



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward



Youth Work Edition

Issue 15

February 2012

Our Quaker Stories

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.

	Gathering Points	Page 2
	Starting Points	Page 2-3
	Reflection Points	Page 3-4
	Listening Points	Page 4-5
	Viewing Points	Page 5
	Talking Points	Page 5-6
	Action Points	Page 6
	Worship Points	Page 7
	Ending Points	Page 7

The theme for this issue

Stories are important to us as Quakers. This issue looks at stories of past Friends, the stories we tell with our lives and the history and development of our Religious Society.

It explores why stories are important in discovering who we are as individuals and as Quakers. They can encourage us, challenge us, move us and make us laugh.

This issue of Journeys in the Spirit looks at a variety of ways of telling stories – using words, music, pictures, conversation, video and lots more.

Using the material

These activities are designed to be used over a weekend or week long event for young people with these themed sessions interspersed with other activities and free time. They could also be used on one-off sessions or a series over a number of weeks.

The material can be used as several consecutive sessions for the whole group or run in parallel with participants choosing between different activities that are undertaken in small groups or individually. 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, you might want to play a piece of music (see Listening Points for some suggestions) or a reading (see ideas in Reflection Points).

Welcome people: You may want to go through the timetable for the event or explain other practicalities (domestic arrangements, boundaries, etc).

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 ideas for things you could do:

- Circle introductions: Go round the group, ask people to say their name, where they are from, how they travelled and one interesting/funny/ thing about their journey to get there.
- Pairs introduction: Divide the group into pairs or threes, pose some questions to enable participants to get to know each other (possible questions include what they enjoy doing in their free time, what music they like, share about their favourite place). The pairs can then introduce each other to the whole group.
- Story introduction: Ask people to tell the story of their week (or month, or however long it is since the group was last together). They have one minute to do this so they have to be brief. Ask them to include one new thing they've done, one thing that made them happy, one thing that made them sad, one thing that they learnt (you can add your own).



Starting Points

Myths and the Quaker Story

This is a good activity to start a longer event with. Use several pieces of flip chart paper or a white board and ask people to write up (or call out for you to scribe) anything they know, or think they know, about Quaker history. This could be dates, names, events – it is not important at this stage if they are wrong – you can then come back to it after some of the later activities. You might want to use prompt questions such as: Can anyone name any famous Quakers (and what are they known for)? Can anyone give any important dates in Quaker history?

Starting our Quaker stories

This is a gentle exercise to encourage participants to start telling their Quaker stories – and to start them thinking that they are part of the Quaker story. Ask them to think about some or all of the following prompts for their story. They can then write or draw this on a sheet of paper.

- When did they first go to a Quaker meeting?
- What is their first memory of meeting?
- Other than their family who is the first Quaker they knew?
- What was the first Quaker event they went to?
- What is their most special Quaker memory?
- What was the most recent thing they did as a Quaker (before the event they are at)?

Quaker Stories from the past

Many Quakers in the past kept journals and these are really important for us in knowing what lots of Quakers did, said, felt and thought. They are a really valuable part of our Quaker story. Use the following extracts as a way of bringing the Quaker story alive.

This passage describes one of the most important moments in the early period of Quakerism:

As we went I spied a great high hill called Pendle Hill, and I went on the top of it with much ado, it was so steep; but I was moved of the Lord to go atop of it; and when I came atop of it I saw Lancashire sea; and there atop of the hill I was moved to sound the day of the Lord; and the Lord let me see atop of the hill in what places he had a great people to be gathered.

