



## Twin Cities Friends Meeting

# Day of Discernment

October 29, 2005

Forty-three people gathered to consider what had been learned by the community throughout this year-long process. Bob Schmitt and Jodi Sandfort facilitated the meeting. After a period of silence, Bob rose to welcome people and explain the process used by the committee throughout the year (see below). Jodi introduced the work of the day and summarized what the committee had learned (see next page).

## Final Report from the Jubilation Committee

December 2005

This is the final report being brought to MWB about the work of the TCFM ad hoc Jubilation committee originally formed in late 2004 to facilitate this year of community discernment around two central questions:

- **What are the ministries of the Twin Cities Friends Meeting?**
- **What are the best structures to support these ministries?**

We would like to report back about the fruits of a specially called “Day of Discernment” held on October 29, 2005 from 1-5 pm. With that meeting, the original committee, comprised of Jean Hammink, Jenny Larson, Elizabeth Barnard, Bob Schmitt, and Jodi Sandfort (clerk), felt that their work on behalf of the community was completed. We request that this committee be laid down.

## Opening Presentations:

### Process and Learning of the Jubilation Committee

The origins of this process began in April 2004 when an “Ad Hoc Committee on Nominations” was formed by the clerks team because of challenges in finding people to serve on the Meeting’s committees. During the summer of that year, the committee met six times, explored the nature of the problem and called a special Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004.

In that meeting, the committee presented its assessment of the challenges facing the community. They stressed that there is a high level of engagement but that structural issues made it difficult for us to feel and acknowledge our assets. They also suggested that we must have better mechanisms in place to get people in, connected to, and sustained by the vital energy of the community. To walk us toward clarity, they suggested that 2005 be a ‘year of discernment’ in which we would explore the two questions listed above.

At the beginning of this ‘year of discernment’ our Ad Hoc Committee settled on the name “Jubilation” for it expressed the joy of this process, the assets of our community. This year, we have posed four queries to the community to elicit discussion about the first question: **What are the ministries of the TCFM?**

#### These queries were:

- What is the core of a Quaker meeting to you?
- How do you experience and care for the light within you?
- How do you share your spiritual gifts with the community?
- What do you need from the community to share those gifts?

## Opening Presentations

We presented these queries in a number of different forums during the year. We held worship sharing at Friends Forum, a First Day school lunch, inter-generational worship and Meetings for Business. We prepared informational packets for committee clerks and asked that they hold worship sharing with their committees. We hosted specially called worship sharing sessions. We made weekly announcements and included information in the community newsletter.

We had a community-forum exchanged be created on the TCFM web site. To reach attenders who are not currently involved in the Meeting structure, we made posters and encouraged people to fill in sheets with their responses to the Query.

We also tried to make the overall process visible by having a colorful logo, information sheets widely available, and by having celebratory balloons at potluck during January and March.

- Weekly Meetings for Worship on Wednesday evening, 8:30 and 11:00 on Sunday;
- A clerks team and trustees;
- Monthly meetings for Worship with Attention to Business;
- 14 standing committees. Regular meetings of clerks from these committees;
- A number of Ad Hoc committees formed from issues coming from Meeting for Business;
- Theological affinity groups, such as Quakers with out God and Friends of Jesus. Groups for study and reflection on core Quaker practices, such as NYM Spiritual nurture, Quakerism 101, and special sessions, such as the current one on Isaac Pennington;
- Support committees organized at the request of a member or attender;
- First day school that counts 95 on its roster.
- Clearness committees organized for marriage or membership or at the request of a member or attender who is wanting discernment for a life choice;
- Care committees representing Meeting's care of an individual;
- Community service efforts such as Loaves and Fishes, Project Home.
- Young adult friends group.

---

## What We Have Learned

We offer the following insights to shape our work today:

- **There is an incredible amount of service being done** to support our community. Yet that sense of accomplishment is not often felt.
- **There is a growing recognition that this service** – from first day school teaching to grounds and gardens, weekly fellowship set-up to news committee, formal care committees to representing TCFM to the wider Friends community – **are ways that we all seek to more deeply explore the light within us or our commitments to this community.**
- **This meeting supports a variety of spiritual experiences.** There must continue to be mechanisms in place that support that reality.
- **Our ministries are many.** We must have mechanisms that both provide ways to care for our community and allow members / attenders to be living out these ministries in the larger world with nurturance and support.
- **Many structures have developed organically** in the community over time to respond to these needs to care for ourselves and be active in the larger world. They include:
  - **While these have evolved, we have not collectively taken the time to consider how they work together, how they support our ministries.** That is the purpose of today.
  - Specifically, **some realities have come to light through our Jubilation process** this year:
    - The crisis that precipitated the beginning of this process – a challenged Nominating committee—has passed. However, members of that committee draw our attention to a continuing concern that the responsibility for accomplishing this work falls on few shoulders. The size

## Opening Presentations

and complexity requires considerable time, effort, and commitment to accomplish.

