

Friends' Women's Group

7:00 - 8:30 PM • Thursday, September 10th, 2020

via Zoom: Meeting link > <https://zoom.us/j/92419704992> Meeting ID: 924 1970 4992

Theme: Wonder and Wondering. Consider what it takes to create a relationship of any kind: with a tree, a dog or cat, flowers and butterflies, one person and groups of people. That will be where we start.

In See No Stranger, pages 26-27, Valerie Kaur writes:

“...When Faye opened the church door and saw me standing there It would have been easy to turn me away. Instead she let me in.”

- Who is knocking on your door?
- Who have you not let in?
- If unconscious, pre-conscious, implicit bias infects us all, how do we reclaim wonder as our primary orientation to the world of one another?

“Seeing no stranger is an act of will. In brain-imaging studies, when people are shown a picture of a person of a different race long enough for comprehension, it is possible for them to dampen their unconscious fear response. We can change how we see. We shouldn't confuse this with suppressing our biased thought. Saying to yourself *Don't be racist, don't be racist* doesn't work. It actually increases the frenzy and power of the original biased thought! Instead you have to choose to think of the face in front of you as belonging to a person. In these studies, it was as simple as what they like to eat for dinner. Only then does fear dissipate. Therefore, when we encounter each other throughout the day, it is not our primal reflex that we are responsible for—it is the succession of conscious thought.

“**I started a very simple practice.** As I move through my day and come across faces on the street or subway or on a screen, I say in my mind, *Sister. Brother. Sibling. Aunt, Uncle.* I start to wonder about each of them as a person. When I do this, I am retraining my mind to see more and more kinds of people as part of *us* rather than *them*. I practice this with animals and parts of the earth, too. I say in my mind: You are part of me I do not yet know. I practice orienting to the world with wonder, preparing myself for the possibility of connection.

“**We become what we practice. It is possible to train our eyes to see others differently— to see no stranger. Wondering about others helps us to wonder about ourselves.**”

- What stereotypes have we absorbed? Where do they come from?
- All of us assume that we are good people.
- When we set aside the tables “good” and “bad,” we can begin to wonder about our effect on the world, which of our actions create the world we want, and which destroy it.
- We can begin to let go of the stories that no longer serve us.