



FORWARD IN FAITHFULNESS

moving where led, trusting Higher Power

This transcript is part of the Listening Project, a series of qualitative interviews that focus on healthy spiritual communities. What makes a strong, welcoming faith community? How are people finding spiritual nourishment in the Quaker world? There are no scripted questions for a listening session; however, there are a variety of themes that might show up.

The Listening Project is an ongoing endeavor by J.T. Dorr-Bremme and Johanna Jackson. We rely entirely on grants and personal donations to fund this work. To learn more, or to support creative conversations like this one, visit forwardinfaithfulness.org.

This transcript is published thanks to a generous grant from [Good News Associates](#).

***Windy Cooler** is originally from Alabama and now lives in Maryland. She is a public minister supported by Quakers. Her work includes offering a workshop entitled The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Developing a Common Language for Pastoral Care. This is how we first met Windy. Her presentation led us to reach out to her to learn more about her and from her.*

She spoke with us on May 5, 2021. Since we are very early in our public ministry, we wanted to speak to someone who was farther along their journey in this role. Windy's story includes many challenges overcome, though not without struggle and heartache. She tells of her professional background as an organizer, how it changed her perspective, and her current and future ministry. She also discusses balancing responsibilities to self, family, and community while being faithful to Spirit.

Toward the end of our conversation, we experimented with naming and valuing the gifts we brought to our time together as a way of recognizing each of our ministries in that moment. This was not easy for us, which is why it was good practice. It is something Johanna and I say we want in our communities, so we tried to start with ourselves.

--JT Dorr-Bremme

Tags: unions, organizing, politics, spiritual journey, domestic violence, public ministry, ethnography, secrets, academics, research, study, pastoral care, modern, radical solidarity, disability, acceptance, need, projection, co-creation, knowledge gap, boundaries, financial support, grants, labor, work, naming gifts, anger, mercy, blame, shame, capitalism, caregiving, covenant relationship, beloved community.



Windy Cooler

Home meeting: Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting

Age 44

Pronouns: she/her

@JT

Okay. So I started the recording also.

@Windy

All right.

@JT

So I think the main reason that we wanted to talk to you again was about the -- well, it's, I guess, the two things that intersect in your ministry, that you have a ministry that's active and that's supported by, it seems like, your meeting and maybe some other folks and other bodies out there, I don't know. And then some maybe about the ministry itself, how that's been going for you, and how you've seen it evolve. I mean things, maybe, you've learned in the pursuit of it, things like that.

@Windy

Mm-hmm.

@JT

And if you feel like that's enough to go on, you can go for it or, if not, then we can take a little bit of quiet and I'll see if a question pops up. But that's more or less how we do this. We take silence as needed and just sort of go wherever conversation goes.

@Windy

Yeah, so I can talk extemporaneously about the history of my ministry and the funding of my ministry. Is that what would be helpful to you?

@JT

Yeah. Let's start there.

@Windy

Okay.

@JT

There are dogs roughhousing here.

@Windy

Then we'll go into silence, and then I will lecture you.

@JT

Sounds great. All right. So take a little bit of quiet time and then whenever you're ready to go for it.

[silence]

@Windy

Yeah. So I started my adult life as a mother. So I got pregnant when I was 18, and my daughter was born when I had just turned 19. And at the time of her birth -- so I'm from the American South. I'm from



Alabama. And at the time of her birth, I really had very few life skills. I had been a really bookish teenager. I had a completely unearned reputation for innocence, considering that I got knocked up when I was 18. I was probably the least likely person in many people's opinion, but there were things they didn't know about me, and.

So I had very, very few life skills, and I was a kid. And I found myself without financial support or emotional support. So I was food insecure, and pregnant, and a teenager that really just liked to read. And I learned some things about the world during that phase of my life that were really upsetting to me that had really not occurred to me before then.

And one of those things was the impact of racism because, in many spaces, I was the only white person that was being seen at a social service agency or church. And that was really striking to me, sort of the overwhelming blackness of the poverty experience in Alabama, or that kind of poverty, that kind of like deep poverty.

And I was also struck by how the caregivers were white. And they also were very sympathetic to me, actually. I always talked about how they gave me soap. They would give me a little something extra, and it was like soap they had, like dish soap or personal soap or shampoo. And they would say that they could see I deserved it. But what they meant was, "You seem to be a young white woman who is literate, and we like you, and we want the best for you." But while I was seeing this, I was not getting myself out of the situation.

I think I developed a lot of anger during that time that I was learning things about the world. And the Internet was created right about that time. So my daughter was born in 1995, and I figured out that if I went to community college, I would have access to a pretty darn good preschool. And so I wanted the resources that were available to me.

And one of the resources I came across was a computer lab. And in the computer lab and on the Internet, I learned about social justice organizing, and I joined the Green Party¹. And that was my first experience of social justice organizing. I was the president of the Alabama Green Party at one point of my life.

And I learned more about the world. I learned about unions, and I learned about the sanctions against Iraq, and I traveled to Chicago. So I left the American South for the first time in my life when my daughter was five. And I went to Chicago to send people illegally to Iraq to document the effect of sanctions on people there.

And the more I learned about the world, the more sort of horrified I became and the more a kind of fixture of the deep radical left I became. So I was a really committed activist in my 20s. And I became a professional union organizer, worked for the AFL-CIO². I became a strategic researcher. And I was really like on my way up, actually, as a professional union organizer researcher. I became the Director of Research at a nonprofit called the Prewitt Organizing Fund³ before I was 30.

And then, a couple of different things happened in my life. One of them was that I noticed I was miserable in the marriage that I had entered into. So right before I moved to the DC area, I married another Green Party activist, and he adopted my daughter, and we had a son together. And I was kind

¹ Founded April 2001, "an independent political party that is connected to American social movements, and is part of a global Green movement that shares key values, including our Four Pillars: Peace and Non-Violence, Ecological Wisdom, Grassroots Democracy, and Social Justice, and our Ten Key Values." (<https://www.gp.org/about>, accessed 5/10/21)

² The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations is "the democratic, voluntary federation of 56 national and international labor unions that represent 12.5 million working men and women." (<https://aflcio.org/about-us>, accessed 05/10/21)

³ A now-dissolved group providing staff and strategic support in union organizing.



of surprised by how miserable I was because he was everything I wanted to be. He had a graduate degree from Harvard, and I still hadn't graduated from college at that point. I just had that scam with the community college so that my child could go to preschool and I could use a computer lab.

And he was just so like Mr. Rogers, outwardly. He was just such a like soft person, it seemed. And his father was a philosophy professor. So he was just from different people than I was. And so to find myself miserable in his company was a shock, and I had no explanation for it at the time.

And then I also developed a criticism of the union movement, actually, that I really was concerned that we had overly professionalized the organizing work we were doing that, if a worker had a problem, we had a staff person for that problem. And so what had attracted me to unionism was radical unionism. And I found myself in a really polished environment where that was just not happening.

