dying process, community, deepening our understanding of equity, environmental issues, racial justice

~peaceful

~resume our social justice, regain our energy

~support for Palestinian peace

~in current political context - prayerful, truthful, resisting pressure to conform to a reality inconsistent with our values, not giving into fear, drawing on Quaker and similar resources, collective campaign, healing, community, creativity, constructive anger, acting by our values

~for younger generation - explore, minorities feel welcome, seek wisdom, small group experiences.

~what we need may be revealed

~do we want to put our energy into upkeep (bldg) or into community?

~use our nomad status to make connection with the community/whomever's space we are using? - reciprocal relationship

~constantly moving is constraining some of our flexibility, access

~visibility - advertising not proselytizing, communication

~permanent space with storage/library, a part we can change/customize

~do we keep the way we practice and hope people join or redesign our practice to serve growing community?

~situation is soooo flexible, "wiggley?"

~"be present and expect a miracle"

~but also guidelines and boundaries - interconnectedness with like-minded where showing up as a group matters

~activism, cross-pollination (picnic with a black church)

~vision of a chapel - vision 50 yrs in the future, speaking of place or people doing great things with their money - rather the legacy be the people themselves not place

~former home both captivated and entrapped us - hurricane liberating us

~advertise, carry core/home with us, let community know we're physically homeless, can we partner with you?

~fragmented - who we are and how to be

~open and sensitive to what might come, black church?

~use resources not to build but to connect

~saturday vs sunday or ???

~Southern Appalachian Young Friends - brings in youth from other areas

~have sufficient sq footage to feel welcoming, i.e. room to grow, enough space to have fold dances, to offer programs

~embedded in the community where we are connected

-offer a Quaker school as connected to Warren Wilson

~widen our activities across campus of Warren Wilson - perhaps starting with preschool

~hope we maintain experience around silence and sharing

~not sure the question of future vision is a good one - as Quakers we are open and flexible, adaptable (open to be spirit-led)

~there are those who have been Quakers for a long time - welcoming new people - when stepping into - it's a welcoming place, welcoming feeling, when stepping out - still feeling connected to each other

~we need to stay open to where spirit leads us, "way will open"

~take time to learn and share traditions - what are Quakers? What is unique? If we are rooted in our history, beliefs, perspective - better communication of that. For ex - we should put more in newsletter if someone is ill, etc

### **Small group - Session #3**

#### **Questions:**

Given we have agreed to let go of our property and given all that has been discussed today, what are we looking for in a new space?

~this space (ransom hall) - accessible, favorable

~now - at St James - 2 pm? (no overlap with St James), early a.m. - before their service, parking, carpooling from black mt, from Givens, Kerry (no car)

~interim - advertise - group doesn't have to be a church, folding sign wherever we are to let folks know we are Meeting ("Society fo Friends (Quakers) Faith Meeting Here 2 pm)  
~future - let it come, be revealed, and vigils, protests, forums, for WWC students & community hikes, etc.

~space - stepping into - feels safe and welcoming, stepping out - still feeling connected  
~a sense of peace, accommodating for mobility issues, hearing challenges  
~a place that is okay even if not perfect  
~center of town vs natural setting?  
~if renting/partnering - like WW - lots of diverse spaces, some benefits/opportunities of being connected to college  
~deep concern about burden of ownership  
~what day/time? Sunday? Saturday morning?  
~advertising our need for a space  
~storage unit needs to be dealt with - where will that stuff go?  
~library - dedicated space for our stuff  
~space for after Meeting gatherings - potlucks, etc  
~WW and the Presby Church on campus - has invited us to use Ransom Hall and would work with us to address concerns  
~lots of light, background noise from buses vs vehicles  
~where technology can work

~natural setting  
~consensus  
~big windows  
~sense of home and connectedness  
~space for 1st day school - hoping to decorate it, bring in beanbags, etc  
~buy own place?  
~being more known in the larger community  
~CCLD? Warren Wilson? Camp Dorothy Walls?Haw Creek Commons?

~highly available at least 50% of the time, Sunday mornings - 11 am, 10 am?  
~neuro-divergent  
~Ransom Fellowship Hall - encouraging for college students, faculty, community, it's in a natural setting, has play equipment, flexible, possible kitchen, restrooms

~simplicity, lots of seating options, windows, indoor and outdoor space, t-coil (audio), mobility accessibility, kitchen, restrooms, unobtrusive zoom option, natural light, quiet, right-size, parking, central location, warmth, library, breakout spaces, in budget?  
~check out the space during Meeting time to detect possible disturbances/noise  
~what was our Meetinghouse used for outside of Meeting times?  
~our occupancy of space has social and political capital, be located where public can see us

~immediate - idea to build around/mutual exchange, water feature/stream, connected with nature, community, reach out, start small and grow  
~long term - flexibility, partnerships, find a space, RV??, prepared, serve more, able to take care of others

~partnerships, mutual, reciprocity, cooperative - strength to strength  
~build around an idea  
~connected with nature, flexibility, community, space to serve larger community, gazebo connected  
~this process is good - let's keep going!  
~preparedness, serving more than one need

~Center for Conscious Living and Dying  
~Camp Dorothy Walls

~future questions - rites of passage school? Our networks - our request