



FORWARD IN FAITHFULNESS

Creative conversations, rooted in love.

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

Keira Wilson is from Bellefonte, PA, where she grew up in the local State College Friends Meeting. She currently lives in Iowa and works at a college as a civic career coach. We met Keira in her role as co-clerk of the Adult Young Friends cohort at the Friends General Conference Gathering of Friends in 2017. Keira's abundant warmth and energy led us to become friends.

Johanna, Keira, and I talked together on December 10, 2020. Our wide-ranging conversation touched on many aspects of evolving and adaptive community relationships. We started by considering the state of spiritual fire in and out of Quakerism and discussed equity, integrity, and expression of gifts and passions. Keira gives examples of these in her professional work, in serving on a unique Quaker committee with all members clerking, and in collaboration with colleagues who hold a Masters of Divinity serving in secular organizations. NOTE: This transcript contains language that some readers may find objectionable.

--JT Dorr-Bremme

Tags: *righteous anger, politeness, intuition, wildness, FGC Gathering, transparency, mentors mentorship, humor, clerkless committees, Martin Melville, adaptability, reassessment, agile emergence, alternate spiritual communities, peer mentoring, West Philly Friends Meeting, clarity, efficiency, preparation, proactivity, indifference, hesitancy, activation, fire, motivation. Subversion as an act of integrity.*



Keira Wilson

Meeting of Origin: State College Friends Meeting
Active in: Guilford College Quaker Leadership Scholars Alumni
FGC Gathering - Junior Gathering Staff
Emerging Leaders Project community
In the care of Dyresha Harris, Galen Fick,
and Suz Cole Sullivan, and Evan Schnider
Age 35
Pronouns: she

@JT
All right. We have started recording.

@Johanna
There we go.

@Keira
My name is Keira Wilson. I give you the consent to record.

@JT
Thank you, Keira Wilson.

@Johanna
Now we can get you your little placard to set on your desk.

@Keira
I have one of those.

@Johanna
How did you get one?

@Keira
I work for a place that makes those things. I also have a nametag. [pause] Would it be cool – as we center, could I also center down into my food?

@Johanna
Definitely. Eat your food, please.

@Keira
Okay. I'm going to mute myself because I just realized it's going to be a little crunchy.

@JT
I might be a little crunchy too.



@Keira

Because you're made of granola!

[Group pauses in worship.]

@JT

I'm ready for words, if others are.

@Johanna

Me too. The phrase 'Quaker fire' came to mind when we were quiet. Like maybe we could talk about the fire that Quakers have, or need, or the fire that they *could* have.

@JT

Sure. I'd like to hear about that.

@Johanna

Okay.

@Keira

When you guys think about that – well I know that that's been part of the language that you've expressed. So when you think about that, what comes to mind? Because I think that will help me find the thread or connection to that question, knowing what you're thinking about and also what comes to mind for me.

@Johanna

Well for me, the fire is the righteous, sometimes angry fire that people have. Anchored in a prophetic voice. Well, it could be one of those but not all – it's not necessarily *all* of them. But it's like I feel my little fire when we're living flat, and we could come to life. And sometimes I see young people call us into life.

@Keira

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

And I see fire come alive when I'm talking to someone on the phone who's a Quaker and we start talking about the Quaker structure. And then we get all heated up. We're just – there's a passion that's kind of pure and good – even if it's forceful and uncontrollable, maybe. That's some of the fire for me.

@Keira

Yeah.

@Johanna

Want to hop in, JT?

@JT

Hmm. Sure. Well, I started by looking up onto my wall where I pinned this piece of art that I have. It's a quote from Rufus Jones that says, 'Inner lights are set on fire by those who are already aflame.' And the fire metaphor is one that has a lot of different meanings that I've



encountered. And I think the one that we're thinking of is mostly what Johanna describes, the fiery passion that comes with being in touch with the Spirit. And then also the burning desire to manifest something of that in the world.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira
Cool. I just wrote down a bunch of things from what you said.

@JT
Yes. Good.

@Keira
So when I think about – if I take it out of just the context of Quakerism, I can – I'll roll back there in a minute. But I think about, oftentimes, we ask 'What are you passionate about? What do you care about, blah blah.' And that's a really nice and polite way of saying that. And I think in a lot of the work that I do, like my paid-paid work, I have really like a unique pleasure of taking all of the values and shit that I care about and getting to put it into my actual lived day-to-day work. It's not something where I have these Quaker values or I have these specific values and I just do them over here on Sunday or I do them from 5:00 PM to midnight, but I get to lay them into the layers of my actual work. And not just the impact of, oh, I'm working with students looking for careers and jobs, but I actually get to layer that into the fabric of the community and the institutions.

So from that space, I look at it, and I'm like, damn, I'm lucky, that not everybody gets to be in a position or not everybody is in a position. And I would say, 'What the heck is this year?' because today everybody is out of work. Right? And so not everybody gets to be in the position of working in a place that – your personal and your professional life, working in place where you can implement and live your values out the way you want to. And also, we have the opportunity to try and do that. I think about my life as a waitress. Loved it. Could still implement a lot of my same values into that work. Right? But it looks different. Right? The impact is different and the kind of scope and space.

So I feel like I'm in a really lucky position to be doing the work that I'm doing for service and social innovation. As a career counselor in a career center that values the idea of holistic career, not just something you do for money, but the combination of your personal, professional, and civic aspirations. I'm also super lucky that my supervisor is a former pastor and Masters of Divinity. So the world of faith communities comes in all the time. Right? And shout out to my M.Divs out there doing work outside of faith communities, that are doing work in the secular spaces, in nonprofit spaces, in corporate spaces. Love to them.

But the question that I often ask my students, in this what-is-that-fire space is, 'What do you give a shit about?' And sometimes, they can't tell me what they give a shit about. They're like, 'I don't know.' And I think that's true of some Quakers. Right? Similar. I don't know what I really give – like I give a shit about that we have clean water. I give a shit about the fact that there is injustice in my community and that space. I give a shit about it. Cool.



But then I ask the question, 'What really pisses you off? What means that you walk in the door, and you just can't? You just can't go to sleep, that your skin is crawling, the stuff that makes you want to cry and you just are losing it because it's so overwhelming. What really, really pisses you off? What do you spend all day talking to your friends about because you just can't let it go?' And they tell me. And I'm like, 'That's the thing that you're going to invest in.' That's the thing that, given enough clarity, space, breath, time, whatever, given an accountability buddy, whatever it is, you're going to spend your time on that. Because I could send you to a job, and you could do it, and you can come home, and you can feel like, okay, my values weren't there and I'm not really living my values out here. But if you're pissed off enough and you're in a position – and you find a position or you're volunteering or you're working or you're showing up to meeting or whatever with that in mind, you are going to invest. And you're going to invest like a dog with a bone. You aren't going to let it go.

