

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 36

February 2010

Children



John Woolman – stories as a child and a man 1

“Journeys in the Spirit” offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people. This children’s work edition of “Journeys in the Spirit” comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children aged 4 –12 years in a Quaker setting. It is offered with the intention of providing an opportunity for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

Included are sections on: **getting ready**, for those co-ordinating the programme; **gather**, meeting, centering, focusing; **engage**, beginning to think about the theme; **respond**, activities linked to the theme; **reflect**, ending appropriately; and **review**, evaluating what has happened. To offer a balanced session you should aim to do something from each section. Some of the activities are included on additional sheets. Timings or ages are not stated, as this will depend on the group and how the guidance and activities are used.

Underpinning each issue is the idea that there are four directions to our spiritual journey. **Inwards** to ourselves; **outwards** to others; **upwards** (or even further inwards) towards the deeper mystery; **downwards** to the world we live in.



The tenth in the series ‘Our Quaker stories’
May 2009 –
August 2010

Getting ready

John Woolman was a Quaker born in America in 1720. Woolman has had a great influence not only on Quakers but on American society. His Journal is a classic in American literature and documents many of his adventures.

This issue of Journeys in the Spirit is the first of two to offer stories about John. We have included lots of quotations – if you find the language difficult please try to look underneath and into the words. Read them in a reflective way.

Woolman campaigned against slavery; he was against materialism and for a simple life. A pacifist, he did not support war and developed links with native American Indians, First Americans. John Woolman refused to be involved in animal cruelty. He is arguably one of the world’s first environmentalists. Woolman was a Quaker Preacher but he did not only preach about the testimonies, he lived them.

Here is something that he wrote concerning Quaker work with children:

To watch the spirit of children, to nurture them in Gospel Love, and labour to help them against that which would mar the beauty of their minds, is a debt we owe them; and a faithful performance of our duty not only tends to their lasting benefit and our own peace, but also to render their company agreeable to us. A care hath lived on my mind, that more time might be employed by parents at home, and by tutors at school, in weightily attending to the spirit and inclinations of children, and that we may so lead, instruct and govern them, in this tender part of life, that nothing may be omitted in our power, to help them on their way to become the children of our Father who is in heaven. John Woolman, 1758

Underpinning references

‘Our Gracious Creator cares and provides for all His Creatures.

His tender mercies are over all His works; and, so far as His love influences our minds, so far we become interested in His workmanship and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the Creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable, that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of Universal Love becomes the business of our lives.’

John Woolman, 1763

Gather

- Sit in a circle maybe with a candle as a focus. If you have just one or two children in your children's Meeting ask one or two adults to join for gathering and worship.

- Be still and quiet for a few moments and then say something like, 'We are going to find out about a Quaker called John Woolman. He lived in a part of the world called America – this was more than 200 years ago – a long, long time.'



- As you speak put down a copy of the picture of John on this page. Say something like, 'John cared for all living things – animals and people; he thought everybody was equal; he loved peace; he thought that we should love the creatures and people of our world more than wanting to have lots of things.'

- As you say each of these things put down copies of the words and pictures on *Sheet 36.A*. If you have used a candle as a focus put the pictures and words around it. Hold the worship stillness for as long as feels right.

Engage

Here are three ways into John Woolman's story. **1** is best for under 5s; **2** is best for 5 year olds upwards and **3** is best for 8 year olds upwards.

1. Caring for animals

John Woolman loved animals and wanted people to be kind to them. On *Sheets 36.D and 36.E* there are some pictures of different types of creatures. Stick these onto separate pieces of card. They are also available as a PowerPoint download at http://www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Animal_powerpoint.pdf. Lay down one card at a time as your group is sitting down. Ask, 'what animal is this?' When you have gone through them all, ask, 'which creature here would make the best pet?' Then ask, 'if you could look after any creature in the whole wide world which one would it be?' Then see the activity in Respond.

2. The Robin

On *Sheet 36.A* there is the story about John as a little boy killing a robin and then having to decide what to do with the chicks. This terrible event had a big affect on him for the rest of his life. Children may recognise these types of dilemmas and difficulties. Read the story, pause afterwards, and then talk about it using the questions on *Sheet 36.A*. Then see the activity in Respond.

3. Standing up for slaves

On *Sheet 36.C* there is a story of how John's conscience is stirred when asked to write a bill for the sale of a slave and then a will leaving a slave to a Friend's son. Woolman's concern turns to action as he thinks about the implications. A shop keeper, John, in a remote part of the world starts a path of simple non-violent protest that helps other people change.

References

"Be careful that the love of gain draw us not into any business which may weaken our love of our Heavenly Father, or bring unnecessary trouble to any of His creatures."

John Woolman 1720 - 1772

"Where the love of God is verily perfected and the true spirit of government watchfully attended to, a tenderness toward all creatures made subject to us will be experienced, and a care felt in us that we do not lessen that sweetness of life in the animal creation which the great Creator intends for them."

John Woolman 1720 - 1772

Respond

The John Woolman Memorial

Founded by Amelia Mott Gummere in 1915, the John Woolman Memorial Association operates a historic house in Mount Holly, New Jersey located where John Woolman's apple orchard once stood. At the time, historic houses were proliferating in honour of military heroes, and Amelia felt the need for a memorial to a man of peace.

From 1916 to 1939, the house operated as a tea house and bed & breakfast that offered simple country living. The garden and orchards provided fresh fruits and vegetables in season. Visitors often canoed on the Rancocas river, and enjoyed quilting or apple butter parties. In 1939, the effects of the Depression were felt, and not enough contributions were raised to keep the teahouse open. A family of German refugees was given shelter there, and then a Chinese family. The Memorial was not open again to the public until 1942.

