



Williamsburg  
Unitarian Universalists



### ***Visioning Session Meeting Notes***

February 15, 2014

#### **PROGRAM REVIEW - WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM WUU SO FAR...**

##### **Sanctuary**

- Lots of natural light and windows, connection to outdoors (strong feelings)
- Sense of inspiration and aspiration, upward shooting angles, loftiness, airiness
- HVAC ducts are very uncomfortable to sit beneath (usually too cold)
- Soften the space (David) – hard, sterile space – floor is unfriendly for kids (it's hard so it can be mopped) – needs visual warmth
- Sitting on left side, sun is right in your eyes
- Windows form an arrow pointing upwards – good
- Kitchen space doesn't work – noise when people are in kitchen is distracting
- Kitchen functionally too small – could be expansion of sanctuary
- Unfinished, natural wood materials
- Jennifer on chancel, feels removed from back row, rather be surrounded by people than long, narrow hallway effect (likes all-inclusive)
- Congestion when leaving service, narthex is not conducive to socializing
- Musicians and choral groups are not accommodated, during service have to shift space around
- Appreciate flexibility of space, services in round, or arranged differently, traditional seating is not what you walk into every Sunday
- Current arrangement is only way to get 200 seats into sanctuary - like the flexibility, but how do we accommodate more congregants
- Lines of sight are difficult – flat floor with lots of rows, can't see up front
- Smaller worship space for smaller, more intimate services – 20 to 40, less than 50
- Want to be able to hang things from time to time – transitional, not permanent
- Space is almost square, but looks linear – columns up front keep us from using parts of sanctuary effectively – when extremely crowded or using screens
- Visioning Circles – enjoy looking out through glass – want to see trees, etc., but more like “vertical” views

## Narthex

- Enhance social interaction
- Multi-functional
- Foyer for entrance, then social hall for community functions – need to be separated, currently, it's both
- Need multiple functional entrances into the building – others aren't used right now
- Flow of people, traffic – lobby was an entrance, a welcome, greeting, could leave another way – if multiple services, don't have to wait for exiting vs. incoming – welcoming experience, warmth
- Don't have a focus, don't know where to look – if 100 people are in there, impossible – recruiting, handouts get “lost” – need informational hub, connection (personal, and displays)
- Sofas and comfy chairs paired around little tables – need COMFORT and interaction
- Narthex does not give us a buffer between service in session and other activities going on – noise, visibility, etc., disrupting experience going on in sanctuary
- Weakest link of entire building - Acoustics are terrible, logjam of people, likes visual appearance, most uncomfortable, but can't hear, want to get out
- People like the height and airiness
- Way to serve refreshments out in narthex – before AND after service
- Might be nice to have horizontal visual access in narthex area
- Narthex is good place for people to be introduced to who WUU is – do we put a lot of info that's currently out there in social hall? Social justice table – likes possibility of “who we are, what our programs, how to get involved, etc” available on display
- St. Bedes commons room – couches at both ends – look through into sanctuary, sense of worship – alcoves where you have privacy from sanctuary
- Don't want people to feel like they want to rush out – linger, have a community that interacts

## Lifespan Faith Development (LFD)

- Remote locations – need connection, adjacency
- More classrooms - lower elementary, higher elementary, adult – dividing walls are very loud - WALT programs – 4 or more minimum
- Do we need to use them completely differently – adult education happening simultaneously? Common time for everyone to have religious education – not just replicating, but what do we add?
- Our visibility of our children is non-existent once they leave the sanctuary – parents have to leave service immediately to “rescue” children – how do we locate to encourage parents to stay?
- Spaces are confining – need activity space, space to move around (teens)
- Inspiring spaces – teens, especially – currently, windowless basement – more creative in allocating different spaces to share – be comfortable in space
- Separation – groups that are not compatible – meditation is not compatible next to bicycle repair WALT class – need to delve into what classes are available, all that happens, etc.

