

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 17 July 2008

Children



This children's work edition of "Journeys in the Spirit" comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children aged 4 –12 years in a Quaker setting. It is offered with the intention of providing an opportunity for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in 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.

Underpinning each issue is the idea that 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.



Ninth in the series exploring Quakers: a people of God: being and doing

Israel /Palestine

Getting ready

Preparing Hearts & Minds

This issue is different. It offers a whole meeting, a group of meetings or larger children and young people's groups ways to learn about and explore Israel /Palestine together. It is bold and reflects the intention of 'Journeys' to make difficult issues accessible to Friends of all ages. Doing this will require a little advanced preparation and giving possible participants copies of the Engage and Respond instructions. You may also need to talk to your meeting as a whole about arranging to do this. There are also some separate extension activities for children aged 4 – 8 and 9 – 11 on *Sheets 17.D, E and F*. Please use the readings and references in the sidebars on the first two pages as part of your Getting Ready.

The central theme is the source of conflict, and how conflict can arise in us and our surroundings. It is also about sharing. The issue of the ownership of land is crucial to the conflict between Israel and Palestine and this can be raised with children. The significance for children is to help them to realise that conflict between groups is easily sparked off where mutual ignorance, fear and competition is present. They will learn therefore that peace is something that we all play a part in maintaining.

Practical preparation:

A fairly spacious room would be helpful. If there is another small room available, that would also be useful. Images of Israel and Palestine, the landscape, olive trees, sheep, Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements. Some are reproduced on *Sheet 17.B*. Some books for the smaller children to read or have read to them; preferably old bible stories. A few exercise books and schoolbooks. Copies of Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) Journal letters for adults and older children to read - see side bar on Page 3.

Underpinning references

Quaker Faith & Practice Advice and Queries 32 and 33.

Explore references to Peace in Quaker Faith and Practice.

Qu'ran, Sura 2, verse 62:

"Those who believe
And those who follow the Jewish scriptures
And the Christians and the Sabians -
Any who believe in Allah
And the Last Day,
And work righteousness',
Shall have their reward
With their Lord; on them
shall be no fear; nor shall they
grieve."

The Torah: "Do not wrong a stranger who resides with you in your land. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens: you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

Gather

The children should be introduced to the 'Holy Land' or Israel/Palestine whilst gathering together. Photographs or posters of the countryside, villages and a settlement would be helpful. See *Sheet 17.B*. Other pictures can be downloaded free from www.sxc.hu when you register.

The following gentle, guided visualisation can be used to create stillness and a sense of place. Begin with a little stillness. Use these words:

'Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Now imagine you are sitting on a hillside in the sunshine. The sky is blue above you and you can hear birds singing. On the hill just below you is a flock of sheep. They don't look like the sheep you see in Britain: they have thin coats, long, floppy ears and long narrow noses. A boy and a girl are with them. Below you, in the valley, there is an olive grove; the olive trees are quite small and squat and at present there are lots of fat olives hanging on the branches. At the top of the hill there is a small town, surrounded by a wall. The houses are quite small and new and the roofs are made of red tiles. Below you there is a village. There the houses are bigger and older, with flat roofs. You can see shops, and people in the streets. It is quiet on the hillside, apart from the occasional 'baaa' from the sheep.'

Engage

The children and adults are going to be asked to take part in a story: they are going to be inventing parts of the story themselves. They will pretend that they are living in Israel/Palestine. Everyone should be encouraged, once the story or drama has begun, to stay in their roles. It is important that adults also take part and that they stay in their roles, always talking to the children as if they were all living in Palestine – this is the best way of helping the children to stay in role. Accuracy does not matter; imagination does. You could begin with the story on *Sheet 17.A*.

Divide everyone into two groups, based on friendship or family ties. One group (A) are Palestinian villagers: the other group (B) are Israeli settlers who have quite recently built a town near the Palestinian village.

Members of Group A are told that they are living in a Palestinian village growing olives and keeping sheep. Their olive groves are the other side of the Israeli settlement. They should be given time to think about what their lives would be like – to ask questions and give themselves names. They will be asked, when the signal to start the drama is given, to pretend that that they are doing the sorts of things village children might do. It is October and many of the larger children will be wanting to pick olives with the adults in their family. Some children may be watching the sheep. Some people, Israeli and Palestinian, will have guns. Think about how these can be represented.