And you might know all about the Bread and Roses Strike⁴ and have an IWW⁵ poster in your office, but we're also very heavily staffed and workers were not doing anything for themselves, not making decisions for themselves. We made people's posters, for God's sake. I mean when you pass by a strike, you notice they haven't made their posters. They were printed somewhere. You know? It's just disturbing to me. And so I developed this criticism about how unionism is about democracy at work, and we were not really enabling democracy at work. We were really enabling a kind of service model. So I developed that criticism.

And then also, I became more and more involved with my Quaker meeting. So I became a Quaker as an adult. And I just found myself attracted more to meeting, and just more intimately connected to the people at my meeting. And first day school was really a part of that. So children's programming was really, really how I connected to a meeting at the time.

So these things were kind of swirling around at the same time, and it's hard for me to suss out what happened when exactly, but my life really fell apart. My marriage really fell apart. I separated from my husband, and I decided not to do professional union work anymore. I became a office manager for the organization that was working to abolish the death penalty in Maryland. And I became increasingly committed to Meeting.

Right after the separation, I realized that what was wrong was domestic violence. I don't know exactly why I couldn't admit that to myself or have that thought. I told, you know, the story of how I learned I wasn't good at the workshop you both attended, and that's when it really came to my attention that this was domestic violence.

So, again, for your transcript, my six-year-old son did not get off the bus one day, and it followed my confrontation about some shared finances. And the police had to go looking for him, and it turns out his father had him the whole time. And his father told me that this should be a lesson for me. And I'd figured out that he was with his dad, or suspected it. And in that moment where I thought that, I thought this is like one of those things you read about in the papers, like this is an escalation of domestic violence, and maybe my son is not alive.

And it was just really terrifying to have all of this become concrete for me, when I had been fighting it for so long. And I think one of the reasons I had been fighting it for so long was because I really wanted to see myself as strong, like in all that history I just gave you. I just saw myself as being this incredibly strong woman. I could have a baby when I was a teenager, and I could develop a professional career

⁴ The two-month-long 1912 Lawrence, MA textile strike involving over 20,000 factory workers of more than 51 nationalities in collaboration with Industrial Workers of the World (see following note).

⁵ Industrial Workers of the World, founded in 1905 in Chicago, IL. "The IWW is a worker-led union dedicated to direct action, workplace democracy, and industrial unionism. IWW members are organizing to win better conditions today and to build a better world tomorrow." (<https://iww.org/>, accessed 5/10/21)



without going to college, and I could give up that professional career if I disagreed with it. And I had this whole narrative about myself.

And then I had to say, "And I am experiencing domestic violence," which was just so humiliating to me. And when I told my Meeting about it, they did give me some financial help, and they gave me their sympathy, but they also told me that Meeting was not a safe place for me anymore. And initially, they said, "It's not a safe place for you because we can't make it safe." And then over the next several years, it just became clear that it was not a safe place for me because they didn't want to hear about what it was like to be in domestic violence. And it didn't just magically go away. So the problem was me, it turned out.

And then in terms of how all of this informs my ministry or created my ministry, after I stopped working for the union movement, I did go back to school. I went to Goddard College, which is this liberal hippie school in Vermont, and I got an individualized bachelor's degree. Everyone does a thesis project there, and mine was on the beloved community and tools for the beloved community. And I concluded that radical solidarity was what we were called to do with one another.

And then after I finished my bachelor's degree, I decided to go to seminary because, by this time, I had heard stories like mine from other Quaker women in the Yearly Meeting or stories that had never been told because they were afraid that they would turn out like mine. And I thought there was something terribly wrong with my Yearly Meeting, and I was going to go to seminary and fix it.

And I got to Earlham School of Religion, which is a Quaker seminary, and they didn't know how to fix it. And I learned that actually very little academic research has been done on modern Quakers. We don't really understand ourselves very well. We understand the 17th century. And we say that the world treats us like we're dead, but we treat ourselves like we're dead. We've really stopped looking at ourselves.

And so in 2018, I got funding from Earlham School of Religion and also the Lyman Fund to travel across the country talking to Quakers like you're doing. And I talked to 92 Friends in eight different yearly meetings, and I thought I was going to get this best-practices document that I was going to take back to Baltimore Yearly Meeting because all the other Friends were good, and they had it all figured out, and I was going to bring this wisdom home.

And, no, I don't have that document, because instead what I heard again was, there's all this stuff we don't talk about at our meetings because we're so terrified that, if we talk about these things, we're going to be shunned. We're not going to be loved the way we need to be loved.

And sometimes we hear things that disturb us and we don't want to do anything about it because we're afraid of making things worse. We're afraid we don't have the skills, we don't have the expertise, which really takes me back to my criticism of unions. I see a lot of overlap between the way unions have gone and the way that Quakers are going, where we think that professionalization is the answer. You have to have professional social work skills to give pastoral care, and pastoral care is something entirely different than professional social work. But we don't know that because we don't engage in seminary-level education because there are no jobs at the end of a seminary education for us.

And yet, we are expected to minister to one another and be competent in this ministry. And so there's this paradox where we demand professionalism and skill and yet don't give one another the skills we need to feel comfortable taking care of each other. So we hire people. If our yearly meetings have money, we hire people. And otherwise, we're just sort of floundering is what I saw in those in those conversations.



So I got funding a second time in 2019 to present this. So there's an organization called the Good News Associates⁶. They gave me some money. And the Friends World Committee for Consultation⁷ gave me some money. The Lyman Fund⁸ gave me a second grant. And my yearly meeting and various monthly meetings that I had gone to in 2018 gave me the money for the second trip.

And I presented these findings that are, essentially, we really love each other and we have a funny way of showing it, because we're not really competent ministers in each other's lives, and we're functioning like a dysfunctional family, like a classic dysfunctional family. And I kind of expected tomatoes to get thrown at me. But instead, people would stand up in my workshop, and they'd be like, "That's right. I told Windy the things that I won't tell anybody." And so that was knowledge. That was new information.

And ever since then, I feel like -- so since 2019, my ministry has been developing kind of rapidly in that it began with this concern about domestic violence, and then it expanded to concern about pastoral care practices in general. And then it expanded to a concern about competency and peer ministry. And then it expanded to what it is now, which is a concern about how we hear each other so that we can create for one another the community we want to live in.

So the next step for me, at this point, is a kind of ethnography of domestic violence amongst Friends. So I'm applying to a PhD program. So my research proposal was just accepted by my potential advisor there, but I have to go through the institutional steps. I am helpful of institutional support. And I'm really excited about it because it's like a citizen science project where I won't be doing the interviews. I will be training other Friends to perform qualitative research. And my job is to find them, train them, support them, and then analyze the data and write a report.

And it's cross-branch, so not just unprogrammed Friends this time. Up to now, I've really only worked with unprogrammed Friends. So I'm just really excited right now about ethnography and how ethnography can be used by Quakers who seemed like natural ethnographers. Theologically, we are so connected to listening to one another and interpreting what the Spirit will have of us together corporately. So yeah.

And along the way, in terms of other fundings, last year, I was the Pendle Hill⁹ Cadbury Scholar in Residence¹⁰. But as I've indicated, I have a child living at home and I have remarried. I'm now in a happy and healthy marriage.

But I needed to leave my son, and there was housework that I normally do. There's things I normally do that we then needed to pay for. And so, my meeting financially supported my family during my period of residency so that I could go and do the writing and thinking work that I needed to do at Pendle Hill.