And that is what I'm looking for, because I can send a student or a kid or a grown adult to any job to do it, but I want them to do whatever it is with the core of what is meaningful for them. Right? Because we are built very differently. Right? And that some of us are super talented at Excel spreadsheets. Some of us love the nitty-gritty numbers, and I want those people to do that work, because that's really important for them. But if I send somebody who doesn't really care about Excel spreadsheets or the nitty-gritty numbers or the impact to the organization, it's not going to help the organization. It's not going to help them either.

And so I always ask the question of what pisses you off, because that is where that person is going to actually spend their time. Even if they go to the 9-to-5 job and they work the job, they will spend their 5:00 to midnight doing the thing, doing the other thing. And sometimes, you have the opportunity to combine the two. Awesome. Sometimes, those spaces aren't quite clicking into place. But when I think about that in the sense of kind of like what's righteous, when I think it gets to the point of like what makes you angry. Right? Because anger is going to be your first signal that something is not right. Something is not right in your neighborhood, in your community, in the things that you see around you. Sometimes, it's something that's not right because you're not being treated correctly. Sometimes, it's like I'm pissed off because I see somebody saying something to JT, and I know that's not right. That's going to be your first signal that this is going to be really important to me.

I like, Johanna, the fact that you called this kind of living flat. There's this kind of two-dimensional sense when we aren't really breathing in that fire, we're not really breathing into that. And I think that often, we are taught to live that way because it is more polite and kind. In the guise of kindness, we're taught to not shake the boat, or agree even when we know it doesn't feel right. In a lot of ways take our intuition – to take the wild things in our mind and brain give us that help us survive, and to actually stuff that back down inside. In the face of being kind, in the face of being polite. And I would say that Quaker spaces are polite.

And that's great. Feel free to bring all of your East Coast Quaker spaces to Midwest America. Y'all would do great together, hand in hand, quietly being polite, seething deeply on the inside, and not having access to the tools that it's going to take to be real. And I think I shared with y'all a list of folks whom I have had the opportunity to be very real with, folks who were Quakers and are not anymore, folks who continue to be Quakers and are bringing the realness in perhaps a way that doesn't feel very kind because it's not in the kind of polite context of that space.



But I think that's part of what I value in that fiery space is that, if you're going to tell me what you really care about, you're going to tell me what really pisses you off. That means that we have to get to the raw realness of that. Whether or not I like it isn't really – for me, and this is not a – is like I'm here to hear that and hold space and to validate that those are real feelings and that's a real space, because much of the spaces we create is a devaluation of those wild thoughts. I'm not saying wild like, oh, they're all over the place. I mean like the survival thoughts, the survival feelings that we go through to say this is – it doesn't feel right. Yeah. You should be in tune with that. And so often we pretend like that's not there. So there is my thought on fire.

@Johanna

Cool. You're saying that you feel fire, you cultivate fire, and you see it alive. Hey, what's that?

@Keira

I just said cool.

@Johanna

Oh. There's half a question coming up that I don't have quite formed, so I'm going to listen. But we'll see what comes up for anybody

[Group moves into worship. JT brings us back with a question.]

@JT

What pisses you off, Keira?

@Keira

Oh. I've got a couple of things that are like on the regular chart, like inequity in pay, workers' rights, racism. Those are like the nice big ones. I'll tell you. The word 'give back' makes my skin crawl, because we use it all the time. We've been trained that the way that we help our community is to give back, and that tells me that I am now in a position of power to give you the things that no longer are – maybe are not as valuable to me. Maybe they're more valuable to you because you need them. And that is an inherent power dynamic that we have created to enable the people in power to feel good.

I am much more interested in helping people identify their own power and privilege in particular positions and contexts to learn when they can advocate, lift up, and invest in either communities around them or communities that they are connected to, and also to learn how to sit down and stand back so that other folks can be at the forefront. And that is really hard work. That means, in a lot of ways, getting to know yourself and dismantling a lot of things that you've been told like giving back is great, but food drives are the best. And I'm like, 'Awesome. I don't want to give my community all the high-sodium expired canned food goods.' I would rather have them direct connect with our local farmers and have some sort of sustainable process in between the two, right, or between everybody. But also, we need to feed folks right off the bat. People need it right now.

And so really coming to an understanding of what do we do in direct action. What's the response today? This week? And how do we continue to move that? And that has a lot to do with taking apart the idea that giving back doesn't have a power construct to it. It absolutely does. And that what that gift to give looks like may not be anything you have ever imagined. And so changing that – maybe it's pay it forward. I don't know. But it's definitely not give back.



@Johanna

Maybe it's lift up together.

@Keira

Mm-hmm. I actually have been really – I mean it's like a popular word at this point, but co-creation, and that means I come in with my idea, like here's your list of questions. Right? Those might not be the questions that we actually ask. Right?

@Johanna

Yeah.

@Keira

Right? Right? That's a great place to start. Where do we go from here? Right? And that if we co-create something, then we're actually building it together. And oftentimes, we're building it as we're moving, as we're learning together, which is, in the philanthropy world, pretty messy because they're like, well, what are the end results going to be. Girl, I don't know. Best guess. Right? So I'll leave that there. That's what pisses me off. At least that's one of the things that makes my skin crawl.

@Johanna

I think about – well often, when I think about you, I think about the many people I know who are activating for Quakers to be something different than they are right now.

@Keira

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

But I don't know where I got that idea. So I'm just wondering. Is that something that you care about? Or is that in the background?

@Keira

That's a great question. And they are. I think I'm in a really interesting space at this point because I don't actually have a – I don't have a home community. Y'all are pretty much the closest thing I have to a home community in the sense of State College Friends Meeting. And the closest thing that I feel like to a core group of Quakers that feels like home is actually FGC's Gathering,¹ and oftentimes the folks that move through that space, both folks who have been in that space and aren't there anymore, and folks that are still there, and folks that are incoming. And I think that's where I do probably most of my work.

And I think, although slow in some ways, FGC as a nonprofit resourcing tool for Quaker spaces has been moving towards that work for at least the last 10 years. And so how do we – the question about how do we become more welcoming, accessible, resource-rich spaces was a conversation they were having like 10 years ago. And that was work that I dove into, moved with

¹FGC is the Friends General Conference, an annual gathering of Quakers and Quaker-curious folks from around North America. It rotates between different cities each year.



them, and not having – myself not quite having the right tools to be in that space, too. And that has obviously transformed into some of the antiracism work.

But also, I'm not hooked into the day-to-day Meeting bullshit. So I get – I am like released from that. And the way I operate in that space is less so around needing to come to consensus, because that's a funny little thing. But at least in the FGC world, they are a nonprofit, and therefore they are a business. As much as it functions like it wants to be a big meeting, it's not. It's a business. And so I constantly bring that perspective back into the space. It's like a Spirit-led business, don't get me wrong. And they try really hard to be like a big, big, big mega-meeting. And I'm like no, no, no, no. That's not – that's actually not how it's set up for, which is – I think it's very interesting, the try to be over on this mega-meeting side. And I'm like y'all still have to do your taxes. Y'all still have to do your nonprofit status. You still a business.

