

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 9 November 2007

Children



Introduction

There are four directions to our spiritual journey. **Inwards** to ourselves; **outwards** to others; **upwards** towards God, the deeper mystery; **downwards** to the world we live in. "Journeys in the Spirit" offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition for 5 –12 year olds comes out monthly. It is offered with the intention of providing an opportunity for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of partnership on our shared journey in the spirit. Included are sections on: **getting ready**, for those co-ordinating the programme; **gather**, meeting, centering, focusing; **engage**, beginning to think about the theme; **respond**, activities linked to the theme; **reflect**, ending appropriately; and **review**, evaluating what has happened. To offer a balanced session you should aim to do something from each section. Some of the activities are included on additional sheets. Timings or ages are not stated, as this will depend on the group and how the guidance and activities are used.



An introduction to the series exploring: Quakers: a people of God: being and doing

An introduction to: Quakers: a people of God: being and doing. Getting ready

Preparing Hearts & Minds

This introduces a new series running from now and through 2008. Issues will alternate between offering ways for children's meeting to explore Quaker work and Quaker spirituality. Journeys in the Spirit is always about equipping children and adults to explore being Quaker. This series will offer opportunities to dig deeper into what Quaker being and doing means.

Chuck Fager, in presentations to Canadian Yearly Meeting 1997, suggests that, "...the Religious Society of Friends is a people raised up to bear witness to the universality of the divine light in all, and the priority of the spirit and the truth as the basis of religion over forms, hierarchies and doctrines". He also suggests that "A people of God is different from a society, a community, a family, a movement or a revival although they might all describe aspects of what we do...". (See side bar for how to obtain these presentations.) . In older language, "The kingdom of heaven did gather us all in a net, and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in." Frances Howgill Quaker 1663.

Some years ago a small group of children, with adults, from an isolated Quaker Meeting, visited Friends House in London. They picnicked in the garden, toured the building and then, when they met Quaker peace work staff, something happened. On the faces of some there was fascination, interest and, also, it seemed, recognition – 'I could do that'. Faces were alight. This is as an example of experiencing being part of **a** people of God. It involves feeling, sensing, calling and belonging - personally and corporately; child or adult. It is not about arrogance of belief or certainty of being **the** people of God. This sense leads to some form of doing – tiny or big to the eye; the measure isn't about scale.

Underpinning references

'Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.'

Issued by a meeting of elders at Balby, 1656 – in the Introduction to Quaker Faith and Practice.

The Bible: John Ch.15 verses 16 – 19.

'Quakerism is not just a faith but a way of being in the world. A central tenet of Quakerism is the importance of having our lives be an expression of our testimonies. our lives - our choices and our interactions in the world - tell who we really are.' Introduction to 'Lives that speak' published by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Chuck Fager presentations to Canadian Yearly Meeting from: <http://quaker.org/quest/peoplehood-1.htm>

Gather

Invite everyone to come and sit in a circle. Light a candle. In the middle of your circle, around the candle, have 1 or 2 footballs, some tennis balls, a couple of bats or rackets of different sizes and 1 or 2 shuttlecocks. Ask everybody to close their eyes and think about one of the things in the middle of their circle – a ball, a bat, a racket, a shuttlecock. Now ask everybody to imagine standing (or sitting), just about to hit or kick a ball or shuttlecock – if football suggest taking a penalty, if tennis or badminton suggest taking the serve. Ask each person to breathe in and out slowly as they imagine standing or sitting and just hold their breath for a moment before getting a picture in their imagination of kicking or hitting the ball or shuttlecock. Everybody opens his or her eyes, the candle is blown out and you could then spend some time, if possible, in a garden playing with the balls, bats and shuttlecocks before coming back in for an Engage activity.

Engage

1. A people of God: 'I am a Quaker' or 'I like Quakers' because...:

Start a conversation with your group by asking everybody to answer the question, 'I am a Quaker because...' and/or 'I like Quakers because...'. This can be a simple 'go round' or there could be more of a discussion in which people can ask each other questions to find out more about what has been said. *This links to the first Respond Activity.*

2. Being: 'On sitting still' – a story by Mary Test. See *Sheets 9.A and 9.B*. This writing is a mixture of accessible and more complex ideas – it is offered as an example of a way into enabling people of any age to think about and be part of stillness, waiting and worship.