⁶ "Good News Associates is a Christian, nonprofit, ministry organization supporting individuals who are called to non-institutional ministries." (<https://goodnewsassoc.org/about-us/>, accessed 5/10/21)

⁷ "Answering God's call to universal love, FWCC brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world." (<http://fwcc.world/about-fwcc>, accessed 5/10/21)

⁸ "The Lyman Fund is a small fund set up to offer a limited number of grants to individuals seeking to pursue their spiritual journeys. Members of the Religious Society of Friends are given preference, but applications may be made by any person, with financial need who seeks to follow his or her deepest spiritual leadings." (<https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Lyman%20Fund%20guidelines%26application.pdf>, accessed 5/10/21)

⁹ Pendle Hill is a Philadelphia-area "Quaker center welcoming all for Spirit-led learning, retreat, and community ... to create peace with justice in the world by transforming lives." (<https://pendlehill.org/explore/vision-mission-values/>, accessed 5/10/21)

¹⁰ "... an endowment to support and encourage scholars with serious interest in Quaker faith, practice, or history to work at Pendle Hill on a specific project of significance to the Religious Society of Friends." (<https://pendlehill.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Cadbury-Scholarship-Description-and-Application.pdf>, accessed 5/10/21)



@JT

So does that bring us up to the present?

@Windy

I think it does. I tried to be as linear as possible.

@JT

It sounded that way. Hmm. Well, there are a couple of things that stood out for me, and I'm going to mention them. And I do have one question in mind, but if we go somewhere else, then great. As you spoke of your ministry, you repeated that "it expanded to". Does it -- well, okay, we'll hold the question.

I also noticed that you said -- the other phrases that stood out for me were radical solidarity and narrative of myself. How is your -- yeah. the question I think I want to ask right now is, as your ministry has expanded, does it continue to include all of those other pieces. I think that I heard some of all of the bits in your workshop, but I'd like to hear your experience of it.

@Windy

Yeah. So in terms of radical solidarity, that is a value of mine, though I think it's a good question in what way it's a value of mine, because one of the things I've learned is the importance of good boundaries.

So while I think that solidarity is certainly a goal of mine, I am not as personally immense as radical solidarity might inspire one to be. And I have begun to accept my limitations much more humbly than I did when I was younger. For instance, in my ministry, a lot gets projected onto me. So I'm really a rather goofy person, and there is an expectation that is both -- it's expressed to me like positively and negatively, but both of them are projections.

There's an expectation that I'm going to somehow be superhuman. So people hear that I want to increase our capacity to give care. And invariably someone thinks to themselves, "Hooray. Give me some care." Well, I have children. I have people in my life that I need to give that kind of care to, and myself. You know I've had a lot of trauma in my life, and I need some space to take care of myself and be healthy and to take and nurture this beautiful marriage I have and intimate friendships I have.

And at first, when people would come to me for care, I would try to care for them, because I know what it's like to feel abandoned and to feel like the people that should be caring for you, your intimates at meeting, are not. They're not able to. And it just -- you feel like you're drowning or something. And you're just like, "I have needs, needs, needs. Give me what I need." And I can't. I mean I get so many emails, it's crazy.

I mean and it's so bad that, before COVID, my son told me he didn't like going to speaking engagements with me because he felt like people were taking me away from him. People would literally touch me and hold me somewhere to talk at me about what they were agitated about. And it's really hard to pull yourself away from someone who is in pain. And that's real, and I honor that and like, "No," at the same time. You know? So I think that the way -- oh.

And conversely, there's the negativity. So that's the "Windy, or caregiver, minister, come and heal my wounds." And then negatively, there are people that really get mad at me when I tell them, no, I can't be that person for them. The message I get a lot is that I'm a hypocrite, that I say that we should care for each other, and then I'm not just giving care right and left. And that's a really hurtful message to me, actually.

And then, when people see that I'm not like a super brilliant superhuman person, that I have a learning disability, like my handwriting looks like a three-year-old wrote something, like I can't wrap a gift to save my life. I mean I have no eye-hand coordination, and I don't know where I am in space, and I'm not terribly good at eye contact all the time. And I accept this about myself. I'm like a person. And yet, the



expectation is that I shouldn't be a person. And when people feel like I have failed them personally in some way or I can't wrap a gift to save my life, you fall from that pedestal really fast.

And it's just so hard to navigate people's projections. And when you're a minister and you're in public all the time, that's hard. So you have to find a way, or I have had to find a way to express solidarity that is like the Good Samaritan, where the Good Samaritan was not overwhelmed and therefore could show appropriate care, but also leave that wounded man at the inn and support someone else's ministry. He pays him two days' wages, which is a lot of money.

And I think that what I've come to is clarity about what I am. So while my ministry has expanded, in a sense, or my interests have expanded, I feel that I have narrowed in my definition of myself and my role. And I see my role now as being a teacher, and a teacher that is pedagogically connected to the co-creation of knowledge and the co-creation of community expectations about what ministry is. And so my intimacy is really limited, or I try. I don't always succeed. My boundaries aren't all that great. I mean I did end up in a domestic violence situation for a reason.

But I'm trying really hard to have the wisdom to really give myself intimately to my intimates, who are few, and otherwise serve as a teacher who is co-creating knowledge and co-creating reality with the rest of my community.

@JT

Tell me more about that. How does that co-creation take place? How do you see it working?

@Windy

Well, right now, I'm very passionate about ethnography as a methodology. I think that the ministry that you both are engaged in are an example of co-creation, actually. You're asking people to speak up themselves in a way that can be seen and heard by others. I really like your ministry.

@JT

Aw. thanks.

@Windy

Yeah. And I think that instead of presenting myself as -- it was really tempting, actually, in seminary, to say, for instance, this is how you do pastoral care. Here's some books you could read, and here are pastoral care practices that other denominations use. And I've made a choice not to do that and, instead, to talk about fundamental values and talk about experiences we have so that we can create those practices together, that we create that knowledge.

@JT

Hmm.

@Johanna

Mmm.

@JT

And what sorts of benefits do you see in that approach?

@Windy

Well, it means that the community owns its knowledge.

@JT

Mm-hmm.



@Johanna

That's it. That's it. There's a pivot I feel happening in our ministry, because some people are asking us for best practices.

@Windy

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

As soon as you said values, I thought, "That's the real source. That's the real root." And I didn't know why. That's it.

@Windy

Yeah. I don't know --

@Johanna

If we focus on values, then the communities co-create instead of consult and repeat.

@Windy

Mm-hmm. Yeah. If we wanted to know -- I've just concluded that, when people want answers from me, they don't really -- they don't have any intention of using those answers.

@Johanna

Hmm.

@JT

Hmm.

@Windy

Because, you know, there's a lot of wisdom that the very smart people that are part of our meetings could go find on their own. I'm not a librarian. You know, they know how to do that. There's a reason why they didn't. And so I think that -- well, I sort of hesitate to say this, but I'm gonna say it anyway. I think the part of my wisdom, actually, is that I have learned that people have to do the work themselves. I feel like that's what I learned in the union movement and that's what I'm seeing in Quaker community as well. And that, if you're not willing to do the work yourself, there's no book in the world, there's no piece of advice in the world that's going to help you.

