



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

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## A simple plan for an all-age Meeting for Worship

*Preparation: You will need some sheets of newspaper roughly cut up into six inch squares, different coloured wool: other threads and small pieces of fabric - this is for making the little worry dolls. A set of worry dolls as an example or a copy of the picture at the bottom of this page. A copy of the book 'The Lion and the Unicorn' by Shirley Hughes – if you don't have a copy ask in Meeting – it has been a very popular book; otherwise it is in the Quaker Bookshop and is readily available in bookshops and online.*

*Involve others from meeting, perhaps elders, to read the quotes or the story.*

Begin by welcoming everyone to all age worship. Start with a few moments of quiet.

Read the following simple quote to introduce the theme of this all age worship – understanding our fears.

*“Usually we think brave people have no fear. The truth is that they are intimate with fear” - Pema Chodron*

Pause

All of us have times in our life when we feel frightened. Fear is a very real feeling. Sometimes if we say we are afraid of spiders or the dark people may laugh at us. This is a shame as it may stop us talking about our fears.

We are now going to hear part of a story (the whole story is very long) called *'The Lion and the Unicorn'*. The story is about a small boy who lived in London during the Second World War. His dad is a soldier and fighting in the war a long way off. Before he goes dad gives Lenny a special badge of a lion and a unicorn that he keeps with him at all times. It is very frightening when the bombs fall and very dangerous so Lenny is evacuated to a large house in the country. He is well looked after but there are lots of things that frighten him including the dark, creepy bedroom, bullies at school and he is missing his mum and dad. All this affects Lenny so much that he starts wetting the bed at night. One day he discovers a secret garden where he goes to be alone and get away from his fears. He discovers a statue of a unicorn like the badge dad gave him. He meets a young man called Mick in the garden who has only one leg – he lost the other leg fighting in the war. We pick up the story when he meets the young man one day in the secret garden.

Read from *“One afternoon Mick came across Lenny sitting hunched on the bench...”* and finish with the sentence that ends ....*“but he got the general idea.”* (The book doesn't have page numbers so, depending on the issue you have or obtain, the reading is on page 44 counting from the title page).

Fears can come from a deep place within us. We may not fully understand from where. It may be from an unhappy or frightening experience like Lenny or Mick.

What can we do to help us not to feel frightened? Perhaps we can think of ways to help us cope with our fears. In the story Lenny talks about “unicorn courage”.

Pause

We now have another part of a story called *“Mister God, this is Anna”* by Fynn. The story is about a five year old orphaned girl who finds a new, slightly strange family. Anna has not had a good start in life and has many fears. But she has found a way to help with her fears – she talks to God. Fynn who helps look after Anna tells the story

*‘.....And so I picked up Anna and took her along to bed. The bedclothes were already pulled back and I put her down and made as if to tuck her up, but this was all wrong.*

*“Ain't you gonna say your prayers?” she asked*

*“Well yes” I replied, ‘when I get to bed.’*

*“I want to say mine now with you,” she said. So we both got down on our knees and she talked while I listened.*

*I've been to church many times, and heard many prayers, but none like this. I can't remember much about her prayer except that it started off with “Dear Mister God, this is Anna talking”, and she went on in such a familiar way of talking to Mister God that I had the creepy feeling that if I dared looked behind me he would be standing there.’*

Later Anna is talking to Fynn about Mister God' .... *"There's another way that Mister God is different."* We obviously hadn't finished yet. *"Mister God can know things and people from the inside too. We only know them from the outside don't we? You see Fynn, people can't talk about Mister God from the outside: you can only talk about Mister God from the inside of him" ...'*

Some people think that it helps to talk to God about their worries or fears. Perhaps you might use different words like that of god, or the light or the divine for the special place inside you. It may feel like a place in our heads or our hearts. We can talk with that place, mull over our fears and perhaps we will feel a little better.

Pause

Here's another way to help deal with our fears.

*Show people the box of "worry dolls" and take the small dolls out to show everyone.*

In the mountains of Guatemala the Indians share this legend with their children. They teach that when troubles/fears befall the child, he/she must remove one doll from the box for each "trouble" or "fear", before going to sleep. Tell the doll the trouble or fear and while he/she is getting a good sleep the doll attempts to solve the trouble. Since there are only six dolls in the box only six troubles or fears a day are allowed.

We can't make dolls this small but we can make a larger one to tell all our fears. Explain the dolls are very simple to make with newspaper and wool. *Have some ready made so that people can copy them.*

We will do this activity quietly. Those who prefer not to take part in the activity can uphold the rest of us in the silence. People might want to share their thoughts. This is ministry.

You might want to place the dolls together in the centre – perhaps on a table but people must take away their doll.

Finish with some quiet and elders shaking hands



Here are some worry dolls made by people at Edinburgh all age meeting for worship. People felt it was a theme that "spoke to everyone".