Function Description – Friendly School

Workload of the function

AYM practice has been that the host RM runs Friendly School (Summer School/Winter School). The difficulty with this arrangement is that Friendly School needs usually a dozen or so facilitators, whose workload peaks right at the start of the YM event. This makes a collision of workload with most other tasks for setting up YM.

Attracting facilitators from other RMs seems a very sensible way to go. Even handing over the whole organizing of Friendly School seems sensible. Your RM can do it a different year for another RM.

It is also possible to ask another RM to take on the whole task of planning and running Friendly School, if the available Friends in the host meeting are limited. Then just one host person would liaise with the Friendly School planners, and ensure rooms are sorted out and materials available.

The Planning Support Committee encourages the creation of RMs a roster, separate from YM hosts to plan Friendly School, so that each RM participates in turn.

We strongly recommend that the coordinator of Friendly School should not be the facilitator of a Friendly School that year. There will be many tasks which need the attention of the coordinator on the Friendly School day. If the coordinator is running a group, they are not available to deal with these.

Similarly, be careful not to have key people on the YM event planning group as facilitators (even though they may want to be, and will have lots to contribute). Their involvement in getting YM running smoothly is paramount—split attention leads to neither job being done well, and the frustration of many!

Time Interval	Tasks	Workload
12 months prior to YM start	• Decide & publicize a succinct theme. • Invite offers of facilitation – through RMs • Receive offers and check suitability • Coordinate any duplication - sharing	Group Consultation
9 months prior	Expand the theme to an article for the AF written in part by the offering facilitators	Creative writing; coordinating, chasing up
6 months prior to YM start	• The AF carries an article on Friendly School, the offerings so far & an invitation to further facilitators if needed. • If necessary, actively seek more offerings • If necessary find assistant facilitators	Email Communication with AF and facilitators

3 months prior	• Facilitators advise equipment & room needs • Venue visit – check possible spaces for SS known groups	Communication – mainly emails
1 month prior to YM start	• Receive registration lists of preferences. • Confirm facilitators • Allocate places. • Lists to facilitators. • Allocate spaces for groups • Possible SKYPE session with facilitation group • Possible training/mentoring for facilitators	• Routine - Registration software does most of it • Email/snail-mail to facilitators • SKYPE • Organize trainer/ mentors/training session
1 week prior to YM start	• Check equipment etc. for all groups • Confirm facilitators' intentions re continuing – if needed find understudy in group • Print lists for display • Print lists for facilitators (to go in their registration packages?) •	Email with Equip person Printing
Registration day – start of YM	• Post SS group lists • Update master list & 'rolls' • Allocate late registrants • If possible update roll data • Confirm tea materials accessible for groups • Lead facilitators' meeting	Sorting Problem solving Meeting facilitation
First full day of YM	FRIENDLY SCHOOL DAY • Public face/s of SS. Conduct brief plenary, introduce facilitators, organize movement to areas • Last minute additions to groups • Roving to assist where needed – equipment, wrong choices, drop-ins/outs • Clarify whether groups will continue • Possible debrief on the day	Full On Day LONG day Problem solving Clear knowledge of campus
Whole of YM	• Debrief/feedback session/s • Be available/rove during follow-up sessions • Solicit reports from facilitators • Minute of record to Secretary	Group facilitation Encouragement Writing/collating

	• Report for DIR	
1 month after YM	Report for DIR and AF Update to YM Planning Manual	
Overall workload:	Fairly heavy. Better with a group, not just a person.	
Skills required to undertake this function	Creative thinking, Flexibility, organizing, unflappable, ability to support others, joy in working vicariously.	
This functions works most closely with:	Registration, Room allocation, Equipment, Pastoral Care	

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Choosing a theme

This Committee starts early in the year. Main arrangements are published in the January *The Australian Friend*: theme, facilitators and outline of each offering Selecting a theme for Friendly School is an important task. Equally important is encouraging Friendly School facilitators to adhere to that theme and to explore it in a range of ways: to provide diversity within commonality.

Remember to ask YFs if they would like to run a session.

Some topics are run almost every year – no matter what the theme – Haiku, silent retreat, Tapestry – can be made to fit into any theme. Try for a mix of Heart & Head

Friendly School Introduction can be included in the First Formal Session, or it may be on the first full day (Sunday usually). Friendly School is then all the first full day (perhaps not in the evening). Timetable may allow for Friendly School groups to continue meeting.

See timetable. Continue with topic or simply as a support group.

JYFs are commonly invited to be part of Friendly School, or they may have their own program.

It is preferable to have the Friendly School sessions and topics resolved so they can be included in the registration process, and Friends registering can elect the topic they'd like.

Timetabling: At YM 2004, the Welcome to Country and first Formal Session were held on the first night and Friendly School was held from 9.00am to 5.15pm on the second day. JYFs were all encouraged to participate in a Friendly School group and most of them did.

Past Friendly School themes:

Year	Host RM	Theme	Special points
2004	NSW	Journeys	SS team chose facilitators and suggested topics within the theme
2013	CRM	Transitioning to a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia	3 on theme; 4 related; 3 off theme
2005	WARM	Keeping our inner light burning bright	13 groups
2006	QRM	Indigenous theme	Introduced by local non-Quaker person
2010	SARM	Choosing life; we dare to hope	Friendly School fair Thursday night
2009	CRM		
2010			
2011			
2012			
2013			
2014			
2015	VRM		
2016	TRM	How faith and action can inspire	Used Open Space method
2017	SANTRM	What Does Love Require of Us?	
2018	NSWRM	Turning Points	

Friendly School groups met all day on Sunday and each day during Yearly Meeting for half an hour to 45 minutes.

