



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition Issue 47 January 2011



## Quaker marriages & partnerships *Advice & Query 23*

### Getting ready

This edition of *Journeys in the Spirit* looks at Quaker marriage and partnerships.

The wedding day is a joyous occasion held in the presence of friends and family who witness the couples' "intention to cherish each other for life". (*Advice and Query 23*). Those present contribute through their ministry, being there in the silence and the signing of the Quaker marriage certificate.

Nowadays some children are present at their parents wedding but it is an occasion to tell children about, whether it is a Quaker wedding or any other form of marriage service. Show them photographs, tell them who was there, and describe the celebrations.

However marriage is not about just this one day. *Advices and Queries* describe how marriage provides a safe secure environment in which to bring up children.

This is the focus of this edition of *Journeys in the Spirit*. It is important to remember that the children you are working with will be growing up in a wide variety of family situations – single parent family, families with step brothers and sisters, same sex relationships, extended families, mixed race families, adopted/fostered children, married, partnerships and perhaps other situations. Be mindful of this as you prepare your session.

*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 setting out the chairs and having ready any resources you need for the chosen activities.

Have some flowers in the room and display the wedding photographs you have gathered or use the ones on *Additional Resources 47.A*. It may be possible to ask the children in advance to bring wedding photographs of parents, grandparents, or friends. Old photos are lovely to look at.

Begin by asking children and adults to say their names especially if there are people in the group who do not know each other.

Continue with a stilling exercise. Place a bowl of water in the centre of the circle and have some small pebbles round the bowl. After a minute or two of quiet invite people to take a pebble and one at a time put it in the water and watch the pebble sink to the bottom, giving the sense of sinking into the silence.

### Underpinning references

Marriage has always been regarded by Friends as a religious commitment rather than merely a civil contract. Both partners should offer with god's help an intention to cherish one another for life. .... In times of difficulty remind yourself of the value of prayer, of perseverance and a sense of humour. *Advices and Query 23*

# Engage

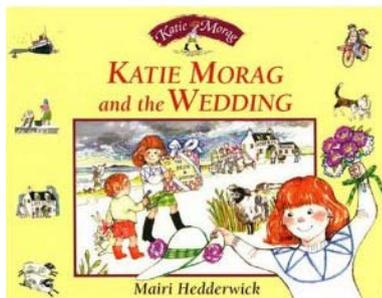
Introduce the theme of Quaker marriages and weddings. What happens when two people decide to get married?

Below are three ways of looking at marriage and what that means for the people who decide to get married, but also for the families and children who become part of that marriage. One of the activities can be done as an all age meeting for worship. All of these activities can be adapted for any age. Each activity is continued within Respond.

## The story of Katie Morag and the wedding.

See side bar for details.

This story is about a wedding that takes place in a small Scottish community and how it affects everyone and how everyone can be involved in the planning of the event and the day itself. It also reminds us that it is not only young people who get married and that adapting to a new life is not always easy. Start by looking at the wedding photos brought by the children or you or at the photos in *Additional Resources 47.A* -see sidebar. Then read the story.



## Who lives in my house?

This activity is definitely one that can be adapted for all ages.



Start by looking at the photos as above. Continue talking about what happens after couples are married. They may want to have children and that is where you all come in. Ask the question "who lives in your house?" Offer children time to talk about who is in their house. Encourage them to think about relationships. Who is very important to them? Who cooks the meals, does the washing, cleans the house etc?

Who reads them a bedtime story, listens to them, answers their questions and gives them a hug?

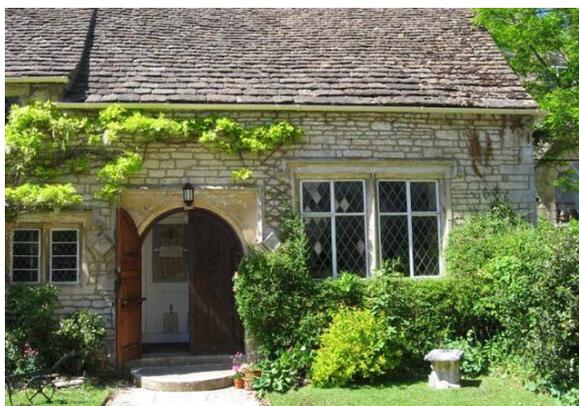
Establish the importance of their home and the people who provide a safe environment, love, nurture and care.

## Acting out a Quaker wedding

This might be a good activity to do with all ages – there will be a part for even the very youngest. The older children can be encouraged to direct and include the younger ones.

