

# FIRST FRIENDS TRANSITION & SEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT - JULY 2018

The primary privilege and task of the Transition and Search Committee is to listen. The following is our best summary of what we've heard. Each recommendation included is formed from the hopes and concerns we heard from the Meeting in the four conversation events, written responses, and comments offered directly to members of the committee. These recommendations are from the entire congregation! We have digested and distilled them through weighty consideration. We offer them back to you with suggestions for transforming them from conversations into enduring actions.

## AFFIRMATIONS OF PRIORITIES AND VALUES

We have spent a year listening to you. There were many affirmations of First Friend's current work, way of worshipping, and caring for our community. The following is a visual representation of the values you affirmed and the ministry priorities of First Friends. Included at the end of this report is the full list in Frist Friend's members words. In order to live out these shared values and accomplish these identified priorities, the Transition and Search Committee makes the recommendations on the following pages.

Sincerely, Beth Joyce, Don Durham, Mary Elizabeth Tillman Barwick, Bill Davis, MacGregor Frank, Bill Hass, Emily Riley, Margaret Rowlett, and Janice Wood.



# MINISTRY PRIORITIES

## **WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL CONCERNS**

Worship and Spiritual Nurture are at the heart of who we are and what we do. We gather both in silence and in study encouraging and calling one another along our shared path.

## **CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER**

Whether through formal programs or personal gestures, sharing and another's joys and concerns and bearing one another's burdens is of the essence of how Friends live in Community.

## **ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL CONCERNS**

With deep conviction that part of our calling is to participate in the transformation of the world, Friends engage the structures and powers of our social order fearlessly and with deep resolve to offer the Quaker Light.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT**

Living as good neighbors in our larger community is as important to Friends as living in community with one another. We seek to participate in the life of our community through service and hospitality to offer a Spirit of Light.

**DEFINITIONS:** Provisional (ad hoc) Committee- Temporary and deliberately selected group formed to create space for bringing representatives from other committees and identified stakeholders together to create next steps, structure, and new possibilities

- Initial report-Report of the first meeting of the Provisional Committee with their identified action items and timeframe for their work
- MM-Monthly Meeting
- M&C-Ministry and Counsel
- P&SC-Peace and Social Concerns Committee
- CE-Christian Education Committee
- H&G-House and Grounds Committee
- NCFN-North Carolina Fellowship of Friends
- PFF-Piedmont Friends Fellowship
- FGC-Friends General Conference

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### **Focused Attention to Long-range Planning**

In the absence of specifically focused attention on Meeting wide strategic planning, both the Personnel Committee and the House and Grounds Committee have needed to take up aspects of long-range planning to accomplish their assigned responsibilities. While they have done good work when they have taken up long-range planning tasks, both groups have sensed and expressed that the long-range planning function is necessary for their work but isn't a part of their assigned duties. Currently there is no specific group with the assigned work of stewarding the meeting's long-range strategic focus on how to live out our priorities and values.

**Question:** How should the Meeting address its need for long-range planning? Would Friends prefer to create a separate group specifically dedicated to the long-range stewardship of our priorities and values, or assign that responsibility to M&C or another existing group?

**Provisional Committee Assignment Recommendation:** We recommend that M&C take leadership of long range planning. Specifically, to task them with creating a written long-range plan for First Friends Meeting. Experience tells us this function needs to be deeply rooted in the spiritual health of the meeting and not merely focused on or driven by building maintenance or staffing needs. We further recommend that an initial focus be given to the consideration of the continuing concerns over the arrangement of our worship space.

**Recommended Time Frame:** Report at January 2019 Monthly Meeting.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### **Communications Working Group**

We have a newsletter, a bulletin, a website, email groups, a changeable outdoor sign, a Facebook page, and various Facebook event posting, but we do not have anyone or any committee coordinating all the ways we communicate with each other, and the wider world, about who we are and what we are doing. Among these various channels of communication, we still experience times when people “miss” or overlook things that may be of interest to them. An additional example would be the recording of our services and their need to be edited and posted on our website.

**Question:** What communications improvements are most needed or desired to create communications habits that are effective in reaching their audiences and are reflective of our values and priorities? How can we best clarify for members how they may best stay informed?

**Provisional Committee Assignment Recommendation:** Kimberly Rathburn (clerk) & Ian Joyce, acting as Project Manager and Strategic Planner respectively.