It's like the people that are always reading a self-help book, and they never get to like the underlying issues in their lives. It's not from lack of words and advice. There's some kind of underlying anxiety that prevents people from doing the things that they know, already, they need to do. And I think our role as ministers and teachers is in -- the midwife thing is over used, but I'm going to use it anyway. Our job is as midwives. It's to help people give birth to what they know, deep down inside of themselves, is true.

But you can't do it for them. You're just a facilitator. And so you have to resist, every single time, or I do. I'll say "I". I'm using I statements. I choose to resist as best as I can, because it's awful with your ego when people think you're going to have the answer. You're like, "Yes. I am very smart, and I will have the answer."

[laughter]

@JT

Yeah.



@Windy

But giving -- even if you did, say, have the super smart answer, you can't really give it to someone else. They have to discover it.

@Johanna

Mmm. Huh. In our ministry, there is a knowledge gap. People need access to clear, simple knowledge. This is helping me see that, once they have access, that's the moment where I step back. I didn't know that until now. People need -- people might need knowledge about the needs of younger Friends. They might need knowledge about the beauties of older Friends. And then they might need some queries at the end, or a -- yeah, a set of questions that can let them pick up their work then. Hmm.

@Windy

I was just having a conversation today with someone from Earlham School of Religion. They're applying for a grant, so they were doing some research on what graduating students felt benefited them. And I heard myself say for the first time that what seminary gave me was not -- it was not book learning, even though that also happened, that the gift that ESR gave me was the environment in which I could safely experiment and learn for myself about the world I was in, that it was a very low shame, highly experimental environment where I felt like I was gonna be loved no matter how my experiments turned out.

And when I went into seminary, I was really self-conscious about my writing. So even though I enjoyed reading, I grew up in a working-class environment, and I just was not familiar at all with academic writing. And being in a master's degree program was really sort of outside of my class experience, I guess, and I was intimidated by it. And I made some mistakes, and those mistakes were corrected. And it was all fine. There was no shame in making mistakes. And I feel like ESR gave me was this environment in which I could heal from some of the really traumatic experiences I had.

And it wasn't like it was a pink-bubble-gum environment. It was an environment that had real boundaries and real expectations, but those boundaries and expectations were just conveyed in such a way, that I could grow from within them. So it was really like the environment of learning more than it was any specific thing that I was taught.

@Johanna

Hmm.

@JT

The word boundaries came up again just now, and that's one of the things that's standing out for me in what I've heard so far. So tell me more about how boundaries are important in the sorts of relationships that grow -- that allow communities to grow in the ways that we're thinking about. Does that question make sense to you?

@Windy

Yeah. I mean I think the growth is about choices, and you have to define what your choices are. And that is an aspect of boundaries. Anytime you're making clear choices, you're engaging in some boundary making. You're defining and you're choosing to act a specific way. And I think, because we're not omnipresent beings, it's really important to recognize where our boundaries are, because otherwise, how would we even know that we had grown. How would we even begin to talk about where we have been without a sense of boundary, without a sense of time having passed?

There's a -- on my wall, there's a growth chart for my son. And I didn't start it till he was a little older, like as he went into puberty, and he grew like two feet in one year or something. And it's marvelous, and it fills us with joy, but you know what is that except an expression of where his boundaries were one month and where his boundaries were the next month. And we can think about his life in a coherent way.



We need the language. I mean my daughter has this whole shtick about how punctuation is radically democratic because it allows us to understand each other. Without punctuation, our words would just be a jumble on the page, but with it, we can be understood.

@Johanna

If we choose to listen.

@Windy

Mm-hmm.

[silence]

@Windy

Well, you had asked me some about money, which is a perennial topic of mine. I'm not -- I'm in a position now where I'm thinking about doing some consulting work. And it kind of makes me feel lousy. I mean I'm still in discernment about it because I still feel some vulnerability around it.

I wish that money would just fall from the sky and would not be connected to any labor I do. That would feel a whole lot better, because I both need income and am really drawn to perform work. I don't need reward and punishment to do work. I think human beings, in general, are pretty drawn to do work. But when you know when my labor is connected to how I receive sustenance, it makes me from really anxious, and that's something I have to figure out about myself.

But I was just talking to someone that does some consulting work, and he gave me this piece of advice or wisdom that is really resonating with me. And I just keep thinking about it. And he said, "You know, you can give someone the gift of your time, and the gift of your knowledge, and the gift of your expertise, but you should let them know you're giving them a gift. And you should know what your gift is worth."

@JT

Have you tried this?

@Windy

No. I have not. Though I was shocked recently. So Pendle Hill invited me back to give a lecture. And I was just like, "Yeah, I'll give a lecture." And they were like, "Okay. This is how much we're going to pay you." And I was like, "Oh. You're gonna pay me."

[laughter]

@Johanna

Huh.

@Windy

And I just keep thinking about it, like it is one of those strange coincidences, because I was thinking about how I need to connect my labor to income. And then, my friend said to me, "You know, when you give a gift, know that you're giving a gift," which seems to be about boundaries, which is why it came up. Know where you begin and where you end.

And then just a couple of days later, Pendle Hill was like, "Can you do labor for us? And by the way, we will compensate you." And I'm still letting myself feel feelings about it, if that makes sense, and see where I land on this, because it is -- it really is something that gives me a lot of anxiety. I mean I don't have a problem asking an organization to just -- I mean I've probably been given, I mean God knows, maybe like \$15,000 or something to help me perform my ministry. But that's not the same thing as being compensated for it, like an exchange is going on.



And I feel like I've gotten very brave about saying I don't have this \$2,000 that I'm going to need to perform this task and then have someone tell me they will or they will not give me that money. That's okay, but it's the exchange that's so hard for me. And intellectually, I think what that's about is a problem with declaring and maintaining my boundaries and expecting reciprocation and respecting the decision-making of other people.

Maybe there's some kind of anxiety there that, if I don't just share my gifts without any desire for compensation, people won't want my gifts. And I'm making that choice for them when I never ask instead of having a negotiation. There's something problematic about that anxiety inside of me.

@JT

That's helpful for me to hear you name that out loud, because it's -- I think that exists in me too, but I hadn't seen it quite clearly.

[silence]

@JT

And I got lost in it a little bit.

@Windy

I think I got lost a little bit in what I was saying. It was a little stream of consciousness there.

@Johanna

Well, there's a thread I'm holding from what you said that I want to share.

@Windy

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

Now I'm nervous. Dang it. Would you be willing to do a short experiment with the three of us?

@Windy

Okay.

@Johanna

Okay. JT, are you willing to do a short experiment?

@JT

Well, I -- yeah, if she's in.

@Johanna

I'll tell you what it is. Okay. Okay.

[laughter]

@Johanna

Here's what it is. This is [both of you now 52:45]. If she's in ...

[laughter]

@Johanna

I'm with her.



@JT

What do you got?

@Johanna

Okay. You've both said, and I might agree, I'm not sure, but you've both said that naming when you give a gift is difficult. Naming the fact that a gift is moving and the worth of the gift can be difficult.

