

Proposal from Religious Education to Meeting for Business December 2016

History & Update:

At this time, the meeting's arc of support for Friends from birth to the grave has a significant gap -- the lack of an appropriate space for elementary aged children. At the December 2015 meeting for business, RE presented a proposal requesting the meeting to create a dedicated space for the elementary children's programming. That meeting charged RE to work with relevant committees to identify a space, design the space, and come up with a budget for this work. With this space, each age cohort in the meeting would have a place for worship and retreat that has been modified to cater to the needs of that age. While the meeting agreed that the creation of this space is important, identifying a space in this heavily used meetinghouse has not been easy. Over the past year, RE has worked hard to identify the needs of the children and our goals for this space. We have considered and ruled out many potential spaces based on these goals. In the end, we have concluded that the Blue Room has the most potential to meet the needs of the children. However, it needs renovation to completely meet the needs of this cohort, and this is why it has not been used in recent years.

Goals:

- A. Sufficient space to allow all elementary children to sit comfortably in silent worship.
- B. Dedicated storage area for Children's Meeting for Discovery (CMD) materials.
- C. Sound isolation from the kitchen and fellowship space.
- D. A sense of permanence, security.
- E. Sufficient natural light to feel welcoming.
- F. Sufficient ventilation and air quality to feel healthy.
- G. A retreat for kids during fellowship that can be visually monitored by adults in the fellowship space.
- H. Sensory friendly seating and other features (to be suggested by RE).
- I. Easily cleaned floor and furniture surfaces for cooking and crafts projects.
- J. Bulletin board wall for decorations, signs, etc...

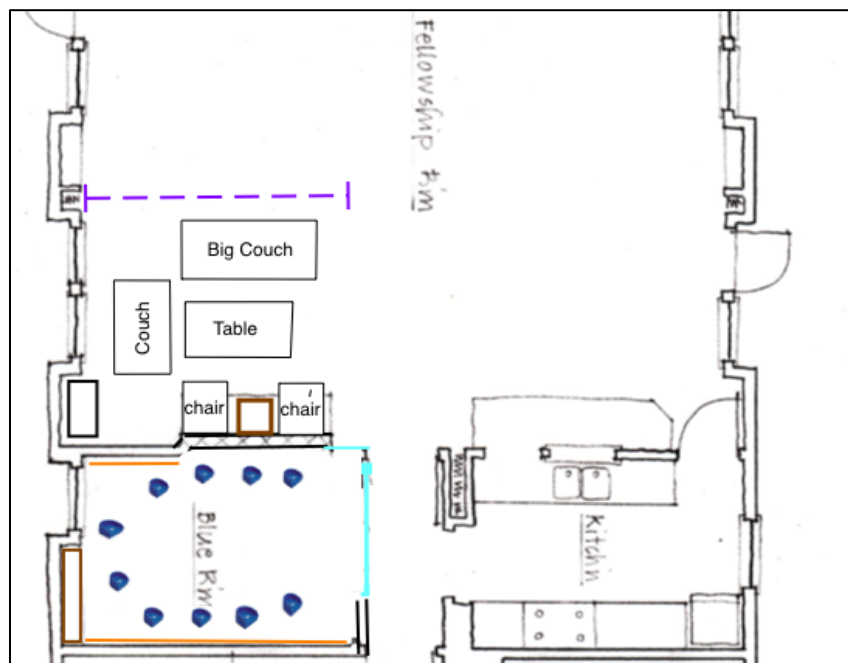


Fig.: Plan B - A recent version (not discussed by RE yet, but in the spirit of what was agreed on):
Removes chimney and partition. Keeps archive nook, adds small window to fellowship, sliding glass door.