**Recommended Time Frame:** Report at December 2018 Monthly Meeting.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

### **Funding Our Priorities: Focus and Transparency**

To inspire more passionate and engaged giving and to be the best possible stewards of our resources, it is important to have a clear focus on the priorities of the Meeting, a full awareness and understanding of its resources and their intended uses, and the ways they are being managed. Transparency inspires greater trust. Like many Meetings and Churches, our committees have had a thorough understanding of these matters. However, rarely has the Meeting as a whole had a clear understanding of the full make up and working of our assets and resources and how they help us accomplish our priorities.

**Question:** How do we develop a deeper, more effective understanding of how the Meeting's priorities and values are supported financially and how our financial condition affects our effectiveness? What is the best way for the Meeting to educate members about our financial condition and practices so that we make the best decisions about our money and encourage additional contributions?

**Provisional Committee Assignment Recommendation:** One chosen by finance, two members chosen by M&C, and to be clerked by Ryan Barwick. NOTE: Finance is already doing very good and helpful work on more transparent reporting and this temporary additional committee will simply add perspective to that work while encouraging a sharp focus on communicating in terms of the Meeting's priorities.

**Recommended Time Frame:** Report at October 2018 Monthly Meeting.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### **Installation and Training of Clerks**

Effective clerking is a staple of Quaker Process and Quaker Leadership. A few committees have not had regular clerks in recent years. There is concern that a lack of consistent leadership in some committees makes these committees less effective over time. Furthermore, it diminishes the opportunity to develop future leadership in other areas.

**Question:** How can the Meeting make sure each committee is adequately clerked and all clerks are adequately trained? How can the Meeting encourage members toward service in leadership/clerking?

**Provisional Committee Assignment Recommendation:** We would encourage M&C to confer with the Nominating Committee and consider bringing in an expert on Clerking that could conduct a “train the trainers” session that will enable training moving forward. This training should be in November or early December for Clerks starting in January, but we trust their wisdom to discern the best course for an increased focus on the ministry of equipping our Clerks. We also recommend the development of a system to ensure every committee has a designated clerk or effective leadership, who is provided appropriate training and support.

**Recommended Time Frame:** Report at October 2018 Monthly Meeting with a goal to have an initial Clerk training before the end of December.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

### **Quaker Groups Exploration**

There is clear and strong investment in continuing to live out our priorities and values by cultivating relationships with other Quakers. These relationships enhance our own faithfulness, effectiveness, and Quaker identity. In addition to continuing our investment in the formation and growth of NCFE, there is significant energy for exploring tangible relationships with additional groups: PFF/FGC and other Quaker organizations.

**Question:** How may we best enhance our ability to live out our priorities and values through additional relationships with other Quaker groups? Of the additional Quaker groups with which we might become involved, which ones most closely reflect our priorities and values, and which ones most inspire Members to become involved?

**Provisional Committee Assignment Recommendation:** Vicki McCready, Bill Davis, one from CE, and one from P&SC. Suggest Bill Davis as Clerk.

**Recommended Time Frame:** Report at December 2018 Monthly Meeting.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

### **Ecological Review of Practices**

In Feb. 2016, the Peace and Social Concerns Committee wrote a minute of support to the House and Grounds Committee, asking them to consider “opportunities for sustainable practices and environmental impacts of any remodeling.” H&G has been approached by others with similar concerns. P&SC continues to consider issues around the environment and the Meeting on a regular basis.

**Question:** How could we decrease our negative impact on our environment? What decision-making structure (committee, etc.) is best to lead this discussion?

**Provisional Committee Assignment Recommendation:** One member from P&SC, one from H&G, one from Finance, and Traci Cossman as Clerk. NOTE: P&SC has already begun meaningful, impactful, and passionate work that is ongoing. This provisional committee will simply add overall perspective to the three existing committees with the goal being to create space and alignment for a sharp focus on how First Friends as a whole can make the largest impact.

**Recommended Time Frame:** Report at November 2018 Monthly Meeting.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

### Ongoing Growth and Improvement

The three items mentioned below are grouped together because they share one important characteristic. No matter how well we are currently doing, we will always want to do better! While there was no sense of criticism in these areas, there was a consistent expression of a desire to seek improvement since they are vitally important to living out our priorities and our values.

