



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition March 2016 Issue 102



Taking Action

Getting ready

This edition of Journeys in the Spirit is about how we help children consider what leads us to take action. Whether this is going on a demonstration, signing a petition, recycling, or standing up for what we believe to be right, it is important to give credence to these actions.

For us as adults the idea of conscience is a hard one to explain, so it will be difficult to talk with children about this. It can be a very personal experience.

However Quakers have a long history of standing up for what they believe in. Quakers have always joined in political debate and lobbied MPs both locally and centrally.

It is important children know about and understand our Quaker history and its roots in Christianity and the teachings of Jesus.

Is our conscience that still small voice, or the deep stirrings of unease or even anger when we are faced with issues that we are led to act on? Do we pay attention to our gut feelings and what they are saying?

We want children to be aware of these feelings, respect and value them, we want to guide our children as they feel compelled to take action. It is not always easy to stand up for what we believe, but supporting children in this enables their social and spiritual development. This issue seeks to help you to do this.

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

Prepare the room by setting out the chairs or cushions in a circle to start with and have any resources ready you need for the activities you have chosen.

Have a selection of photos/pictures of people taking action such as people on a demonstration, doing some recycling, writing a letter, or a picture of the suffragettes (see side bar for link to additional resource 102.1).

Begin by everyone saying their names, especially if there are people in the group who do not know each other, and something they have done this week.

Place the pictures in the centre of the circle and have some quiet while everyone looks at the pictures for a few minutes. Then ask the children if they know what is happening in each of the pictures.

Underpinning reference.

'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing'.

Edmund Burke

Additional Resource 102.1 can be found at:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren

Engage

The story of Jesus in the Temple

Read the story of Jesus in the Temple in the *NIV Bible* in *Matthew 21 v 12-17* or *Mark 11v 15-19* or *Luke 19 v 45-48* or *John 2 v 13-22*.

The story of Jesus overturning the tables of the moneylenders in the Temple shows a different side of Jesus. Here he is angry to the extent of performing quite a violent act. In John's account, there is a description of Jesus making a whip and driving out the animals. Explain the people in the Temple were using it as a bank instead of a place to be quiet and pray to God. Jesus was upset as well as angry.

Writing letters

George Fox wrote lots of letters – it helped him when he was in prison. He felt very strongly about his faith and wanted to tell others. This is a story about a small boy who did write a letter. Read this to the children first – (see side bar for link to *additional resource 102.2*).

Talk about the story and how both the boys must have felt. What exactly was it that compelled David to write his letter. Introduce the idea of conscience, and the stirrings inside David's heart that made him want to help rather than just ignore the situation. Also once one child decided on an action others joined in. What would the children like to write to their MP about? Maybe the plight of refugees coming to Europe. Together devise a letter to the local MP.

Stories of famous Quakers who took action



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A chance to find out about Lucretia Mott and Helen Stevens. These two women lived many years apart but they were both driven to take action about issues they felt strongly about. Read the two stories (see sidebar for link to *additional resource 102.3*). Talk with the children about how the women might have felt about taking action. Try to draw out that taking action may involve an element of risk even to the extent of breaking the law. Quakers sometimes find it hard to follow their conscience when their actions might mean breaking the law. Perhaps these women felt afraid when they were taking action – it takes courage.

The Kites are flying – Michael Morpurgo

Ask the children if they have read this and if so, what can they tell you about it. If possible show the book and talk about it with the children. The most important point in this story is that one boy's action had a powerful effect on others and built bridges across a troubled land.

References & other resources

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.

Martin Niemoller

Read more at <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/mothertere121243.html#sBZc59EqKLBQW1wg.99>

Additional Resource sheet 102.2 & 102.3, can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren

References & other resources

War and Peas by Michael Foreman

Anderson Press
Paperback Picture Book

ISBN 978-1-84270-083-9

Advice and query 36

Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for the prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.

We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.

[Mother Teresa](#)

Respond

The story of Jesus in the Temple

After telling the story from the Bible as stated in Engage, talk with the children about how Jesus is often seen as a kind gentle person tending to the sick, telling stories and caring for children. But in this story he is cross and angry. There are people using the Temple as a market place to sell their goods. Others were using the Temple as a bank (moneylenders). Jesus is very cross saying the Temple is a place of prayer. Can you see him pushing over the tables?

