

How do we continue to connect and engage with children, young people, and families each week in worship and religious education, during the “physical distancing” of the coronavirus pandemic?

- Recognize that not only do different people have their own needs in a challenging time, but developmentally, children and young people have different needs at various ages.
- Don’t make assumptions about how children and young people are experiencing this time, but make yourself available to listen. They may be feeling isolated or anxious, without the routines of school and contact with peers. Acknowledging their feelings is important, without projecting our adult anxieties.
- Meetings are places for vital all-ages community, and worship can be for all ages! For some meetings, there is an opportunity to gather virtually and make space for children to participate from home in ways that work for them and their parents. Support children’s presence in all-ages spaces, and also leave expectations up to families. What is nurturing in this time, and what can be let go?
- Zoom fatigue is real, and will become more acute before we’re done. Some families are making the weekends “screen free” time because of schooling online, and others do not have consistent access to the internet at home. How can we reach them in other ways or times?

Support for Religious Education Committees:

- *Communicating:* Committees need time to check in; what tools work best for your committee? (phone, email, Zoom). Meeting clerks can ask the committee: what do you need?
- *Care and Support:* Do you know what families are up to at home (school, work, access to groceries or other support?) and how you can support their need for spiritual nurture, too? Can the RE committee partner with the pastoral care committee to reach out and check on families?
- *Community Building:* Are you aware of other meetings in your area or Quarter who you could “buddy” with, offering for them to join you for online programming? *Is your meeting in a care relationship with a Friends school? School families may be seeking connection and spiritual community in this time.*

- Support for Families & First Day Programs on the PYM website has links to ideas and resources related to COVID-19.
- Quaker Religious Education Collaborative:
 - “Valiant Together: Sharing Quaker Religious Education Support and Resources During COVID-19” Group on Facebook
 - New web page with resources related to virtual and distance gathering
- Watch for future issues of “The Tote Bag: PYM Religious Education and Family Resources” e-newsletter, with resources and stories from meetings. Past issues are posted on the PYM website.

First Day Programs and Worship: online and home

- We are needing to rethink ways to be together — This doesn’t only need to be online, and it’s important to be mindful about families who don’t have online access, or are limiting it.
- Is there a project you can work on together, while you’re apart? A Friend described to me her hope that the children in her meeting would find new ways to *work on the same things, and be thinking about the same things together.*
- Some meetings are moving their religious education program online to Zoom:
 - programs for children and young people can happen before or after meeting for worship; 30 minutes is a good time frame
 - some meetings are using “chat rooms” for children and adults to meet together *during* worship — be aware that this requires a family to have multiple devices
 - child safety and the “rule of three” still applies in virtual spaces. We need to ensure that online spaces are safe spaces
 - there are many resources to support creating online programs — books, songs, stories on YouTube, free materials to download and send to families by email to print (or in the mail — be aware of who isn’t able to print at home!)
 - ♦ Illustrated Ministry FREE coloring pages
 - ♦ Rise Up and Sing (including Annie Patterson sing-alongs)
 - ♦ Godly Play® (Bible) stories and a Faith & Play (Quaker) story, “Listening for God” are shown on the Godly Play YouTube channel
 - ♦ NOTE: Faith & Play Stories, Inc. is creating a YouTube channel with additional Faith & Play stories recorded for Friends to share

- If you are able to meet virtually, it's an opportunity to gather for all-ages worship, and families can use Zoom audio tools as needed. Children can move in and out of the space, and also be together with their family in worship in a new way.
- Encourage parents to have the kinds of things available we have at all-ages worship at Sessions: a basket of books, quiet coloring things, even a snack for the hour. But while we want to make families feel comfortable and welcome, also make room for children to participate!
- *Beware assumptions that children aren't participating in waiting worship in their own way — they are gathered with their family, and their community. They are experiencing being included. Children at my meeting have been sharing vocal ministry on a regular basis, particularly if they have heard a story before worship.*
- Are there other times in the week to worship or have fellowship that families might be interested in, beyond Sunday morning?
- Is there an opportunity to use Quarterly Meeting communities as a way to gather? If the meetings in your Quarter have small numbers of children, perhaps meetings in the Quarter take turns hosting a weekly lesson or activity for children, particularly if you are meeting online.
- If you are not meeting virtually, share with families suggested activities for spiritual nurture at home. Parents will have varying levels of comfort with this, and may appreciate clear directions, suggestions, and encouragement. Family exploration of spiritual formation can deepen our connections to one another and the Divine in this time.
 - Be mindful of availability of materials as shopping opportunities are limited.
 - What is the best way to reach families? email? postal mail? can they print at home?
 - Lessons for Home and Zoom During COVID-19 are posted on the PYM website.

Wider Opportunities to Gather: Spread the word!

- This is a perfect time to encourage families, and MS and HS youth, to join a PYM event or gathering — they can try out a new community from their own home.
- "Youth Programs Zooming" tells the story of online programs during Spring Continuing Sessions weekend.
- PYM programs seek to be in partnership with local meetings to share with their community what's available to them. We need support from local meetings to connect with young and new families!
- Information about upcoming events for Children and Families, Middle School Friends and Young Friends programs on the Yearly Meeting website: www.pym.org.

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