I think that we are in a moment where all three of us are giving gifts. So the experiment would be to test out how it feels to name the gift we are giving at this moment and name the value of that gift.

@Windy

Hmm. That's a hard one.

@Johanna

Yeah. Yeah.

[laughter]

@Johanna

It's not an experiment like can you fit all the boxes in the box, or whatever. I'm willing to go first, if this is something we want to do, and I'm willing to wait if it's something we don't.

@Windy

No. I think it's a good experiment.

@Johanna

Yeah.

@JT

Show us how it's done.

@Johanna

Aw. I was just getting my bravery up.

[laughter]

@JT

Okay. I'm willing to wait.

[silence]

[The following words are spoken slowly by each speaker over about five minutes each, that is, with much silence within. This was an experiment for all of us and took effort to be faithful and find the right words.]

@Johanna

Okay. All right. I'm giving the gift of cleansing. I'm giving a gift of, maybe, honesty or humility because I needed to admit that I wasn't in a capacity to do more words, to hear more words, to take in them. So, once I admitted that to myself and to both of you, it turned my gaze a new way. And that honesty and humility are helping me to hold the energy of the words.

While we've been speaking, I've held the energy of something coming from behind the head, or side, or down, release energy, or I've been listening for what the hidden part of the heart says. And that means that I've noticed that I've been hearing what's just about to come, emotionally, like sometimes somebody



said something very serious, and I felt levity, and the next thing they said was levity. So that that surprised me, but that happened many times today. The gift is keeping my feet where my feet are and letting the breath move in the air.

The value of that gift? Well, to me, the value of that gift is it lets me be authentic and true to my real capacity. I think the value in our room here is high, but I don't know how. I think the value is that empowers both of your voices. That's a beautiful thing.

What I'm learning about this gift is that it feels like being in the body of a dancer. And that's all I have to say. Huh. Except maybe it's easier to answer the impact of the gifts than the value.

@Windy

I think the gift I'm giving is the gift of collegiality. That's also like what I'm getting. I feel like there's a very infant community of Quaker public ministers that are all starting to talk to each other and find each other and form these peer relationships with each other. And so I'm giving the gift of entering into that space with you both, who are new to me. And in that gift is the gift of vulnerability, being able to share things that I am more confident of and still in discernment about is vulnerable.

And what that is worth, I think it's worth, well, reciprocation, which I feel like is happening, that I feel like there's the beginning of some kind of peer relationship here.

And I will say that -- this is not really a part of the question -- that I increasingly desire and seek out peer relationships with other people doing public ministry among unprogrammed Friends, that people who are professional ministers seek out peer relationships with each other. And they're often, I have heard from them, often the people that are -- as a minister in a congregation, it is often hard to find peer relationships. You can't vent to people in your congregation when you are a minister.

And owning that you are a public minister is a very -- it has been a very odd experience for me because my relationships with Friends, Friends-capital-F, have changed because there are just differences in our experiences. And also, I carry things in confidence now that I can't just vent about. Though I feel like I am giving and getting -- I'm offering and receiving an offer of a very similar gift which is camaraderie in this journey as a public minister, this really pretty uncharted journey into being a public minister in the 21st century amongst unprogrammed Friends.

@Johanna

Hmm.

[silence]

@JT

In listening to both of you, I've heard some of the things that were swirling around inside me when I thought about this question. In some ways, I think a gift that I'm giving here is an attentive and loving listening. I think that there is an affirmation that individuals have expressed to me in being listened to in a particular way. That is a gift that I am very grateful to be able to give. It's remarkable to me how much I have seen the value of that to people. And it makes me sad, now in this moment, to think that it might be so rare.

I also feel that I am giving and receiving a gift of mutual support, that there is something of a -- there is an uncertain path that comes with ministry and that that requires an openness that can feel precarious. But to have a relationship with others who are doing this thing and therefore having this experience is a reassurance. And somehow a furtherance. It's just in knowing that there are others out there like me.



I'm thinking that there's some form of co-creation, like we talked about, in this openness to be ourselves with all of our successes and faults. And our present condition, immediately in this moment, to be who we are as much as we can be all together.

When I think about value I can't help thinking about money, because we've talked about it that way and I certainly have been trained to think of things that way. But I think that the values behind that are faulty and that the sense of genuine human connection, relationship, and support has a value that is beyond. Certainly, professional listeners, like therapists and so on, can charge lots of money, but I don't always know how they decide what that is, because I've experienced how uncorrelated that dollar figure is with the feeling I receive.

[laughter]

And I didn't know it until Johanna spoke, but I am happy to give a gift of myself in a different mode, to be the one in the role that she usually occupies, and vice versa. I've felt a solid grounding that has made it easier for me to do that.

I don't know if I said this out loud or just thought it, but I'm very grateful to you for saying that you have wisdom. I think that we sometimes are too intent on hiding a sense of pride we may have, which may be entirely justified, by not claiming those gifts that we do have or that growth that we have made, not celebrating it with each other. And I believe I know the reasons for it, but I believe it is a loss.

And that sometimes wisdom is not just a recognition of one's own power or achievement, but a recognition of one's limitations and what one needs to give more fully of oneself. I imagine us celebrating that together in our communities, and I think it would change things quite a bit if we did.

@Johanna

A phrase just came to mind when you said that. Wisdom comes from true perspective on where we fit in the world. Wisdom comes slowly and must be earned, but it can also be passed on. When we share wisdom with our feet rooted, we open a portal. The other person climbs through the portal, and that's how they earn the wisdom.

When Windy shared about the flurry of public judgment, need, preference, and response to her work, I gained wisdom because, though you use the word colleague, we are very new to the colleague scheme. And that's generous. That may be a true word, but it's generous, because you're -- because we are just entering the colleague world.

And your wisdom is drawing lines on my map, which can help me know where my lines might be. I can test my lines against those lines, but they come from a trusted source, and they're a great starting point. My map has some boundaries, written in pencil. And that's part of what you -- that's part of your gift.

@Windy

I'm really glad. Watch out for those people that will call you a hypocrite.

[laughter]

[a more conversational tone resumes]

@Johanna

Yeah, when you described them, I kind of wish that you could walk around the world with a placard, that's like, "I'm also human." Dude, no one can bear all that load. I don't know what the placard would say, but I kind of wish that it could just go ahead of you physically and Internet-ly and spiritually. Yeah.



@Windy

Well, in their defense, I will say that I think, when we're suffering, and maybe this is universally true, I don't know, but I think it's definitely true of unprogrammed Friends, we always think we're the only one because we think everybody else has it together. It's a part of our shame culture. And so, when someone has a lot of needs and I show up and I have this message about meeting each other's needs -- and my message has changed over time. It used to be -- I think I used to invite more boundary violations as part of my message.

Someone shows up, and they say, "I'm interested in our meeting each other's needs better." Well, that Friend thinks they're the only one that has ever -- even though I just said something that is sort of -- I mean it to be generally true, but to them and their reality, they think -- or this is what I think anyway. I think that they feel like they're alone in their shame, and someone has just invited them to share their trauma and their shame.