- Ask everybody to make themselves comfortable and settled on a chair, a cushion or the floor and get ready for a story.
- Introduce this by saying that this story was first in a book more than 50 years ago and the Quaker who wrote it, Mary Test, who lives in America, was happy for it to be told to people in our Quaker meetings in Wales, Scotland and England – her hundredth birthday was happening the same week that this *Journeys in the Spirit* was sent out.
- Tell the story slowly and carefully – it should take about 10 minutes at most. At the completion of the telling of the story use these questions to help exploration of the experiences, issues, and ideas it raises:

- I wonder which part of this story you liked the most?
- I wonder which part of the story you liked the least?
- I wonder if there is part of the story that you could leave out and still have all the story that you need?
- I wonder if there is part of this story that is in you or that you are in?

Offer time for people to answer – don't expect everyone to contribute.

Resources: Sheet 9.A, card, scissors and glue sticks and a comfortable space.

3. Doing: Peacebuilders - 20 ways to build world peace.

Print or write out and cut up the '20 ways to build world peace' on *Sheet 9.C*. Tell the group that everybody can be a peacebuilder – sometimes children can show adults the way. One at a time, reading each out loud, lay the words on the floor or table, whichever you use. Invite children to read and lay out words. When they are all laid down, say each one again, pointing to each in turn. Ask if anyone has any questions or is not sure what each one means; the group can help. Ask which one people like the most – have spares available. Encourage people to pick up the one or ones they like. Ask what it is people like about their choice. *Resources: Two sets of copies of words from Sheet 9.C, scissors.*

References & other resources

'We have wondered whether there is anything Quakers today can say as one. After much struggle we have discovered that we can proclaim this: there is a living God at the centre of all, who is available to each of us as a present teacher at the very heart of our lives. We seek as people of God to be worthy vessels to deliver the Lord's transforming word, to be prophets of joy who know from experience and can testify to the world, as George Fox did, 'that the Lord is at work in this thick night'. **Young Friends from 35 countries 1985 North Carolina**

'Peacebuilders' is a programme developed by the Methodist and United Reformed Church in partnership with churches in India. There are activities and programmes run in local churches – this could be a way for children from different groups to meet up and share what they do.

www.peacebuilders.info/

References & other resources

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

The Bible: Isaiah
Ch.11 vs. 6 - 9



On sitting still



The peacebox idea on the website www.peacebuilders.info/ could be an excellent outreach and ecumenical children's activity. Order copies of the Peacebuilders booklet free from the website – lots of games, ideas, readings and background.

Respond

1. A people of God: 'I am a Quaker' or 'I like Quakers' because...:

- On *Sheet 9.D* there are templates for a simple card. Print or copy these onto card, cut them into strips and fold into little cards. Alternatively print them onto paper, stick them onto card and cut and fold into little cards.
- Have enough cards for each child to use when they talk with one or two adults in the meeting and one for themselves.
- Arrange with meeting as a whole for an all age meeting or for older Friends to visit children's meeting when children can talk with them about 'I am a Quaker because' or 'I like Quakers because...'. Children or the older Friends could write in the card – that will depend on the confidence and ability of each child and the older Friend. When discussing the idea at a business or Preparative meeting talk about this as a way to share and explore spiritual journeys, accompanying each other in simple ways.
- Display the cards on a table or wall in the meeting house under the title, 'I am a Quaker' or 'I like Quakers'.
- Everybody in Children's Meeting can complete their cards after the conversation and a display can be started.

Resources: Card, paper, pens and pencils glue sticks.

2. Being: 'On sitting still'.

- When you know that you are going to tell this story think about the range of creative and art materials in your meeting house or children's room. Before your session begins make an array of materials around the children's room or space of good quality things like: 'playdoh' or clay, felt pens, pencils, crayons, oil pastels, glitter, sequins, white and coloured paper, card, coloured tissue paper, scissors, glue sticks, PVA glue, glue brushes, gold and silver pens, picture books with related pictures, fabric pieces and anything you particularly like.
- After the 'wondering conversation' that follows the story ask everybody what materials they would like to use to make or do something about what they have felt, know, heard or said; describe, briefly and without direction, what is available. Remember to finish with enough time for reflection but remember that response time after the story is crucial; if there is any work that is incomplete it can be taken away for finishing or completed at another time. Don't hurry. The work that is done should be seen as personal rather than for display.

