

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 42

August 2010

Children



Bayard Rustin

A lost prophet

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 sixteenth in the series exploring our Quaker stories May 2009 - September 2010

Getting ready

Take a moment to consider why you attend Meeting for Worship and what it means to you - how might you share that with the children? What people have influenced you in your life, also, what it might be in you that influences others?

This issue is about Bayard Rustin, an African American Quaker, who expressed his faith in action, challenging inequalities and responding to racism and prejudice nonviolently. In researching a project for Black History month, an 8-year-old child of Quaker parents learned of Bayard Rustin and was moved to develop a youtube film. The short film can be viewed online – the link is in the sidebar. Have a look before you read on. She explored complicated and difficult issues which were not easy to understand: racism, segregation, and the history of slavery. This led her to inquire about Quaker faith and issues, in doing so she learned more about being a Quaker herself. This issue is developed around the story she wrote, and her and her brother's suggestions on how other children might learn more about this remarkable man and Quaker ways of being. Think about how to make Bayard Rustin's story relevant to the age groups in your meeting. All children understand unfairness and inequality in some way, and given the chance, find kind ways to respond. Read *Sheets 42 A & B* for yourself.

Equipment needed

To create a sense of sacred space set up a comfortable and welcoming room - maybe a blanket, rug or pillows on the floor, low lighting, teddy bears or comfort toys along with an array of some natural objects - stones, pine cones, sticks or leaves. Avoid clutter. Use soft pastel coloured fabric can cover book cases.

Resources and background

This issue, like issues 27, 35 and 40, is based on an approach to children's work called 'Way of the Child'. Resources about this are listed under resources on page 4.

The youtube video by young Quaker about Bayard Rustin:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHJGCxMDaQg> or search in youtube for *African American Quaker*

Gather

One adult greets each child at the door, shakes their hand and welcomes them by name. You can invite children to take off their shoes. Say that they are entering into a special place, a place of peace, a place to be quiet, to feel the presence of love, of God. In this moment, as everyone comes together, you are setting the tone for a simple sacred experience: children's meeting for worship.

The other adult sits on a rug large enough for all to sit together. Be calm, speak quietly and greet each child by name as they sit. Give time for each child to introduce themselves and say something about their week. You may want to do this in a circle or informally speak with them, engage in conversation about their families, how their week was, has anything happened to make them happy, anything to make them sad. Encourage everyone to listen, not comment and to leave a pause between comments. Ensure everyone has introduced themselves and, if they want, spoken.

When everyone is gathered and settled, light a candle and say "this candle is to remind us that God is present" – use language with which you are comfortable. Either light or support each child to light a smaller candle which is labelled with their name, inviting them to say their name – do this for absent children too. Encourage children to sit quietly on the rug, hands resting on their lap for a moment in silence. Invite them to look at the candle to help them focus on the silence, if that is helpful to them. See sidebar for information and resources about prayer, centering and guided meditation. Have a special table for the candles,

Engage

Say that you are going to read a story written by, or show a youtube film made by an 8-year-old Quaker girl : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHJGCxMDaQg> . It is just over 7 minutes long. Say it is about a boy who did something that wasn't so nice but then learned friendly ways to stop bullies being mean. It is helpful to be able to tell a story in your own words, rather than read it but as these words are those of a child, you might just want to read it. If you are able to show the film do so because hearing another child's voice telling the story may have more of an impact. Also children get to hear Bayard Rustin's voice. See *Sheet 42.C* for Anya's *Story of Bayard Rustin* and *Sheets 42. B & D* for pictures of Bayard. After you have finished encourage sharing of experience of the story. Use "I wonder..." questions to help with this:

- I wonder what part of this story you like the best.
- I wonder what part of this story was most important to you.
- I wonder who you might like to be in this story.
- I wonder if there is any part of this story that you would like to leave out and still have all the story you need.

Bayard Rustin talking with children. See *Sheets 42.D* for more pictures of Bayard and the march to Washington



Advice & Queries 1

Take heed, dear Friends, to the prompting of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leading of God whose Light shows us our darkness and bring us to new life.

Advices & Queries 3:

Do you try to set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit? All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the divine and to find the inward source of our strength. Seek to know an inward stillness, even amid the activities of daily life.

Books and resources, stilling, centering, prayer and guided meditation:

See Issue 40 *Sheet 40.A of Journeys in the Spirit Children's edition* for information about guided meditation.

Approaches to Prayer: a resource book for groups and individuals. Edit. H. Morgan (1991) London: SPCK.

Praying with Children: some ways and means. J.Pate (1995) McCrimmon.

Don't just do something, sit there: developing children's spiritual awareness. Mary K. Stone (1995) Norwich: RMEP.

References & other resources

Advice & Query 35

'Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes.....'

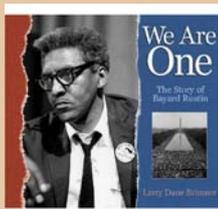
Lives that Speak: stories of Twentieth-Century Quakers. Ed.

Marnie Clark (2004)
Quakers Press,
Friends General
Conference:
Philadelphia.

Challenging issues are addressed in Journeys in the Spirit Children's edition issue 20 'Stop bullying – some Quaker ways':

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Journeys-in-the-Spirit-Children-Oct-08-No-20.pdf>

A children's book about Bayard Rustin:



Calkins Creek Books
(October 2007)
ISBN: 978-1590784983

[Note: If you have siblings in your meeting, consider how you might respond if one of them accuses the other of some mean action. Also be prepared that difficult issues might arise relating to family relations, bullying or abuse. You may want to let your overseer know that you may be addressing challenging issues.]