We have considered and ruled out the following spaces:	Pros	Reasons Ruled Out
Champney Room	Aesthetically pleasant. Large enough space for worship, movement, and crafts.	New use as secondary worship space. Heavy use in other times requiring children's materials and seating to be moved and stored elsewhere. Carpet difficult to clean. Isolated and difficult to monitor during fellowship.
Young Friends Room	Large enough. Plenty of storage.	This is a dedicated space for the Young Friends. It was designed for them and is important to them. If we take-out this link in the chain of support, we are being short-sighted. Sound isolation from Champney room. Difficult to monitor.
The partitioned space in the fellowship room next to the nursery.	The space was designed to be used this way. It has dedicated storage. The proximity to the nursery would create an intuitive transition between the nursery and the elementary program and, during fellowship, a child friendly space between the crowds and the nursery.	The fellowship space is heavily used by the meeting. Any furnishings would have to be able to be moved, taken-up, and stored during potlucks, concerts, etc.... Therefore, it would be difficult to create a sense of dedicated space and security. The partitions offer no sound isolation from activity in the kitchen and fellowship space during MfW.
Couch Area	Where we have been gathering. Large enough for the children and adults to sit comfortably. Able to be partitioned for visual (though not auditory) boundary.	The fellowship space can be busy and distracting during MfW. We are asking children to learn how to sit in silent worship in a space without doors that would not be considered conducive to worship or acceptable by the adults in the meeting. There is no storage. It is dedicated to another age cohort during fellowship and cannot be a space dedicated to elementary children.
Blue Room (as is)	Historically, this was used by kindergarten aged children. It was designed as a children's space and has dedicated storage. It has good sound isolation from the kitchen and fellowship space.	It is a small space made awkward by the footprint of the chimney. With no furniture at all, it would be difficult to fit everyone on the days when we have 10 children. The current furniture is too small to be comfortable for anyone older than kindergarten. It is currently quite private with no visual or auditory access, making it difficult to monitor during fellowship. It has poor ventilation (critical for the health of elementary kids and their caregivers) and limited natural light given the one small window. The carpet is old, musty, and on top of asbestos.

After over a year of brainstorming different options and consulting with Nina Weyl, the Meetinghouse committee, and other concerned parties RE has reached clarity that we would like to reclaim the Blue Room, with modification, as a space dedicated to the elementary children. We think that the blue room can be renovated to increase size, visibility, and air quality so that we can use it as a dedicated gathering and worship space for the kids. In addition, we hope the room can be used as an easily monitored retreat for children during fellowship.

We have begun working with the meetinghouse committee to get estimates for proposed renovations, and they have been helping us evaluate the feasibility of plans under consideration. We hope that a detailed proposal will be ready for consideration by MfB in time to begin the renovations in the Spring.

How the Blue Room currently meets our goals and possible renovations:

Goal	Solution
B, C, D	The current blue room has shelving for storage, good sound isolation, and a sense of permanence -- if it is dedicated to the children and isn't used for chair or other storage.
A	Renovations to create more room: We could remove the partition in the wall towards the kitchen, remove the chimney to make a less awkward space, and potentially move the wall of the blue room out a few feet into the fellowship space without significant disruption to the primary use of this space. (The last renovation might require relocating the archive corner.)
E, G, C	Modify a wall of the blue room so that it is primarily glass and able to be visually monitored from the fellowship space, hallway, and kitchen. This could be a half-wall window or sliding glass door.
F	Include screens in a sliding door or a screen door to the children's room so that the space can be easily sealed off for sound proofing or opened for ventilation.
F, I	Replace old carpet with new rubber flooring that is soft enough for yoga and kneeling and firm enough to provide sure footing for elders. (Will this require asbestos removal?) Green rubber flooring has low off-gasing and is easily mopped. It may also helps dampen sound.
H	Furnish with sensory friendly seating (to be determined by the committee) and modify some shelving so that children who are soothed by tight spaces can squeeze into the lower shelves. Have 1-2 low folding tables for drawing and games during fellowship hour that can be easily tucked out of the way when we use the space for worship and circle time.
J	Wall next to window and the entire blue room-library wall is currently a bulletin board space.

An example of three levels of renovation and the outcome:

- Plan A - Remove current furnishings, organize shelf, and purchase appropriate seating. This is the current situation with new furnishings. It meets goals: B, C, D, H, J. It cannot accommodate the current peak number of children and does not allow for growth.
- Plan B - Plan A + remove chimney and partition. Add small window to fellowship space and sliding glass door. Replace flooring. This plan increases the size and usability of space. It keeps the current fellowship walls and records nook as is. It meets goals: B, C, D, E, G, F, H, I, J. It addresses A, the need for more space, could comfortably accommodate our current numbers, but leaves little room for growth.
- Plan C - Plan B + expands the wall a few feet into the fellowship space. It would alter the records nook, but it would not alter the use of the couch area in significant ways. This plan would give us the greatest increase in space for the investment, increasing the likelihood that we could accommodate all elementary children in a Children's meeting for worship as we head into the future. It has the highest chance of meeting all the goals for the space.

We believe that a renovated blue room would be a useful space during times of high numbers of children and low. During a time with larger elementary numbers, we could use a renovated blue room to gather, for silent worship, and then use the couch area and, potentially, partitioned fellowship spaces as break-out spaces for activities with different age cohorts.

Proposal:

At this time, we believe that RE has brought this project as far as it can. We ask MfB to (1) Approve the laying down of RE's leadership of this project, and (2) identify the appropriate group to take over this project. This group will be tasked with developing at least 2 proposals for renovating the blue room and bringing them to MfB within a few months. One of these proposals should include sufficient expansion to accommodate more children on a regular basis.