

**Old Chatham Monthly Meeting**  
**Meeting for Discussion of Worship for Children and Youth**  
**Sunday, January 25, 2015**

**Present:** Spee Braun (clerk), Vicki Smith (recording), Mary Lou Peck, Elisabeth Grace, Dianne Leung, Sandra Beer, Heidi Kelly, Jennifer Kean-Schmitt, Maddy Kelly, Ellen Harris-Braun, Eric Harris-Braun, Sarah Miller, Mike Clark, Herb Ranney, Erin Clark

The meeting began with silent worship at 1:05pm.

As groundwork for the discussion, a chart had been prepared showing the various approaches to worship that have been tried over the past several months:

**Experimental Meeting for Worship**

- Back to back in a circle or one-on-one
- In a tree
- Sitting like on a bus
- Heads on stomachs Meeting for Worship
- Reading your choice, then sharing
- Singing worship in song
- Faith & Practice - What the specific advice means to me
- Drawing in worship
- Waterfall worshipping
- Yoga and worship
- Sculpting in worship
- Meditation

**Agenda:**

1. Name of the committee
2. Roles, responsibilities, charter of the committee
3. Review of how the past several months have gone, and discussion of possible changes moving forward. What do we want to do better/differently?
4. Challenges
5. Guidelines for Facilitators
6. Playground equipment
7. Other

### **Name of the committee**

Discussion focused on what the charge of the committee really is, which should ideally inform the name. Various suggestions included: Children & Youth Committee, First Day Committee, Religious Education, Alternative Worship, Experimental Worship, Youth-centered Alternative Worship, and few flightier ones. The sense that emerged was that we go with “Children & Youth Committee” for now, and change it down the road as needed.

### **Roles & Responsibilities**

What is the committee’s charge? Previous charge was child care and care and religious education of children and youth. Previous charge spoke of having a budget, setting curricula, and having clearness committees for older youth. (Ministry & Counsel has taken over this last role, and has them already set up). Committee was also charged with finding educators and maintaining the room & supplies. The committee has evolved away from religious education per se and has moved towards more care of spiritual development. Importance of choice.

### **How have the last few months gone with the “Experimental” Meeting for Worship?? What has worked well?**

- Some adults report having more fun and having it more meaningful to do alternative things. Didn’t find any difference in buy-in from the youth, though visitors liked it.
- It provides a good place for parents to be close to their children and still worship.
- Importance of choice: the youth get significant choice in what they do; example was given that at today’s meeting one young person suggested meditation, so that is what they did.
- Flexibility between storytelling and the experimental meeting; they can actually wander between the two. The one “rule” is that they have to engage in something - storytelling, experimental meeting, or traditional meeting - and exercise the choice.
- The storytelling side seems to be working pretty well, even with the youngest kids. It was noted that it is hard to read an exciting story quietly....

### **Challenges**

Challenges identified include acoustical issues, problems with lining up facilitators, running out of ideas for the experimental/experiential meetings, communication with the rest of the Meeting, and meeting the needs of a small group of children and youth with varying interests. With such a small group of kids, with different personal needs and interests, it is a challenge to find a balance and create a cohesive group.

Original idea of having two adults plus childcare has fallen to one adult plus childcare, though it was observed that when there are two+ adults in the yellow room it deactivates some of the kids' group issues and becomes more of a discussion. We are finding that we have 2+ adults about 75% of the time. If we had more encouragement in general for adults to join in the alternative worship, this could become more regular. And although our childcare person is generally doing the storytelling, we should continue to encourage additional adult participation in this activity.

Communication within the Meeting was raised; with no regular reporting back to traditional meeting (to avoid having the youth feel they needed to report and to avoid extending the post-Meeting time), it was observed that many people are unsure just what is going on in the "alternative meeting." One member pointed out that members of the Meeting have responsibilities to the Meeting, and should be willing to contribute on occasion to this alternate worship.

Suggestions which emerged from this discussion were:

1. Post a list in the storytelling area that shows what books have been read. The reader for that day can repeat a book or not as he/she chooses.
2. To better inform those attending traditional meeting as to what is happening in the yellow room, consider having this be a regular part of the Committee's report at Meeting for Business. Also, suggestion was made that occasional informational segments be posted in the weekly email Meeting Updates.
3. Suggestion made that perhaps, instead of reporting out, a more general question should be posed, along the lines of "What did you do today during worship?" A question relevant to traditional meeting as well. It was further suggested that perhaps Ministry and Counsel could take this up as a question for consideration.
4. Emerging consensus was that there needs to be communication between main room and yellow room on what happened during worship.

#### **What do we want to do better, differently?**

1. Improve communication throughout the Meeting.
2. Encourage our high-schoolers to go into worship in main meeting for the full hour. Not a requirement, but encouraged. It was decided that we would do this.
3. Create guidelines for facilitators, and encourage greater participation from members of the Meeting as facilitators.

#### **Facilitators**

It is still very difficult to line up facilitators and the question was raised as to whether we can handle this or if we need to hire someone. Friends were asked to volunteer to facilitate Experimental Meeting for Worship for a month at a time and several made commitments: Ellen and Eric for February; Sandy for March; Jen for June. For Storytelling Meeting for Worship, Eric volunteered to cover April and Dianne to cover May.

Ministry & Counsel Committee is asked to take up concerns of more communication about Yellow Room opportunities and what sharing goes on there, as well as adult

religious education. There was a concern raised that children (and adults) learn about Quakerism, both historical and contemporary, the Bible, and world religions.

Since we did not get through all our agenda items, Spee will set up another committee time to discuss acoustics and outdoor equipment, and any other agenda items which arise.

The meeting closed with silent worship at 2:20 pm.