

Topic: ILYM Site Envisioning Queries
Columbia Friends Meeting, May 22, 2011

Present: Nancy Finke (ILYM Rep, facilitating), Scott Searles (recording), Sandy Matsuda, Sylvia Spotts, Wedge Watson, Teri Sullivan, David Finke, Jeff Brotemarkle, Lyle Koch, Carolyn Doll

Meeting opened with silence at 11:35 am.

OVERVIEW

Nancy spoke of the background and history of the purchase in 2009 of 6 acres adjacent to property already owned by ILYM. She passed around pictures of the Meeting House and an arial view of the area to give everyone a sense of the site.

Scott contributed to the history, saying that there has long been a need for more space on the grounds. About 1960, a dormitory was constructed, but it proved unsatisfactory over time. The dorm was removed several years ago. The materials were used for construction of 6 small cabins or were recycled. Sandy observed that this was a thoughtful transformation of dorm to cabins.

The Yearly Meeting site seems much appreciated. Nancy recalled comments of participants at the ILYM Women's Weekend early in May, that being able to gather on the Yearly Meeting Grounds is very important. Others have expressed the feeling that this is "sacred space." Scott and David reflected that being in a rural area with many trees, surrounded by corn and bean fields, covered by a wide night sky, brings us close to nature and to God.

The Yearly Meeting grounds are shared by Clear Creek Monthly Meeting that meets there every week.

The Site is used several times a year by various ILYM groups. Since McNabb is only 80 miles from Chicago and close to Peoria, Bloomington, Galesburg and other places where northern Illinois friends live, it is a convenient location for many.

Wedge related his experience in a west-coast Yearly Meeting where annual sessions are held on a college campus, thus using available facilities and freeing the Yearly Meeting from property ownership and maintenance.

HOW CAN THE QUAKER TESTIMONIES OF PEACE, EQUALITY, INTEGRITY, COMMUNITY, SIMPLICITY, AND SERVICE BE REPRESENTED AND GUIDE US?

Nancy distributed copies of 7 queries from the ILYM Site Envisioning Committee (see below).

To encourage discussion on the first query, "How can the Quaker Testimonies of Peace, Equality, Integrity, Community, Simplicity and Service be represented and guide us?), she distributed copies of five excerpts from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice (1972):

- a) 1894 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting statement about living the Truth in many ways, including through our buildings and furniture (#226, p. 155)
- b) John Woolman's 1743 statement about freely following our Shepherd unencumbered by a never-satisfied desire for wealth (#235, p. 157)
- c) John Ormerod Greenwood's belief in the revelation of the divine through the arts (1978; #282, p. 171),
- d) A London Yearly Meeting statement of 1957 cautioning against overspending the allowance that God has given us (#287, p. 172)
- e) Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice paragraphs on Stewardship and Right Sharing, ending with the suggestion that judgments are required "about what expenditures are essential and what are discretionary, and about the values that will underlie discretionary expenditures." (pp. 80-81)

IMPORTANT IDEAS

In agreement with the Testimonies, we asserted that simplicity should be kept in mind in all things. Sustainable products should be used that are not harmful to economies, people, or environment.

FEATURES/FACILITIES

Enjoyable, useful space should be available to Young Friends.

There is need for a better space for our common meals, as well as for more space for attenders to be able to sleep on the general site.

New accommodations should be handicapped-accessible.

Nancy and David agree that the "chicken-mink barn" should be torn down and the materials recycled or sold as salvage.

David suggests a sitting circle for star gazing somewhere on the Mills Property.

VISIONS FOR FUTURE

People were friendly toward use of the Yearly Meeting Grounds year-round, and perhaps developing more programming, establishing a conference facility and/or working with other groups. This would require staffing, and, even now, steady, residential oversight may be required.

There was general agreement that improvements to the property should be spiritually expressive, keeping the feeling of "near to God." Changes should be conservation-minded, reflecting good stewardship.

BARRIERS TO USE OF SITE

Nancy asked, "What would help you attend Annual Sessions?" Sandy suggested that the Meeting give financial aid to young people to help them attend--in addition to registration fees, there are other expenses. Columbia Friends Meeting Scholarship Fund could be used, but it probably needs more funding. Other problems that prevent people from attending include the distance and time required for the trip (ride-sharing can help), the length and intensity of the daily schedule (a short nap after lunch helps), and personal discipline against over-extension.

The meeting ended in silence about 12:40 p.m. with thanks to all for participating.

Notes by Scott Searles and Nancy Finke