

## Spiritual Companions within an Ecology of Quaker Practice

September 11-13, 2020

Last year, Joann Neuroth expanded our thinking about spiritual formation to include collective spiritual growth. She helped us consider crucibles for testing recognition moments as well as incubators for nurturing gifts. Together, we pondered the work of individuals and meetings. Continuing this conversation, the program for LEYM's fall 2020 spiritual formation retreat will explore spiritual companions as a foundation for collective spiritual growth within an ecology of Quaker practice.

Early Friends practiced attention to Spirit as individuals, spiritual friends, and meeting communities. Individually, Friends attended to that still small voice within, experimented with implications for living, invited feedback from others, and acted on the truth working within them. Similarly, meetings attended to gathered Spirit, sought ways of acting with integrity, and invited feedback from other monthly meetings as well as their regional and yearly meeting. Linking individual and collective spiritual life was a practice of spiritual companionship. Companions supported each other and honed essential skills for collective discernment. The Valiant Sixty relied on spiritual companions to support their ministry and bear witness. The rich heritage of spiritual companions has much to offer present-day Friends.

Given the continued restrictions of the pandemic, the fall 2020 retreat will be virtual, with recognition of the limitations of online connection and sensitivity for everyone's physical and mental health.

Friday, Sept. 11: 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 12: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 13: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

The format will blend writing, drawing, talking, moving, viewing short videos, and more. We will work individually, in small groups, and as a whole.

In our time together, we will develop key practices for spiritual companion groups and consider their role in living our faith. We will engage in activities to help us open ourselves, work together, and experiment with Spirit in our lives. We will reflect on how the recording of spiritual insights bridges the still small voice within to the faith and practice of community. Drawing on both historical and present-day writings, we will explore how an ecology of Quaker practice is the essence of collective spiritual life.

*Cassie Cammann* is a member of Ann Arbor Friends Meeting. She is retired from a career in social work and energy body work. Her spiritual journey has taken her from her roots in Congregational and Episcopalian churches into Buddhist philosophy and meditation, through other spiritual exploration, to her thirty years of Quaker membership, including three years as clerk of AAFM. In retirement she seeks ways to learn about and promote anti-racist thinking and living. She believes that Quaker discernment practices under the influence of Transformative Power is a gift that Quakers offer for building a sustainable and just world.

*Nadine Hoover* is a member of the Buffalo Friends Meeting in New York Yearly Meeting. She grew up in a small, rural Meeting in western New York among Friends who did alternative service as conscientious objectors in WWII, discerned together, and let their lives speak. Nadine graduated from George School in 1978 and Friends World College in 1982. She served as Secretary of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, 1997-99, and as Manager of the Friends General Conference Bookstore in 1999. Southeastern Yearly Meeting released her to travel in the ministry in 1996, and New York Yearly Meeting in 1999. Her ministry focuses on building cultures of peace in Southeast Asia and beyond. She served as Coordinator of Friends Peace Teams in Asia West Pacific, 2007-2018. Her book, *Creating Cultures of Peace*, provides a toolbox of ideas and practices for citizen leaders creating loving, conscientious, peaceful homes, communities and societies. This LEYM retreat draws on materials she recently developed for the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative, *Walking in the world as a Friend: Essential Quaker practices*.

*Mark Hoover* is a member of Ann Arbor Friends Meeting. He is a mathematics teacher educator and researcher at the University of Michigan. He acknowledges that American society is rooted in a violent colonial history that confiscated indigenous people's lands, enslaved Africans, subjugated women, and

exploited the planet that sustains us. In his professional work, he conceptualizes public school mathematics teaching that disrupts default patterns of injustice and prepares students for civic participation. In his personal work, he seeks to understand the history and dynamics of oppression and ways of rebuilding our lives to affirm all forms of life.

### Background Readings

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