



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

April 2014 Issue 86



## An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting about Mary Elizabeth Phillips

Make sure you have a little time of worship for yourself and other volunteers before the session – even a couple of minutes are good. The outline is based on a 45 minutes children's meeting.

*Resources: cut out leaves, pens, pencils, yarn, hole punch, big branch in a pot or vase, soil or sand for the pot or vase.*

### Gather:

Greet and welcome each child at the door, ensuring they are calm and ready for worship. Another adult sits on a rug large enough for all to gather and speaks quietly, again greeting each child by name as they sit and engaging in conversation about their families, how their week was, whether anything happened to make them happy, sad, or anything else. Encourage everyone to listen, and to pause after a person has spoken.

When all are gathered, light a large candle to remind everyone "that God is present" (using language with which you are comfortable). Light a small candle for each child, say their name and welcome them. Light a final candle for absent friends. Sit quietly for a moment in worship, with lit candles and pine cones, rocks, shells laid out reverently on a small table to your side, or on a tray on the rug. Some children may need assistance to gather into worshipful silence.

In the gathered silence, introduce *Advices & queries* 3 in words that the children may understand, e.g. share with children that Quakers think it is important "to set aside times of quiet even within the busyness of the day so that we may know a calmness within ourselves. Some Quakers say this is a way to get closer to God and this quiet can help us be calm and find ways to deal with difficult feelings and thoughts." Pause in the gathered silence.

**5 minutes**

### Engage:

A story about Mary Elizabeth Phillips

Quietly, say you are going to tell a story about a young Quaker girl who cares so much about the people around her she wanted to make their lives even better. See *Additional Resource 86.A* for the story. As it suggests on page 2 of issue 86 of *Journeys in the Spirit* you could familiarise yourself with the story before the session. Tell the story. You could lay down some of the pictures on *Additional Resource 86.B* as you speak. Allow some silence following the story. Then ask the children "I wonder..." questions. Just listen to and accept whatever answers or silence greets your wondering:

I wonder, what part of this story you like the best.

I wonder, what part of the story you think is the most important.

I wonder, if there is any part of this story you feel is like you.

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.

I wonder what special interests you have / what you feel passionate about.

I wonder if there is something you want to improve in your family, your school, where you live or this Meeting?

**15 minutes**

### Respond:

Before doing any of the activities here talk with children about their ideas for making a better world and how that might be done. Then go onto the following activity:

Leaves on a tree.

Begin with a little worshipful silence. Give out hole punched copies of the leaf template on *Additional Resource 86.D*. Ask children to put their wishes or what they would like to do for a better world on one or more leaves, writing, drawing or both, and hang them on a tree branch.

**15 minutes**

**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 and to God. Let us practice this listening again." After a time, looking at the candles, 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, we extinguish the candles for those present." You may choose to say each child's name as you extinguish each candle. When done, say "for absent friends" and extinguish that candle. Finally, extinguish the large candle, reminding "God is with us always, even when we can't see his light." (or words that you are comfortable with). Then 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." Shake hands to close Meeting. After notices, invite children to help tidy up. When it is time to leave, stands at the door and says goodbye to each child as they leave.

**5 minutes**