3. Doing: Peacebuilders - 20 ways to build world peace.

- Suggest that people work in pairs on making a peace mobile – see *Sheet 9.E*. Some may need help with the thinking and working out what to do. The task is to make simple pictures, shapes or cut out word patterns to hang on a mobile to represent which of the 20 ways each person liked the most. If people think of other ways they can be added. This can then be talked about in notices at the end of main meeting for worship and may be something some children want to talk about at school in 'news' or 'circle time'.

4. Friendly biscuits.

Recently we asked for feedback from Friends, older and younger, using or engaging with Journeys in the Spirit in Meetings. One younger person said that they really liked making biscuits with a particular Friend in their meeting and could they make more. This simple act seemed to encompass sharing and shared purpose, companionship across the ages, tasty food, community, kindness and belonging. It became an important memory of encounter. These were the magical ingredients, the practical ingredients can be found on *Sheet 9.E*.

Reflect

Come back together as a circle. Ask each person to say one thing that they have enjoyed and one thing that they have learned. Ask what they think it might mean to be a people of God. What is it that Quakers are? What is it that Quakers do? State that in the coming weeks and months, we are going to explore together what Quakers are and what they do and will be thinking more about what it means to be a people of God. Read the last paragraph from 'On sitting still' again to close the session. Alternatively, this could be read in main meeting for worship if your practice is to go in at the end.

Ongoing activity Peace picture

This issue's ongoing activity continues a peace theme. A project to raise money for children's education in Palestine called 'The Art of Peace' was begun by two students from Birmingham University who approached 'Journeys in the Spirit' about ways to involve children in Quaker meetings. The project involves children in the UK and in Palestine drawing about peace and the vision of peace. The artwork is to be exhibited; postcards and calendars will be produced. Using *Sheet 9.F* for drawing, painting or photo collage, children will have the opportunity to:

- Think about peace and what it means to them and encourage appreciation of the safe environment we are living in and that other children don't have.
- To draw about peace and think of ways to achieve peace in Palestine. This may also encourage some children to take an interest in Palestine and what they could do to influence what happens.
- To discover that there are Palestinian people who wish to live peacefully and are striving to make that feeling a reality. *Resources: Sheet 9.F, felt pens, crayons, paints, magazines, scissors, glue sticks, pencils, brushes, gold and silver pens.*

Review

The review can happen at the time or later – it may be by yourself or with others. Some useful questions for the use of volunteers to look back over and learn from the session include:

Have children been able to participate in their own way? What went well and why? Has each child been able to reflect, even a little, on something about her or his thoughts and feelings about being Quaker, being part of the meeting, about themselves? What is there for you to learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

Links to other organisations and resources

The Quaker Life Resources Room can be found via www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - phone or email for resources on the contact details below. The previous series of Journeys in the Spirit can be found at www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - follow the links in the sidebar to Resources and Archive. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has a new website for its children's work with all sorts of good things that they are glad to share; www.pym.org/children Peacebuilders website: www.peacebuilders.info/

This issue was written by Chris Nickolay and edited by Howard Nurden. The ongoing activity was provided by Sandra Ool. We are very grateful to Mary Test and Philadelphia YM for permission to use 'On sitting still'.

Published by Children & Young People's Staff Team, Quaker Life

Available free by subscription.

Contact: Bevelie Shember, CYP Staff Team, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Phone 020 7663 1013

Email bevelies@quaker.org.uk

Website: www.quaker.org.uk

References & other resources

"As it hath pleased the Lord in these latter days, by his spirit and power, to gather a people to himself; and releasing them from the impositions and teachings of men...these have been engaged to meet together for the worship of God in Spirit". **Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 1806**

This issue offers several ways of working in a multi-generational way in your meeting. 'I am a Quaker because..' is quite simple to do; why not also try using 'On sitting still' for an all age meeting for worship?

The next issue of Journeys in the Spirit is an exploration of the quotation from George Fox: 'Walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone'. It will be available from December 1st 2007.