



Williamsburg  
Unitarian Universalists



### ***Outreach Small Group Meeting Notes***

March 4, 2014

#### **WUU Mission Is Multi-faceted**

- **Community of Faith** – one of 14 faith groups that house the homeless – one week at a time with a partner
- **Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission** – systemic things to help community – day shelter, providing food (soup kitchen)
- **Green Sanctuary** – deep commitment to the environment – we are solely responsible for taking care of what's here – visitors to campus should see this mission clearly – i.e., solar panels, permeable parking, composting, community garden
- **Welcoming Congregation** – strong commitment to our gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/questioning community – multicultural, multiracial, multigenerational community members – strive to improve this within WUU – Welcoming witnessing congregation – speak out, speak up for rights

#### **Goals/Thoughts for Outreach**

- Want to be more visible outside of the congregation, wider community acknowledgement and connection
- Take on larger projects such as homeless shelter
- Providing safe spaces for difficult conversations – i.e., gun control, Rumi forum (during Rammadan) – want to provide more opportunities for these types of meetings
- Want (generally) a nonsecular community space – more liberal religious space – don't currently have space to host
- Host J4C – issues such as uranium, environment
- Like to show films that are environmental – need space for this and kitchen space for support
- Scouting and Navigators USA – outreach into community – 30% of participants come from outside of WUU – attracts new members, as well
- Coffeehouse for other conversations to continue in a casual, less formal atmosphere
- Most of these programs require storage
- PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gay) Chapter – logical location for headquarters
- Al-Anon or AA – need privacy and isolated space – used to meet in Parker House – don't want congregation to interrupt – confidentiality
- Confidentiality is important
- Need showers for homeless shelter use

- Reach out to people who need spiritual help but are encumbered by traditional stereotypes – need to find ways to reach out to be visible to them
- Consider how this effects worship space
- Unable to reach out to local community due to space limitations – in the immediate neighborhood
- Making space available for smaller religious/spiritual groups that do not have a space to hold their services or meetings
- WALT – bring more classes on-campus? Benefits of having various venues around town – fall and spring semesters – Jill Whitten – part-time staff member (30 hrs/week at peak times), handles payments, finds teachers, gathering input from potential instructors, writing course descriptions, catalog together, to Gazette, speaking with service clubs, HOA's, etc. – currently has a computer cabinet in Ellyn's office
- Coffee sales kiosk – Fair Trade products, chocolate, etc., information about UUSC (UU Service Committee), books
- Homeless facilities – bedrooms, personal spaces
- Caring Ministry – WUU goes to homes, but can come here, not be isolated, but not crowded
- Handicapped accessibility is key
- Invite community in for art, performance in multi-use space, more versatile, with sink/accommodations for art – dedicated space for display in lobby for rotating exhibits – more monitored, secure/safe place
- Emergency shelter – for hurricane/tornado shelter – American Red Cross checklist of requirements
- Fahs house – could this be used to house a family to make them self-sufficient – new program called the “3E Restoration Process”
- Preschool – hosted by WUU? – possible
- Could WUU house conferences, speakers, etc. for social justice? Interfaith regional hub, for retreats, etc. – can talk about common social justice issues and goals

### **What Hinders/Limits missions Currently?**

- Location – hard to connect with community – have to bring them HERE from other locations – not on bus line
- Limited access – meeting space is locked up most of the time – portions are not accessible full-time or most of the time, cannot access for meditation
- No conversation space – informal areas, comfortable, safe, private for sharing in an open way – not conference tables - brings in new relationships, can grow programs
- Need “a place to play together” – fellowship, coffee, passive connection – lounge, watch a movie – 3 to 5 people at once, a “home” area – Sacred Grounds or The Living Room in Norge
- Sanctuary space is large enough, but due to multi-use space, time is limited, and chairs/setup must be changed
- Friday night potlucks – sanctuary has to be reconfigured each time

### **What would really help WUU with its mission(s)?**

- Meeting space for diverse audiences that does not feel like “church” – furnishings, atmosphere lend itself to a nonsecular environment
- Sign at Ironbound is not as effective as it could be – not a welcoming sign – horizontal, not vertical, larger letters, more legible – warmer material, such as wood – landscaping improved, lead eye in to site – view in is very linear, not layered currently

### **Goals of outreach**

- Make it visible and welcoming, easily identifiable
- Spaces to meet, accommodate
- Welcomed, not controlled – allowing access only to a small area is not welcoming
- Build relationships and diversity
- Enrich volunteers as well as those WUU is working for

### **Display Spaces**

- Information regarding outreach
- Promote programs
- Sign volunteers up for programs
- Visibility during service and before/after – not in narthex
- Monitor is not noticed in narthex
- Electronic displays – i.e., 2 minute program on social justice, then another program – photos, “scrolling” information, environmentally friendly, all programs are collective instead of in “silos”, where meetings are/will be, future events, interesting
- Currently, locked bulletin boards – not accessible, but limits overdisplayed materials
- Need to have both systems – communal, but also limited

### **Do any of these outreach spaces “clash” or conflict?**

- Scheduling – church is rented on Saturdays, currently
- Acoustical conflicts should be considered
- Kitchen can’t be used during service or other events
- Can’t get to storage during service
- Younger folks – activity, noise
- Art group could use different space and layout
- Eating in sanctuary with new chairs a problem
- AA and other groups where confidentiality is expected – need separate entrance/exit
- Youth group – can make noise, dedicated space
- Small congregation – loss of intimacy is a concern – take care of needs, but not a monolith

## Storage

- Methodist church – empty areas in the basement – if WUU had storage space for some items, spaces could be used flexibly for more than one purpose
- Storage space limited – not very welcoming for leaders – have to be stored at homes, etc.
- WALT – street signs in front of classroom spaces, filing
- Homeless – one week/year – store leftover supplies for a year, signs and posters
- Birthday and anniversary signs, easels, non-folding signs – also consider security – large - writing pads
- Labeling, dedicated spaces for items
- Storage of videos
- Largest (other than choir) storage needs is Navigators – tents, camping equipment, easy access to the outdoors – families currently maintain their own items as it's very family oriented – could expand later, but items are currently individually owned
- Church of God – secured – tablecloths – 4 shelves or so in the storage room – food, electronics, speakers, A/V equipment, piano is in sanctuary (they use their own) – need more than the shelves – should have their own dedicated space, secured – 6' X 6' closet
- Maintenance items for grounds are currently stored in outbuilding, not secure, currently
- Storage for display items that are transitional

## Other Thoughts

- Satellite offices for outreach, as well (i.e., FISH, CRC)
- Will future WUU space attract other cultures, such as Hispanic or African-American?
- Are there other barriers? How does WUU welcome ALL?
- Unisex restroom, family restroom