A few group leaders had designed their workshops to be able to include children and some worked well once things had started. A whole day at the same activity with adults did not suit all of the children and they dispersed to other child-oriented areas during the afternoon of the Friendly School day.

We (Canberra) modified YM 2009's idea of a Welcome Fair and scheduled a Summer School Fair. allowing those at YM to have some experience of the Summer School groups they didn't attend. The various Summer School groups interpreted this event in different ways. Some displayed some of the products of their Summer School experience, others provided what was essentially a mini Summer School session, attempting to recapture the experience of the Summer School group itself. Those opting to participate in the latter type were committed for the whole of the fair session and were less able to sample the other Fair displays.

The overall theme of the Summer School at YM 2013 in Canberra was 'Transitioning to a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia' but there were other offerings. About 160 Friends were allocated to one of the

ten workshops, mostly their first choice, with a reasonably even distribution. Three of the workshops dealt directly with the theme (one a structured workshop, one an Open Space approach and one on Ecological Footprints); four were on related matters (non-violent communication, peace initiatives, 'Our Coming Wisdom' and 'The Compassionate Brain'); and the rest on Eldering, Stitching and a Contemplative Retreat. The JYF Friendly School was run by a Friend from TRM based on the 'Adventures in the Spirit' book. There seemed general and genuine appreciation of the preparation put in by the facilitators and of the opportunities to explore the topics. Many of the groups met for shorter times in the early evening on three other days during the week.

Recommendations from the Children and JYF Coordinator at YM 2013 in Canberra: Liaise with JYF coordinator to enable Friendly School for JYFs. In the past it has been suggested that JYFs might want to attend any of adult Friendly Schools. JYFs are more than welcome but our experience suggests that this is an important day for building a good strong JYF community. JYFs mostly want to catch up with each other, and a well-structured Friendly School allows those who know each other to catch up, connect and, very importantly, to introduce and welcome in those joining the JYFs for the first time. It helps the group to be more inclusive.

Children can have a focused program based around the theme of the adult session. A name other than 'school' may be more enticing for children and JYFs. It is hoped that the children's responses to the theme including their work can be included in the Friendly School summaries – and not just adult sessions.

Choice of facilitators

Usually group facilitators are Quakers who have good experience. Sometimes a non-Quaker can contribute well in a specialist area. It's ideal to pair up such a person with a Quaker, who can help them understand the practices and flavour of Friendly School groups. Pairs or teams of facilitators is often a good idea.

Friendly School is about learning. For participants to learn and exchange requires more than a person who is very knowledgeable in their subject area. A variety of activities is very helpful. If you find a subject-expert, who is less skilled in engaging their group with relevant activities, it can be helpful to team them up with a person who has those skills. Planning the day jointly can work well.

Adult learning is enhanced by including a variety of activities. Just sitting in a big group discussion all day is less than ideal. Sometimes facilitators know a lot about their topic, but can benefit from developing a range of activities for participants to engage with it.

- Small group activities
- Forced-choice ladders
- Games (lots available from AVP resources)
- Writing activities
- Art and creative activities
- Tackling a challenge (real or hypothetical)
- Drama

can all enhance group experience and learning.

Sometimes facilitators will readily offer themselves. Sometimes you will have to go chasing and inviting.

Please note the cautions in the paragraphs immediately above the table (above) in this description—key YM event planners should not be Friendly School facilitators.

Preparation of facilitators

Facilitators and the whole Friendly School program will work better when facilitators feel well supported. Contact from early in your engagement with them up till after their day has been held is important. Remember the value of face-to-face (even with technology), a conversation. Don't rely totally on emails.

Some facilitators may feel overwhelmed, or lacking in skills. Listen to them, support them. Allow them to lay the task down if that is what makes most sense.

Facilitators may benefit from contact with those from other parallel groups.

Develop a program that you think would be helpful for them to be following:

- Clarification of their topic and scope;
- Choice of group activities;
- Collaboration with fellow facilitators;
- Preparation of materials
- How they will collect evaluation and feedback from participants
- etc

Have a clear sense in your mind of when a facilitator is on-track, on-time, and support them if you feel that they are lagging behind.

Check with them close to the start of YM event. Assist with any last-minute needs and arrangements.

If a group wishes to bring a topic to YM overall, the facilitator may need support to do this. They may not know how to approach the Presiding Clerk, etc to discuss the matter. Your support may be invaluable.

Catherine Heywood has offered to run a training session for Friendly School facilitators. The Planning Support Committee can help broker such opportunities.

Allocation of rooms/spaces

Someone on the YM event planning team will be looking after the allocation of rooms/spaces. You will need to work closely with them. Room availability may dictate group sizes. Help the rooms person to understand the style of each Friendly School group, so rooms can be allocated appropriately.

Off-campus activities

Some Friendly School activities can be off-campus. This will require extra logistics:

- Transport
- Lunches
- Support or clarity for Friends with mobility limitations
- Wet weather arrangements
- Early departure/late return

Reporting from each group

It is usual for a report from Friendly School to be included in YM reporting. This can be during the event, and then in Documents in Retrospect.

There are times when a Friendly School group want to bring something to session for YM. This will require liaison with the Presiding Clerk, secretary, etc.

Evaluation of the program