George Fox Journal 1652 Quaker faith & practice 19.06

Being a Quaker includes accepting the testimonies which are held by Quakers as a whole:

A knot of my old acquaintance [at Oxford], espying me, came to me... When they were come up to me, they all saluted me, after the usual manner, putting off their hats and bowing, and saying, 'Your humble Servant, Sir', expecting no doubt the same from me. But when they saw me stand still, not moving my cap, nor bowing my knee, in way of congee to them, they were amazed, and looked first one upon another, then upon me, and then one upon another again for a while, without a word speaking. At length [one]... clapping his hand in a familiar way upon my shoulder and smiling on me said, 'What, Tom, a Quaker!' To which I readily, and cheerfully answered, 'Yes, a Quaker.' And as the words passed out of my mouth I felt joy spring in my heart, for I rejoiced that I had not been drawn out by them into a compliance with them, and that I had strength and boldness given me to confess myself to be one of that despised people. *Thomas Ellwood Journal 1659 Quaker faith & practice 19.16*

It was difficult for young people too:

When between eight and ten years of age, my father and mother sent me near two miles to school, ... in the suburbs of London. I went mostly by myself to school; and many and various were the exercises I went through, by beatings and stonings along the streets, being distinguished to the people (by the badge of plainness which my parents put upon me) of what profession [i.e. religion] I was; divers telling me, 'Twas no more sin to kill me, than it was to kill a dog'. *Thomas Chalkley (1675-1741) Quaker faith & practice 19.42*

This is another example of thinking about the Quaker Testimonies:

May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.

John Woolman: Quaker faith & practice 23.16

People might not be comfortable with the language used by these Friends – you should expect a reaction to them as they use unfamiliar words and concepts. Having a reaction shows that people are responding to them, what is important is that people respect these as our Quaker roots and the basis of our tradition.



Journaling

Explain how many early Friends kept journals as a way of recording their lives and telling their stories (you could use the 'Quaker stories from the past' activity under Starting Points as a way of introducing this). Give people the opportunity to write their own journals. Depending on the amount

of time you have for this you could suggest a period for them to write about (the past day/week/month) or let people choose. Use the following as prompts:

- In what ways have you lived as a Quaker (been to meeting, been to an event, lived the testimonies)?
- When did you feel most Quaker, or most connected to Quakerism?
- When did you feel least Quaker, or most distant from Quakerism?
- When was your Quakerism challenged, how did you respond?

Give people the opportunity to write about their thoughts/feelings/responses to these questions and other experiences.

If you are using these activities at an event you might want to give time for people to write in their journal at the end of every session or for a time each day. If you are using them in young people's meetings over several weeks you might ask them to write another part of their Quaker story for the preceding week.

N.B. Although 'writing' is suggested above it is important that people are able to use their journals however they feel comfortable – whether this is writing, drawing, doodling, etc. It is important that these journals are kept private and that people have an explicit choice over what (if anything) they share. You might give people the choice to share some parts of their journal in a session towards the end of an event (possibly in small groups). It is important that you use good quality notebooks, pens and other materials for this activity as this shows value for what is written or drawn in them.

Collage

Collage is a good way to respond and to illustrate thoughts, feelings and reflections. It also has the benefit that young people who might not consider themselves as good at drawing (or who've been told they aren't) can join in without feeling self-conscious.

Have plain white paper as a base, various colours of paper (regular paper, crepe paper, tissue paper for a variety of textures), scraps of textiles, bits of card, glue.

Use the same prompts as above.

- In what ways have you lived as a Quaker (been to meeting, been to an event, lived the testimonies)?
- When did you feel most Quaker, or most connected to Quakerism?
- When did you feel least Quaker, or most distant from Quakerism?
- When was your Quakerism challenged, how did you respond?

Give time for the story people want to tell to form in their mind and colours, shapes and textures that for them convey a message to suggest themselves, encourage people to be free about how they express themselves. Then encourage people to work together to create a collage of expression.



Listening Points

Personal Soundtracks

One way that people tell stories is through music. Songs and instrumental pieces tell stories. Particular songs resonate with us at different times in our lives and when we're experiencing different things. This activity uses music as medium for people to tell their own stories.

