



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition November 2015 Issue 100



## Quakers in the world - seeds and senses

### Getting ready

Our spiritual journeys involve paying attention to and sharing with ourselves, other people, the world around us, and God. We can use all our senses to do this.

We invite you to 'listen' and respond to the story of the life cycle of a dandelion using all your senses.

This way of story telling is inclusive: people of all ages and abilities can engage with a story through their senses. It's particularly effective for people with disabilities that prevent them communicating with spoken or written words. People with disabilities are often left out – not talked to or listened to - especially if they communicate in different ways. You can use the story and suggested activities for children's meeting about how we can share and communicate with people despite of difference in ability or language.

Alternatively, you might like to explore further the themes of the story. Early Quakers used 'the seed' as a metaphor for the inward light. The dandelion's life cycle can be a parable of transformation and inspiration. You can imagine that the single dandelion seed is an idea that is nurtured and grows, and then, when the time is right, it inspires other ideas to blossom. We offer activities and an outline for an all-age meeting for worship to explore these themes.

*Journeys in the Spirit* offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

### Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive and gather together in a circle. Introduce the idea of using all of our senses by asking the children what senses they have. As each of the senses is named, ask the children to spend a moment concentrating on what they can sense with it:

- What can you hear right now?
- What can you smell? etc.



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### Underpinning references

*"I love to feel where the words come from"*

Papunehang to John Woolman: see issue 37 of *Journeys in the Spirit*

*"...sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee ..."*

Isaac Pennington. QF&P 26.70

See also QF&P 19.14 & 26.69 – 26.71

# Engage

*Resources that you need for this are listed in the separate 'stimuli' headings – read the script through carefully and make a list of things you want to use.*

Use the script below to tell the story of the life cycle of a dandelion. Take it slowly, giving the children time to explore each sensory stimulus that you have provided before moving on to the next sentence. Where several options are given for stimuli, choose the one that best suits your setting or invent one of your own. If necessary, change the words and/or stimulus to be appropriate to the age and abilities of the children.

A single seed waits in the soil.

*Touch stimuli: a single marble; a single seed; moist soil; a single marble on a damp cloth.*

Rain falls, the seed germinates. The flower inside begins to grow.

*Taste stimuli: drink a sip of water; gently spray water on the tongue and face.*

Leaves brace themselves against the earth and a tall hollow stalk shoots skywards.

*Sound stimuli: Whistle to represent growing; play a long rising note on a swanee whistle or a recorder.*

The flower blooms.

*Smell stimuli: Strongly brewed dandelion tea; fresh flowers; or any other floral smell.*

At night the flower closes to rest, by day it opens and follows the sun, and so on and on ...

*Sight stimuli : Light and dark – create night and day by shutting out the light and letting it in again, alternatively you can cover the children in a heavy blanket to make it dark and lift it off again to make it light.*

Until one day the flower closes and the outer bracts fold down and the inner close up; on top the petals furl themselves into a tight spiral and wait.

*Touch stimuli: Wrap the children in blankets or scarfs; get everyone to wrap their arms tightly around themselves.*

When the moment comes the petal spiral pops off and the bracts unfurl to reveal the seed ball beneath.

*Sight stimuli: unwrap and hand out seed wands to everyone (see Additional resource 100.A for how to make seed wands).*

One seed has become many.

*Sight stimuli: gesture around the group and allow time to look around and see that everyone has a seed wand.*

The wind blows and carries them away.

*Sound stimuli: create the sound of the wind by blowing gently – everyone can join in. Blow away a handful of mini seed wands or encourage the children to disperse and find their own resting places within the room.*

After telling the story, ask the children

- Which of your senses did you use to 'listen' to the story?

We often tell stories by talking, reading, or looking at pictures in a story book

- How could you share a story if you couldn't hear? See pictures? Understand the language?

## References & other resources

Watch a beautiful time-lapse film of dandelions by nature filmmaker Artur Homan:

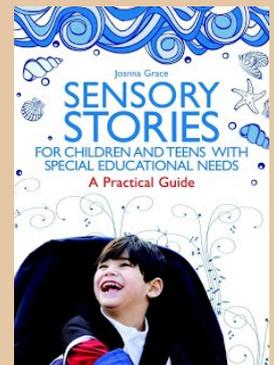


<http://youtu.be/gEs6kF90xOc>

For more sensory storytelling inspiration, read

*Sensory Stories for Children and Teens with Special Educational Needs: A Practical Guide*

by Joanna Grace



ISBN:  
1849054843

*Additional Resource 100.A* can be found at:  
<http://old.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

## References & other resources

*Journeys in the Spirit Series 8* (issues 60 - 70) is all about the five senses.