#### I. Quaker Process Training

As new people come into the Meeting, which we love, we have a responsibility to help them learn about Quaker process so that everyone understands what is happening in our business meetings and no one is confused about unique practices like not voting. Quaker 101 classes have been a valuable strategy for accomplishing this and should continue.

**Question:** In addition to regular orientation sessions like Quaker 101 how can we make modeling and teaching Quaker Process Training a more robust part of our ongoing work and practices with all the Meeting's members and attenders?

#### II. Education Strategy

While there has been deep value affirmed for the regular 10 a.m. offerings, there has also been a consistent desire to have more variety in small group offerings both at 10 a.m. on Sunday, and at other times.

**Question:** How might we best encourage, provide, and promote a creative variety of small group opportunities for both community building and learning?

### III. Youth Program

We have an ongoing youth program, but it seems to draw participation only for certain events, like when the youth oversee Meeting for Worship each year or when they go on a trip. Also, there is a concern that the youth have ideas about how they would like to operate and things they would like to do, but the structure is not in place for them to participate in the leadership of the youth group and in planning of the youth program. NOTE: While these observations accurately reflect what we heard, steps have already been taken by the CE Committee to begin to address this by adding the twice a month Youth meeting on Sunday.

**Question:** How can we improve an ongoing youth program that develops youth leadership and involves them in planning for their activities? How can we provide a consistent, predictable youth program, rather than periodic events?

**Provisional Committee Assignment Recommendation:** All three items under this section are recommended to the CE committee for focused consideration and further recommendations.

**Recommended Time Frame:** Report at September 2018 Monthly Meeting.

# RECORD OF AFFIRMED VALUES AND MINISTRY PRIORITIES

## Community

- We put our money/time/resources where our mouths are (most of the time). This is a genuine & supportive community.
- I am a relatively new member & I felt welcomed & appreciated from the very first time I came here.
- Open & welcoming attitude. Everyone is lifted up to be as involved as they wish to be
- Openness, seeing that of God in others
- Accepting everyone
- I would like for us to be even *more diverse* and accepting of others
- Friendly, welcoming common sense
- *All* are welcome here! Non-judgmental. Meeting the needs of our Meeting and community
- Maintain rootedness in Christianity, Quakerism—> Spirit of welcome, hospitality, and mutual love/support
- Support, caring & love of others in this Meeting
- Learning to be more excepting [sic]
- Continue to be welcoming to who[m]ever comes in the door
- Our acceptance & value of each of our members
- Welcome to participation by others
- Sense of Meeting community borne out by service to greater community
- Keep the sense of *sharing* important aspects of our lives
- Open to receive the values Quakers see in me
- Continue to encourage & seek diversity
- A positive is changing of guard to younger, newer members

## Ministry

- Keep reaching out to people who don't look like us, worship like us, etc. There is strength in diversity!  
If we aren't welcoming & active in the community, then we serve no purpose.
- I like to help others that are in need
- Night shelter & food pantry (community work)
- Activities for young families
- Continuing to deal with/respond to community/world issues
- Charity & involvement w/ variety of ministries w/o advertising or "bragging" about it
- Activism and community involvement
- Food pantry
- Our support of *refugees* and our sponsoring of two families
- Food pantry
- Those who visit members & attenders

## **Openness**

- Inclusion. Ok to say “no”
- Greetings & friendly smiles
- Love & support
- Openness to equality in practical ways (even in just inviting to dinner)
- Atmosphere of welcoming & hospitality
- To work hard to see that of God in everyone, even those who do not understand or embrace us
- Acceptance of children
- Love—acceptance
- All are welcome

## **Worship**

- Contemplative practices. Honoring each individual’s personal journey
- Use of words to develop memorable moral [sic]
- Sanctuary for worship in lots of different ways
- Importance of *silence*
- Listening. Really listening within my own heart for the unexpected TRUTH
- Keeping an open mind & heart
- Compassion
- Our always returning to the still, small, quiet voice within & holding our silence as a cornerstone of our faith
- Continue to find peace in the Unprogrammed worship

## **Growth**

- Continue to see love & growth in the First Friends community
- Keep asking questions, embrace the gray, & remember that the moment we feel that we’ve figured out all of the answers is the very moment that we stop learning & growing
- Willingness to find new ways of living my life