And so it's really confusing to them when I'm like, "Uh-uh. Not today," because it just never occurs to them that they're not the only one doing that with me. And so, they're just like, "Well, what's the problem here? You just talked about how we need to care for each other. I'm seeking care." And they just have no knowledge of the 50 other people that have recently reached out to me because they also need care.

And so I'm working on helping people understand, without having to go through that experience with me, that the place to receive care is your meeting and that, if you need care, we need to increase the capacity of the meeting to give care.

@Johanna

And if the meeting's not able, there might be Friend networks, worship groups, spiritual friends, partnerships across time zones. There might be other emerging structures that can also give care.

@Windy

Mm-hmm.

@JT

And as you say that I thought, "Well, but then that only works if people know about them, or create them. And that only works if we talk about these things publicly in ways that folks who aren't yet involved know that it exists." And what you said to me about -- well, I thought this when you first mentioned it and now that we're back on this topic, this sense that there is shame around feeling hurt or feeling anything bad, basically. And yet, we all do. And in our communities, we allow the dominant culture to win in telling us, "Don't talk about that stuff. Pretend everything's okay. Don't bring people down."

@Johanna

Huh. Such a hurtful message.

@JT

It is. It is. People are personally harmed by it every single day. And this -- and I'm realizing -- I'm saying these things because I'm having this realization that I'm kind of mad at Quakers for being that way, that I think we have such a radical message about how to love each other in community and that we have capacities to do that that are, to me, precious and, I think, rare. And we're not using them.

@Johanna

Yeah.

@Windy

Mm-hmm.



@JT

We're not using them as well as we could, if we're using them at all. Some places, I wonder. You know?

@Johanna

Mm-hmm.

@Windy

Mm-hmm.

@JT

And I know it's hard work. I know it is. I've had the experience. I know it takes a lot of energy, but to think about the reactions that people had to you and your message, there's a clear need. And of course, you can't be that one person for everybody. Everybody needs more people. We should be those people for each other, is how I feel.

@Windy

Yeah, me too. Sometimes I feel angry, actually, but I also feel like -- you know, I have this whole shtick about how mercy is the opposite of shame. And it's not just a shtick. I really believe it. I have to remind myself of what I think sometimes. Not that there's anything wrong with being angry. I think, when you feel angry, welcome it. It's there for a reason.

But I think when I explore that anger and I respond to it with a sense of mercy, first of all, I forgive myself for being angry. I can have mercy for myself. But then I can also have mercy for all the reasons why it's hard. It's not just that people are being lazy, which is what I tell myself. When I think about my anger, the first thing I do is blame, and say, "It's because they're lazy." And then I say, "Oh, gosh. Blame." You know? What does mercy say to the blame?

And what mercy says to the blame, in this case, is capitalism is rough, actually. I mean thinking about this as a systematic deficit we have. And most people our age just work all the time.

@Johanna

Mm-hmm. Yeah.

@Windy

And people who have dependents, like, oh my gosh. There's just no social support. And so you're sort of singularly responsible for the people that count on you. Capitalism is ravaging us, and all the psychological effects of that. And I think capitalism is one of the reasons why we don't see so many people at meeting and our capacity is really down. Most of us seem to be like 80 or 90 years old. In like 10 years, there's going to be like a dozen Quakers in the United States or something.

And I think people are just exhausted on Sunday. So it's hard to get yourself to meeting and think about these things, much less participate in committee life. Oh my gosh. You could work an unpaid full-time job just being a normal Quaker with normal Quaker expectations of your time.

And I think that's the life I would like to lead, actually, if I had my wish. Money would fall from the sky, and I would just be a full-time unpaid Quaker. And I would like to live in a community of full-time unpaid Quakers where money falls from the sky.

@Johanna

Yeah. Me too.

@JT

Yeah. Yeah. Me too. Let's go there.



[laughter]

@Windy

But I mean -- and I think that we're not alone and, if we could have the imagination to see that desire, I think a lot of us would have that desire. But then what are the steps we need to take to live that, that goal? And, well, there's capitalism. There's this huge problem. And I think that there's a lot of steps between us, what we really want for our for ourselves and for our community, and where we are now.

And it's not just a matter of choosing to do differently. I think that's one of the reasons why co-creation and the application of wisdom and values is going to be really important to this journey, because it's just a very complicated journey. There's problems in the economy, for God's sake. Between us and genuine caregiving is recognizing cultural tendencies, recognizing our own shame, learning some of the skills of caregiving, and the entire economy of the United States.

[laughter]

@JT

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

It's been a -- it's clear it's officially time to colonize Mars. Start fresh. I'm bringing the trees.

[laughter]

@Johanna

And the entire economy. When you said, "What does mercy say to the blame?", the first thing I pictured was a purple sock puppet talking to a green sock puppet.

[laughter]

@Johanna

I want to give you a sock puppet. Maybe Mercy's like a flower or whatever, and Blame -- and I was just like, "I can't wait to see this sock puppet show." Brené Brown can narrate for us.

[laughter]

@Johanna

If we're gonna live outside the US economy, that's a lot of work. And if we're going to live inside of it, that's a lot of pain.

@Windy

Yeah. I mean I think that -- I mean maybe this is the old union organizer in me. I'm still a radical anti-capitalist. I can see how all the pieces of my life are sort of integrated into who I am today.

[laughter]

@Windy

But I think that it's hard to know what the first step is. Maybe this is not a linear process. But I think that we are going to have to make some creative decisions as a community about how we're going to live inside of capitalism and how we're going to change the economy that we all live in. And I feel like that is part of the prophetic work of Quakerism and that's where -- that's another place where the prophetic implications of Quakerism meet the pastoral care implications of Quakerism.



@Johanna

Hmm. It would be really neat to see the pastoral care crew meet the Quakers and business crew, because Quakers and business are on the front lines of alternative money systems, using money for good. Money is not evil, but. And there are Quakers doing work to alter the economic options or the story or the picture, like I think of EQUAT or EQUATe¹¹. But I also -- I know of a Quaker who's encouraging everyone he knows to divest from the stock market, start local loans to help people buy houses or farms or whatever, and take the financial risk, and also to plan to live without a pension, to plan to live without an IRA¹², and to just trust the community to show up, which is a huge ask.

@Windy

Mm-hmm. Yeah. I admit I'm not really there yet, in terms of that trust.

@Johanna

Yeah. Yeah. And you have youth in your care.

@Windy

Mm-hmm. But I think it would go -- I mean I would love for us to start trying to earn each other's trust.

[JT laughs]

@Johanna

What's making you laugh?

@JT

I'm not quite sure how to say it.

@Johanna

Hmm.

@JT

Well, the way you said that, that you'd love for us to start trying to.

@Windy

Yes.

[laughter]

@JT

We're already a couple of steps removed from the beginning of the process.

@Windy

Yeah.

@JT

Yeah. See? It is funny.

@Johanna

Yeah. You're right.

¹¹ "Earth Quaker Action Team is a grassroots, nonviolent action group including Quakers and people of diverse beliefs, who join with millions of people around the world fighting for a just and sustainable economy." (<https://www.eqat.org/>, accessed 5/10/21)

¹² Individual Retirement Account, a personal financial savings account designed to plan for retirement.



