

Being a Companion/Elder for a Visitor with CYM's Visitation Program

Thank you for your willingness to consider serving as a companion for a Friend who is visiting under the CYM visitation program. This is a practice that goes back to the very early days of Friends.

As Friends, we are all called to minister according to the gifts we have received. Over the past century, the practice of recording Friends with gifts of ministry and eldering fell into disuse among many Friends, and traveling in the ministry became replaced by "intervisitation". Today many of us are unfamiliar with the practices of both traveling in the ministry and the value and richness of traveling in pairs.

Your task as companion is to support the visitor in being open to the guidance of the Spirit in bringing forth ministry. It is important to ask the visitor with whom you are traveling what is most helpful to her or him, what practicalities she or he might need help with, and to what vulnerabilities you should be particularly attentive. You might also let him or her know what ways are most effective for communicating with you. He or she will concentrate on the message, the ministry. You will concentrate on the details in order to free him or her from being distracted. There are some specific spiritual and practical tasks you may be called on to carry out to provide support.

Spiritual arrangements: Your major spiritual task is to hold the visitor and the gathering in prayer. This can begin as soon as you accept the assignment. Long before you are actually on the road, you are encouraged to begin to hold the visit in prayer, asking God to provide the message that is needed, to prepare the ears and hearts to receive it, and that the visitor gives faithful service.

When the session is actually happening, yours is a background role. You model prayerful attentiveness, holding the visitor and the meeting in the Light. As a general rule, the companion does not contribute to the discussion or help shape the delivery of the ministry, although every relationship between visitor and companion is unique.

Following the session the visitor may wish to have you join in holding in prayer the way she or he was faithful to the leadings of the Spirit or fell short. The visitor may also seek your feedback. It can be extremely valuable for the visitor to be able to compare his or her discernment of what was happening with yours. Particularly in visits over several days, the visitor may ask for your discernment of the dynamics of the group, and your insights into what might be helpful in responding to the Spirit's unfolding of the agenda, rhythm, and dynamics of the group's time together.

In other words, you are a *midwife* for the spiritual arrangements, helping birth the message or ministry God wants brought forth in this particular group. It is not your baby, it is not your labor. But your presence is very important for a healthy, safe, delivery.

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Physical arrangements:

The arrangements for the session will normally have been made by local Friends - advertising, setting up of chairs, and so on. However, if something is amiss or left undone, it is your task to do it as quickly and quietly as possible so that the visitor can stay concentrated on the work of the ministry. It may end up being your task, therefore, to make sure that transportation is provided for the two of you, that chairs are arranged, supplies such as paper and pens (if requested) are on hand, and the temperature and lighting are comfortable. If people are standing around talking, then if the local host does not act, you are the one who calls them to settle. If the visitor is exhausted at the end and needs to be protected from talkative folks, at the visitor's request you run interference for him or her, and help the visitor withdraw to a quiet place.

Your job is to pay attention to the visitor. If the visit lasts several days, is she or he getting adequate rest, food, and time for revitalization? If he or she requests time and space alone for prayer, you help arrange it and see that nobody disturbs it.

After the completion of the travel, you will be asked to write a report on your experience. This will help us in the visitation program to deepen our understanding of the role of the travelling companion and to offer better support to those who take on this role in the future.

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