

Minutes of the Community Meeting held at 4 pm on June 21st at the Northfield Mount Hermon campus

Linda Giarla presiding.

Opening Prayer

Linda opened the meeting with a short prayer.

New Home

Linda asked if anyone would like to comment on our new home.

Comments: experiencing a sense of renewed energy; being in a new place put everyone on the same footing (newcomers and returning members of the community); the dining space is larger and there is less waiting time for getting food; very good food choices; nice having the chapel again; handicap access is great; Blake works better than Gould. There is a general feeling of being at home here.

There is a lack of a central space like Gould—we need to find a home space; the coffee house space worked well; too warm at the coffee house; next year we need more fans, especially in Blake; not enough room in Blake for the first night fun and games because of the ping-pong table—perhaps we could use the auditorium, which is large.

We should pursue the use of cottages and other buildings next year. If we use Crossley again, we should use Blake for the children's activities, as it is close by. Parents like to be near their children because of the many time constraints. We need a space that is always quiet for meditation, etc. We lack a conversation room for evening use. We could use the atrium in the evening if we had tables and chairs set up there. We need a music practice room. Could we set up a living room type area in the hallway to dining room as a "centre?" Perhaps we could use part of the dining room, which is open to us all day.

We need to clarify our grazing privileges with the kitchen staff. The dining room is closed at 7pm. The room we use for conference hours could be our centre during the day.

Kara Colvin suggested that next year's name tags be in the form of watches.

Travelling to Roundtop

A comment was made that it feels disruptive to go back to Roundtop. There was general agreement. Linda said that the executive thought that going back for this one activity would serve as a means of closure. Maeve Blackman, who arrived today, agreed that we should not return. Mickey Friedman who has been looking at documents about Roundtop with Maeve, said that she is torn about the question She appreciates the planning but sometimes the reality changes and we need to adjust. A vote was taken—the consensus was to stay here, but we need to tell Dorothy Mason, who is organizing the evening. A straw vote was taken on having this evening activity in front of the chapel.

George Blackman said that it is not the space that defines us—it is our community. It does not matter where we have an activity as long as we are together. Peter Bloch suggested that Dorothy and Jim Peters choose the location. Jim said that we should meet in front of the chapel and if we are going elsewhere, we'll go from there.

Midwinter

Betsy outlined the history of midwinter, beginning with weekends at George and Maeve Blackman's, using the parish hall. Melissa said that it was because of midwinter that she came this June. She found it a terrific experience and it made her feel connected to the community. This winter, we will return to Andover, Rolling Ridge, but the date has been changed back to the end of January as it used to be.

The question was asked as to whether midwinter was child-friendly. There is no real program for little children. If enough parents with children came, the parents could help devise a program for them.

There was discussion about having a Canadian midwinter. Perhaps we could have one midway—Burlington would be good.

Newcomers

The comment was made that it can be really lonely on Sunday and Monday even if you come with friends. Workshop people tend to come on their own—it would help those without friends if the newcomers met every day. Alan Lauderdale said that he felt welcomed. He thinks the mechanisms in place worked well for him.

We used to have a buddy system and also a newcomers' table in the dining room. The Newcomers' meeting, which was held at one on Sunday, was too early for most newcomers. Lots of information was given but not enough effort made to create a sense of community. Group building would be valuable. Special nametags are good. Families could be asked to make their new members welcome. Mark and Linchy Higham said that the people living in Manchester made them both feel very comfortable and welcome. It was suggested that newcomers could have different buddies to take them to different places.

Perhaps we could make up a poster with pictures of newcomers and some information about them so we can get to know them. We could work on focusing the dorm meetings on community building. Some of these meetings can be rather too rule-oriented.

League

Maeve Blackman gave us a brief history of the League. The League started in 1902. Up to 1943 there was only one conference held at Northfield. It divided up into three conferences because transportation became difficult and, after the war, it stayed that way. Our conference was the radical one. As part of the League, we have a tax umbrella. We used to get \$500 each year for scholarships. At first, we had an accountant who did not charge us but later, when we had to pay for one, we no longer got our \$500 scholarship money. Now the question is, should the League continue or has it had its time? The Mid-Atlantic group chose not to have a conference this year and instead five of them have come to our conference.

Maeve talked about the commitment we have to attend some of their annual meetings. Each volunteer must attend one meeting in his or her three-year term. The annual meetings move each year from one conference to another. Maeve is sad to see the connection loosening

but she feels that things have changed. Morgan Hellmold said that Laurel from Erie is the president of the League and she, together with others, is trying to revive it. Erie is an all-woman group—they will vote at the League meeting, which Erie is hosting this year, about whether to combine with us. Mid-Atlantic have been looking at this whole question—2004 was all about this—about folding, because even if they join us, it means the end of their conference. The League is our tax umbrella so we need to look at this.

Four Mid-Atlantic people are here (one to come) at our conference. Last year they had twelve people at their conference. We would wish to honor their traditions if we combine.

Julie Osherson said the reason we keep bringing this up is the practical pressure on the people who have to travel to these meetings. Can we stay in the League and not attend these meetings?

It was voted to defer discussion on the League to the Annual Meeting.

Children's/Parents' Issues

At evaluations last night the question of the supervision of children in our new space was raised. It was suggested that a meeting with parents be held to look at providing activities for kids outside the kids' program. Allison suggested that parents and other people could share the supervision for kids, who need freedom more than structured activity. Julie raised the point that we need to be really attentive to the children's behavior in order to ensure our continued welcome on this campus.

It was suggested that we have a triangle area for the children, but it would be very important to make sure everyone knew the boundaries.

4:05 meeting adjourned.