- **The growing size of the meeting**, while positive, means that personal relationships no longer binds the whole meeting together. Many of us operate within a sub-circle within the community.
- **The presence of more families with young children**, more families where both adults are working outside of their home, results in some community members having less time for TCFM service or having to offer their service in more time-limited ways.
- **The committees often struggle with a lack of continuity** as new people come forward to offer service. Because of this, many people have the sense that they are ‘reinventing the wheel’ when a committee enters a new generation of its existence.
- While the Nominating committee has tried to stress **the importance of considering leadings when asked to be of service**, this message needs to be echoed and reinforced throughout the community.
- **The complexity of our structure makes it difficult** for newcomers to understand how we operate and it takes a long time to discern how they can commit their energy to our community, even if they are willing.
- **Linkages between committees are not formalized** and, as a result, there are few ways of understanding the “sense of the whole.”
- As our committee grappled with these issues, **there are a few structural changes that might respond to them.** While not deeply seasoned, we offer them as illustration of types of ideas that could come from this worship sharing and become a focus of the small group work.
  - Sponsor the establishment of smaller, bud meetings;
  - Hire paid staff to help with the administration of meeting and provide some continuity to the committees, clerks, etc;
  - Hold First day school at Friends School;

- Expand the role of the clerks team to provide decision-making authority for the care and operation of the Meeting;
- Create many weekly meetings in homes and gather monthly for collective meeting for business (as in England).

## Worship Sharing/Emerging Topics

The work of the Day of Discernment began with a worship sharing about the second question posed above – **what are the best structures to support the ministries of the TCFM?**

## Working Groups Form

From that worship sharing, the following 8 discussion topics emerged. Those in attendance then picked one topic to discuss further and gathered in small groups for 1 ½ hours to add more details to the ideas. The convener of the small group is noted for reference.

- Paid Staff (Fran Martinson)
- Support / Service (Ann Riemermann)
- Ministries (Joe Landsberger)
- Doing Less – Formal Work becoming Informal (James Riemermann)
- Internet (David Alley)
- Children & Youth (Lynne Holman)
- Bud Meeting (Carol Bartoo)
- Interconnection (Elaine Martin)

Each working group created a report that was read back to all those assembled (see reports on following pages).

## Working Groups Meet

### Working Group on

# Paid Staff

**Convenor:** Fran Martinson

**Other Participants:**

Steve Marchese, Mary Ellen Shaw, John Martinson

**Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:**

- 1) Need for continuity of information and records
- 2) Need to support TCFM infrastructure, (especially meeting house and finances)
- 3) Need to support the work of the TCFM committees to relieve obligations and exhaustion.

**Sense of direction going forward:**

- Identify tasks such a position could include;
- Develop a list of resources needed (computer, etc) to create a functional office.

**Potential next steps:**

- Create an ad hoc committee to develop more detailed job description and task list;
- Develop plan for functional office;
- Develop a financial plan to accomplish this.

### Working Group on

# Support/Service

**Convenor:** Ann Riemermann

**Other Participants:**

Susan DeVries, Cathy DeMoll, Jean Hammick

**Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:**

- 1) How do we issue invitations to service?
- 2) There are two levels of service – one is at the individual / personal motivation, the other service to the broader community

**Sense of Direction Going Forward:**

- Orientation to new comers and not-so-new comers;
- Using a community process to clarify expectations of service by members / attenders;
- Practice discernment about ways that a person wants to be of service;
- Use time between two worship meetings on First day.

## Working Groups Meet

### Working Group on

# Doing Less

## Formal Work Becoming Informal

**Convener:** James Riemermann

**Other Participants:**

Richard Fuller, Lael Gatewood, Anna Lisa Tooker, Jamie Buss, Mary ann Crolley

### Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:

- 1) Doing less **is** ministry. Reducing obligations can open space for leadings of the spirit;
- 2) Faith / Trust – if there is not energy for a task, the world won't end.
- 3) What are the **essentials** (infrastructure) versus what can be done out of shared leadings?
- 4) **Very** important work can and will be done outside of the formal structure of the Meeting.

### Sense of Direction Going Forward:

- This is a difficult conversation – What is essential?  
Our quick sense:
  - Building;
  - Kids, in some manner;
  - Financial / legal
- Strengthening trust – there will be shared leadings.

### Potential Next Steps:

- **Real** Sabbath year!!
- Threshing – what are drop-dead structures / areas?
- Research – what are structures of other meetings of similar size
- Job fair – if energy is not there for a task, the task needn't be done. Held by nominations committees.
- Hold discussions about moving First Day school to Friends school.

## Working Groups Meet

### Working Group on

# Ministries

**Convener:** Joe Landsberger

**Other Participants:**

Nat Case, Jenny Larson and Grace, Ruby Steigerwald, Heather Fergusson, Charlie Underwood

### Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:

- 1) As Quakers we are called to minister to each other. “We didn’t abolish the ministers, we abolished the laity.”
- 2) The reason we come together in Meetings is to try to practice living the testimonies beyond an intellectual commitment, shedding distractions in order to be able to act with integrity.
- 3) The Heart of Meeting is Meeting for Worship and all the structures are subservient to it.
- 4) Comfort of a family (not a recliner). Any separations are an “out”growth (not a divorce)
- 5) Visibility is a function of building interconnections, historic affinities, and being a religious society (not dedicated to an individual’s purpose).

