Homewood Friends Meeting
Threshing Session on Our Resources
30 April 2017

These queries were provided in advance of the session, which was held from 12:30 to 2:05 with 22 people present. The session was organized by the Trustees Committee, with Debbie Kennison facilitating.

Overall query: Do we as a community use our resources of money, property and people in ways that best reflect and support our Quaker ideals?

--What are the Meeting’s priorities right now? 
--How well are we doing in regard to the right use of our resources? 
--What do we want to be different in that regard?
--What steps do we take starting now to best match our resources to our priorities?

Present: Mina Brunyate, Corry Royer, Phil Furness, Kathryn Munnell, Barbara Bezdek, David Blalock, John McKusick, Cathy Hanson, Michael Prior, Debbie Cooper, Pat Tracey, George Amoss, Donna McKusick, Megan Shook, Polly Heninger, Rosetta Graham, Jo Brown, Susan Russell Walters, Bess Keller, Debbie Kennison, Molly Mitchell

When asked, Friends named the following as things the meeting should support:

- addressing homelessness issues
- justice—racial, economic, criminal justice reform
- welcoming, open and caring community
- pastoral care
- community connections—connections to organizations and groups in the community
- offering sanctuary
- spiritual life of members/attenders
- encouraging diversity
- peace education for ourselves and others
- caring for the environment, biospheric health
- social gatherings within and outside the group
- material aid for those in need
- nurturing children in our midst, supporting families in the meeting
- caring for old people in the meeting
- spiritual resources for students, outreach to students
- gender equity
- the Meeting itself
- Quaker organizations
- handling our growth in numbers, attendance well
- outreach

Debbie K. explained that trustees conceived resources in three categories: people, meetinghouse and fiscal (money we have and money we raise).
People
Debbie asked Friends to name what people are doing singly or together as well as formally as a meeting to fulfill our mission:

- STRIDE activities to diversify BYM camp campers
- committee participation
- GOAT working group—renewable energy, reduction of consumption, understanding and care for the environment
- work for fracking-ban legislation
- environmental advocacy
- Peace and Justice Committee-sponsored vigil, court watch, link to MAJR
- Peaceable City series
- Friendly Adult Presences for Quaker youth conferences
- adult religious education, including Quaker book club
- simple lunch after meeting for worship
- work days for meetinghouse maintenance/improvement
- participation in short-term mentoring program at request of a member
- sponsoring art events
- hosting visiting Quakers and others in our homes and meetinghouse
- Circles of Voices participation
- discussion with police around peace
- work to understand racial differences from a Quaker perspective
- building the meeting’s organizational and communicative infrastructure
- individual participation on community boards

Fiscal resources and the meetinghouse as resource
Debbie K. explained that this section of the meeting was largely informational, with Trustees providing a picture of our finances. Corry presented the 2016 summary financial information and charts showing the sources of the Meeting’s income and the categories of our expenses for 2016. He discussed the ways we invest our endowment. Susan presented information about the contributions in 2016 that could be attributed to individual families (some cash contributions come without identification of source) and the income from meetinghouse rentals. Susan also explained the new proposed formula for Baltimore Yearly Meeting “apportionment”—the contribution asked of each meeting in the yearly meeting.

Two friends raised the issue of discerning as a group what our priorities are. That is a deep conversation that we are not having and will take additional time, several said.

Several specific questions were raised to be discussed at a later time:

- A friend asked if donations should be higher and represent a larger proportion of our income. Reflecting conversations she has had with others, she asked whether contributions to community organizations should continue be made on behalf of the Meeting as part of our budget.
- A friend pointed out what he perceived as a conflict between motivating increased giving and using budget money to support organizations that individuals could support with their own donations. What if the budget went strictly to supporting the operation of the Meeting? Other possibilities raised included: allowing individuals to designate contributions for Meeting
operation or for community giving or for both; designating different uses for investment income and contributions from members/attenders, one to be used for Meeting operation and the other for donations to support other organizations.

Debbie K. asked: What are we doing well? That also raised the question: What could be better?

A friend noted that a time is set aside in a worshipful frame each year for discerning the spiritual state of the meeting. But do we have a way of discerning how we want to be, what we want to do in the future?

A friend said a retreat could be one avenue to defining priorities. Another tool is a charette with one or more skilled facilitators.

Susan summarized that she was hearing a yearning for another gathering dedicated to naming our Meeting’s priorities. The session should have more time than we have today, include a break for food, and make use of one or more facilitators. With priorities clearer, we will know better how to think about our resources. Today’s meeting was a beginning; participants have a more detailed understanding of the meeting’s wide variety of resources.

A friend suggested that it is not that it is not necessarily up to the Meeting to address all our priorities; individuals can address some of the priorities.

With encouragement from the group, Trustees agreed to take the first step in planning for a priorities’ discernment process.

A friend recalled that the last time we had a deep conversation around priorities was when needed major repairs to the meetinghouse raised the question of whether we should stay in the building. Is there an external threat or concern we need to address this time around?

Minutes submitted by Bess Keller