

Minutes of the Retreat held at 9:00 am on Sunday, September 11, 2005 held at the Bloch's home in New London

Present were: Sam Osherson, Julie Osherson, Jan Morgan, Doreen Cooke, Kathy Lowe Bloch, Peter Bloch, Caroline Jestin, Betsy Taylor, Betsy Stout, Carol Costello, Andrew Mason, Kelly Soule, Kay Flanagan

Julie opened the meeting with a quote from Einstein.

Midwinter

Julie asked the meeting to suggest people who might plan the Midwinter conference. Jan suggested we assign the three pieces we discussed yesterday and either have the three people doing the pieces form a committee or have a coordinator. Several names were put forward to lead or take part in Midwinter. It would not be so hard to find a coordinator if we had people lined up to take care of the parts of the conference. Promotional piece needs to be written. Registration forms need to be printed up.

Teen Talk

Sam's report was handed out—a summary of a meeting he and Peter had on the Friday night of the conference with the teens. It was felt that it was a good idea to get the teens involved in designing their own program. If we have sessions on sex, drugs etc, as the teens suggested, we need to be mindful of parental control and parental attitudes. Teens want the facts, not values but even facts have a value base. The teens vary in age from 13 up.

Andrew read Ron McClain's response to the teen talk report. Ron raises interesting questions about how much teens should be separate or together with adults. Teens want and need time to talk openly and ask their questions in complete safety. There was much discussion about whether parents should be involved and if not, how to approach the discussions in a safe and effective way.

It was felt that we need to encourage interactive events as well as ones for teens. The jam session worked well with a mix of teens and adults led by Bill Milford. We could offer "parents of teens" talk with different leaders so teens would not feel any infringement on their confidences.

Our conference is a rare opportunity for teens and adults to be together and we should build on that. Sleepovers might be good. Betsy Stout suggested that we not plan too many separate activities for teens. Peter would like to see us encouraging teens to embrace the primary values of Northfield like sharing, empathy, and community. What about confidentiality?—if a teen admits to dangerous behaviour—what does the adult do with this info? Teens who attend families and teen talk have a model on which to base their talk among

themselves. Concerns were raised about dark things coming out in teen talk and how to handle this.

On the question of confidentiality, it was generally agreed that only really dangerous behaviour would be shared with parents. For less dangerous behaviours, the adult leader might wish to talk privately with the teen involved. Betsy Taylor said that we have a tremendous resource in the school as they have people who specialize in teen behaviour — lots of expertise we can draw on. Who is responsible for the teens—the parents or the conference? Betsy Stout suggested having a meeting of parents of teens and the teens at the beginning of the week where guidelines can be set.

The discussion around teen talk had been quite intense and it was becoming difficult to make sure speakers were heard in turn. Some people were having a hard time getting space to talk. It was agreed that everyone should listen more carefully and wait at least three seconds before responding. We need to be more mindful of others when they indicate they wish to say something.

Doreen asked if we needed to have a solution to teen talk today or are we just making suggestions? Julie says she wants ideas to build on later. Sam and Patty should run the beginning of the week parent meeting if they are doing teen talk.

Communication/Outreach

Peter explained that he has explored with Sam and Carol how we communicate with our membership via brochures, Grapevine, etc. Peter said he had 500 cards made up and they were widely used at the conference—hopefully to send to friends to talk up the conference. While the outreach group could try to get more members from the larger community, perhaps we should wait until we have our new location. What is the ideal size of the conference? What about the demographics? Peter thinks we should have a sub-committee to explore this issue. Mickey suggested we wait till we are settled in the new place to see how many we want. Kelly commented that the postcards work—they are small, handy and effective.

Betsy Stout would like to see us do some outreach at the Mt. Hermon school. We have put forward ideas such as offering one or two scholarships to students. Andrew said that we have an in with the school chaplain who is a friend of George and Maeve and who is keen to involve himself with us. The faculty could do workshops for us. How should we promote ourselves? —we underplay our religious and even spiritual side but then we talk about getting more involved with the school.

Peter suggested that we do the postcard again—perhaps using a different format. Jan thought we should wait until we move to the other campus. Focus this year on getting people to use the website—specially the open part which outsiders can check. We could update the section

Sam wrote about the conference. Julie agreed that we should focus on the website this year. Jan suggested promoting the website through our email – have our web address in colour at the bottom of each message.

Job Allocation

Kay read out the list of names that was drawn up at the Annual Meeting of people willing to do jobs. Betsy Taylor offered to do morning meditations. Caroline offered to do the handbook if Isobel does not want to continue doing it.

Fundraising

Mickey said it is really important to clarify where the money is going before it is collected. If people made long-term commitments at the annual appeal it would be an important source of funds. There are currently 5 or 6 people doing it—it could raise around \$2000 each year. Andrew said that we need to have someone in charge of the long-term commitments who would send multi-year pledge reminders and track the years pledged. Ron is going to help Doreen write the fundraising letter. Monthly payments could be organized. We should encourage gifts in memory of/ in honour of, etc. (using gift cards). We could rotate the fundraising options. We should show how much we take in from the sale of artwork

Caroline brought up the question of remainder trust and lead trusts-- planned giving—she will get information on these. If people give substantial money to us, the purpose for which it is to be used should be clearly designated.

Carol will head the fund-raising committee and explore options. She will lead a brainstorming session with her group next meeting. She wants info on how much we raise now and how much we'd like to raise.

Betsy asked if the meeting would approve her flying to Montreal at the conference expense. Graceanna indicated it would be all right with her. The meeting unanimously approved her request. The program coordinators have a budget, which will cover this expense. Andrew says we could make this a deductible charitable donation, which would save us up to a third of the cost.

Conversation ranged around costs for executive members to attend meetings. Julie asked executive and program people to submit approximate costs for the year when they have them calculated.

The meeting adjourned at 11:57.