

*Report for ILYM Site Envisioning Committee, from the Ministry and Advancement Committee (MnA) Fall Retreat, November 12-13, 2010*

We began by asking Friends to reflect on notecards, then respond orally, in response to four questions:

*What is happening at ILYM now?*

*What would you like to have happen at ILYM in the next five years?*

*How can the Ministry and Advancement Committee (MnA) help move us there?*

*What does MnA need at the McNabb site to help us move there?*

Friends were pretty straight in their answers to questions 1 and 2, speaking of a lack of a strongly spiritual basis at yearly meeting these days, and their vision of the yearly meeting in another five years was a deeper spirituality. These notes pick up with Questions 3 and 4.

*What can MnA do to help move us there?*

There is a general sense of agreement that Friends need events to help us experience the Spirit. It's Pentecost or bust. Either we experience the essence of our being, or there will be no Quakerism. We need to challenge each other spiritually. One Friend called us to pray for the yearly meeting; another finished the sentence, "Pray til the power of the Lord comes down." MnA needs to help the yearly meeting embody a love of souls by deepening our knowing of each other in that which is eternal. We want to create yearly meeting events that are less busy, more spiritually focused, and more local. We want to help Friends learn to pray; there is a hunger for finding better ways to pray that feed us better spiritually.

We were asked, "What can we present to make Spirit-filled events more likely?" We thought we needed to help Friends think about basic questions; to say, "How do I fit spirituality into my life?" is to say, "How do I fit breathing into my life?" It's more like, "How do I fit Spirit into my life when the computer/TV/iPod is turned on?" We need to teach Friends how to stop and listen; "to remember who I am, that I am a soul."

One Friend said the evangelicals speak of having heard the Good News and being out to share it. Basically, what they are saying is, "Something has changed me." We need to share what in our experience has changed us. We need to teach people how to be present. To be simple is to be present; to be present is to be simple.

We want to teach people how to be in silence. Too many people are unable to cope with long silences. One Friend has experienced silent retreats in which there was a retreat leader, with readings during supper and exercises to silently journal one's responses. Another Friend told about a minister when she was in college, whose standard question in small groups was, "How did God speak to you this week?" We wanted to find ways to help Friends move from an expectation of a once-in-a-lifetime epiphany to expecting God to speak in any and all aspects of our lives. On that note, we moved to the fourth question.

*What does MnA need at the McNabb campus to accomplish our goals?*

We agreed that the facilities at McNabb are not the basic issue. We need to use the outdoor space to create individual and group seating spaces; “Dark skies and lawn chairs,” as one Friend put it. We do need comfortable seating inside. With the acquisition of the Clear Creek House, we now have a small retreat center; with the cabins in the campground, we have sleeping space good for six-plus months a year. Events like the Winter Retreats we can hold in other places; we don’t need our own Taj Mahal retreat center. One Friend said, “There are eight retreat centers within 2-3 hours’ drive of Chicago, all denominationally sponsored, and all struggling financially. It is not realistic for us to duplicate other facilities. It’s much better for us to work with existing facilities – ours and others’.”

We agreed, in the words of one Friend, “We need to put resources into programs, not facilities. Programs don’t drag us down financially, or in the use of our time. We need to be spirit-filled, not facilities-focused.”

*General Comments*

Ministry and Advancement Committee is in support of creating accessible sleeping and bathroom facilities in the Clear Creek House, and also in support of better bathrooms and more showers in the campground. It is important to the future of the yearly meeting for our site to be able to serve small groups of Friends of diverse ages and diverse needs.