



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward



Youth Work Edition

Issue 12

February 2011

## Living sustainably

The youth edition of Journeys in the Spirit provides a range of ideas to use with 12–18 year olds in a Quaker context. It offers activities for one-off sessions or weekends and comes out three times a year. Some suggestions are made about age suitability. Timings are not stated, as this will depend on the group and how the activities are used. Each issue explores a theme.

Journeys in the Spirit 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. There are four directions to our spiritual journey: inwards to ourselves; outwards to others; upwards (or is it further inwards?) towards the deeper mystery; downwards to the world we live in.

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### The theme for this issue

Living sustainably is about living in a way that meets our needs without damaging the planet or preventing other people elsewhere and in the future meeting their needs.

This issue asks what it is that we really need by looking at what matters most in our lives, and how the way we live impacts on the lives of others. It focuses particularly on our dependence on fossil fuels and the effect that this has on the planet and all that lives on it.

It helps the group explore a vision for a sustainable world. It includes activities to help the group think about what actions they might take to achieve this vision. It also asks what it is that makes it difficult to do this, and explores ways to overcome these.

The aim of edition is to help the group think about the relationship between the way they live and the world; to make the link between living sustainably and being a Quaker; to explore their ideas of a sustainable world; and to inspire and provide some ideas for action.

### Using the material

These activities are designed to be used over a weekend for young people with these 'themed' sessions interspersed with other activities and free time. The material could also be used for a one-off session or a series over many weeks.

Alternatively the ideas can be run in parallel with participants choosing between different activities that are undertaken in small groups or individually. When using this material try to include at least one activity from each of the different points so that you cater for different learning styles.



# Gathering Points

**Worship:** Start your time together with some worship.

**Welcome people:** Let the group know the theme and the aims of the gathering. You may want to go through the timetable for the event or explain other practicalities (e.g. domestic arrangements). Draw up a group agreement (either prepare one in advance for people to comment on and alter, or prepare one together) and stick it on the wall.

**Introductions:** Depending on the size of the group you might do some activities in the whole group, some in small groups and others in pairs. Here are some suggestions for what you could do:

- Circle introductions: Go round the group and ask people to say their name and something that makes them happy. You could also go around again and get people to say something that makes them unhappy.
- Small group introductions: Each person thinks of three interesting/unusual things to say about themselves. Two of the things are true and one isn't. Others in the group have to guess which is untrue.



## Starting Points

**What matters most?**

*(good for 12 – 18 year olds. 12 – 15 year olds may find it easier if you provide them with paper to draw their circle on)*

The word 'sustain' means to keep in existence; to maintain; to provide with nourishment; to hold up; to endure; to flourish.

Do the paper or visualisation exercise that can be found on the *Journeys in the Spirit: Youth* edition web pages <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> . This activity focuses on helping individuals to think about what it is that matters most to them (what it is they really need). These are the things that are important for them to maintain / nourish / hold up / sustain.

Once you have done the activity take some time to compare experiences and identify commonalities and differences. In a full group, or small groups you may want to ask people to:

- Discuss what they put in their circles.
- Did people have similar ideas? Are the same things important to different people?
- Are there differences in what people think are important?
- Which of these things involve fossil fuels; which don't? You may well notice that many of the things that are really important to us don't actually rely on fossil fuels, though some do.

You could have this discussion in a more active way. Ask everyone to stand in a circle. People take it in turns to say something that they put in their circle, moving into the centre of the circle when they do so. Others who have a similar thing in their circle join them, and have a discussion about why they chose that thing. Repeat the exercise.

## What is sustainable living?

Living sustainably is not just about you meeting your own needs. It's about living in a way that enables you to meet your needs without preventing other people now and in the future from meeting theirs.

If you meet your needs in a way that destroys the planet or takes more than your fair share of resources this is not sustainable living. If you do that other people may not be able to have the resources they need to survive, which is unjust.

We need to find ways to meet our needs in ways that don't have negative impacts on people and planet. When we do we are living sustainably.

Is this the way the world is living today?