When it re-opened, the new vision for the house was as the hub of a Quaker centre, along the lines of the Pendle Hill Quaker Study Center in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Today, the John Woolman Memorial Association sponsors the Annual Lecture. The house offers an opportunity for visitors to walk in John Woolman's footsteps, and serves as a backdrop for workshops and tours. It provides a place of refreshment and encouragement to follow one's conscience and to act for a just and righteous society.

Carol Walz, copyrighted 2005; go to: <http://woolmancentral.com/index.html>

1. Caring for animals.

Show the picture of the coach and horses on *Sheet 36.F*. Read what it says. Have lots of good art resources available for everybody to make a picture of themselves and the creature they would most like to look after. Have a sheet of card for each person – maybe a John Woolman book could be made for display in the Meeting House.

Perhaps think about arranging a visit to an animal shelter or rescue centre? Is there an animal rescue service that children and Meeting could help a little in memory of John Woolman and because it's a good thing to do?

2. The Robin.

- On *Sheet 36.B* there is a web link to the song of the American robin. If you are able to, play this in the next bit of your session. It is beautiful.
- Talk about what you could all do to tell the meeting about John Woolman and the robin? Do it together – have all sorts of resources available and ready.
- Colour in the picture of the American Robin on *Sheet 36.B*. whilst reflecting on the story. Have things like this happened to you?
- What can you do by yourself and together in Meeting to help birds and animals?

Find out about organisations which protect birds and animals – see *the Resources list on Page 4*.

3. Standing up for slaves

John Woolman refused to use things which he thought were made by people who were not treated fairly. Today John would have supported fair trade.

- For a way to introduce and talk about Fairtrade see *Sheet 36.F*. What can you do in your family, meeting, youth groups or school to support fairtrade?
- Find out about fairtrade organisation and goods. Ask children in your group what they would like to do about it. Also see *Resources list on Page 4 for a link to Abolition resources*.

4. The John Woolman memorial house. See the side bar for information.

- Show the picture below. Tell a little or lots of this story to children's meeting – show the picture.
- Ask, 'I wonder, if each of us were to make a picture or a model of a house to remember someone we liked or who we thought was special or very helpful in the world – what would it look like? What would you put in it?'

Have lots of model making and craft materials available.



Reflect

If you used a candle in the Gathering at the beginning – light it again. At this part of the Meeting the children are readying themselves to go back into the other Meeting for Worship. What would they like to tell or share with the adults in the Meeting? Are there any messages that they would like to pass on? Just sit quietly after asking these or similar questions and wait for answers.

Review

The review can happen at the time or later –maybe by yourself or with others. Some useful questions for the use of volunteers to look back over and learn from the session include:

Have children been able to participate in their own way? What went well and why? Has each child been able to reflect, even a little? How was it for you? Have the children had opportunities to think about what they might do, even in a small way, to make the world a better place to live?

Topical activity

Small beings can make a difference

A little story about how each of us has something to say, give and can be strong.

One day the sun went out. It stopped shining. All the animals and birds, came to a meeting together to decide what to do (the people were hiding). A little dog said, 'Someone has to get the sun burning again.' An elephant said, 'They will have to carry fire to the sun.' Everyone looked at the birds. They all pretended to be looking at the ground for food – all except the eagle and a tiny brown bird at the back that nobody saw. The eagle said, 'I can do it.' Everybody cheered. The little bird said, 'I can help' and nobody noticed. The eagle flew to a tree, burning where lightening had hit it. She flew to the meeting with fire in her beak. Without anybody seeing the little bird climbed onto the eagle's back.

The eagle flew higher and higher, nearer and nearer to the sun. She got hotter and hotter. The little bird held on tightly. The eagle got so hot she gave up and flew back down. She dropped the fire. The little bird flew up, caught the fire and went to the sun and lit it again. But, oh dear, her wings were burnt and she couldn't fly. She fell back down to the meeting. Everybody cheered – the sun was alight again. All the birds gave the little bird a feather or two and soon she was very brightly coloured and everybody listened to things she had to say.

Look at the picture of the goldfinch- was it this bird? What other bird might it have been? Make a book of the story together.

Links to other organisations and resources

<http://woolmancentral.com/index.html> - a mixture of all sorts about John Woolman

www.quaker.org.uk/files/Abolition-Journeys-March-2007.pdf - about slavery.

www.rspca.org.uk – resources and activities about animals – click on 'teachers' and then 'lesson resources'.

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/teaching/catalogue/index.asp> - RSPB and birds – click on 'things to do' and then 'kids'.

<http://www.birdlife.org> – for positive stories of people working to save birds look for what is being successfully done to protect the albatross from long line fishing.

This issue was written by Martin Lightfoot and edited by Chris Nickolay

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit*, issue 37 (available from March 1st) has more about John Woolman; issue 38 (available from April 1st) is about the Quaker Tapestry; issue 39 is about Lewis Cock, a Quaker and a butcher, and his struggle to be honest (available from May 3rd)

An idea for an all age Meeting for Worship -

Start by saying that the children, if possible, are going to tell a difficult story.

Tell the story of John and the robin.

Allow some quiet and then play, if you can, the song of the robin. End it so that the Meeting can be still.

Have available a range of books and pictures of birds on the floor and on low tables.

Lay out an array of drawing and colouring things for anybody to use around the pictures and books. Have some simple card bird templates for younger hands to use.

Have 2 children as Elders to hold and close the Meeting.



A goldfinch

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