But like what could we be? Right? What could Quakers really be? And I mean I'm not totally in love with, historically, the 'look at where we have come from' stuff. I'm like, 'That's neat. Where are we now?' But historically, if I look at where we come from, we look like a bunch of crazy people, like people wandering around naked doing wild-ass shit, like people who are like, 'Look, I'm going to be a lady preacher, and I don't give a shit what you say in Boston,' and still get hung. I look at that, and I go, 'Oh my god, Quakers of the Ye Olde Age be wilding!'

And I know why the Midwest Quakers were like, 'Let's just bring it back. Let's just have music and hang out and go to meeting.' And like, 'Oh, no. We just want to – we want it to be okay.' And I have to wonder. Right? I have to wonder about the kind of ebb and the flow to generations of this, because they – feeling so moved to really rebuke a system to its core. Right? Or I think about the stories they tell about New Garden Friends in North Carolina² about how they would – slave owners would come looking for their slaves, and they were like, 'Oh, of course I'll help you,' and they'd literally drive them around to other places away from the folks that they were hiding. They were like, 'Of course we'll help you over here.' Just even thinking about how do you – what problem solvers are in this mix. Right?

And my question is like what are doing now. Who's really problem solving in our community? And so much of – I mean if we wanted to see what – I think about federal government versus state government. We're a great version of state government. We're like every meeting for themselves. But I don't know that our meetings are really tied to each other that tightly, even through – even through like – Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's³ like, 'We're going to do all this.' Right? And I would say maybe it would be 20 of the other meetings might be tapped in, hell yeah, but they're not necessarily connected, not really.

And so the question is how do you make change like that. How do you – how does somebody like me make any change in that larger space? Right? And alternatively, my question is like what are the Quakers gonna be for this world? And maybe it's not through the system of meetings. Maybe that's just like the meetup point. Gather at the meetinghouse. We're going to go out and do something else. Right? That's the jump-off. Right? It's not the house in which we live in.

²Learn more at the New Garden Friends Meeting website: <https://ngfm.org/about/network-to-freedom/>

³Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM or PhYM) is a Quaker body that includes New Jersey, Delaware, Eastern Maryland, and Central Pennsylvania. It is made up of over 100 local meetings inside these states.



Yeah. And I – the question about like what am I really doing, I don't know that I'm doing anything really different. I think I've actually been very quiet in a lot of ways, and I've actually moved up some really interesting not-spoken-about ranks within larger Quaker organizations. I think probably one of the most powerful and non-talked-about positions is actually a Naming Committee for the Nominating Committee⁴ of any group. Number one, nobody wants to be on Nominating Committee because it's a lot of work. But two, Naming Committee gets to determine who makes the decisions about who gets to be where. What a wild thought. And ultimately, it's usually down to like three people, maybe four. Those four people basically determine the shape of leadership within a Quaker organization. What the fuck?

@Johanna
The four on Naming?

@Keira
Yeah. They name the folks on Nominating. And whoever they put on Nominating then is the powerhouse to decide who then gets to go everywhere else. Isn't that wild?

@Johanna
Yeah. I guess I'm struggling with the word powerhouse, because I'm on Nominating, and it's more like a chug. It's not a smoothly riding ship.

@Keira
Right. But somebody had to put you there.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira
And somebody put you there for a purpose.

@Johanna
Actually, I suggested myself when I talked to a Friend –

@Keira
But see, that doesn't happen all the time.

@Johanna
Oh. Well, I was talking to somebody who was on a committee. And she said, 'Where do you see yourself fitting?'⁵

@Keira
But it's like one of those things that not everybody gets to nominate themselves. There's not a real clear process for that. And I mean ultimately, Nominating Committee is the group that gets

⁴Naming Committee is the group that suggests people for Nominating Committee, who then suggest people for service roles inside the group. It's a little convoluted, but that's generally how it works.

⁵As it turns out, Johanna's meeting does not have a Naming Committee.



to make the decisions. Right? But whose brains we put on that committee is oftentimes determined by Naming Committee. And I'm like – and that process is shitty. It's a shitty process. I'm going to give it to you that way. I'm like I'd rather have y'all saying who wants to do this, put your name in the pot, like make it a public process. I'm much more interested in transparency. And for at least our young folks, it's like unless you're coming into a nominating committee or another committee that has folks who want to foster and mentor, it sucks. It sucks.

@Johanna

Can I give you an example of that?

@Keira

Yeah. Hit me.

@Johanna

Our meeting just approved a COVID safety plan, after two business meetings⁶ of talking about reopening. And I was like, 'Hey, in case you didn't notice, I am the only young person at business meeting.' And they were like, 'Well, we sent out the safety plan for review to all the committees.' And I was like, 'Hey, in case you didn't know, there's only two of us young folks that are on committees, but there's 10, 12, or 15 young adult Friends who have been coming in and out of Meeting.'

@Keira

Yup.

@Johanna

That's it. So because young folks weren't plugged in to the committee structure, they didn't have a voice in this decision. They didn't even know it was *happening*. Which, any young person could come to business meeting, but I don't see a lot of folks besides me inviting the young people to come in.

@Keira

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

Yup.

@Keira

On a brief side note, this is really about that question. And this is kind of a joke, but not really. My question, Johanna, is who do I sue when I get sick [from COVID] when I get to meeting. Is it the meetinghouse? Is it everyone on business meeting?

@Johanna

I don't know, Keira. I guess you'll have to figure that one out!

⁶Business meeting is a community forum, usually held monthly, in which Quakers make decisions together.



@Keira

And that is a question that I was like, sitting in that meeting, when I was like woo. And I was like, 'Who does one sue, then?' Who will be responsible for this decision? Will it be everyone who's at this meeting? Will it be everyone that was at the last meeting? Will it be just the folks who are in – is it business meeting folks? Is it – which committee will be held responsible for that health and care and safety should anything go wrong? And the answer is I don't think we got it. And I'm like, okay, cover your ass because that's the next thing that's coming. And I am like, phew, I am so glad that I am not on a record anywhere for anyone to personally sue me for making that decision.

@Johanna

You'll be on the business meeting minutes because you attended that business meeting, Keira.

@Keira

Mm-hmm. And that is like a really dangerous space. Right? When we say we're going to do this thing, but we don't know who is responsible, and then the answer is that we are all responsible if we're going to do the consensus model of things. So, you know, love [Friend's name], hope she's got enough money.

@Johanna

Hmm.

@Keira

And I think those are the things that, as Quakers, we don't necessarily think about because we don't have to think in a business model most often. And that means if I were showing up there, I'd have everybody sign off on a liability waiver that says you will not hold us responsible. But I don't know anybody on business meeting that is thinking about that particular piece. I am, but that's because I do risk management. I'm like, 'What's going to give me a heart attack? This.' Right? And in that case, for that specific purpose, I'm really glad a lot of your young people aren't there because I don't want them to be caught up in any of that. Right? That's not fair, but.

