

## 3/15/2020 Letter to ARCH Visitors

Dear ARCH Visitors and Friends of ARCH,

I am writing to you today to affirm your resilience and capacity: you are amazing. I'm already hearing so many wonderful stories of how Friends are caring for each other in the midst of confusion, fear, and crisis.

**Safety** We need our elders, which is why we need to stay safe. Social distancing and sanitation precautions may seem inconvenient or out of alignment with our experience of community. But they can save lives by slowing the spread, and we all need to participate in that. Please stay safe. Now is the time to work with your meeting to reach out to older Friends and others who may be at risk (the CDC is recommending that everyone 60 or older or who is immune compromised consider themselves at risk). I recommend discontinuing in-person visits, and instead to focus on calling, video calling, or texting twice as often. Offer extra smiles at a distance, and kind and generous words at every opportunity.

You can familiarize yourself with the sources of information that we have and that most closely pertain to your area - you'll find that they may have conflicting or confusing information!

- [The New York State Department of Health](#)
- [The New Jersey Department of Health](#)
- [The Connecticut Department of Health](#)
- [The World Health Organization](#)
- [The Centers for Disease Control](#)

Here are two sources I have found slightly less confusing

- [An \(older\) Explainer Video from Canadian Public Broadcasting](#)
- [A PDF of Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission \(that's us!\) from this week](#)
- Look up or call your city or county department of health for even more specific information to your area.

Remember that people may make choices that you don't agree with. We can find compassion and generosity of spirit there too. We are all doing our best to make difficult choices in an imperfect situation.

**Community** Social distancing is not compatible with most of the ways we are accustomed to worshipping together. While we live into how to do this day by day it gives us the opportunity to experiment with other forms of connection. Consider organizing small groups of 3 to 5 people who

can worship together on the phone or over video conferencing. Initiate, renew, or continue the practice of spiritual friendships, and making those connections more frequently. When the weather permits, we can meet outside in places that give us the space to remain a safe distance apart. Remember - this isn't forever, and the stakes are high.

**Care** Some of us will become sick and may need help. Many meetings and Friends have a rich tradition of organizing this care for one another, we just need to do it a little different to stay safe. Care teams can be organized over email, and meetings of the team can happen by phone. In person visits can be replaced with more frequent phone calls. Deliveries of needed food or supplies (or treats like puzzles or books) can be made in a "door dash" manner, leaving parcels at the door of the recipient without making contact. Friends who become sick may need help and/or encouragement to navigate the process of contacting medical professionals, gaining access to testing, and to get the treatment appropriate to them. This too can be done by phone, text, and email. It may be helpful to familiarize yourself with the stores in your area that deliver, and the public health options closest to you.

Now is an especially good time to cultivate more in depth spiritual conversations, and to cultivate our spiritual practices and divine connections. We can and need to take time to connect with each other and with Spirit. We need this now more than ever. Let your own comfort level and experience be your guide. In your conversations, try beginning with a period of centering, asking open ended questions, and practice your curiosity. If a call is intense or emotional for you - reach out to your support network or your ARCH staff person.

**Equity** This crisis is already affecting the most vulnerable in our communities more than others. Incarcerated Friends, those already frail or living in nursing homes, those with less access to wealth and privilege will continue to be at a higher risk, not only of getting sick, but suffering the longer term financial and social consequences of this pandemic. We can advocate for incarcerated people with our state's elected officials, making sure they have a comprehensive strategy to keep prisons and jails safe. We can volunteer to help others in ways that are safe and asked for. We can donate to organizations and funds that support emergency financial relief for those in crisis, and remind those who could use those funds that they may be available.

Please send me news of your ARCH Visiting and how you are managing in your meeting community. We are at the very beginning of what feels now like a very long journey. I'm grateful to have you as companions for it.

Callie Janoff

Director, ARCH