@Windy
It is funny.

@Johanna
Pretty awful.

@Windy
It's partially a verbal tic, and actually I think that's true. We are at least a couple removed.

@Johanna
Oh. I think that's real true.

@Windy
Haven't even started on this.

@Johanna
Hi. I belong to this faith community. Hypothetically, someday, we might trust each other.

[laughter]

@Johanna
Until that day, we're gonna work against violence and hope that we start to get closer. Oh, my God.
When you look at it that way --

@JT
Yeah. When it put it --

@Johanna
Geez.

@JT
It's pretty stark.

@Johanna
Whoa. We're getting heated up.

@Windy
That is funny.

@Johanna
It's pretty pathetic.

@JT
Well, and what's interesting to me -- what came up when you said that is that I have found some of the relationships that feel the most deep and the most solid in my life because I've been in this Quaker world. I have also seen how there is not one meeting I've been to that feels the way I imagine the beloved community of Friends could feel, or the way I imagined it to feel were it to exist somewhere, because there is -- there are these bonds of love and trust that would exist and would be, I think, palpable to newcomers. If somebody walked in the door and didn't know any of the humans there, they would still see a group that had a cohesion that would be recognizable.

@Windy
Mm-hmm. Yeah. I really feel that paradox. My most intimate relationships are from this community. So my husband, Erik, was a Quaker before we met. We were both Quakers when we met. Actually, he



knew my daughter before he knew me because he was a Friendly Adult Presence¹³. So she was mortified when I started dating him, actually. She was like, "No. He knows things about me."

[laughter]

@Windy

But he never told me, so.

@Johanna

So then it became okay, huh?

@Windy

But I met him at Annual Session¹⁴. And our relationship -- and I don't know that we would have developed as a couple as deeply as we did without the support of all of these other intimate relationships that we had in common. It's sort of like, in the tribe, everyone knows everyone else, and it just felt like a really safe relationship. So there's lots of funny stories about that that I'll tell you another time. And I recently -- I've been joking that I need to start seeing other people that aren't Quakers, because like all my friends are Quakers, like my whole life.

@Johanna

Oh yeah.

@Windy

It's like Quaker everything all the time. And I've started to think maybe I should know people that aren't Quaker.

[laughter]

@Windy

So that's true. All that's true. And then at the same time, there's all of this hurt and distrust and -- but that pain wouldn't exist if there wasn't also love to begin with.

@JT

Hmm.

@Johanna

That's kind of chilling.

@JT

Yes. But --

@Windy

Like when some random guy with no pants on the street tells you something about yourself --

@Johanna

Right. Okay. I got you.

@Windy

-- you're like, "Whatever."

¹³ An adult chaperone and ally for youth programs at larger Quaker gatherings.

¹⁴ Annual Session(s) refers to the approximately week-long annual gathering of Quakers in a yearly meeting for business, fellowship, and community development.



@Johanna
Okay.

[laughter]

@Johanna
I think I just took what you said and I just -- I put it in my life for a second. I was like, "Ugh." I thought of a couple scenarios that came to mind. But okay. That I -- that's easier to eat, I think, than what I was imagining. Yeah. I mean I went to betrayal and disappointment are the natural flow from love, and I was like, "Whoa. Geez. I don't think that's what she said."

[laughter]

@Windy
No. But you can't experience betrayal, though, without there being some love.

@Johanna
Right. Right. That's what I was hearing in your words. Yeah.

@JT
Well, I was going to try to repeat back what you said, but maybe just say a bit more.

@Windy
About betrayal?

@JT
How love and hurt are related.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Windy
Hmm. Well, I think it's not that everyone you love will necessarily cause you this kind of existential pain. But I think that you can't experience -- you can't -- you wouldn't feel pain if you didn't love in the first place, because people that you don't feel connected to just can't hurt you like that. You just don't care. You forget what they said. They certainly can't betray you because there was no covenant to begin with. And I think that, when we understand ourselves to be in covenant relationship like I think we do at meeting, there is a lot of vulnerability there to tremendous pain because there's tremendous love.

@JT
Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. I can think of a couple of examples, people who were very deeply hurt by their meeting because they were in a loving long-term relationship, and they were betrayed. They're not properly cared for by the people that they cared for.

@Windy
I read somewhere that betrayal is the hardest experience, like it just destroys people.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. That's why that's what I thought of. That's why I thought of it first when you talked about hurt linked to love, because I lived through an experience of betrayal with a close Quaker friend who was a spiritual traveler for several years -- well, for two years. And the degree of pain, the degree of betrayal, was baffling given the degree of trust, but they're also inherently linked.



I wonder if we can go back to something JT said which was about having never seen a meeting that is fully living into the potential he could picture with the beloved community. I want to talk about a time I saw that flicker come to life. And for me, the beloved community is about reliability, which is a slightly different take because, before, we were talking about camaraderie that's apparent to a newcomer, like warmth, or there was another word used. But for me, the beloved community is reliability and a willingness to step in, when needed, to do difficult work. And I experienced that.

I was at the FGC¹⁵ Gathering¹⁶. I was working with the Junior -- nope. I was working with the Young Friends Program with the middle school, and I loved working it in the evenings because I got to run around. That was the only way I could tolerate being at FGC which was full of sitting, is that you put me with the kids in the evening. I'll run around for two hours. We'll be exhausted by the end, and then I can finish my day.

And I reached a day where I needed to ask my boss for that work grant¹⁷ -- I just told them, an hour or two before the shift was to start. I said, "I've just had a transformational spiritual experience. I don't have a lot of words for it. I'm not able to show up to work. I don't think I can be there. And it's in an hour and a half." And they said, "Enough said. We've got you covered. Go take care of yourself." And they sent basically the head of Junior Gathering¹⁸. It wasn't Patsy Arnold Martin, but it was Casey. Casey stopped doing whatever bigger-picture holding-space he was doing, and he stepped into my role right there on the ground right then.

And I saw him and his big pink t-shirt, and I just about cried because he did a great service that affirmed my willingness. The reason I couldn't go to work right then for that shift was that I was willing to be transformed. And I happened to have a responsibility right on the heels of it. And so his taking responsibility and his support taught me that this is a faith community where I can bring all my skills, and be cracked open and be raw, and I can withdraw when I need. And that gives me full permission to really be here, to really bring all of me, not just the responsible, put-together, great-with-kids part, but the wounded part, the healing part, the exploratory part that sometimes nudges me to explore a place that has some risk. That was a moment where the beloved community was really alive for me.

So I think maybe it happens in flickers, because all of our communities are dynamic systems. And so, maybe instead of searching for the beloved community, we search for a flicker or a -- it's so temporary. Anyway, that is a time that I lived it, and it's still something I feel very tender about today, and that was four years -- four and a half years ago.

@Windy
Mm-hmm.

@Johanna
Yeah.

@Windy
Mm-hmm. That's beautiful. And I have a dumb question. Was that at Niagara Falls?