Respond

In Meeting for Children's Worship it can be easy to get caught up in "producing" something to 'show and tell' to everyone else in Meeting. The suggestions here and on Sheets 42.E & F offer a variety of ways for supporting children to reflect on and respond to the Bayard Rustin story. Doing so in a calm and quiet manner may also lead children into their own precious inner silence and, for some this may be the only opportunity in their week to be in quiet and contemplation. The activities are those suggested by Anya and Arjun 8-year-old children who attend Meeting for Children's Worship regularly.

Rights and Wrongs: what would you do if....?

Ask the children if they remember what Bayard Rustin did when people were being mean to him and what he learned from his grandmother. Ask them to quietly think about what they would do in the following scenarios. This could be in the whole group or smaller groups:

- If some body in the playground hits you, or takes you ball away.
- If you hear another child call your friend a nasty name.
- If you saw a friends steal something from a shop.

For each scenario ask everyone to notice:

- What is their gut reaction - *point to your stomach*
- What do they feel - *point to your heart*
- What do they think - *point to your head*
- What would they do - *open your hands up, palms up*

Alternatively, you could create a scenario yourself or invite suggestions from the children by asking, "I wonder if someone has ever done something to you that made you sad or angry?" Or "I wonder if you have ever watched someone be mean to someone else?"

After conversation about the scenarios go to *Sheet 42.E* for creative ways for children to explore the scenarios and express or record their responses.

Ways to live

Remind children that Bayard Rustin was taught by his grandmother that:

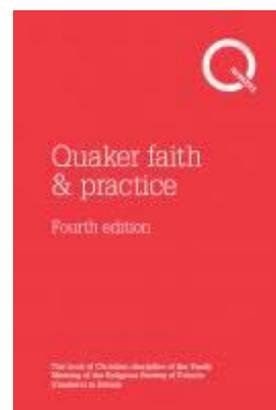
- All people are equal before God
- All violence is wrong
- Treat people with love and respect
- It is too tiresome to hate
- Never go to sleep still angry with anyone

Ask the children:

"I wonder what you think of these advices from his grandmother."

"I wonder if there is anything that you would add to this list – advice or ways to live that you think are important."

Leave silence between comments and remind children they do not need to put their hand up. Here we just listen to each other and take turns. See *Sheet 42.F* for activities to help explore ways to live – they are suitable for a variety of ages.



Reflect

Remind children: "You sat quietly at the beginning of the meeting. Silence helps us to think and to listen to ourselves as well as to each other. Let us practice this again.". After a time, looking at the candle, say "Our candles remind us we are not alone. We lit one large candle to remind us that God is present with us and within us. As this Meeting for Worship draws to a close, I invite each child to extinguish their candle" (or you extinguish each candle, saying the child's name). As each child extinguishes their candle or you say their name, take from a basket a small prepared stone and give to each child, saying, "Take this with you as a reminder that God is with you (Or: you are loved)." Shake hands to close Meeting. After notices, invite children to help tidy up. One adult stands at the door and says goodbye to each child as they leave.

Review

Reviewing can happen at the time or later and may help the planning of future children's meetings for worship. Do you keep simple records of the meeting, e.g. a notebook including who attended, their ages and the focus of worship. To aid review you might consider:

- Do you think the meeting was worshipful?
- Did it respect the Quaker testimonies – equality, peace, simplicity, truth?
- Did facilitators and children have fun?
- What went really well?
- What is there for you to learn from this session?
- What might you do differently another time?

Topical activity Your holiday story

Sheets 42.G and H offer an activity for everybody in Meeting to do during the summer holiday time. *Sheet 42.G* is for children and talks about each child being given a bag to collect all sorts of things in that could be part of the story of their holiday. *Sheet 42.H* is for older people in Meeting and invites each person to write a little story about a summer in their childhood. Both of these things would be ideal for sharing after the summer holidays and this could be after a shared

Links to other organisations and resources

www.racematters.org/bayardrustin.htm and www.quakerinfo.com/quak_br.shtml for more about Bayard Rustin.

www.quaker.org.uk/ideas for the Ideas Store with lots of activities and resources tried and tested by others in children's meetings.

www.bookshop.quaker-secure.org.uk/quaker-resources & www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop - for the Quaker Resources Centre and Bookshop includes books on stilling, centering, prayer and 'Way of the Child'.

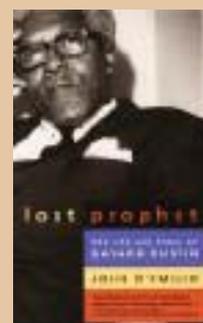
This issue was written by Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, Arjun Nanning Ramamurthy and Eugene Nanning. Edited by Chris Nickolay with the assistance of Howard Nurden. The topical activity was by Beate Dehnen.

The next issue, number 43 ends **Series 4** – it looks back over the whole series and also asks: "What is your story?" and is available on September 1st. **Series 5** begins with Issue 44 on October 1st. The new series is all about Advices and Queries; issue 44 concentrates on A&Q 3 and 7; Issue 45 is about A&Q 37 and 38 and is available on November 1st.

A Meeting for Worship for all ages about Bayard Rustin

After gathering in stillness have the story of Bayard read by children and adults in parts – use a mix of the two stories on *Sheets 42 A,B & C*. Introduce the 'Ways to live' activity using the pillow idea. People can quietly help each other – end with finished and unfinished pillows on a table in the centre of your Meeting.

A book about Bayard Rustin:



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