- Brainstorm signs that the world is not living sustainably. You may want to do this in a whole group with people contributing ideas, written up on a flip chart. *(good for 15 – 18 year olds)*
- Or you could do the exercise in groups and provide magazines and coloured pens for people to brainstorm using pictures as well as words. *(good for 12 - 15 year olds)*
- You might want to give the group some prompts. E.g. what is happening to the climate/ atmosphere/ eco-systems/ sea/ animals/ forests? What happens to people as a result of these things –and to equality, and peace? How do people spend money?

## What and where are fossil fuels?

*(good for 15 – 18 year olds)*

For an additional activity identifying fossil fuels in the space you are working in see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> .



## Lectio Divina

*(good for 15 - 18 year olds)*

Lectio Divina is a slow contemplative way of Reading the Bible or other sacred text in order to reflect on the text, come to understand its message and connect with the spirit behind the passage.

It should be done alone and have four steps. You should allow plenty of time for the whole process. Each stage will take its own time. Some people will spend more time on one stage than another.

- Read – read the page slowly and thoughtfully. If possible provide space for individuals to read this aloud without being disturbed.
- Think – read the passage again, slowly and carefully, pausing whenever a word or phrase strikes a chord with you and stands out. Stay with the word or phrase, repeating it and pondering it. Take time to listen deeply to thoughts, images, feelings or memories that may arise. You might want to read it twice, three times, or several times this way, listening for words that stand out.
- Pray/reflect – allow the thoughts, images and feelings which have arisen from your thinking to settle, see what emerges from that and where this leads you as you encounter new ways to think about, reflect on and potentially communicate with God / the Spirit.
- Live/respond – rest, reflect, respond, or act as you discover what you are taking from the passage and how it may affect what you believe or how you practice your faith, both in worship and in action.

Possible passages to use are Quaker faith & practice 19.32, 23.16, 25.02, 25.04, Advices & Queries 41, and 'A Quaker response to the crisis of climate change', Meeting for Sufferings, June 2009. See <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> .

## Time capsule

(good for 12 - 15 year olds)

Someone should read out the mini-science fiction by Margaret Atwood, 'Time capsule found on a dead planet'. See <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> . Follow this with some minutes of quiet to reflect on it.

In small groups or individually ask people to imagine that they are burying things in a box that you don't think the world needs, as a way of destroying them and avoiding the future looking like the one that Margaret Atwood describes in her story. What things, thoughts and feelings would you like to get rid of? For younger people you may want to provide a real box, and small bits of paper and pens to write the things on to put in the box.



## Listening Points

If you are providing parallel activities consider providing a separate room or a corner of a room with a lap top (or CD player) with headphones so that people are able to focus on the music, and don't distract others. You could provide sheets with the lyrics on (you can find these at [www.lyrics.com](http://www.lyrics.com)). You can find the songs on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) or itunes ([www.itunes.co.uk](http://www.itunes.co.uk)). Possible songs include:

Where Do the Children Play – Cat Stevens

Get Up Stand Up – Bob Marley

Where is the Love? – Black Eyed Peas

I wish I knew How it Felt to be Free – Nina Simone

What a Wonderful World – Louis Armstrong

Some questions to ask which might be discussed by the whole group or written out for individual contemplation :

- What is the song saying to you?
- How does the song make you feel – sad/positive/inspired/depressed/empowered?
- Does the song make you want to do anything?



## Viewing Points

### Watch the film WALL-E (U)

(good for 12 – 15 year olds)

This animation film takes place after mass consumerism on earth, led by a megacorporation, Buy n Large, has left the planet covered in rubbish. Buy n Large evacuated humanity from the planet, leaving robots to clean it up. By the time of the film one robot, WALL-E, is the only one left. The film follows his story as he falls in love, and attempts to make the planet habitable again.

Some questions you could explore in small groups after watching the film:

- Do you recognise the world shown at the start of the film?
- What do you think of BuynLarge's claim that they provide 'everything you need to be happy'?
- What do you think about the people on the Axiom? And the captain? Do you recognise them?

