

**Query 5: Mutual Care  
Spring 2009 Response**

**How do we respond to each other's personal needs and difficulties in sensitive and useful ways? Do we encourage both men and women to share in caregiving?**

To be of service, it seems important to keep one's own emotional reaction separate from the request of the person in need. It might be helpful to ground and center oneself first before approaching one who seems to need help. Both men and women offer and receive caregiving in our group. We appreciate this reciprocity and feel well cared for by one another.

Are there ways to know more about folks without seeming nosy...? Our small gatherings provide a way to know each other in new ways. But we sometimes find it difficult to go up to someone and ask how they are.

On the other hand, our size allows us to be visible and present to one another. We can observe each other, notice when there is some difficulty, and offer to listen.

There seems to be a relationship between the trust we have with each other and in the Spirit, and our ability to share our needs. We are willing to risk asking. The love that runs through us supports this trust.

**What are we doing to welcome and draw members and attenders of all ages into the fellowship of the meeting?**

We are thankful for the ministry in Godly Play that one adult brings us each First Day: it gives us a chance to share common stories about the people of God, the Bible, and the life of Jesus with our children. This seems a hugely wonderful thing.

We've also appreciated opportunities outside of worship to get to know people, especially new attenders. We seem to do a good job of welcoming newcomers and we should do it more. We greet them before and after worship, invite them to upcoming events, and let them know they are welcome to return.

We find that the time after worship connects us to the group. For some people this clicks and they come back. For those who don't come back we don't know why and if they have found something elsewhere. Some of us ask bold questions which draw us out and draw us together spiritually.

We think we do all of this pretty well but the shadow side is that we are focused on ourselves and are somewhat insular. Are we really stretching ourselves to those who are not part of the group? In what ways can we be sharing this gift we have?

We lift up the question "How do we give to others that which we do so well for ourselves?" This is part of building the kingdom of God. The children's program, the camping outings, and the things we share are things we can share with others. How do we know that we are ready to enlarge the intergenerational Faith and Play sessions, to extend ourselves to the broader community?

Maybe we are living into the answer. Maybe we are doing it.

### **How do we help our children feel the loving care of the meeting? What do the children contribute to the meeting?**

Waldorf education tells us that children sense warmth from us. And they in turn warm us with their sharing. Our experience affirms this also. The children contribute their laughter, joy, fun, lightness and the openness they have with one another.

But is there something more...? We make the schedule for the children We tell them when it's time to go to First Day School and what the topic or story will be. There may not be opportunities for them to share with us freely. Is there a way for us to open up some space for more expression of the children to us as a whole group?

### **How do we keep in touch with inactive and distant members and attenders?**

We have no plan for keeping in touch with people who move away or who simply stop attending worship. Our Google group provides some visibility for those who request to be placed on it. But it doesn't work for those who aren't technophiles.

We recognize that people have different needs for contact. We individually may welcome more contact but we wonder about what others might want or need. How could we have a structure that is sensitive to individual differences?

Some of us have this gift for extended contact more than others. We understand the blessing of receiving a personal card or note from family and friends. Could we ask the children to make some kind of card to be sent to those who have not been attending? An invitation might be issued a few times a year to come and share a meal. These simple gestures might be meaningful.

We think about some worshipers who attended when the worship group was fairly new. They have stopped coming after the I-35 bridge collapsed. A few of us kept in touch at first, checking in, but that is not so any more. If/when we do a State of Society report of the group, we might send this out to individuals who are no longer attending as a way to include them.

To ignore someone's absence can feel hurtful for the one who is ignored. Even a simple form letter would be better than nothing at all. This ignoring, while it follows a wish to allow persons their privacy, gives an impression that the person is not missed.

### **Additional reflections?**

Considering all of this brings to mind just how fragmented a culture we live in. These are all important queries and topics to consider, yet our daily lives are not very intertwined. Though there are a few exceptions within our familial groups, our fragmented, busy lives are too common in our culture.

We are aware of a family currently in transition, preparing to move away—the first among us. There are questions of how to navigate that transition and how the relationship between the worship group and the family will change as they move out of the metro area. We need to hold that situation very lightly as we explore it together.