@Johanna

But we're not doing the work we could be doing to invite new voices.

@Keira

Right. And that takes some serious mentorship.

@Johanna

Yeah. And time.

@Keira

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

@Keira

I forgot what her last name is, but a woman named Geeta out of Southern Yearly Meeting, maybe – Southern? What's the one that's in Appalachia?



@JT
It's SAYMA.

@Keira
AYMA?

@JT
Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting.⁷ I know who you're talking about. I've met her.

@Keira
Yeah. She was one of my mentors in 2010. There's a woman out of New England, and now I'm forgetting her name. She does a lot of the stuff with the mayor in Maine about taking back guns. I'm forgetting her name, and I have to look it up. Also one of my mentors. These are like the folks who were like, 'Cool. We're going to help you figure out how to make their way through here.'

@Johanna
Who's your mentor now?

@Keira
That's a great question. I'm trying to think of who I would – probably Suze and I spend the most amount of time together. They are [so-and-so]'s partner. And I don't know so much about a mentor, but I think that we're accountability buddies, especially in different spaces. I would've said, for a long time, Patsy. Patsy actually gave me a lot of my first starts on things, but that was probably in 2008 to 2012 or so. She was like you can do this. I'm trying to think of who else is out there. There was a couple people in meeting, long time ago, like hard-ass people. I loved them.

@Johanna
Like Dean Tuttle and Steven Beerman? Like long ago? No, you're shaking your head.

@Keira
But I always will listen for Martin. I'm always listening for Martin. I'm trying to – his last name was Wilson. I can't remember his first name. He came back to Meeting not too long ago and maybe got very old very quick. Martin's always like somebody I check in with. Another person, too. I'm forgetting her name. Oh my god. Anne something. She might still be on the bulletin board. She's like a faraway Friend, hasn't been there for years.

@Johanna
Anne Ward.

@Keira
Yes. Anne Ward!

⁷Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting (SAYMA) is the Quaker body encompassing local meetings in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia.



@Johanna
She's in Iraq.

@Keira
Yeah. She's so badass.

@Johanna
Yeah.

@Keira
I fucking love her. She is so badass. She used to do peacekeeping walks during football games to deter rioting.

@Johanna
What! Holy shit.

@Keira
Yeah. That's where – that's how I got to know her. I also see Kersey a lot when I'm in town here. Kersey's always making art in the park. I'm very into it. A couple of my folks, I feel like, passed away. So like Jane – what is Jane's last name?

@Johanna
Jenks Small?

@Keira
Yes. Jane. How about mentors in the last couple of years? I don't know. I'd have to think about that. I know that Grace Cooke out of PYM who's maybe doing their fundraising stuff, she's always been a supporter of me, and she's also a wild human. I find her very interesting. She's a Quaker who says, 'We have to do justice work.' And I'm always like, 'What's happening here?' She's always been a big believer in young folks.

@Johanna
Hmm. Cool.

@Keira
Yeah. We did a couple of committees together that were really cool. I'm also having a hard time remembering what committee I've been on. Right?

@Johanna
Yeah. I think some time last summer JT told me he's never been on a committee. Is that right?

@Keira
JT, you've never been on a committee?



@JT

Oh. I was on one that hardly counted. I was part of the Fellowship Committee at Orange Grove,⁸ my first meeting, which essentially was I was willing to do chores.

@Johanna

That matters. That's service.

@JT

And show up to meetings once or –

@Johanna

What's that?

@JT

And show up to meetings.

@Keira

But like do you –

@JT

[indiscernible 42:24] they met once a year. Sorry.

@Keira

But do you want to be on committees?

@JT

I'm not sure I do. No. None of them particularly entice me as far as the kind of work they do. But in listening to you, I've realized that you, I think, have experience with and perspective on the structures and how they relate to each other or don't. And how those structures relate to individuals in ways that I don't at all, that I haven't really encountered. And my sense is that some of the changes or phenomena that I'd like to see more of could be facilitated by committee work, but. I'm willing to buy that. I just haven't seen much evidence yet, personally.

@Keira

I wish y'all could've been in the last meeting I was literally in. It's the union programs committee for FGC's Gathering. I actually wish that you could've seen the progression. And we started out with one core group, and I was brought in as a new person, and a high schooler. What's up, [Friend's name]? He's cool. I like him. It was really tough. It was like – it was both like project managed and Quakerly project managed. There was all this Quaker stuff we would do, and then there was this project flow that we were trying to do to determine who might be speakers for the evening program which, I understand, that's a very – it's very structured. And that's very helpful, I think, for folks who need a lot of structure. That's also me. I need a lot of structure.

But it just like – it didn't jive. Things weren't working. People weren't really tapped in. We were just in for the five minutes of quiet time and then on to the business. Right? And it really didn't feel like this committee meshed. And we actually lost both of our co-clerks, probably in October.

⁸Orange Grove Friends Meeting, which is in Los Angeles County.



They both were like I can't. And they both chose to step down. And I was really sad about that for a while. And I was like I really like these people. They were just not in the capacity zone. And I was sad about it because it knocked us down to just these four people, the three of us left on the committee and then one of the Gathering tri-clerks⁹ was like, okay, I'm not going to leave you guys. Right?

And this – maybe this is part of why I love it. It's like [one Friend], who's a high schooler, and me, and another person who's maybe a little bit younger than me by a couple years, and one other, I'm going to say, senior Friend, as in gets the discount. Because you know senior Friend can mean a lot of things. And it's just the four of us. And we were like, shit, who's going to be clerk. None of us really wanted to be clerk. None of us wanted to be recording clerk. But we all determined that we were all going to be clerk and that we were all going to be recording clerk and we would pass off those responsibilities as it felt right for what was going on in each other's spaces.

And we have done exceedingly well. We have not just – and everybody is like here is the timeline. And I'm like fuck your timeline. I don't care if you want it in the early program. Sorry. The world doesn't work like that right now. And one of us is like, oh my god, we have to make the timeline. And I'm like forget the timeline. So we're falling somewhere in between, which is great. And so we've gotten some really great – we've pulled some really great things together. We've got one big outstanding thing that's like waiting, but everything is pretty much lined up. And it's taken us an additional month and a half longer than normal, as everything is doing these days.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira

And I mean I got off a phone call with them with the last thing we were talking about what our favorite food was, and I was inspired to go make myself some food, right, which you are watching me eat. And we talked about how, okay, in the spring, we don't have to meet as often. Do you want to meet every other week even if we don't have a ton of stuff to talk about? And I was like, 'Of course I want to hang out with y'all.' And everybody was like excited to be able to continue to hang out. And I was like what an interesting committee to be part of. Right?

There is no clerk. When folks email us, they email all of us. We all know. But we also all signed up for that part. We said, okay, no one's going to be clerk, so now we all get the emails from everybody. Okay. But also there is no specific recording clerk. And so we all learned how to use the Google Doc and just had our notes. And the way we – the setup we had had some specific processes, and we kept to most of those processes as we determined what we wanted. And then each one of us took somebody to reach out to and do the work. And some of us are struggling with having those conversations with people, and wrangling them. Like, okay, what's that look like,, et cetera. And we help each other.

