



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition

March 2018 Issue 114



Militarisation in schools

Getting ready

This edition of Journeys in the Spirit focuses on militarisation in schools. It looks at how the influence of the military can permeate children's thinking even at quite a young age. Children are surrounded by images of violence and fighting through television, comics, books, computer games and social media. It is not therefore a huge step to the armed forces putting on events for children and young people at which they will look to recruit young people into the military.

"Public understanding of the military and recognition of their role will always determine the climate within which the Forces can recruit, and the willingness of the taxpayer to finance them adequately"
(Government report on National Recognition of the Armed Forces)

So, it is important that children understand the reality of what the military in Britain is doing but more importantly that there is an alternative. Quakers have a strong testimony to peace and understanding the true worth of working for peace, and recognising a common humanity.

We can talk with our children and young people about our testimony to peace and give them the resilience to stand up for what they believe in and enable them to go with what their hearts tell them.

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 you need for the activities you chosen.

Place some images on the floor in the centre of the circle of soldiers, war and the effects of war (*Additional Resource 114A – see sidebar*).

Begin by everyone saying their names, especially if there are people in the group who do not know each other. Ask everyone to say their name and their favourite game.

Have a few minutes of quiet while everyone looks at the images displayed. Ask the children the following questions: 'what do you think the person in the picture wants?' 'If you asked this person why they're doing that, what do you think they would say?' 'What might the story of this person be?'

"The two most important benefits to the MOD (of running activities for young people) are awareness and recruitment."
2011 Ministry of Defence 'youth engagement review'.

Additional Resource 114.A accessible at www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren select 'resources for current issue'.

Engage

Developing understanding

Explain to the children that Quakers have a strong belief that peace is part of how we live our lives. We call this the Peace Testimony. You might want to read them something from *Quaker faith & practice* on the Peace Testimony such as 24.03 written in 1693 by William Penn. Of course, there are many other passages you could choose.

Peace comes from within and from our Quaker belief that “there is that of God within everyone”. There are lots of ways we can try to make this happen.

We believe that war is wrong and never achieves anything. So perhaps we need to understand a little more of what we mean when we talk about the military. The military includes the Army, Navy and the Air Force.

You may hear some words to do with the military that need some explanation:

- Militarism – this means that a country wants to have an army, navy & air force to fight other countries and nations.
- Militarisation – this means how a country goes about making sure they have enough people in the army, navy and air force to do the fighting. And they do this by recruiting young men and women who are fit and able to fight.

Pause here and ask if there are any questions. Now ask the children if they have ever seen people from the armed forces in uniform. If so where was this? What were they doing?

Children might have been at events where the armed forces had a stall for advertising. They may have been at a fun event run by the army where there were games or a bouncy castle. Perhaps the army has been to their school for recruitment purposes, although this will be unlikely in a primary school. They may have seen adverts on T.V. or at the cinema. Encourage them to come up with their ideas/experiences. Think about how militarisation might seep into everyday life – maybe toys and games? If you are able, to watch a short video (*see sidebar*) and talk about it with the children. It is made by a boy about boys so may spark a conversation about gender and militarisation.

A game - Spectrum

Indicate to the group an imaginary line across the room. At one end is “I completely agree” and at the other end “I completely disagree”. In the middle “I’m not sure”. Read the statements below and ask the children to stand on the part of the imaginary line that matches how they feel about the statement.

- The main reason that the military run fun activities for children is to recruit young people (get them to join).
- These activities are mainly aimed at boys.
- The military should not be allowed to run activities for under 16 year olds.
- Schools should not allow red or white poppies to be worn around Remembrance Day - November 11 (Explain what poppies are for).
- Military toys, such as soldier figures and replica guns should not be allowed.

After the game have some discussion about the children’s choices. This might all be new for them so they may have questions as well.

References & other resources

The head of army recruitment strategy in 2009, Colonel David Alfrey, said: “We take a ten-year span. It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, ‘That looks great.’ From then on, the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip.”

Watch the short video by following this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_IvVG6_rNs

‘A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it... It is as great presumption to send our passions upon God’s errands, as it is to palliate them with God’s name... We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by love and information. And yet we could hurt no man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do: for if men did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel.’

