



## A Ministry of Presence

The “active” piece of Active Caring appeals especially to children and youth. It’s a great counterpoint to schoolwork and there’s absolutely a satisfaction in accomplishing a concrete task or offering a tangible improvement in a situation. To successfully act on our intentions to be of service is affirming of us and of the Spirit which grounds our deepest hopes. But, at the same time, don’t underestimate the benefit of a short visit as you are dropping off a homemade birthday card or a pot of soup.

Quakers sometimes refer to this as a Ministry of Presence. There’s tremendous spiritual potential in visits and relationship building. The very fact of our presence is powerful. At one level, it transmits our intention to connect and to serve, but there’s much more. The social connection allows Love to flow and that opens us to the engagement of Spirit. The Bible tells us, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Matthew 18:20)

Wherever we show up, that of God within us is right there. Often subtle or unseen, the Light is at work within and among us. I recall the words of the Faith & Play Story™ *Listening for God*. “Sometimes God touches us through another person. God in one person sees God in another person. Heart touches heart. We say “Welcome God!” Then the Spirit helps us to know how to love, what to do, and who to be.”

These encounters can also be a perfect opportunity to lift up the testimony of the person’s life with a child or youth, before, during, or after the visit. Did they work for peace? Did they speak courageously for justice? Friends with long lives of faith have treasures of experience walking in the Light to share. You may need to signal that you are open to hearing about it. A visit can be the occasion for connection and genuine questions that open the way for more work of the Spirit in the space between hearts. John O’Donohue invites us to explore how we navigate that sacred ground in his book of poems, [\*To Bless the Space Between Us\*](#). He models a way to lean into the grace of a Ministry of Presence embracing the opportunity to meet God no matter what is happening on that sacred ground.

A Ministry of Presence can change the visitor as well. Notice what happens within during the visit or interaction. The work of the Spirit can happen in very ordinary ways, so it can be easy to miss. Sometimes you don’t know until later that shifts in your perspective occurred through that interaction. Encouragement to take the high road in a situation of conflict may have been imparted during the visit. Pay attention. Keep your mind and your heart open. God breaks in wherever we open ourselves to the divine. It is my experience that there is no shortage of Spirit, there’s a shortage of attention and willingness to step into the potential to be guided and shaped by God.

A Ministry of Presence can happen anywhere, anytime. It is one of the primary forms of Active Caring we practice as Friends.