And it's like one of the most successful committees I feel like I've ever been on where the structures that have been put in place for how it should be no longer are serving us. And so

⁹There are three people who worked together to coordinate logistics for the FGC Gathering that year.



we've just adapted, both in – like I don't think we had any silence today. We didn't sit down and have silence. We spent time getting to know each other. We spent time asking some things that were really important of each other. And not to say that silence isn't important. I think there is such a really parasympathetic nervous process in that. But today, it didn't feel like that was the space. That is a space, but it didn't feel like – it didn't feel like that that was where we needed to connect today, and that was okay.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira
And like what an interesting – not just committee, but what an interesting community space to be able to walk in and be able to serve the needs that are in the room that day.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira
And maybe that's the reason I hate business meeting, but. Right? Because there's business to be had, but the idea that there is a structure that you have to stuff it through –

@Johanna
Ah. No.

@Keira
So –

@Johanna
[indiscernible 50:08] and people – we keep hearing that we're doing things wrong because they didn't know the right process.

@Keira
Yeah.

@Johanna
I keep doing it wrong. I've been here 10 years. That's too long to not understand the basic rules!

@Keira
Yeah. And sometimes, it's like, oh, we just need to clarify rules. Fine. Fine. Fine. But really, let us – and I do this at work. My dean hates this, but too bad. You can't just say, 'Here is the protocol.' If you want people to buy into that, you have to say, 'Here are some of the basic things that the current group has agreed upon, and because we are a new group because we have new people who are showing up, we need to reassess this.' Aha. Reassessment! Ooh. And integrate – for the folks who have been here to reassess and change some of the things. Maybe this thing isn't working right. And then we have gotten new people, and so they might have new things to add.

And so to be able to create the system that we're going to follow in this meeting or community or whatever that we're going to agree upon, everybody's got to be at the table to agree. And so



when we take JT and Johanna and stuff them into the old system and say this is the way it's going to be, it's not going to work. I mean you can do it, but does that mean you get the investment? Nah. Does it mean you got the skin in the game? Probably not. Does it mean it's going to be like outright successful? You maybe got a 40 percent chance. But what happens when we come – we reassess, we know it, we all do this together, we co-create it, and then we're able to come into that space and serve the needs that are in that room in that moment, not the needs from yesterday, not the needs from last week, not the needs from Margaret Meade, but the needs of here and now.

And that feels really different. And I'll chalk it up that this has been the most successful committee I think I've ever been on. It also could be because we're young, but I don't think that's true, or at least not entirely.

@JT

Do you think being young has any relation to your willingness to do things differently?

@Keira

Hmm. So for one, I would not label myself as young. I'm mid-30s, baby, like prime time. Welcome to the prime, Friends. Not only do I have the autonomy and I'm capturing my values, I've got some energy in a way that other folks might not. And in my case, I am like a sustaining human. I have money. I can spend time, money, talent in whatever way I want to. So prime time. Sorry, my 20-year-olds. You still don't have it together. Right? That's all bias, but.

I think it has more to do with cultivating a mindset. Right? One of the reasons why Anne Ward is badass, continues to be badass, continues to do work that for most of the other people in our meeting seems totally terrifying, totally unlikely, as if they would never do something like that. Right? And I think it's like – it's not just like, oh, fearlessness, oh, but it's this kind of mindset. And maybe it's a two-piece. I think about it most recently in the sense of like what is going to make me feel good. What is going to be really amazing? Is it going to be – is it going to feel good for me to walk outside in the cold with a friend of mine? Great question. It's going to be cold. Friend of mine. Right? Let me weigh that. Is that going to feel good? Walking in the cold is actually going to get my body moving, that could be really good, et cetera.

And I think so much of our time is spent thinking about what's not going to make us feel good or what's going to feel good I want to do. I want to eat food right now, so I'm going to continue to eat food even though I'm in front of y'all because I'm going to be like that's not something I wish to be ashamed of. But this mindset of being like what is actually going to serve me and what is actually going to make me feel good. And one of those answers, like living in an antiracist community would make me fucking feel good, wouldn't it. Right? That requires some really hard work, but ultimately, that dream, that space, that reality would feel really good for me. Does it feel good for everybody? I don't know. Depends on your mindset.

So there's that kind of like feeling-good space. What am I going to do? And can I allow myself to have that? I'm going to say that there are some folks in my life who struggle really hard with allowing themselves to feel good. What kind of toilet paper do you want to use? Are you just going to use the cheap stuff because it's cheap? Are you going to use it because it's super sustainable and friendly? Are you going to use – does that make you feel good? Great. Are you going to use the super puffy Charmin because it makes your bum feel good? Well, I don't know.



But you have to think about those choices and say what's going to make me feel good in this moment. Right?

So there's a whole piece of that, right, where we don't actually let ourselves feel that great, but then there's a whole piece of – and this is what totally surprises me about Quakers. Right? There's a whole piece about being kind of emergent and evolving. And I forget the line. There's something about the kingdom that is evolving, like the kingdom here on earth, like you're already living – I forget who said it. Some Quaker. Frank Massey would be so said that I forgot. But I'm going to take this nugget away that we're here in this kingdom on earth. We're actually living in the best time. Right? We're here and it's evolving and it's kind of always changing when we're in it.

And it's so surprising to me that we just don't live in a place of agile emergence, where we're not like, oh, this has just changed. Okay. Let's just move with that change. And instead, we're like, no, we got to do it like we did in the 1800s, like word up, George Fox. I'm like, 'That's cute, but also we don't live there anymore.' Right? And so in this space of like – and I love Quakers because there's this mysticism piece. There's this like, oh, be open, be open to these feelings, be open to what could be, be open. And yet we don't – we then – we just don't practice it. And I'm like, well, and isn't that the point. Well, you know, we talk about it and we feel it, we just don't do it.

@Johanna
Hmm. Hmm.

@Keira
And that's where I'm like, 'Well, what are you going to do with that? What's stopping us?' And I think part of what's stopping us is that – either this I don't know if it's going to feel good to change in this way or I'm afraid to feel good in changing in this way or – I don't know. Just it gets stuck there, and I don't have an answer for that, but I don't want to be stuck there.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

@Keira
That's a very long answer for your question, JT.

@Johanna
Hmm.

@JT
I'm here to listen.

@Keira
You're here to be part of it.

@Johanna
Yeah. But listening's at the core of whatever the 'it' is.



@Keira

Mm-hmm. I'm writing that down. Has anything stuck with – I mean I feel like a couple things have stuck with y'all. I'm taking away living flat, for sure.

@Johanna

Are you asking us what's stuck with us?

@Keira

Yeah.

@Johanna

Yeah. Hold on a minute.