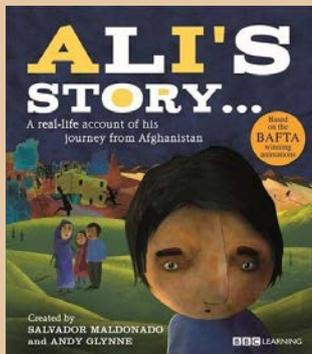
William Penn, 1693

References & other resources

Let us remember: One book, one pen, and one teacher can change the world.

Malala Yousaf

“All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever.”
Declaration by a group of Quakers to King Charles II in 1660



Ali's Story by Salvador Maldonado & Andy Glynn

ISBN 978-0-7502-9207-8



Imagine by John Lennon

ISBN978-3772528002

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<http://bookshop.quaker.org.uk>

Respond

Alternative weapons

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4).

This is a quote from the Bible – the Old Testament. I wonder what it means? Explain that weapons used in war should be made into useful peaceful things such as tools for farming the land. Ask the children for ideas about what weapons might be made into. You could have a go at making some from junk.

There are lots of horrible weapons today that cause much damage and kill and injure people badly. We may not be able to make bombs into useful tools but perhaps we can use the money to provide things people need like more hospitals, schools etc.

Ali's story

Read or watch (<https://vimeo.com/44516196>) the story called 'Ali's story' by Salvador Maldonado and Andy Glynn (see sidebar).

Talk with the children about how it must feel to be separated from your parents and not see them for a long time, all because soldiers are dropping bombs on the place where you live.

Arms in the world

Lots of countries have armies or a navy or an air force, or all three. These countries will also have the weapons and bombs to use when they are fighting wars. The exercise (link below) demonstrates which countries, and nations in the past, are most heavily armed. This is an interesting exercise but may well need to be done in an all age session with other adults, depending a bit on the age of the children.

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/country-cards-for-militarisation-spectrum-dec2015>

You may want to go on to talk about how they might feel if they went to an event (maybe at their school) where the armed forces were doing some interesting activities. Would they want to join in? It might be fun. Perhaps they have older brother and sisters who might also be there and be persuaded to join the cadets (junior section of the army/navy/air force). It may not be obvious at this point that the army is about fighting wars and killing people but that is what happens.

Imagine

Read the book by John Lennon (*see sidebar*). They may not know who John Lennon was so tell them about how he wanted a peaceful world and got his message over through music and singing. This is very powerful as lots of people liked John Lennon and wanted to listen to his music – and still do. Listen to the words of song here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwUGSYDKUxU>

The children may want to respond by engaging in an activity such as writing some simple poetry or songs, making a peace poster or collage or even something in fabric. Be inventive and involve others in the meeting.

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 need clarification if there are things they have not understood.

Through this edition, children can begin to understand how powerful and persuasive the military are and that what they offer is not the reality of what actually happens. Children can be very perceptive about the horrors of war but it is not helpful to be left with these awful images. We need to enable children to understand the importance of peace and that they can make a difference. There is something they can do.

Malala's Magic Pencil

If the influence of the army can have a drip drip effect then so can peaceful means. This is an inspirational story (see sidebar) about what one person can do. As a child in Pakistan, Malala made a wish for a magic pencil that she could use to redraw reality. She would use it to give gifts to her family, to erase the smell from the rubbish dump near her house, to sleep an extra hour in the morning. As she grew older, Malala wished for bigger and bigger things. She saw a world that needed fixing. And even if she never found a magic pencil, Malala realized that she could still work hard every day to make her wishes come true.

Review

The review can happen at the time or later. It will probably be helpful to talk with others doing sessions from this edition of *Journeys in the Spirit*. You may want to liaise as to how to involve the rest of meeting. It would also be good to let parents and others know what the sessions are about and how the work relates to the whole meeting.

For yourself reflect on how you feel the session went. Did the children participate well and feel able to contribute? Are there things you might have done differently?

Liaise with children's committee and elders and overseers about how you might involve the rest of meeting. Militarisation in schools is an important issue and it would be good for the rest of meeting to talk about this especially parents.

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 alternative month is a topical activity – something about the news or of a seasonal interest.

Available from 3 April 2018: Topical Activity White poppies

Available from 1 May 2018: Refugees

Materials available online are:

Additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

These can be accessed through

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren by scrolling down to 'resources for current issue'.

Malala's Magic Pencil

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<http://bookshop.quaker.org.uk>

For a 'How to use Journeys in the Spirit guide', the catalogue of previous issues and a link to the resources for recent issues, go to

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren and scroll down to find what you want.

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