Ask participants to think of at least three songs that are important to them (it could be more depending on the size of the group and how long you have) not just songs that they like or the latest song they've downloaded, but ones which have a connection to a particular point in their life. Ask

them to choose songs from different periods in their lives, perhaps different years, or those that express different emotions or are connected with different events. If you can ask them in advance, you can ask people to bring the songs to the event on CD (make sure you have a CD player available) or on an mp3 player. Ask people to work in pairs or small groups to share their songs, and talk about the part of their life that it relates to and why it is significant for them.



Viewing Points

Unfortunately there are not a lot of films about Quakers so this issue's 'Viewing Points' offers ideas of how to make your own film. Flip video cameras are relatively cheap and produce good quality video, see if someone in your meeting has one or has access to them. Some towns have equipment they lend to voluntary organisations. For tips on how to make a good video select Viewing Points at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> choose 'Tips for making a video'. Once you have made it then you could put it on your meeting's website or on youtube. If you make a video CYP staff (see contact details on page 8) would be really pleased to hear about it (and watch it).

Vox-Pops

Ask people to talk to camera about their Quaker story. They might have interesting stories (if for example they've been involved in peace work) otherwise you can use the following questions as prompts: What drew you to Quakers? What kept you coming? What keeps you coming now?

Make a film

As a starting point imagine some young people who aren't Quakers coming to your meeting, or link group. What would you show them? What would you tell them? What is distinctive about Quakers and how would you explain this? How might you show Quaker worship on video? How much talking should you include? Think about using interviews/vox pops or narration to explain what people can see. Plan this out carefully and then film it.

George Fox and the History of Early Quakers DVD

Running time: 13 minutes. Available from the Quaker Bookshop telephone 0207 6631030, email www.quaker.org.uk/shop

Watch the film as a group and then discuss what people learnt from watching it.



Talking Points

Quaker Chronology

For the full chronology go to <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> and select 'Talking Points: A Quaker chronology'. Refer back to the 'Myths and the Quaker story' activity in Starting Points and see how many of the things people mentioned are included in the chronology. You could ask small groups to pick a person or an event and do some research on this and then tell the story of this person or event to the whole group. They can use words, music, pictures or act it out. Useful resources to do this include: www.quaker.org; Ben Pink Dandelion's *Introduction to Quakerism*; John Punshon's *A Portrait in Grey*. Alternatively ask the group to devise a Quaker quiz for the meeting based on the chronology. You could do this at Area Meeting with teams from each local meeting competing – just for fun of course!

Telling the Quaker Story

For the full text used for this activity go to <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> and select 'Talking Points: Telling the Quaker story'. This tells the story of the history of Quakerism from 1652 to the present day, highlighting some key points in Quaker history. You may also choose to use the Quaker Chronology (<http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> select 'Talking Points: A Quaker Chronology'). Tell the story in a way that you consider to be appropriate for the group. After telling the story use the following questions as prompts for a discussion:

- I wonder what the most important part of that story is?
- I wonder what part of the story you like the best?
- I wonder what part of the story you could leave out and have all of the story that you need?
- I wonder what part of the Quaker story is in you and you are in?

The Future of the Quaker Story

Some people have predicted that there will be no Quakers left by 2050. Ask participants to imagine that in 60 years time they are being asked about Quakerism in 2012 by a group of young people. What would they say about it? Do they think there will still be Quakers in Britain? Why? Why not?

What do they think will change about Quakerism over the next 60 years in relation to:

- Their personal Quaker story (will they still be involved, how)?
- Quakerism (beliefs, values, practices like the business method and meeting for worship)?
- The Quaker meeting that they belong to and/or Quaker meeting houses?
- The group that they are part of at that event (link group, summer event, etc)?

Values Stories

For five stories about Quakers who have put their Quaker values into practice in their lives go to <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-youth> and select 'Talking Points: Stories about Quakers'. Divide people into six groups and give each group a story. Ask them to think and talk about the person in the story – who were they? What did they do? Which of the Quaker testimonies or which Quaker value did they put into practice? What do you particularly like about the story? Each small group can then report back and tell the whole group about that person.