## Watch The Age of Stupid (12)

*(good for 15 – 18 year olds)*

The Age of Stupid stars Pete Postlethwaite as a man living in the devastated future world of 2055, looking at old footage and asking: why didn't we stop climate change when we had the chance?

Some questions you could explore in small groups after watching the film:

- How does the film make you feel?
- Do you think we are stupid?
- Do you think the film communicates climate change in a helpful way?



## Talking Points

### What's your vision?

Explain that visions of a changed world have long been part of Jewish and Christian spirituality. For example:

- Micah 4:3: "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nether shall they make war anymore"
- Revelation 21:3-4 "He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more."

Early Quakers took up this heritage, looking forward to an imminent transformation that would bring about the kingdom of God. The Quaker testimony emerges from a sense of being on the threshold of the kingdom. By living the life of The Kingdom, we make the transformation possible.

Visions are important: we need to know what we don't like and what we would like to change, but we also need to know what we do like and what we'd like to change to. A vision gives us something to aim for, inspires people and gives hope. Martin Luther King said 'I have a dream', not 'I have a nightmare'.

What is your dream or vision for a sustainable world? In groups or as individuals write an article for a paper in 2050 as though your vision had been achieved. For some suggested questions to help do this see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> .

Ask people what they think they might need to do to help this dream come true. This may include a personal action plan in relation to what we can do as individuals.

### Impact of climate change

*(good for 15 – 18 year olds)*

Watch 'Oumer's experience of climate change', at <http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/TeachersResources/secondary/climate-change-countdown-film-clip.aspx> (5 minutes). For questions to ask to encourage reflection and a follow up activity see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> .

### Consumption and the seeds of war

For an additional activity to stimulate thinking about how the way we consume impacts on conflict and peace, focusing on mobile phones, see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> .

### Line exercise

See <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> for an exercise to stimulate discussion around what people feel about different issues.



# Action Points

## Quick game

*(good for 12 – 15 year olds)*

See <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> for instructions for a quick game to play highlighting the interconnectedness of eco-systems.

## Oil free day/weekend

*(good for 15 – 18 year olds)*

The extraction of oil comes with huge environmental and social costs. Have some newspaper articles for people to read e.g. of the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and leaks in the Niger Delta.

This activity would work best if integrated into the whole session. The idea is to try and spend a day (or more) without using products made of crude oil. This is an almost impossible exercise – this is the point! Emphasise that the exercise is about oil awareness as much as cutting out oil. If you can, plan in advance to try and reduce the amount of oil in your session – this will effect where you stay, the activities you do, the food you eat.

Together review the oil content of what you are doing that day/session. You need to think about food; travel; the building; your clothes and other possessions.

- As a starting point you may want to take a piece of food e.g. a chocolate bar and list all the ways in which oil has been involved in its life story – production, transport, packaging, selling, cooking, marketing...

For detail about the oil content of different product and activities, and their carbon emissions, see 'The Oil Fast Guide' by Operation Noah (downloadable at [www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org)).

Brainstorm what you could to reduce this – try to come up with ideas for all the problem areas identified. Simply by changing our everyday behaviour we can reduce carbon emissions by 40%.

Here is one idea of an activity you could together do to demonstrate change is possible:

- Eat a low-carbon meal together – vegetarian (animal farming is a major contributor to green house gases), sourced locally (to reduce food miles), seasonal, organic, avoiding packaging, using crockery and cutlery (rather than disposables), and eaten by natural or candle light.

Brainstorm what makes changing the way we live as individuals difficult. You may want to prompt people to think about infrastructure, policies, politics, other people, other countries, peer pressure, the economy, jobs. You could do this in small groups and then share ideas.

- If you keep to the food theme you may want to talk about whether it is easy or difficult to grow your own food, or to get seasonal, local, organic food, or to ignore advertising? What questions does this raise? What are the challenges to eating more sustainably?

Gathered in a large group ask people what they might be able to do to address the challenges there are to living differently and more sustainably? What do people feel moved to do. You could look at some case studies of Quakers that are taking action to change the way they live and to try and challenge the structures and politics that contribute to unsustainable living – including working in their communities, campaigning and direct action ([www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability](http://www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability))

## Day out

Is there an eco-centre, community garden, recycling centre, community project...that you could visit?

