New York Yearly Meeting
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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3/30/2020 Letter to ARCH Visitors

Dear ARCH Visitors and Friends of ARCH,

In the last few weeks I've been working to understand how we as a community of practice are called to respond to the needs and circumstances before us.

Listening

I started last week in the same place the ARCH program started - with listening for spirit among us and rising in me. This kind of spiritual listening is the foundation of our ARCH visiting. In the last week I've made a special effort to listen to the feelings rising behind the words I hear people say. This list of the feelings I heard will come as no surprise to you: lost, scattered, busy, bored, isolated, connected, grieving, overwhelmed, anxious, in denial, frustrated, fearful, resistant, angry, resentmentful, inspired, overstimulated, surprised, generous, grateful. And many of these feelings are happening all at once. It can be dizzying to listen to another, recognize your own emotional content, and then to try to discern what would help the person you are listening to. It is likely that the listening itself is the greatest gift you can give someone right now. We can keep it simple

Rebuilding the Scaffolding

In the last two or three weeks most of us have completely reimagined how we can worship with one another. After 350 years, this is an incredible transformation. Good work Friends! We've built a scaffolding to keep our worship life alive. Now we need to extend that scaffolding out into the other ways that we make community with one another, because our community is more than just our worship. We need to find new ways to make those connections that we enjoy circumstantially when we are accustomed to being with each other in person, and we need to do it with intention. This is essential now. Some of us will become ill, and some of us will experience caregiving, and some of us will experience loss. We need to be ready for this - and we can. We already have the capacity to. Wether we reignite spiritual friendships, organize new support committees or faithfulness groups, or make time in our committee meetings to check in with one another personally and spiritually, we must make those connections now before we need them.

Be the Meeting

In my meeting's Sunday worship this last week I remembered that "the meeting" is not abstract. We often say things like, "I don't know if the meeting is ready for that." Or "The meeting thinks we should..." But the meeting is us. Though our meetings are more than the sum of their parts, without each of us, there isn't a meeting. In this time we need to be the meeting for one another, and that may be a little different than we are used to. It doesn't mean doing more necessarily, but it does

mean paying special attention, and reaching out instead of waiting for someone to ask for help, or making connections, or thinking creatively about how to be with each other.

In closing I want to remind you as I must remind myself: it is a joy and a blessing to be able to help. We must not deny one another this opportunity to be of service when so many of us are desperately missing the ways we are accustomed to - or often called to - help others. Ask for help, with Zoom, with meals, with spiritual concerns, with discernment. What can you ask for help with today?

Stay safe. Wash your hands, and don't touch your face.

Callie

Callie Janoff, Director
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