Start in the same way by looking at photos and talking about what happens at a Quaker wedding. Ask if any of the children have been to a Quaker wedding.

You may want to spread this over two sessions so that in the first session you can discuss the importance and seriousness of the marriage ceremony.



## References & other resources

Katie Morag and the Wedding by Mairi Hedderwick  
ISBN 978-1-849-41093-9  
[www.rbooks.co.uk](http://www.rbooks.co.uk)

Children and young people need love and stability. Are we doing all we can to uphold and sustain parents and others who carry the responsibility for providing this care?  
*Advice & Query 24*

For the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests' or magistrates'; for it is God's ordinance and not man's; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord's work, and we are but witnesses.  
*Quaker Faith & Practice 16.01*

*Additional Resources 47.A*  
[www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

## References & other resources

A long term relationship brings tensions as well as fulfillment. If your relationship with you partner is under strain, seek helping understanding the other's point of view and in exploring your own feelings, which may be powerful and destructive. Consider the wishes and feelings of any children involved, and remember their enduring need for love and security. Seek God's guidance. If you undergo the distress of separation or divorce, try to maintain some compassionate communication so that arrangements can be made with the minimum of bitterness.

## Advice & Query 25

*Additional Resources* 47. B , 47.C and 47.D  
[www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

# Respond

## Katie Morag story

Once you have read the story ask the children which part they enjoyed the best, what they felt to be the most important and did they feel a part of the story at any time.

Talk about the characters in the story. It is not just young people who get married older people get married too. This may cause some difficulties of combining two houses, changing jobs or even living apart some of the time.

This discussion could lead to thinking other situations of people getting married such as same sex marriage.

Some of this may resonate with the children so offer them time to talk about their own families.

Move on to think of how everyone in the story was involved in planning the wedding. Make some wedding invitations using coloured card, pens, crayons tissue paper etc.

Bring some simple fairy cakes in paper cases for the children to decorate with icing and/or sprinkles so that they all have a "wedding cake."



## Who lives in my house?

Give each child one the templates, "who lives in my house?" to be found on *Additional Resources 47.B* - see sidebar. Ask them to draw or write in the rooms who is part of their household. Encourage them to include everyone parents, children, relatives, lodgers and even pets.

When they have finished allow time for the children to talk about their house if they would like to.



## Acting out a Quaker wedding

The first part of this session is to talk about what happens at a Quaker wedding and how it is different from other church weddings. While being a very happy day it is also a serious and solemn occasion.

Explain that Quakers do not have priests to "marry" the couple – they make their intention of caring for each other to each other, and to the meeting.

Show the children the words the couple say to each other and the wording of the certificate - See *Additional Resources 47.C and D* - see sidebar.

Depending on the ages of the children it may be appropriate to talk about who gets married, perhaps second marriages, same sex marriage etc.

Have some dressing up clothes – hats, flowers, cloaks, scarves – keep it simple.

Move on to the second part. Explain that they are going to act out a Quaker wedding. Decide on who is going to be "the couple"; elders; doorkeeper; registrar; friends and family. This is ideal for a larger group of children and for a mixed age group.

Make sure everyone knows what to do, have a little rehearsal and then go for it. You may decide to spread this out over two weeks.

## Reflect

At the end of the session allow 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 some clarification if there are things they have not understood.

Ask the children if they would like to share with the adults what you have been doing in the Children's Meeting. Decide what everyone wants to share with the rest of meeting and how best to do this.

If you decide to act out a Quaker wedding the children may want to invite other adults to join them. This of course will need a little organization but would be a good all age activity.

Perhaps finish with a few moments of quiet.



## 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, especially if there have been issues around family relationships that have arisen during Children's Meeting.

It may be a good idea to let parents know the theme of this Children's Meeting in case there are questions they want to come back to ask the volunteer. These may be questions that have come out of discussions with their children after the session.

For yourself, reflect on how you feel the session went. Did the children participate well and did they learn something about Quaker marriage? Are there things you might have done differently? It is worth discussing these things with other volunteers and Children's Committee.

**This issue was written by Madeleine Harding and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. Chris Nickolay wrote the Topical activity.**

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* is **Issue 48** which is about Advices and Queries 41 & 42 (*sustainability and our responsibility for the Earth*) and is available on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2011; **Issue 49** is about Advices and Queries 30 (*helping with thinking about death and dying*) and is available on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. **Issue 50** is about Advices and Queries 32 & 36 (*dealing with conflict*) and is available on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Materials available online are:

Current issue additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

Links to other resources and information

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity – this time about children on demonstrations.

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](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren)

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