Ask the children if they can think of the times they have been angry about something. They might want whatever it was to stop and perhaps have wanted to take action. What did it make them want to do? Perhaps it was something at school, like seeing someone else being bullied or someone telling a lie. Talk with the children about what they experienced and did (if anything) or what they might have done.

You might want to give the children a simple journal in which they can write their feelings about this and the following sessions on taking action. The journal could be a simple exercise book or even sheets of A4 paper folded in half and stapled together. Explain that a journal is somewhere to write their personal thoughts. It is private and they share only what they choose to share with others. They could start using it this session and they might want to decorate their journal on the outside as well.

Writing Letters

Ask children if they have ever written a letter to voice a concern – to tell someone they think something is wrong, unfair.

Ask children to think of something they would like to change or make happen. Perhaps they can agree on one concern and all write letters in their own words. It may be they come up with different issues. If this is the case value and respect individual concerns. Have some discussion about the various concerns and if there is no consensus there will need to be letters written on the different issues. They may want to write about the plight of refugees – perhaps there are refugees in their school or community. The concern could be something different such as something at school they would like to change. They may want a local play area in the park that is safe, or they may have concerns about too many cars on the road and want more cycle lanes. These are some suggestions that might help to encourage ideas. They can take their letters home with them and ask parents to help them address the letters to the relevant MP. This will encourage some adults to be involved as well.

Again they might want to use their journals to write or draw something of their own thoughts.

Stories of famous Quakers who took action

Take some time to talk with the children about these two stories. There could be some discussion about when is it okay to break the rules. Perhaps the children can think of rules they have not kept – maybe at school. Think also about how these women must have felt as they took action. Perhaps they were a bit frightened, had second thoughts but went with their conviction of what is right.

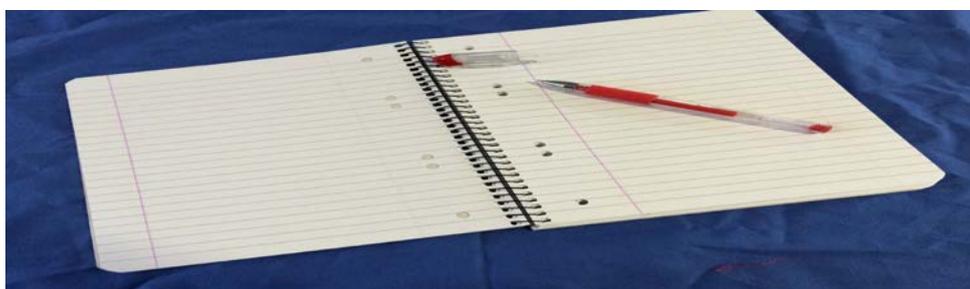
Suggest the children write down their thoughts about these stories in their journals or draw some pictures about the stories.

Reflect

At the end of the session have some time for the children to ask any questions. There may be issues that have arisen as a result of the subject and children may need clarification if there are things they have not understood.

As we have seen, taking action is a very personal thing and we must encourage children to come to their own decision about what are the issues that they feel strongly about and what action they might take. The children may not all have the same thoughts and ideas about this. There may not be consensus, so it is important to value all the children's contributions and to individually address how they take the action they feel is appropriate.

Children may like to share with the adults in meeting what they have been thinking about and done. Consider how you might do this allowing plenty of time. This is a topic that adults may struggle with and may also learn from the children.



Review

The review can happen at the time or later but volunteers may well feel they need to speak to someone immediately after the session.

For yourself, reflect on how the session went. Did the children participate well? Did they learn about taking action? Are there things you might have done differently? Is it worth discussing these things with other volunteers and at Children's Committee?

It may be worth thinking about doing the three approaches over three consecutive Sundays or whenever there is children's meeting. Then ending with all age worship that involves the whole of meeting. Think about how taking action is an all age issue and everyone can learn from each other.

This issue was written by Madeleine Harding and edited by Mel Cook and Howard Nurden.

Journeys in the Spirit is published in two formats – on alternative 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 April 2016: **Topical Activity:** This light that pushes me.

Available from 3 May 2016: **Issue 103** Root and Fruit

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.

All these are available at:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren

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