

Pastoral Care Phone Conference, Dec 3, 2017

Focus on section *Be Not Afraid* under Peace Testimony in new NPYM Faith and Practice

The queries to which we responded were:

In times of trial and terror how can we open our hearts, return to God's love, and move forward with courage?

What would we do, as individuals and as a community, if we were not afraid?

Suggestions made to become acquainted with our fears included turning toward God and opening our hearts, resting in the love present in Meetings for Worship, acknowledging that change is scary, and listening during worship to go deep and share what we find.

Some of the fears mentioned were the degradation of the environment, including the largest species extinction event in the history of the Earth, political trends, the prevalence of violence and hatred in society. Fear can be connected to a feeling of lacks in ourselves – I am not enough. I might not do it perfectly. Feelings of anger may help us recognize fears.

Ways of Coping with fear in ourselves included remembering that it's better to throw at least your hat in the ring than not be in the ring at all, joining others to look for helpful ways to be reach out to those who are stuck in fear, and absorbing love and strength for our efforts from community worship.

Worship can help us address the sense of lacking necessary coping qualities and skills, to put what we fear in context – that is compare it to all the fearful things that have been survived in the history of the world. As that of God is in each of us, strength that comes to us through connection with people and with the Divine is not two different things.

Connecting with the environment – the soil, water, etc.- and the thought that to be alive means you are loved, as are all living organisms, were both mentioned as helpful; and from Transformational Resilience came the suggestions to live in the Present (and the readiness of small children to forgive and move on can teach us that).

Look for how to ground oneself in a sense of purpose and hope. Another suggestion was to make a conscious goal of moving beyond being afraid, also endeavoring to move beyond self-disparagement to ways you can be useful. List the tools for regeneration and strength that you already have. When fear is “me oriented,” we are liberated to take action by a joining in community. Fear can be envisioned as a catalyst to practice specific positive traits, such as fortitude, patience, humility, and persistence. Small positive actions foster courage, “or at least joy”. Avoid identifying causes that hold us back from acting, but focus on goals which move us forward. Attention to Psalm 121

was recommended. Recognizing Radical Safety allows us to do things that are radically unsafe.

Constructive ways for Meetings to respond to fear in the community included group study. Some of the resources recommended were: Rex Ambler's PH pamphlet Living in Dark Times (#447), Transformational Resilience How Building Human Resilience to Climate Disruption can Safeguard Society and Increase Well Being by Bob Doppler 2016, and Nonviolence and Civil Disobedience. by Ree Skills and George Lakey. It might be helpful to find ways to share the resources we are using on this topic.

We were reminded that it was actively MAKING peace that is blessed in the Beatitudes. Make peace with those already in our lives, at work and in the community. Among techniques enabling us to move into action is spending time with children. One Friend had experienced being made brave enough to act by acting with a small, supportive group of others he had become acquainted with. Courage also comes from acting on behalf of others after discerning the course that is grounded in love. Small successes energize one for the next step. Focus on actions that open conversations around understanding fear. Break down big situations to parts that can be addressed one step at a time.

We closed with gratitude and mention of two other calls this year, one on The State of Society reports in February and one on racism in the spring.