

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 37

March 2010

Children



John Woolman – more stories

“Journeys in the Spirit” offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people. 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** (or even further inwards) towards the deeper mystery; **downwards** to the world we live in.



The eleventh in the series ‘Our Quaker stories’ May 2009 – September 2010

Getting ready

John Woolman is often talked about as a ‘Quaker hero’. If we label people as heroic it reduces what they have done or been to some kind of personal magic or power that the rest of us don’t have or can’t get. It can deny the struggle and suffering they have gone through to arrive at doing the thing they did.

In John Woolman’s case the different processes he went through personally, in his family and in his Quaker communities were often intense, painful, complex and difficult. His actions will have caused suffering, pain, anxiety and fear for his wife, Sarah, and daughter Mary. Sarah talked about being quite resigned when he put himself in great danger and went, in terrible weather and in a time of conflict, to meet with and get to know Native American people – against the advice of many in his Quaker community.

He eventually died thousands of miles away from home, in York, England, engaged in ministry and witness described elsewhere in this issue.

John is a clear example of someone acting ‘*not for our or their comfort but for our and their discomfort*’. Also we mustn’t forget that John was guided by and led by his adherence to and following of the inner impact of the teaching of Jesus. He was not acting only from conscience but from the outcomes of deep examination and private and shared discernment. That his experience and thinking are still powerful today is probably because of the risk, the suffering, the discernment and the deep spiritual joy and delight that emerged in what he did. He and his wife and child still have the power today to discomfort us, of any age, and yet also show us the way to the, sometimes, deeper comfort of speaking and acting with love in the world.

Underpinning references

The place of prayer is a precious habitation; I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world.

John Woolman, 1770

See Journeys in the Spirit Children’s edition issue 36 for more background on John Woolman

Gather

After everybody has settled and depending on whether you have previously done things about John Woolman, say something like, 'Today we are going to hear and do things about a Quaker from a long time ago, John Woolman. He lived in America – when people from our country first went there. John often left his wife, Sarah, and daughter, Mary, to go on dangerous or scary journeys. One time he met a man called Papunehang, a chief, a leader of the Lenape people; they were, what many people call 'Indians', actually they were the first Americans – Lenape means 'original people'. Papunehang, John and lots of other people, got together for something like a big Meeting for Worship. Sometimes they couldn't really understand each other – they spoke different languages. But it didn't matter too

much. At the end of their meeting Papunehang said,

'I love to feel where the words come from'.

On *Sheet 37.A* there are some ideas and activities about how you can help children reflect on where words come from in worship and stillness.

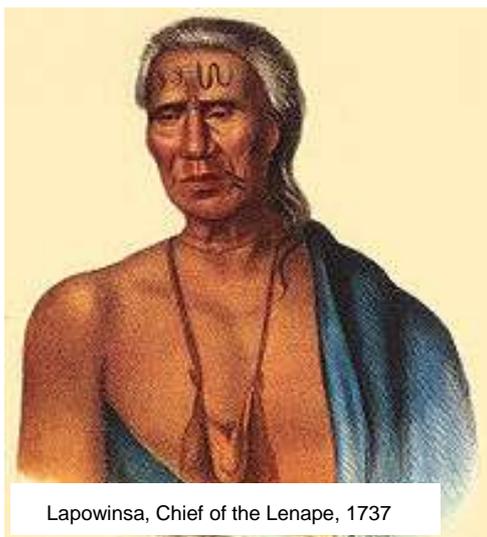


Engage

John goes to London. When John went to meet the Lenape people he wanted to "feel and understand their life, and the Spirit they live in." On *Sheets 37.C D& E* there is a Godly Play style story that will help children to feel and understand something of the life of John Woolman and the spirit he lived in. It is about John's last journey – he came to England to ask Quakers here not to buy things made by slaves. On *Sheet 37.C* there is a simple description of the Godly Play way of telling stories. It is very important to remember that this approach is about encouraging people of any age to engage with a story personally and inwardly. It is the opposite of saying that 'this is the story and this is what it means'. also on *Sheet 37.C* and *37.D* there is the story script. On *37.E* there is a picture of the story equipment or kit.

Faces and pictures give us words.

On this page is a picture of Lenape leader, a chief, around the time that John was alive. Have one or more copies of this picture available. Remind children of what the other chief said, 'he loved to feel where the words come from'. This man has a face full of expression. After children have had a few moments to look at the picture ask what they imagine or think he might have been thinking or feeling when the picture was made. What sort of person do they think he might have been? What was he like?



Lapowinsa, Chief of the Lenape, 1737

References & other resources

See *Journeys in the Spirit Children's* edition issue 36 for pictures and background information about John Woolman.

'There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren.'

John Woolman

'We who declare against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the light, and thereby examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions'.

John Woolman

Suggestions for creative equipment & other information

Pens, pencils, coloured & plain paper, crayons, pastels, scissors, a range of boxes, paints, PVA glue, brushes, paper, card and clay or plasticene, glue pens, pipe cleaners, lollipop sticks and drinks stirrers. Books or pictures that might link to the story – a Bible or two with accessible language e.g.: children's bibles or 'Good News' or 'Message' bibles.

