

A Quaker Vision For SEYM

Many states, Florida in particular, are now experiencing a famine of Spirit. We need not recite the evidence. Florida's acute moral distress reflects what is happening elsewhere in the country, but carries potentially more dangerous political implications for Democracy and for our country as a whole. In our history, Quakers were given the antidote to times of moral crisis by George Fox, in his advice:

"Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing and make the witness of God in them to bless you."

Quakers in SEYM are uniquely positioned to lead people into a new awareness of the Spirit. Our emphasis upon silent, expectant worship, free from distracting forms, creeds, and structures, focuses The Light within on a path forward. It responds directly to the universal hunger for the Spirit.

This SEYM committee proposes renewing a historic and bold vision for SEYM designed to highlight the Spirit through the establishment of a Gathering/Interfaith Conference Center, a K-12 Quaker school, and a Quaker retirement community, to serve jointly as a "Lighthouse" for those now lost in a sea of fear, meaninglessness, loneliness, and despair, as well as a refuge for those seeking a non-partisan spiritual education for their children.

Many of our Monthly Meetings have put aside money from their spiritually abundant years. Perhaps the Spirit is calling us to now use our accumulated wealth to ease this spiritual famine.

Does your Monthly Meeting possess significant accumulated wealth that could be leveraged for the Greater Good? Have you queried your Meeting about what you may

be led to do with your abundance? Is the Spirit in your Meeting at peace with its management and re-investment of your abundance? Is the Spirit in your Meeting searching for some action that can minister directly to the pain of our Spiritual famine?

In 2021, Green Street Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, set aside \$500,000 of their accumulated wealth for Reparations; \$50,000 per year, for ten years. Their Clerk reported "It may forever be one of the most profound spiritual experiences of my life." His reflections about Green Street's journey may be helpful: see the 01/2023 issue of Friends Journal, at p. 3.

Would the creation of a Quaker school to accept Florida School Vouchers be an actively non-violent response to legislative efforts to restrict, sanitize, or undermine public education? Would the creation of a Quaker Retirement Community in Florida provide a place where Quaker values could be nurtured, tended and patterned, while also addressing pressing needs for affordable retirement options? Would an InterFaith Conference Center, where Quakers and people of all faiths could intersect, cross-fertilize, and learn from each other, be an effective way to address critical spiritual needs? Might the Spirit in your Meeting endorse any one or more of such actions?

If your Meeting is so led, please respond to SEYM's Ad Hoc Retirement Community Committee, the group from which this historic Quaker Vision For SEYM has re-emerged, with your discernment of the Spirit's present leading in your Meeting, together with your sense of what role your Meeting might best play in its expression.

This SEYM Committee must first learn whether SEYM Monthly Meetings are in unity with this committee's Quaker Vision For SEYM. Are they willing and able to support it financially, using some portion of their accumulated wealth? If so, the Vision can then be more specifically defined. An overall plan can be presented. Specific projects can be identified and scheduled. Additional Committees and Teams from different meetings can be created and staffed; appropriate budgets adopted.

Such a meaningful, significant, and unified Quaker Response to the present existential spiritual crisis in Florida could be an exciting time for SEYM and a historic opportunity for Quakers to implement George Fox's vision.

We will be holding you in The Light as we await your response.

SEYM's Ad Hoc Retirement Community Committee