- Shipyard - build for the future, not for the present – walls, doors, venting, heating, all easily moved – FLEXIBILITY TO ADAPT
- “Green” as possible – strong desire for sustainability
- All children in one room for chapel – music, etc., on floor of Fahs house before breaking out into classes
- Work together with technology, do projects together, not old-fashioned classrooms
- Inspiring, spiritual space – Providence, RI – teen space – Quaker meeting – square with benches in four quadrants – worship, meeting – Tibetan prayer flags – COLOR
- Outside spaces for children – unsafe – anthills, transformer box
- Teenagers – Charlotte – conference for teens – teen area covered with banners, lots of color, worship area separate, very warm, sloped wood floors away from altar, warmth in the seating – for youth, need wood or cork floors, places to decorate with colorful flags
- Youth should have a dedicated space they can have ownership of
- Activity currently is for a couple of hours on a Sunday – how do we make spaces useful for the rest of the week? Can “classroom” be combined with office space – VA Center for Justice – classroom separated off for rest of week – allows funding from outside just the membership, but benefits WUU
- Workspace – come and perch, work, youth after school, business start-ups with mission focus – ability to open up or close off to public
- Space conducive to worshipful attitude – Buddhist temples – psychological impression – natural materials well-integrated with outside spaces – indoor-outdoor links
- Space for meetings – flexible in size, 12 for board, space for 40, now and then large spaces – ½ hour for setup and takedown

### **Social, Meeting, and Program Spaces**

- WALT, music, social interaction
- How does new kitchen or relocated kitchen support programming?
- Daycare center – provided a good income source at one time – dream to have daycare again – long-term income production – steady flow of income for operation of entire place
- Look for income streams
- David Wilcox – social hall space is most important place – food arrives for lunch – how would social hall work – accommodate half the congregation to sit – annual events that are limited by tables in sanctuary now
- Large enough room that you can break down into separate spaces – one super large space for auctions, currently have limits on attendance – stage space
- Wedding venues (commercial kitchen) – allow outside weddings now
- Parker/Fahs – coffeehouse or bookstore – do work, sit with others
- Overflow – extension of sanctuary when needed for piping in sound, display
- Church of God – Saturday from 10 to 2 – WUU has no use of space – could use a space independently – wedding, district meeting – if we cancel Church of God, we lose income
- Resourceful to the larger community – love to see WUU as a resource – interdenominational, social justice, space supports that – resonated strongly

- Wilcox – likes enterprising ideas, but doesn't want to generate ideas just to generate income – what we do is directly connected to our mission – could become a drain of energy
- Light, outdoor courtyard in center of a community space – outdoor gathering space to organize rest of community spaces
- Live Off 5 – folk singers and performers – would like open space able to handle that kind of event – accommodate lecture program series
- WALT – 10 to 30 people – 15% of WALT programs can be accommodated here
- How do we prioritize without sacrificing critical elements – nice to have versus critical

### **Support Spaces**

- Technology – currently, we stream onto internet for those who can't attend
- Flexibility – we don't know what tech challenges will be in future – easily reconfigurable space and connection – conduit, junction boxes, etc.
- Audio-visual needs a separate space – currently in storage room – no visual connection if door is closed
- Wilcox – don't want technology in their faces – wires, etc., not really part of service – want it subtle, well-done
- Classrooms – smart board
- Playground – direct access to fenced area from classroom/activity areas – sustainable, natural, different areas
- Pagan, earth-centered group for monthly services
- Navigator/scout group
- Outdoor meditation
- Natural, not forced, spaces
- Low-maintenance spaces outside
- Outdoor events – solstice, Maypole, labyrinth, fire pits, drumming circles, wedding (very small), Easter sunrise service (small), teens like to be outside
- Memorial Garden – special place – can be meditative center – base core for that kind of development – ashes are deposited out there
- Engineering – outdoor – – bad runoff across circle – skating rink right at drop-off
- Parking lot – connect secondary lot to front – never done – was proffered
- Raised bed garden boxes – flowers and vegetables – interest in community gardening (low-maintenance)

### **Other Issues that have not been mentioned**

- Office space for staff – on top of each other, currently
- 5 currently - Jennifer, Administration, Financial, WALT administrator
- Sustainability is key – responsible for future generations
- Chesapeake Bay Act restraints? AES will analyze site constraints
- Retention of buildings we currently own – if we can build something effective, could sell Parker? Return it to a home? Use income from that sale to help with better office/space? Is this retention presumed?

