

# Notes on Pastoral Care at a Distance

Below are ideas generated at an online Zoom presentation and discussion facilitated by Callie Janoff on March 30, 2020 as part of the Local Meetings Respond series.

## General advice for meetings

- Use the structures your meeting already has — a Relief Fund, Pastoral Care Committee, support committees for overwhelmed Friends, etc — to help people; no need to come up with new structures
- Provide plenty of Zoom opportunities for folks to gather socially, not just First Day: "teatime," eating meals together virtually, midweek every week instead of every other week, etc.
- Homebound folks should be included — they can serve on support committees and can hold folks who are doing grocery runs (and others) in the Light
- Note that it's not just older Friends who need extra support — families with young children are also feeling particularly stressed, having to juggle online schooling and working from home along with social distancing

## Caring for people in our meeting community

### Ideas for staying connected

- Call everyone who regularly attends your meeting, just to check in. Too many people to call? Call the people who are most at risk — everyone over 65, perhaps
- Send a postcard with a message of love to all members and attenders
- Collect small news "snippets" from people's lives and send them out in a regular, frequent email newsletter to the meeting community
- After meeting for worship, provide an opportunity for Friends to check in with updates and news about their lives. May need to designate someone "call on" people to speak
- The Zoom meeting can also be left "open" after meeting for worship so Friends can choose to stay and chat
- Involve family: If a Friend is particularly vulnerable, needs a lot of help, or gets ill, try to contact family members. If possible, let family members be the physical care-givers so the meeting can focus on the spiritual care-giving
- If the worship experience over Zoom is feeling uneven between Friends on video and Friends on the phone, consider asking Friends on video to refrain from looking at each other during worship, only during afterthoughts
- Consider an outdoors "meeting for walking," carefully staying at least 6 feet apart while walking in nature together
- For Friends who can't or don't want to use Zoom:

- Someone can call them during Zoom worship and share what and who they see, or share the sound from the Zoom call over the phone
- Friends can sit in silent, expectant worship in their homes at the same time as meeting for worship
- An experienced Zoom user can offer to help someone needing technical help
- Call and check in with Friends who usually attend but haven't been participating in Zoom meetings. Offer help or to pass along messages between Friends and the rest of meeting on a regular basis. NYYM staff can also provide Zoom assistance.

## Caring for those in need

- Arrange to do grocery runs or other errands for people at risk, especially those who are ill
  - Choose a conscientious hand-washer and mask-wearer to shop for and deliver groceries
  - Divide larger meeting areas into smaller geographical "pods" to make it easier to connect volunteers with those in need
- Send text messages to those who are ill
- Pray and hold Friends in the Light
- Become a correspondent to incarcerated people who are part of our worship groups, as they are particularly isolated and at risk at this time. Contact Judy Meikle for info (email [office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org) for her information if you need it.)

## Meeting the needs of young families

- Children miss First Day School. Consider a video-streamed story time or even a "field trip"
- A teacher suggests, "Tell parents not to stress about kids completing all assignments for school; it's ok just to do what you can"
- Online worship often misses young families; midweek meeting for worship is sometimes a better time; evening worship may be better for parents of young children (after children fall asleep) — check with parents re: best timing
- During a Zoom meeting for worship, parents can be invited to turn off their sound and video if they're anxious about disruption
- One meeting had First Day School on Zoom: they read a story about gardens onscreen to kids; sent them off to draw a garden during meeting for worship; then had all kids hold up their garden drawings on screen to make one huge garden
- This may be a time for those meetings that have been totally silent to welcome a little noise/activity from youngsters, or to invite a tiny bit of "programmed" worship to help all be included. Being the meeting is about being community with and for one another more than about any one format of worship. How are we led?

## Opportunities to consider

- Zoom meetings provide a chance for folks who've moved away to reconnect with the meeting and attend worship again
- More people can attend events via Zoom than can show up physically, giving an opportunity for larger and more frequent gatherings; meetings have restarted midweek meetings for worship, for example
- It is a gift to give folks the opportunity to help, and to learn how to receive the help of others