

Minute on Religious Education Space Needs  
Religious Education Committee  
November 6, 2011

The Religious Education Committee, which represents both 15<sup>th</sup> Street Monthly Meeting and Manhattan Monthly Meeting, wishes to affirm our profound enthusiasm for dedicated space at the 15<sup>th</sup> Street Meetinghouse for religious education. At the moment First Day School must vacate the spaces it uses entirely at the end of each hour-long gathering on First Day. Materials and projects are stored elsewhere and carried in and out by teachers. Dedicated space would allow:

- Children to personalize a space and take ownership of their place in the Meeting;
- Creation of a learning environment reflecting our curriculum and mission;
- Unity and cohesion among First Day School classes and teachers, who now spend First Day spread around the building;
- Improved supervision and safety and implementation of our Child Protection Policy, which requires children and adults to be in groups;
- Development of ongoing projects;
- Access to supplies and materials;
- Coordinated transition of First Day School classes to 11 AM Meeting for Worship;
- Improved opportunities for older young Friends and young adult Friends to gather under the care of the Meeting;
- Relief of anxiety associated with preventing children from using materials not their own and eliminating all traces of our presence from the classrooms we use at the end of each lesson;
- Opportunities for intergenerational fellowship and sharing with the Meeting as a whole;
- Simplified access for new families and volunteer parents, who are now constrained by security considerations from spending time in classrooms and setting up a welcoming environment.

We also feel, beyond our roles as teachers and parents, that dedicated common space would greatly benefit our Meeting in providing an opportunity for us to assemble informally and to expand our ability to gather in committees, to provide programs for Quarterly and other large-group gatherings, and to respond to extraordinary circumstances. We feel that our First Day School specifically and our Meeting generally suffer from a feeling of transience and rootlessness, which inhibits our ability to be welcoming and to promote fellowship. We wish not to be visitors in our Meetinghouse but welcoming hosts.

Our committee is flexible and open to working with the Quarter in developing a coherent plan for space allocation, but the recently vacated NYYM office specifically serves our needs in several respects:

- Most importantly, the space provides both a common area for large gatherings and smaller, differentiated spaces to accommodate our different age groups and storage needs;
- The kitchen area would allow us to contribute to social hour and to feed kids in house on long days;
- The adjoining bathroom helps us with supervision.

In short, we feel a dedicated space for First Day School and Quaker fellowship for our two meetings would be a significant support to our efforts to grow as a healthy and spiritually sustained community.