¹⁵ "Friends General Conference provides services and resources for individual Friends, meetings, and people interested in the Quaker way. FGC is an association of regional Quaker communities in the U.S. and Canada working together to nurture a vital Quaker faith." (<https://www.fgcquaker.org/>, accessed 5/10/21)

¹⁶ "The Gathering is a week of Quaker worship, workshops, and community for all ages. Friends come together from across the US and Canada (and sometimes further) to deepen our connection to one another and the Spirit." (<https://www.fgcquaker.org/connect/gathering/what-fgc-gathering>, accessed 5/10/21)

¹⁷ Friends may attend the FGC Gathering free of charge by exchanging service instead of money.

¹⁸ "Junior Gathering is a home for children from birth through 9th grade engaging in spirituality and community. We will gather together each day for art, stories, and song." (<https://quakerrecollaborative.org/youth-fgc-2021-gathering>, accessed 5/10/21)



@Johanna

Mm-hmm. It was actually meeting JT that turned me inside out.

@Windy

Aw.

@Johanna

It wasn't like romantic. It was really spiritual. And it put anything that was on the inside of me flipped to the outside, including all of my nerves. And, yeah, so that was the day I met JT.

@JT

I was wondering. I had a feeling.

@Johanna

Yeah. Yeah, it was. It's true. Yeah. So that was at Niagara.

@Windy

Yeah, my son was in the middle school program that year.

@Johanna

Oh. That's how I recognized your face. I worked with him.

@Windy

Ob is my son. Ob was very into juggling that year, I remember.

@Johanna

He worked with Eric. Eric was the juggler.

@Windy

Yes, that is right.

@Johanna

Eric was my co-worker. And a year later, I said, "I'll work any job at Junior Gathering as long as it's with Eric."

@Windy

I was confused there for a minute, because my husband's name is also Erik.

@Johanna

Oh. Okay. No. I forget his last name, but anyway, it's Eric from Junior Gathering. He has a brown beard, and he's got kids in the Gathering. Oh, neat. Geez. I want to say your face looks a lot like your son's.

@Windy

Actually, it's true.

@Johanna

It's more appropriate to say his face looks like you, but it's just kind of the order in which I met you.

@Windy

I know this face looks like someone's face. Throughout history, this face has been passed down.

[laughter]



@Johanna
Oh my gosh. Look at that.

@JT
I know. The tribe is pretty small. Isn't it?

@Johanna
Yeah.

@Windy
It is.

@Johanna
I'm really enjoying looking at Windy's face.

@Windy
And seeing Ob.

@Johanna
It's like a little portal into 2017. I go, "Whoa." Oh, that's neat.

@Windy
Yeah. That was Ob's favorite year, actually, of the Gathering. He really enjoyed being at Niagara Falls. We walked across the bridge into Canada. He was so excited. He was like, "We can walk to another country!"

[laughter]

@Johanna
That is so neat. Oh.

@Windy
Well, I'm so glad that you two met there too. It was a great year for everyone, apparently.

@JT
Yeah. It wasn't bad.

@Johanna
Maybe that was my peak.

@JT
Pretty good. Yeah.

@Johanna
2017. Everything started to -- actually, maybe that was my launch. Everything started to --

@JT
Yeah.

@Johanna
Yeah. I started to launch after that year.

@JT
Mm-hmm.



@Johanna

Yeah. I hope my peak is the day I die. Poom. Who knows? Windy's thinking something. I see your eyes.

@Windy

Yeah. I'm thinking about peaks, actually. I'm not sure. I'm trying to make coherent sense out of peaking, but also boundaries, because I was going to push back against that. Maybe we don't peak. Do we have to? But then I'm like, "But I just talked about boundaries and measuring time. Maybe my brain doesn't make sense." So this is the internal dialogue going on inside of me right now.

@Johanna

Yeah.

@JT

I don't really know why but, driving over here, I was thinking about the number of people that I knew from my school who are no longer living.

I went to a very small private school. The whole high school student body was around 350 people. My graduating class was 81. And I recalled three of them are no longer living, just from my class. I still feel like I'm missing somebody, but. And then thinking about folks that were sort of around my age, you know, more [than three].

And just now when you talked about peaking again, I don't know for sure because the details were not shared, but there was one of them where I felt that his death was probably suicide. My sense is that the pressure to achieve and be great was very high. And not everyone can do that. There's not -- I mean not everyone should try to do that.

@Windy

Well, if you believe that you have to achieve and you have an idea of what you need to -- well, you just have this drive to achieve, I think it's hard to ever feel like you have done the thing.

@Johanna

Yeah.

@Windy

There's always something else that you could be achieving, because you can't be grateful for where you are or see where you are with any accuracy.

@JT

Hmm. Hmm.

@Windy

I mean I feel like having a goal is one thing, but I feel like, for a lot of people who just have shame about achievement, they don't really have a goal. They just have this need to fill this place inside of themselves that can't be filled.

@JT

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

Right now, I'm falling into another pit, which is I have 100 goals. So I finished many of them, and I'm so jazzed up about the others. This week I noticed I needed worship, because it was time to celebrate something, but I was busy.



@Windy
Mm-hmm.

@Johanna
I had just finished one of my goals that had been a goal for a year, but I was busy working on the next one. And I was like, "Oh. This is not really how I want to keep operating."

@JT
Hmm.

@Windy
Mm-hmm.

@Johanna
I'm also beginning to feel a little weary, like I'm beginning to feel like it might be time for me to bake some chocolate chip cookies after this conversation.

@JT
I think you probably should.

@Johanna
Should we mail some to Windy?

@JT
Yeah.

@Windy
Actually, maybe I'll bake some too. I have some dough. I have some dough in my freezer. I could do that.

@Johanna
Oh. Cool. That's the best. Let's see if the housesitting house has any chocolate chip cookie dough for us.

@JT
We'll find out.

@Windy
Well, this was a good conversation. This was a very athletic conversation.

@Johanna
Right.

@JT
Yeah.

@Johanna
Yeah.

@JT
Yeah. When you said weariness, I thought, "Well, we've walked a long way together tonight."

@Johanna
Yeah.



@Windy
Mm-hmm.

@JT
Mm-hmm.

@Johanna
Running's more fun in a group, but we still did it.

@Windy
I don't know. I don't think you want to watch me run. It's pretty sad.

@Johanna
Oh. Okay. Wait. We won't go running. How about spiritual running?

@JT
Right.

[laughter]

@JT
I'll take that.

@Johanna
I like how you both are like, "Don't put me in the running pod."

@JT
Not the kind of thing I do either. No.

@Johanna
Yeah. You're shaking your head.

@JT
Mm-hmm.

@Windy
All right. Well, good night, you two. Enjoy your cookies.

@JT
Thank you.

@Johanna
Good night.

@JT
Good night.



Discussion Questions

1. *Can meetings be welcoming of all people's conditions? If so, where are the boundaries for this? How does your meeting approach ongoing pastoral care of its members?*
2. *What was your reaction to our exercise in naming and valuing gifts?*
3. *How do you answer your anger, blame, shame, etc. with mercy? When is this easy? When is it hard?*
4. *How do capitalism and money influence our ability to be faithful, offer ministry and service, and give each other care? What do the terms "covenant relationship" and "beloved community" mean to you?*

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