[pause]

@Johanna

Well, I keep wondering who supports you as you grow, if your mentors are dying off and you have a couple of accountability buddies. But it's hard to have a meeting when you don't have a meeting. Is it possible that the evening program committee is your main faith committee – or community?

@Keira

Maybe. I think part of it right now, for me, is that I actually don't need a lot from the Quaker community. I am not in a space where I am feeling like I need to take from that or even need to draw so much from that. I would say that when I lived in west Philadelphia when I first moved to Philly, ooh, deep, deep, deep, deep, that crew. That crew was my crew. Right? And those folks are still around. I still have deep relationships with a lot of folks from that West Philly Meeting. But I think at like this juncture, there's not needing so much from the Quaker faith community. And part of it is like being in a space and establishing a – and being in that established space, I think, is really helpful, especially if folks are moving around. I think that's a really great place to be.

But I also think that there is a lot of stuff that I'm working on that the Quaker faith community doesn't have a handle on. And so I'm not drawing a lot of energy from that. Not to say that those folks aren't here to support. Right? [Friend's name] and I have been friends since I was 17, and we will continue to be in those tough and tender parts of our lives, despite the fact that we will have not seen each other for like two years in kind of all of this. So I think there's really strong bonds that are there.

But I also think there's an element of me – and I talk about this in a couple of different stances. But there is a really – there is an element of me creating a set – like a series of chosen family, not just in like, hey, I don't want to hang out with my biological family because sometimes they're really intense. And, no doubt, they are. Right? But I think that when I look at my values and when I look at the people doing the work and when I look at the folks who can support me and vice versa, even in this like quarantine space, I have a chosen family in which I chose two other people with whom to share space with so that I could, and they could, be okay in the middle of this year. Right? Definitely conversations, but this idea of two other people living solo, that humans aren't really meant to be solitary in this way.



@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira

And so I chose that pod. And we chose our – we co-created our rules. Right? And then we – and we practice that together. And we're tight. We weren't tight at the beginning. We didn't know each other that well, and now we really do. Right? And so there's a chosen family there. And I think when it comes to my faith, practice, and the work that I do, I said I loved M.Divs. Right? My boss is a Masters of Divinity. One of my – what I would say, my work wife, which is kind of inappropriate but I – we'll shout it out to each other. My work wife from Princeton still works there. We call each other every week, and he is also a Masters of Divinity. Right? One of my good friends from grad school who transitioned, whole-life transitioned, works for Lambda Legal in Texas, also a Masters of Divinity.

And so I think about – and it's like not the thing I look for. I don't look up all the M.Divs and say who wants to be friends. Right? It's that as I'm getting to know folks, our value sets are matching, and that the way we are doing that work and we're approaching that work have some continuity and have some – and some challenges. We challenge each other. Right? And so when I think about faith communities – and lots of people ask me lots of Quaker questions. I'm happy to answer. Right? But they're coming out of really different faith communities, and I actually get a lot more from that kind of peer mentoring at this juncture in my life doing this type of work than I do from a Quaker space that's just like we're Quaker, wah, we're here.

Now that person in our meeting for me is going to be Martin. He's working on his Masters of Divinity. Not a huge surprise to me, because that's a trend that I have picked up over the course of the last 10 years. This is a particular skill set that I'm drawn to specifically working with. I like to hang out with them. Absolutely, we'll have a personal relationship. But these are the folks that I work with, I will carry weight with, and we will design and build and craft and do, which is not the same feeling I get from all my Quaker spaces. From the West Philly group back in 2010? Absolutely. They're a bunch of doers.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira

And maybe that's why, a couple years ago, everybody was like, 'Green Street Friends in Philadelphia. They might be a bunch of doers.' But I don't – I think that thinking about who is my chosen family, who is my chosen committee – I'll use that one lightly, committee. Who is going to talk real with me? Because I'm not going to spend my energy on someone who's going to placate my bullshit, like blah blah blah blah blah. You know? And I'd rather have you be like that was neat, I really love you, and that was a bullshit thing I want you to think about again. Right?

@Johanna
Yep. I just told that to someone today.

@Keira

Yeah. My boss tells me that all the time. She's like 'I'm right, you're wrong, I love you.' Or, 'I'm wrong, you're right, I love you.'



@Johanna
Wow. Cool.

@Keira

It's like you have to be in the level of trust with those folks to make that really work. And I think one of the things, when I look at Quakers, is like why the fuck should anybody trust us as a group. And you can say, well, look at what we did for abolition. I'm like, all right, abolish the prisons. What are you going to do for that one? Right? And I think that's a tough thing to really narrow people down on and say here is this one topic that we all should care about, and this is what we're going to do as a whole community. But I think that that is what FGC is – I don't want to say shifting or moving towards. It's doing something. And right now, enough people are being kind of relentless about it that it's showing up. Not like showing up here where you appear to do all the great work, but it's like appearing.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira

I also think Quakers should cry more often, like let it out, or because you're stressed. Just cry.

@Johanna

The M.Div people that you know, do they cry?

@Keira

Oh yeah. I mean I was on the phone with the person I call on a weekly basis, and probably like two or three weeks ago, he was in tears. Not because I was like boo, boo, boo, but just like he was in a place. When he – we talked a little bit about crying for a while. I think about my boss, who definitely cries at some points, but not at work. We're working with a lot of students, so we try to not lay that on them. That's a power dynamic in and of itself. I don't know about my person down in Texas. I don't know that we've talked about that. But the person I talk to on the pretty regular basis, tall skinny white dude, definitely in check with some of his deeper emotions on that front. He's pretty cool.

@Johanna
Mm-hmm.

@Keira

Also, the M.Divs want out. They're not all about preaching. I can't tell you how many times I've talked to folks who are like, cool, I've got this Masters in Divinity, can I work anywhere else. They want to be able to do their work way more broadly than just churches or faith communities, which is fair.

@Johanna

There's something enriching from the Divinity folks you know. What is it?

@Keira

It might be an element of clarity. And I called them doers, but it might be much more of a clarity of motion. So like when I think about my experience in Quaker spaces, it's hard for, I'll say, liberal Friends to get from the thought to the action or the action happens, I'm going to point at



you guys, and the rest of the community is like not on the same page. They're like what, or like I didn't get that message, did you put it in the bulletin, did you put it in the bulletin for like weeks, where I think a lot of the folks in the M.Div section are working within church communities that have systems that have been built by either their organization or the community in which they're in that are consistently maintained and operated. There are – and that's part of the hierarchical piece.

It both sucks and doesn't suck, in that sense, that in those spaces, it becomes much more clear about who the operators are of those groups. They would also be more clear about who do I need to sue if I got sick. Right? But in that sense that there are some really clear folks who are responsible for the care, physical care of the space, community care of the space. People have roles. People have clearly defined roles. There is a benefit to some of that, and my M.Div folks benefit from that and are able to get from point A to point B much more quickly.

@Johanna
Yeah.