## VISIONING SESSION

### What originally brought you to WUU?

- 50% of group started here with church – Clara Byrd Baker and WRL – 1987, small groups – 1989, charter
- Their children – seemed a perfect fit for family, felt comfortable to them – came for son, got involved for her
- Inclusivity – it's inclusive – two students from West Point asked for a ride to WUU – she experienced it this way – religious freedom, ability to create one's own religious life
- Hoping for a faith community that fostered inquiry than superimposing tons of answers
- Only UU church in this area – location-based
- Came over from Middlesex – attracted by was already UU – welcoming nature, space
- Looked on internet for broader, more expansive, more inclusive – stayed rather than go to Peninsula because of welcoming, warm congregation – visitors outreach, arts group – community
- The heart of worship is so broad and “aweful” ringing of Buddhist plan – raggedy band, 40 people in choir, soul connection happening every Sunday – what makes us different is we are truly committed to social justice – shelters, sexual freedom – not ashamed to do it – support those initiatives
- Liberal religious community – real community – covenant groups – waves of people meeting every other week for a group – share who they are – relationships – they meet in Fahs, homes, Parker
- Spiritual place, wonderful people, community leaders
- Church for my son to learn spiritual values – fellowship – bring child to learn right values – youth program is heart of what we have

### Why do you continue to come here?

- Stayed for atmosphere
- Majority were UU's prior to coming here – leadership have always been UU's
- Stay because of ideals congregation stands for – proud of ideals – social justice
- Continue to grow, think
- Jennifer – 8 years
- Beautiful, spiritual space of sanctuary

### What would cause recommend others to WUU?

- Well-established programs for children
- Sustainable, going to last – kids can grow within community
- Welcoming, open attitude – space where they feel like there's room for them
- What kids talk about when they do bridging – youth groups – kids can talk freely and openly
- Gay and lesbian couples are acknowledged as partners, respected
- Bridging – high school kids going out into world – make a statement of what they take with them from WUU at a service – common with UU fellowships
- Congregation cares about each other

- Value system of UU
- Energy of WUU – warmth, but also to get involved, outreach, statements based on values
- Ability to get involved beyond Sundays in ways that are meaningful to them
- “All religions can worship together here”
- Not real good at proselytizing – needs to be visible, inviting
- Place they can come any day of the week and be comfortable, find out what we’re about – staffed so we’re open all of the time

### **Ideal Vision of WUU 15 years from now?**

- Not a minority in religion
- More than one UU church in Williamsburg – there’s room for another congregation here – some concern that if we grow too much, we will lose intimacy of what we have
- Abundance of 20, 30, 40 year olds
- Vibrant community associated with community project tied very closely into providing for underserved parts of this community
- Two families in houses that we’ve made self-sufficient
- People of all colors, busy and active together
- All kinds of other traditions and religions added in – multicultural service
- Place to house religious communities on periphery right now
- Activity no matter when you come onto campus – constant flow of things happening – center for social justice, outreach, etc.
- Two full thriving services – one different from what we have now
- Strong religious education programs that are full, engaged, participating, both children and adults
- Preschool – 100 to 150 kids, 10 or 15 teachers
- Tighter connection with college
- Respite care – Methodist is only right now

### **Anything Else?**

- How big can we be – size of congregation?
- Franz – if we needed more land to accomplish ideas, how do we make that happen? Expand on site, find another site – find out what next UU congregation looks like, and how it grows organically out of this congregation