Living the Quaker Story Ourselves

Ask people individually to think about a time when they have put their Quaker values into practice – how would they tell that story. Use the following prompts to help them think about the story:

- What was the situation?
- What did they do? Why did they act in that way?
- Which Quaker value do they think they were putting into practice?
- What was easy about doing it? What was difficult about doing it?

Then ask people to share their story in small groups and for those that want with the whole group.



Action Points

Living Quaker Library

Ask several Friends (aim for one from each decade from 30 to 90, and at least have people from several different generations) who are willing to tell their Quaker stories and to answer people's questions. Depending on the size of the group you might want to split into small groups and circulate around the Friends who are telling their stories. Ask people to talk for no more than 5 minutes (you may need to be strict about timing with some people). Working in small groups may encourage people to ask questions that they might be reluctant to voice in the whole group and may make it less daunting for those telling their stories.

You could record these in some way (audio, video or in written form) to keep (see Viewing Points).

Scrap book story

Part of our Quaker story is the story of our meetings and events. This is one way of telling that story in a way that can be shown to the whole meeting and kept. Get a large scrap book or a photograph album, and include photos, writing, pictures. Things you could include are:

- How long ago did the meeting/group start? Who started it? Are there any interesting stories from its history?
- Has it always been in the same place? Has there been more than one meeting house?
- Who is part of the meeting? Who in the meeting has responsibilities (clerk, elders, overseers)?
- What is it like being a child/young person in the meeting?
- Does the meeting have any special projects it is involved in, or support?
- What does it have with other local meetings and churches?
- What activities does the meeting/group have (meeting for worship, shared lunches, study groups, residential weekends, events, trips).
- You could include photos of everyone in the meeting with a short version of their Quaker story "I am a Quaker because... and I like it because"



Worship Points

Quaker faith & practice is full of Quaker stories (especially Chapter 18 'Faithful lives'). Choose some to read in worship.

You might ask some of those involved in the sessions to share from their own Quaker stories in worship (this could also be done as worship sharing).



Ending Points

Return to myths

Go back to the 'Myths and the Quaker story' sheets (see Starting Points), looking back on this are there any things that need correcting or changing? What would you add? How would they add themselves to the Quaker story?

Reflection

Ask people to think about and reflect on:

- What have they learnt about the Quaker story?
- What have they learnt about their own story?
- Is there a Quaker they would like to tell their meeting about?

Review

After using the ideas within this issue request feedback from the young people involved. Maybe asking:

- How their engagement with the activities encouraged them to understand themselves better, as individuals and as Quaker?
- What have they learnt about Quaker history, Quaker beliefs and Quaker values?
- Would they suggest any alternative approaches?

Those involved in the planning and facilitating of the activities might consider the following:

- Did what was done encourage the creativity of those involved?
- Were people able to express themselves in a variety of ways?
- Did the activities increase the knowledge and understanding of Quakerism of those involved?
- How will you follow up on what has been achieved?

Additional resources & links

The Quaker Tapestry, Kendal.

An exhibition of 77 panels of colourful embroidery telling wonderful stories from Quaker History

<http://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk/the-exhibition/>

Quaker History Resources from www.quaker.org This is an American website <http://quaker.org/#7>

Links to other organisations

Christian Aid:
empower resource for young people
www.christianaid.org.uk

Cafod Youth Topics:
monthly activities on world issues
www.cafod.org.uk

Youth Work magazine:
a monthly Christian youth work publication
www.youthwork.co.uk

Russell House Publishing:
resources for working with young people
www.russellhouse.co.uk

Oxfam:
resources for youth work on global issues
www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet

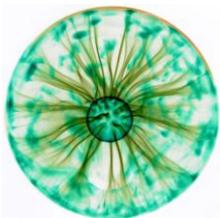
Leaveners:
Quaker performing arts project
www.leaveners.org

This issue

This issue of Journeys in the Spirit Youth Edition was written by Simon Best. The editor was Howard Nurden.

Next issue

The next issue of Journeys in the Spirit Youth Edition will be on Quakers, Spirituality and God and it will be sent out on 11 June.



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