



**Let love  
(and welcome, inclusion,  
knowledge, and action)  
be the first motion!**

In both my roles as a parent and educator, I've been part of many conversations since the 2016 election about "how do I parent/work with children/model activism/take care of myself" in response to events and news stories. In times of challenge, there is always more wisdom in the circle of people around us, whether in our families, meeting, or the wider world of Friends. During the time of greatest personal crisis in my life, when one of my children (then a toddler) had cancer, our family, local meeting, Friends school colleagues, and yearly meeting communities gathered around and journeyed with us. That was, in fact, what the pediatrician said to me when we first spoke after James' diagnosis: "You are beginning a journey."

Accompaniment on a journey can make an extraordinary difference, whether the journey is physical or spiritual. The times we're living in certainly feel for some of us like a new path, and for others like a road walked too often. How can we provide accompaniment and spiritual nurture to children and young people in the days ahead? How can we support their interest in justice and participation in protest? How do we address worries and provide comfort? How do we recognize the Light in everyone — especially those who don't hold the same views or values — and let love be the first motion?

***Welcome: Among ourselves and to the stranger***

Two of the best ways we can support our children are to take care of ourselves on this journey, and model for them both the giving and receiving of hospitality to others. Building connections and finding accompaniment is a powerful message to model for our children, who know how important friends are. In our yearly meeting, Youth Programs host Family Overnights for fellowship and worship together with all ages. Quaker Family Meetups gather our community for fellowship and worship sharing, and there are online communities for sharing information, like the "Families in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Area" Facebook page. Explore with children and youth how we make our circle wider, and welcome others, whether it's a visitor to meeting on First Day or reaching out in friendship and service in our neighborhood or community.

## **Knowledge and Inclusion: Hand in hand**

Providing children with stories and images of people who live/look/worship/love differently than them or their family nurtures their compassion and experience of inclusion. How can we support young Friends if they are confronted with racism, Islamophobia, misogyny, homophobia? Stories are a potent source for exploring the experiences of people different from us, as well as finding part of ourselves in their story. Check for and add to your meeting library books which center the lives of people of color (Friends and others), and also including stories like "Muslim Child" by Rukhsana Khan and "Before Columbus" by Charles C. Mann. This Fall, my meeting has focused our First Day program for children on, "Who is my neighbor?" and connected children's books about refugee experiences with stories we're witnessing in the news. Websites with excellent multicultural book collections and suggestions:

[Early Childhood Anti-Bias Education](#)

[We Need Diverse Books](#)

[Colours of Us](#)

[Children's Books that Tackle Race and Ethnicity](#)

[Counter Islamophobia Through Stories of Muslim Kids As Heroes](#)

[Books to Help Kids Understand What It's Like to Be a Refugee](#)

## **Activism with Children and Youth**

Several opportunities for children to be involved in age-appropriate activism are happening at this time. There are possibilities for each of us, at all ages, to find our entry into witness and activism. How do we know where our Light leads us to be God's hands and feet and voice? One of the gifts we can give children is the tool of discernment. In PYM Youth Programs, our young people engage in this discernment as part of their retreats. Last summer at Annual Sessions we experienced the witness of Young Friends to Native Justice and gun violence concerns. Beth Collea, a Friend in New England YM, talks about giving a concern or a leading: "Give it the love test; Give it time; Give it over to a larger group." She created a resource with these questions, to explore discernment with children: "When the Light is at Work in Us."

*Books and Resources for Young Activists:*

35 Picture Books for Young Activists

8 Empowering Middle Grade Novels for Kids Interested in Social Justice

Student Activism on Campus

19 Books to Help Children Find Hope and Strength in Stressful Times

Teaching Radical Hope and Resistance

The wider circle of Friends is on this journey together. For adults who work and live with young people, there is wisdom in the advice to take care of yourself, pay attention to where young people are (do not assume or project feelings about events), provide accurate information, move to action you can take, and make space for prayer and silence as well as support from those around you. Let us walk together, and let love be the first motion.

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(A version of this story first appeared in the March 2017 issue of "Spark" the New York YM newsletter)