The seal's meaning:

Lenape: An Indian

Name. English translation - common, original or real people.

Delaware: The English named the river our ancestors lived along after Lord De La Warr and called our people by a similar name.

Turtle, Wolf, Turkey:

These are the three clans of the Lenape people.

Peace Pipe: Represents our history as leaders in peace.

Cross: Represents our history in religion.

Mesing mask:

Ceremonial mask used in the Big House ceremonies, represents the spirit of all living things.

Prayer Sticks: 12 prayer sticks used on the 9th night of the Big House ceremony which lasted 12 nights.

Fire Drill: Was used in ceremonies to start fires.

Colours: Red, white and black were colours used in Aboriginal times; red from berries, white from chalk, and black from charcoal.'

Respond

John goes to London. *Sheets 37.C, D & E.* Once the story has been finished and you judge that everyone who wants to speak in response to the wondering questions has done so, then there is a time of creative response. (See sidebar for a possible list of materials.). Just say something like, 'everybody can use the materials set out, look at books or just sit for a bit until you want to do something else.' What anybody does is not necessarily for sharing in the other Meeting for Worship or in 'afterword' – it is private reflection or creation.



John always endeavoured to understand what people felt or had to say – here are two ways to think about this:

Faces and pictures give us words. On *Sheet 37.F* there is a simple set of pictures that can be used – like the Lenape people did – to carry news or tell stories. Have copies of these available for everybody. Talk about them a bit. Have a story that you have made using the pictures drawn up big on a piece of card or paper. Everybody in children's meeting can go on to make a story or tell some news using these pictures or some of their own. Younger children may need a little help.

Pictures on a badge or flag. The design here is used by the Lenape or Delaware people today on badges and flags. In the design are things that are still important to the Lenape people today. See the sidebar for a description of what they mean. Make copies of the badge available for everybody.

Have a conversation with children about pictures or symbols for things that are important to them – home, place, family, celebrations, church or Meeting, animals, pets, the world, friends for example.

Have available an array of arts materials – if you can, include fabric pens and T-shirts or plain cloth to work on – maybe ask children to bring them. Everybody can then make a badge or flag design of their own. There could be conversation about the Lenape symbols – children may want to make versions of the objects themselves.



Reflect

Have a glass or perspex bowl 2/3rds full of water. Place it on the floor. Ask everybody in children's meeting to sit around it. Have a selection of small stones, polished pebbles or coloured glass 'pebbles'. After a moment's quiet pass these around the group for each person to take one. These are then held for a little while and, when people are ready, carefully dropped into the water. As this is done each person is invited to make a private prayer or good wish for someone that they know. This echoes the 'where do words come from' picture and activity in 'Gather' on page 2. After a few more moments you can close the meeting with handshakes or move to considering the following. At this part of the Meeting the children may be readying themselves to go back into the other Meeting for Worship. What would they like to tell or share with the adults in the Meeting? Are there any messages that they would like to pass on? What would they like to ask the adults about what they have been doing?

Review

The review can happen at the time or later – it maybe 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? How was it for you? Have the children had opportunities to think about what they might do, even in a small way, to make the world a better place to live?

Topical activity

Britain Yearly Meeting 2010

Once again we are offering activities that can help children and adults alike engage with or get ready for the work of Britain Yearly Meeting at the end of May this year. Some things you will need include: a roll of big sheet of paper and some glue and pens. Everybody draws or is helped to draw a picture of themselves on the big sheet or roll of paper. Have the following series of questions ready to talk about:

- What would you like to give to or do for Meeting?
- What would you like Meeting to give to or do for you?
- What would you like Meeting to ask you to do?
- What is the one thing that you would like to ask Meeting?

After or during conversation picture or word answers to these questions could be written or drawn on the paper.

Links to other organisations and resources

The Quaker Life Resources Centre can be contacted on: 0207 663 1030 or at quakercentre@quaker.org.uk. The Resources Centre and Quaker Life children and young people's team have a big range of resources to borrow. For example, the activity on *Sheet 37.F* came from a resources pack about William Penn produced by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting USA.

This issue was written by Martin Lightfoot and Chris Nickolay who, along with Howard Nurden, was editor.

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit*, issue 38 (available from April 1st) is about the Quaker Tapestry; issue 39 is about Lewis Cock, a Quaker and a butcher, and his struggle to be honest (available from May 3rd); issue 40 is about Pilgrimage (available from June 1st).

An idea for an all age Meeting for Worship -

The '*John goes to London story*' (see Engage and Respond) could be told to the whole Meeting. This could be followed by creative response activities.

Tell the story about Papunehang and '*where the words come from*' (see Gather). Have a Meeting for Worship with this as a theme – again have art materials to be used in the quiet.

The Topical activity is for everybody in Meeting – not only those going to Yearly Meeting – this could be done together and shared in a worship sharing setting.

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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/cyp