## Sweetie bag game

*(good for 15 – 18 year olds)*

For an additional activity to help participants experience power/ privilege/ powerlessness and competition / co-operation at personal and collective levels see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> . You may or may not want to explicitly link it to sustainability issues.



# Worship Points

## Visualisation

Explain that while many people respond well to visualisations, some do not. People can sit out of the session if they wish – they may just want to listen and make notes of their own thoughts. The text which can be found at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> should be read at a relaxed pace, in a calm voice. Leave silent spaces of 20-30 seconds (marked by dots....) or longer where marked, for participants to follow the instructions in their minds. You may want to have paper and drawing materials available in case people want to respond in that way to the visualisation.

After the visualisation invite people to spend a few minutes reflecting on what happened for them during it – whether they actually “saw” anything or not: what ideas, feelings, images, insights came to them? If they fell asleep, that’s fine. What do they know now about their vision of the way they would like the world to be? Then invite participants to share about their experience. If they drew something, they might like to show it to the group. You could place a stone or talking stick in the centre of the group for participants to hold when they speak. Let the group know how long is available for each contribution plus silence.

When everyone who wants to has shared have a time of silent worship.



# Ending Points

Ask people to reflect individually on the session, to think about what they have learnt or realised and what they are taking away from it. You could use the following questions to prompt:

- Do you think there is anything you might change about the way you live?
- What else do you think may need to change in the world? Do you think there’s anything you can do?

## Pledge tree

Give everyone a leaf shaped piece of paper to write on something that they’ll be doing as a result of the session. They may want to decorate their leaf. You could display them all on a ‘tree’ shape.

## Celebration

Even if you have only been together for one short session it is good to end with some celebratory food and drink. This may just be biscuits or could be a (low carbon) meal.

## Worship

Finish your time off together with a time of quiet reflection or with a longer period of worship depending on the length of the event.

## Review

For those planning / facilitating the event to consider after:

- Did everyone have the opportunity to speak and be listened to?
- Did everyone have the opportunity to listen to others?
- Did everyone have the opportunity to reflect?

How did the activities encourage young people to:

- Think about the relationship between the way they live and the world?
- Make the link between living sustainably and being a Quaker?
- Explore their ideas of a sustainable world?
- Act?

Think about how you might go about getting feedback from participants, maybe informally or whole group review sessions or using feedback forms or individual verbal feedback.

## Additional resources & links

[www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability](http://www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability) - information about the work of Quaker Peace and Social Witness's Sustainability and Peace programme.

[www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org) – a Christian organisation that provides focus and leadership on climate change.

[www.climatecamp.org.uk](http://www.climatecamp.org.uk) – a grassroots movement taking action on climate change.

[www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk) – a Quaker organisation supporting development of the Quaker corporate witness on sustainability.

[www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitionnetwork.org) – a network of transition communities aiming to build resilience and reduce carbon emissions.

## Links to other organisations

Christian Aid:  
empower resource for young people  
[www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)

Cafod Youth Topics:  
monthly activities on world issues  
[www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

Youth Work magazine:  
a monthly Christian youth work publication  
[www.youthwork.co.uk](http://www.youthwork.co.uk)

Russell House Publishing:  
resources for working with young people  
[www.russellhouse.co.uk](http://www.russellhouse.co.uk)

Oxfam:  
resources for youth work on global issues  
[www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet)

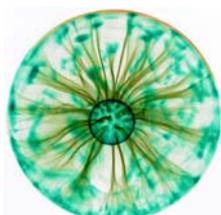
Leavers:  
Quaker performing arts project  
[www.leavers.org](http://www.leavers.org)

## This issue

This issue of *Journeys in the Spirit: Youth Edition* was written by Sunniva Taylor (QPSW Programme Manager: Sustainability and Peace). The editor was Howard Nurden.

## Next issue

The next issue of *Journeys in the Spirit Youth Edition* will be on Quakers around the world, it will be sent out on June 13



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