### Sense of Direction Going Forward:

- A clearer sense of commonalities among us would yield a ‘truer’ structure.
- We need to articulate with more clarity – visually organize the structure of the meeting and our spirit-led decision-making and the discernment process. For example, have a wall that displays the ministries of the Meeting, whether collective or individual.

### Working Group on

# Internet

**Convener:** David Alley

### Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:

How can a TCFM website:

- support a variety of spiritual experiences?
- deepen members and attenders personal relationships?
- facilitate creation of a service resource database made up of TDFM members/attenders knowledge, skills and talents?
- support social, education, and personal interests of TCFM children and youth?
- facilitate communication between TCFM groups and bud meetings?

### Sense of Direction Going Forward:

- Just as telephones have been joined by TVs and VCRs and computers are increasingly part of the classrooms and offices in which we work, the internet is a transforming reality which can enhance and enlighten the future of TDFM.
- Efforts of the TCFM webmaster and other volunteers who have established and maintain the TCFM website are worthy of praise and thanks.

### Potential Next Steps:

- Continue efforts to bring paper and pencil aspect of TCFM to digital form and have a presence on the website (e.g. budgets, directory).
- Offer training and support to Friends seeking to better connect with TCFM and Friends through the Internet (e.g. Friends Forum?).

## Working Groups Meet

### Working Group on

# Children & Youth

**Convener:** Lynne Holman

**Other Participants:**

Marianne Clinton-McCausland, Annika Fjelstad

**Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:**

- 1) First Day School has outgrown its space. Could we recommend a administrative and perhaps an educational building?
- 2) Import to create a family / community / First day school space where people from different generations can be together (a place where they don't have to be a consumer, like a mall).

**Sense of Direction Going Forward:**

- Look at the option of moving meeting to Friends School
- Develop a plan / vision for this space.

**Potential Next Steps:**

- Put on the agenda of an Ad Hoc Committee on TCFM and Friends School
- First Day School committee – address options for space (i.e. bud meetings, add-on to existing building, Friends school).
- Ask people who were in the Summit Meeting when they know that it was time to move – price? Gain?

### Working Group on

# Bud Meetings

**Convener:** Carol Bartoo

**Other Participants:**

Hobie Perry, Kate Gallagher, Cynthia Schmidt, Mary Ann Crolley, Michael Bischoff

**Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:**

- 1) There is a need for more intimacy and depth within TCFM worship
- 2) Meeting draws diversity of beliefs because it's so open bus as people continue often seek greater depth of Quakerism.
- 3) Limitations of physical space at TCFM
- 4) Are there other ways to address these issues than bud meetings?
- 5) Have a large public meeting for all the visitors and separate smaller meetings focused on special ministry. This would provide an opportunity for people to be passionately involved in a ministry of their choice.

**Sense of Direction Going Forward:**

- Pursue further discussion of this issue.

**Potential Next Steps:**

- Request TCFM Ministry and Counsel to support formation of a committee to explore interest in forming a bud meeting under the care of TCFM.

## Working Groups Meet

### Working Group on

# Interconnection

**Convener:** Elaine Martin

**Other Participants:**

Anne Holzinger, Paul Landskroener

### Key Issues Identified in the Discussion:

1) There is tension between having centralized structure versus decentralized, web-like organization. We feel we are stronger with the decentralized functions.

2) Weak centralized functions include:

- a. Greeting and following up with newcomers and lapsed Friends;
- b. Conveying who we are as a faith-religious community – Quaker distinctiveness.
- c. Decision-making in crises / urgent / timely situations.
- d. Lack of connection with other local Friends meetings.
- e. Adult Friends don't know young Friends well enough.

### Sense of Direction Going Forward:

- Continue and strengthen adult religious education programs (e.g. Quakerism 101, Barclay in Brief, Pennington, Sunday morning programs more thematically planned).

### Potential Next Steps:

- Directory with photos (both? Posted in meeting house? Both? Newsletter?)
- Establish small executive meeting committee (e.g. clerk's team?) clearly authorized to act between business meetings;
- Hold common meetings for worship with other metro meetings, rotating locations (e.g. 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday).
- Keep clear committees' work of **overseeing** activities, rather than **doing** the activities.

## Closing Worship

After those reports, the group settled into a final worship. At that session, there was a clear recognition that another group in the community would need to be formed to carry these themes forward.

There was also a reminder that structure is just the mechanism through which energy moves through our community – it is not the heart of the Meeting, itself.

A number of Friends expressed feelings of hope, a sense that the soil is fertile for change and there is true deep movement of spirit in our abundant community.

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Sandfort (clerk)