If there are some very small children there, they can be encouraged to play together, or, if they are restless, the older children could read to them. They might like to pretend to be animals: dogs or cats or sheep – see side bar for links to RSPCA and Kidsart templates.

If there are two rooms available Group B's instructions could take place at the same time. If not, then they will now receive their instructions. They are told that they are Israeli children moving into a small town or 'settlement' that their parents have just built very near Group A's village. Their parents are not farmers; they travel to a town to work. Their parents have told them that they must not play with the village children who are different from them and may be dangerous. As with Group A, they need to be given time to think about what this might be like, ask questions and give themselves names etc. They will be asked, when the signal is given, to pretend that they are doing the sorts of things they might do at weekends (homework, playing on the computer etc.) Any adults involved will state who they are, as Israeli settlers.

References & other resources

The Bible Old Testament:

Isaiah 65.21 – 22:

"They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat."

The Mishnah:

"Therefore was Adam created single, to teach you that the destruction of any person's life is tantamount to destroying the whole world and the preservation of a single life is tantamount to preserving a whole world."

The Dalai Lama in 'The Book of Love and Compassion' - p. 59:

"If we use violence in order to reduce disagreements and conflict, then we must expect violence every day and I think the result of this is terrible. Furthermore, it is actually impossible to eliminate disagreements through violence."

www.rspca.org.uk for a sheep mask. Click on Education in the left hand menu bar; then education resources, then Farm Animals, Farm Animal masks and choose sheep. www.kidsartplanet.com/artsandcrafts for cats and dogs; scroll down to Arts and Craft ideas and Animal Masks craft project

References & other resources

There are lots of stories about helping in Palestine/Israel in the Journal Letters written by Ecumenical Accompaniers. Visit www.quaker.org.uk/gpsw ; select Online resources in the left hand menu bar and then choose 'Journal letters from Ecumenical accompaniers'.

Contact :

eappi@quaker.org.uk or 0207 663 1144 to ask for a visit from an Ecumenical accompanier for your meeting as a whole or for your children's meeting.

Psalm 106:3:

"Happy are those who act justly, who do right at all times"

This is from the website of Rabbis for Human Rights: www.rhr.israel.net/

Other activities:

Sheets 17.C and 17.D have four stories and activities for 9 – 12 year olds.

Sheet 17.F has an activity for 4 – 8 year olds.

Respond

Everybody should now be in one room together. Tell everybody how the space in the room is divided: where the Palestinian village and its olive trees are, and where the Israeli settlement is placed. Everyone should move to where they live or work.

Now say that everyone is now in their new role: it is about 3 o'clock on a sunny afternoon in October. S/he could usefully initiate the drama by beginning to speak and act in role. S/he could take the role of the owner of the Palestinian olive grove and call to his or her family to come and help with the picking, giving them instructions, and warning them to watch out for Israeli settlers. There should be an attempt to get to the olive grove by a small group of Palestinians.

Ideally, everyone in the room should now be left to do and say whatever they feel like – which, of course, is risky! The adults participation – and all present must participate - will be vitally important here: in role, some parents might try to persuade their children to behave and set a good example; others might set a bad example: preventing children mixing or pickers getting to the olive grove. The Palestinian parents will be working hard at olive picking, while keeping a wary eye out for the Israeli settlers.

The two broad possibilities are that either the 'Israelis' or the 'Palestinians' will make overtures to the other group, and/or an argument will start.

There may be some tension and hostility – this is inevitable and necessary, in part, to the success of this as a reflective activity. If it becomes problematic there may need to be some intervention – maybe the facilitator is an Ecumenical Accompanier helping defuse conflict or maybe she or he is a soldier who intervenes to stop the conflict. One adult does need to be prepared to take on the role of intervener.

Choose an appropriate moment to end. The children and adults should now form a circle. Each in turn will now say that he or she was a Palestinian or Israeli, but now they are... and give their own name. Everyone should now be helped to talk, and listen carefully to the others, about how they felt during the 'drama.' The adults should also do this.