@Keira
And because they've talked about in. They've already had the conversation about what will we do when such-and-such happens. And I think that's the conversation that many Quaker meetings have been trying to have, at least what I've seen over the last like 10 years. But if I were to say, 'We want a group of students to come stay at your meetinghouse for a week to do service projects in your community,' well, then it would be nearly impossible to get it to happen. Because we would have to go to business meeting, and then they would have to figure out if it was okay, and then maybe there would be some questions. And then there is a question of what – should we ask these people to pay? Should they rent the space? What requirements should we have of the service group coming? Should there be an adult? Or are the college students okay? Will someone need to stay in the meetinghouse. Blah blah blah.

My question is why ain't you all thinking about that now? Ask yourself that question now. Don't wait until somebody says we want to have a service group stay here. Say what if we had a service group stay here. What would we need? What would we require? Because someday, someone will ask you that question.

@Johanna
Hmm.

@Keira
And the last thing I'll say. I think that 'Way Will Open' is also very privileged.¹⁰

@Johanna
Hmm. Say more about that.

¹⁰'Way Will Open' is a Quaker phrase many people use. It roughly translates to, 'Trust the process.'



@Keira

Way will open for people who have access, money, privilege, and power, easily. And sometimes, it's like by divine intervention, I made it on this bus, like woo. Right? But when we leave it up to way will open, we cut out a lot of people who can't afford that.

@Johanna

Hmm. Yeah. That makes sense. I just got an email from a judge in New York City today, and the Genesee Valley Quakers are working with the State College Quakers to support a man in prison who's made a motion to be – for early release. And as I see how convoluted it is for him to advocate for his freedom, even with support from people on the outside. There are Quakers who are making phone calls and finding support from other folks, too, who know people in power in the justice system in New York City. But it's like, way will *not* open for this man until 100 people find the right judge to call and call them. There is something lazy about 'way will open' when I look at what's needed to help him return to living outside of prison.

@Keira

When I hear you say that, I think about there is something very indifferent, because I don't think that people can't do the work. I don't think that people don't want to do the work. I think that that just hasn't made its way to the importance or priority.

@Johanna

Yeah. Well, I can speak to that for myself. I mean emailing this judge has been on my to-do list for at least five days, but also getting Medicaid and things that help me survive has also been on the list. And so I see it continue to get bumped down the priority list because it doesn't directly benefit me, which there's something healthy about that, and then there's something really screwed up about that. It's healthy to work for my own survival. I need to have health insurance. That's a good thing.

@Keira

Yeah.

@Johanna

That's fine. But like when you – what you said, either people don't want to do the work or they can't contribute, it's like, yeah, actually, I'm in both positions. After I read the reply from the judge – I was willing to connect to a Quaker who knew *other* Quakers in the Bronx who could help us find a judge that might know the judge hearing his case. And I was like this might work. I don't know. I can reach out. But I am at a place of 'can't' and 'don't want to,' because once I heard back from the chain, they have all these legal questions, like, 'Well, is it a motion or an appeal?' and technical stuff. And I was like I – all I can do is ferry that information to someone else, but I can't get involved in it.

@Keira

Mm-hmm.

@Johanna

Which I think – I feel right about that, but I say that because I'm feeling both the fire and the indifference, both the activation and the hesitancy. They kind of move back and forth.



@Keira

Well, and it's also, I think, those are the questions of what do we first need to do for ourselves or what do we need to ask for from our communities to meet those needs. Right?

@Johanna

Yeah. But like getting Medicaid's an easy example of putting my needs ahead of my service. But then I wonder, how far does that go? Do I need to sweep the floor before I make this email? That's harder for me to judge. I guess that's probably a different rabbit hole to talk about, which is how much service feels like the right amount.

@Keira

Right. In the Quaker Leadership Scholars Program¹¹, they would say it's not this much. [hands small] it's not that much. [hands wide apart] It's this much. [hands somewhere in the middle]

@Johanna

What does that mean?

@Keira

The fuck is this much?

@Johanna

Yeah. What does that mean?

@Keira

It means not too little, not too much, just right.

@Johanna

Huh.

@Keira

And I was like, 'I don't like that, because I like structure. Tell me how many hours. Tell me how many projects I have to do.' And they were like, 'No.' And I hated it. But I was like, 'Okay. I have to learn for myself what that balance looks like.' Do I do it well? Hell no. Am I doing it better now? Maybe. For me, it took a global pandemic to move a bunch of shit out of the way to be like, 'You cannot do this like this anymore, and you will not.' And I was like, 'Oh, amazing. Thank you.' And that was [indiscernible 1:20:50]. I was like, 'I can move and eat when I want to instead of having to be at my desk and do work.'

@Johanna

Yeah.

@Keira

Like, when do I want to see students? When do I want to talk to people? How many projects do I want to work on right now? And I took that – and I took a couple projects that I was like I kind of want to do, but I haven't really had time to do, and now I have time to do them. And I was like,

¹¹The Quaker Leadership Scholars Program is an apprentice program at Guildford College that focuses on service-learning, spiritual formation, and social justice.



'Cool. How long will each of these projects take?' And some of them might take a long fucking time. And it's like how long can I commit to this. Is it a year? Is it three years? And then how do I transition this to somebody else to take the lead on it because I cannot lead this forever, nor do I want to.

And those are questions I have to ask myself about how much I want to commit, because sometimes folks are like we want you to commit indefinitely all of your resources. And I'm the – when people are like, 'Oh, JT, join this committee,' JT, you best be asking, 'How often do you meet? When is the high season for this work? How much time does it take?' Right? Because it sucks to just hang out in a meeting and do nothing, unless you're building relationships and trust. That's kind of cool. But this – and folks who don't know how much they're asking of other people, that's a dangerous situation. And I think that's also kind of what Quakers do in the kind of committee world. We just ask you, and then suck out all your energy with no self-awareness about how much we're asking people to put in. I feel like folks that do business meeting and some other meetings know how much it takes, and then they try not to say it. They try to hide it.

@Johanna
Oh yeah.

@Keira
Oh. And then I'm like, 'Y'all shouldn't be doing all of this shit. That's too much work. That's too much work for a volunteer committee.' Like if people are not joyously committing to that work, you don't want them there, or the work you're doing is not anything that anybody wants to do. And why is it happening unless it's at all base necessary? Someone's got to do the books.

@Johanna
Do you know [Friend's name]?

@Keira
I don't but I –

@Johanna
She's badass with the books. Dude, she is the best. She's got it down. I don't know how much she works for free in order to do that, though.

@Keira
Oh. Okay. She shouldn't work for free.

@Johanna
Yeah. I can hold that for – that's probably a different topic for a different night. Hmm.

@Keira
[indiscernible 1:24:14]

@JT
Say that again, Keira?

@Keira
I'm eating the last of my food.



[pause]

@Johanna

Keira, are there other people we should talk to besides the folks you recommended on email?

[Keira recommends a few people she knows who might be interested, most of whom have left the Quaker world. In the process, she describes someone she knows who's unafraid to speak very openly and plainly.]

@Keira

Their game is – they piss a lot of other Quakers off.