Refer to these issues for lots more ideas for children's meeting activities using our senses, see:

<http://old.quaker.org.uk/childrens-work-edition-series-8>

*Additional Resource 100.B* and *Simple plan for all age worship* can be found at:

<http://old.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

## Respond

Choose one or more of the activities below to develop the themes of using our senses to communicate and allowing the divine 'seed' to grow in us.

### Another two senses! Dandelion movement sequence

As well as the famous five senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell), we have two more: our vestibular sense, i.e. our sense of balance, and our proprioceptive sense i.e. our sense of where our bodies are in space. Engage these two senses by re-telling the dandelion life cycle story using the movement sequence described in *Additional resource 100.B*.

### Using our senses to communicate: Make a touch picture

A touch picture is a picture that you understand by feeling rather than by looking. *You'll need plain white paper, some stiff plain card, glue sticks and scissors.* Create different textures by ripping, folding, screwing up, or rolling the paper. Stick the paper to the card to create a picture. Share your pictures with each other. Invite the children to pay attention to how people respond to their pictures with their body language as well as with words.

### Using our senses to communicate: Make a sensory tour

Work together to make a sensory tour of your meeting place or a sensory guide to meeting for worship. *You'll need plain white paper – big sheets are best and marker pens.* Elements might include: shaking hands when you arrive (touch), flowers (smell), biscuits (taste), and other sensory experiences particular to your Meeting. Ask children about how they think the different senses link to different parts of the meeting house or meeting for worship. Write on the sheets during the conversation and/or as you go round the meeting house.



### Seeds and growing

Plant some seeds, for example sunflower seeds in pots or cress seeds in cotton wool. If you have access to a Meeting House garden, plant bulbs or explore the different types of seeds you can find in the garden. This could be an opportunity to collect seeds and other natural objects to use in all-age worship (see the *Simple plan for all age worship* for this issue).

Talk with the children about the seeds/bulbs they have planted or found: what will they grow into? What they will need to grow? (e.g. light, water, warmth, time). Give the children some time to reflect on how they would like to grow.

### Seeds, transformation and taste

In the story, the dandelion seed was transformed into a plant and flower, and then into a whole collection of seeds. Popcorn is another type of seed. Planted, it would grow into corn. But you can also transform it into a tasty food by cooking it. Cook some popcorn with the children. Experiment with the taste of different flavours e.g. plain, salt, sugar, butter.



## Reflect

Gather the group back together in a circle. If you have made touch pictures or planted or found seeds, spend some time sharing these with each other. Ask for volunteers to tell the adults' meeting about what you have done.

Go round the circle asking everyone to describe one sensory experience – perhaps from today's children's meeting - that they are that they are thankful for, that they like.

Finish with some time quietly being aware of what you can currently see, hear, smell, feel or taste



Image by Benjamin Esham, CC-BY <https://flic.kr/p/2HJvfn>

## Review

Take some time to reflect on the session:

What went well, and why? What didn't go well, and why? Has everyone been able to participate?

How can you share your experience and reflections with other Friends involved with children's meeting?

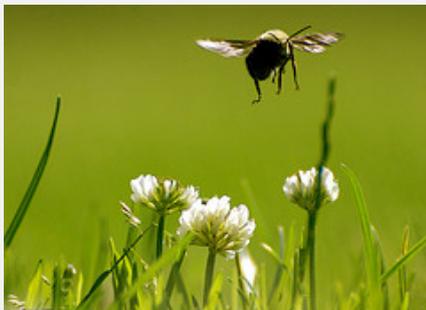


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**This issue was written by Jo Grace and Katie Evans and edited by Mel Cook and Howard Nurden.**

*Journeys in the Spirit* is published in two formats – on alternate months. One month the issue is on a theme with an easy to use structure set out in a four page booklet with additional online resources. The alternate month the issue is a topical activity - this is about something in the news or of seasonal interest.

Available from 1 December 2015: **Topical Activity: A Christmas Story**

Available from 4 January 2016: **Issue 101** *Accompanying the people of Palestine* offering a careful approach to looking at these complex issues with children.

Available from 1 February 2016 **Topical Activity: Good to be Green**

## Materials available online are:

Current issue additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

Go to:

[www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren) and choose from the range of links in the sidebar.

**Published by Children & Young People's Staff Team, Quaker Life**

Available free by subscription.

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