Questions for the 'Palestinians' – ask: 'I wonder, how did it feel to have a group of strangers build a town near your village? Did you want to make friends?'

Questions for the 'Israelis' – ask: 'I wonder, did you feel frightened of the village children or did you want to make friends with them?'

The children's experience can be linked to the real issue of Israel/Palestine and the sharing of the Holy Land. One story that can be told them concerns people working for the *EAPPI*:

'A team of Ecumenical Accompaniers' is based in Hebron, in Palestine. In that town there are Israeli settlers who have bought houses in the middle of the town where mainly Palestinians have lived. There is one block of houses, a settlement, which is on the opposite side of the road to a Palestinian school, the Cordoba school. Each day the Palestinian children have to walk past the Israeli settlement. The children who live in that settlement have been brought up to hate and fear the Palestinians, and sometimes they attack the Palestinian children when they are walking to school. Because of these attacks, Ecumenical Accompaniers go with the Palestinian children to school each day, to give them protection. The children learned to hold hands and chat to feel safe.'

Say how Israeli settlers have prevented Palestinians from picking their olives, and have at times damaged the olive trees. In order to stop this happening, some Israelis, like *Rabbis for Human Rights*, go with the Palestinians to help them pick olives, and plant olive trees and to protect them from such attacks. Show the pictures on *Sheet 17.E* and encourage discussion about the questions posed.

Reflect

In the circle, each person should think of a word or a phrase which expresses an idea that might help lead to peace between Israelis and Palestinians. For example: Be prepared to share; Let go of anger; Value the land...it belongs to all of us; do not fear strangers. Everybody could think about whether they find it easy to share, to avoid being angry and abusing someone if they feel they have been badly treated. This song could be chanted (or sung to any tune that fits):

'There is enough, there is enough, there is enough room for all
There is enough, there is enough, there is enough land for all

Put down the bombs, tear down the walls
There is enough, enough for all
Hold back the tanks, throw down the stones
There is enough, enough for all

There is enough, there is enough, there is enough, enough for all
There is enough, there is enough, no more olive trees shall fall.'

Review

Volunteers might find it helpful to answer these questions on paper individually, and then share them with any others involved, including the older children.

- Did the drama 'work'? Were the participants able to transport themselves to a Palestinian village, or an Israeli settlement? What might have helped them more to do this?
- Did the children make connections between their own lives and those of the Palestinians and Israelis?
- Was there any tendency towards violence? If so, why was this?

Topical activity Zimbabwe

Hlekweni Friends Rural Training Centre. Hlekweni is a rural training centre outside Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. It was set up 40 years ago by Quakers, and now specialises in sustainable farming, and offers practical training courses in essential skills that Zimbabwe badly needs – building, early childhood education, carpentry, plumbing and garment making. The name Hlekweni means Place of Laughter. Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting (and other parts of the world) support Hlekweni in various ways. They give money for the food programme at Samathonga school, on the Hlekweni farm, which means that children get at least one good meal a day - otherwise they might go hungry. Look for and print out pictures from the Hlekweni website – www.quaker.org/hlekweni/. See *Sheet 17.F* for some things to do to help.

Links to other organisations and resources

www.quaker.org.uk/cyp and click on Database of Ideas.

www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - the Quaker Life Resources Room can be found via this link - phone and email for resources on the contact details below.

www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw for Journal Letters from workers in Palestine/Israel

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Information

Quaker Communications

Has a Palestine/Israel fundraising pack that includes a song and some Palestinian and Israeli recipes. You can get this from: Quaker Communications Dept: katief@quaker.org.uk or 020 7866 9508

The Dalai Lama in 'The Book of Love and Compassion' - p.29:

"Basically, therefore, we should approach others openly, recognizing each person as another human being just like ourselves. There is not so much difference between us all".

Linking with the wider meeting:

This whole issue offers opportunities to link with the wider meeting. Take a risk – try it! Live adventurously. Join together in a Palestinian Israeli meal after the activity.

The next children's work issue of 'Journeys in the spirit', number 18, August 2008, will be on called 'Listen, hear, act – Quaker decision making, clearness and business method; Issue number 19, September 2008, will be on Britain Yearly Meeting work in former Yugoslavia; Issue number 20, October 2008 will be on Quaker ways to deal with bullying.