@JT

Great.

@Keira

[indiscernible 1:26:58]

@Johanna

Definitely who we want. I mean, we want to hear from everyone, but especially from the folks who have some fire in their gut.

@Keira

And if you were to think about Quaker fire as a baseball game, if we're in the same committee meeting, then this one friend of mine is batting 100, and I'm in the outfield catching them. Right? We'll be in a meeting. They will be very quiet, and the text – I have literally had to put my phone on silent because my text messages would be like ding-da-ding-ding-ding-ding. And I'm like, yup, I see it, yup I know.

I think that's also an interesting thing specifically for young folks is that the way you make change in your committee is by having another advocate in the room and that you double down really hard a lot. That's really great. 'I heard so-and-so say this thing just five minutes ago. Does it sound like this again?' Right? And that whether it's somebody the same age, obviously, or somebody else in the room who is like – that goes back to the mentor/advocate thing. You need to have that other person in the room or things will be ignored. And you can shout one single person as much as you want, but it's really hard when somebody loops back and says I heard Johanna say this, did y'all hear that.

@Johanna

That's what happened when I was the only voice at business meeting one month. That's exactly it. After the meeting was done, I called people, and I said 'Please come to business meeting, because we need other voices who talk about white supremacy culture, without it being just one person.'

@Keira

And that is why I, and when I was in the Naming Committee role, I encouraged us to put people on committees or into Nominating with the idea that they would be co-supports. They would come in together, that you would never come into a committee without somebody else you knew



was also going to be on that committee. And then you had a team, and they could bounce off of each other, so that every committee should technically have – any new person should also be two – there should either be two new people or a new person coming in with a mentor on the other end so that there would always be that support. And ideally, if you did that, you could change the ways the committees worked. I just like scheming.

@Johanna

This is some good Quaker scheming. It always happens after 8:00 PM.

@Keira

I'll let that – that'll be – that'll be it.

@Johanna

All right. I'm feeling pretty full myself. JT, did I see you rubbing your eyes?

@JT

Yeah.

@Johanna

I'm just impressed because, in my peer group, I'm usually the first one to fade off any given evening.

@Keira

Yup.

@Johanna

Well, Keira, you asked what was sticking with us. I don't know how to narrow it much at all. It might take me a while to get a summary going.

@Keira

Well, you're good at those.

@Johanna

What's that?

@Keira

We need your summaries. If you have something –

@Johanna

You've read them? When was that?

@Keira

When you write about the different places that you go and you put them in the newsletter.

@Johanna

You read the newsletter? Huh! Truth comes out. The only people who read the newsletter are newcomers and people under the age of 50. Everyone else is hit or miss. But the young people and newcomers are reading them. Huh!



@Keira

That's me.

@Johanna

Cool. That's cool. I think I'm taking away a sense of broader living. Like when we talked about fire in the Quaker community, you talked about fire in life and fire in your work counseling when you guide folks. You didn't just talk about the Quaker slice of things. And then I also felt excited when you talked about your chosen family or your found family and started to dish out what they have that the Quakers don't have. Because that's something I'm really curious about. Yeah.

@Keira

Yeah.

@Johanna

And also, I think I want to call Anne Ward over Zoom now, because I've never met her.

@Keira

Yes. Tell Anne Ward I say hey girl.

@Johanna

That would be cool. I don't have her contact info. Do you have it?

@Keira

No. The last time – like she used to have a thing on the wall at the Meeting, and I think you could still get ahold of her. I mean you could shout out to the Meeting. I'm sure somebody does.

@Johanna

Yeah. There's a thing on the wall that says 'Pray for Iraq,' but it doesn't have contact info for Anne Ward. What's that?

@Keira

I fucking love Anne Ward. I'm getting an Anne Ward t-shirt and wear it around.

@Johanna

Cool. You could rock that for sure. Well JT, what are you taking away?

@JT

Well, the words that came to minds were 'subversion as an act of integrity.'

@Keira

Oh. I like that.

@Johanna

Wow. Sweet.

@JT

And when we were talking about –



@Johanna

Keira and I are both writing it down.

@JT

Yes. I noticed that. I'm probably blushing now. Is it up on top of my head?

@Johanna

No, not quiet. But close, yeah.

@JT

Well, when we talked about fire at the beginning, I thought about how Quakerism is nominally a Christian religion, and how Christ had some righteous anger in his day. There were – he saw some things that pissed him off, and he wouldn't let it go, and it got him killed.

@Johanna

Yeah.

@JT

And that's who we're supposed to modeling ourselves after. Right? Just one example. Right? If you want to say that Quakers are Christians. Not that any of those were your words. Those were my thoughts. But what it connected up to was the fact that I think what was – what I see in that story – and I am not a believer of the divine Christ and so that's not my thing. But historically, I could believe that that absolutely happened, that there was just one person who was like so passionately angry about something and loves the world and the people in it enough to want to change it, that has enough integrity with Spirit, whatever that may mean, to carry out all those actions.

That feels – and so I feel like I'm seeing that in you, that you have this sense of who you are, what matters to you, what you can do, how you can do it, and who you can do it with, and you're out there doing these things.

@Johanna

And basically, the Quakers can just wither if they need to while you go do those things. I mean they're a good group, but still. There are other groups too.

@JT

Yeah.

@Keira

I think that part of it is also like they'll be there when they're going to be there. Think about the EQAT people.¹² They show up. They're around. They doing it. With or without you, they're going to take action!

¹²EQAT, the Earth Quaker Action Team, is a grassroots, nonviolent action group that includes Quakers and people of diverse beliefs in a coalition together. They publicly addressed PNC Bank and its monetary support for mountaintop removal for five years. (PNC was one of the primary financiers of mountaintop removal.) Using creative means, including Meeting for Worship inside the bank lobby EQAT activated in a spiritually grounded



@Johanna
Yeah. They're cool.

@Keira
One of the things I'm thinking from my like dump of thoughts is that each of our communities or each of our Quaker communities is really an opportunity to meet our closest needs. And oftentimes that's actually maybe how it was meant to be structured, is that we have a group of people in close proximity who are really meant to show up for community care. And then how do we enliven that practice?

@Johanna
Mm-hmm. Yeah. Well, let's a good place to pause for today. I'm pretty sleepy.

@Keira
Mm-hmm. Good.

@JT
Great. Let's do this again sometime, then.

@Keira
Cool. I'm into it. I'll see you all later.

@Johanna
Okay. Bye, Keira.

@Keira
Bye.

Discussion Questions

- 1. How do you live out your values in your life? Do you do this at work? Elsewhere? How do your values influence these life choices?*
- 2. What pisses you off, like Keira describes? Have you felt that kind of righteous anger in your life?*

way. Eventually, PNC bank caved in under this pressure. In March 2015, the bank changed its investment policy toward a better structure. More information is at www.eqat.org/about



3. *What would you like to see Quakers be for this world? How do we help each other in doing this? What sorts of relationships and structures have you found to be effective support?*

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