

# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 26

April 2009

Children



## Belonging and joining

## Part 2

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** towards God, the deeper mystery; **downwards** to the world we live in.



The last in the series exploring Quakers: a people of God: being and doing.

## Getting ready

This is the last of this series. Maybe our title should actually be joining and belonging – you come along, you are brought to Meeting, you join. You then become part of what is happening, and a sense of belonging, hopefully, can grow depending on welcome, what is offered and then maybe, later or sooner you join again more formally...if asked or encouraged. Maybe there should be more freedom to talk with children about formal joining or membership. What could make it easier?

How does what your Meeting offers resonate with a child's innate spirituality? Does your Meeting speak to a child's condition? Do we make the mistake of hoping that the child will speak to the Meetings condition?

Early Quakers were clear about the light in each of us. There was not more or less according to age or gender. Contemporary work on the spiritual nature of children has caught up with this idea. Our engagement with children and young people, with each other, can, should be, a divine experiment. We need to build our confidence and trust that Love, and how we as Quakers offer Love, as disciples of the original messages of Jesus, can be a statement of the presence of the divine in each of us. That is not a complicated thing – it can be as simple as listening, as making cakes, telling a story, inviting questions, sharing your own questions, going for a walk.

Have a look again at the story of the beautiful city and the travelling people or the old woman – do they remind you of anyone?

We have simple ways of evoking this of engaging with it, letting the inside out. Remember 4 year old Billy in issue 25? Love is "When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth". Maybe working with children is seriously Divine. Have a read of Mark ch.10:v.13 – 15, see sidebar on Page 3, sit still for a little bit, picture the scene remembering to breathe. What might the participants in the story think or feel? How might it relate to your Meeting? To children's experience of joining and belonging?

## Underpinning reference

**Can your Meeting:** Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your Meeting and recognise the gifts they bring.

**Remember** that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. **Seek** for them as for yourself a full development of God's gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours.

**How** do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them?

**Do** you invite them to share their insights with you?

**Are** you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them? **QF&P: Adv.1.19**

# Gather

Say something like, 'early Quakers often had to meet in the open air – this is a hill where they worshipped together, Pendle Hill. If the weather is alright on the day of your meeting – or even if it isn't! – begin, and even continue your children's meeting in the open air. Sit on the ground or on chairs – have an array of stones, pebbles and flowers in the centre of your circle and have a meeting for worship that is still but in the sounds of the open. A meeting outside may take a little longer to settle but it is worth trying.



# Engage

**1. The story of the beautiful city.** This story was offered in the last issue of Journeys in the Spirit, number 25, Additional Sheet 25.C. It could be used in one or more sessions. If you are using it again, or for the firsttime, read all or part of it and then ask the wondering questions reproduced from Issue 25 in the side bar on this page. These need to be asked slowly, with plenty of time for people to answer or not. See **Respond 1** for the next step in this wondering process.



**2. What are Quakers like?** Begin by asking the children 'What are Quakers like?' & 'What do Quakers do?' Ask the children to each come up with 1 or 2 things that they have noticed about what Quakers are like, or what they do. These things can be absolutely anything: to do with children's meeting or not; ordinary or special things; silly or serious things; liked or annoying. Have pieces of paper or card and coloured pencils and pens so that what is said or thought can be written or drawn before it is shared. This can lead to **Respond 2**.

**3. Who belongs to Meeting? What are their names?** A simple activity for all ages. Lay out lots of the simple figures on *Sheet 26.A* in a circle on the floor. Have an array of pens, pencils and crayons in pots around the figures. However small or big your group take it in turns to say the name of one person in the Meeting and one thing about them. The first part of this should be to say the name of people in the children's meeting. Keep going until everybody is named. This moves naturally into **Respond 3**.

**4. What is your Quaker story?** This might need to be done over a couple of sessions. Begin by saying, 'Everybody here in Meeting has their own Quaker story about how you first came to Quaker meeting and what has happened since then. We are going to talk about our own story and hear about other people's. We could also give everybody else in Meeting a chance to share their story and make a picture about it'. Some questions you might use include:

'Who remembers when they first came to Quaker meeting? or, 'who knows when they first came and who they came with?' or, 'what do you first remember about coming to Quaker meeting?' You could help the conversation along by having a soft ball that is tossed from one person to another – with the understanding that when you catch the ball you can pass it on without speaking. This links to **Respond 4**.



Here is a picture of George Fox, the first Quaker, talking to people in the open air – on a hillside.

This is one of the panels of the Quaker Tapestry – visit the website at [www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk](http://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk)

## Wondering questions:

'I wonder which part of this story you like the best?

I wonder which part of this story you think is most important?

I wonder which part of this story is in you or you are in?

I wonder if there is any part of this story that you could leave out and still have all the story that you need?'

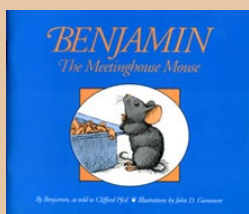
# Respond

## Mark 10:13-15 (The Message Bible):

The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: "Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God's kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you'll never get in." Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them.

## A resource

### Benjamin the Meeting House Mouse



Benjamin is a little mouse who lives in a Meeting House. He learns about Quakers and eventually ministers in Meeting asking Friends to leave him more crumbs. Available from the Quaker Bookshop 0207 663 1030

### 1. The story of the beautiful city.

This links to **Engage 1**. When you judge conversation to be completed just say that there are lots of lovely things to use around the room to make something – it might be to do with the story and it might just be to do with something that each person has thought about or has just popped into their thoughts. This is work that is just for the person doing it and is not done for sharing with others – although it can be if the individual wants to. There might be conversation about the story as the work goes on. *Resources: lots of art materials – pens, pastels, pencils, scissors, glue, magazines, paints, brushes, paper of different sizes and colour, sequins, glitter, pictures of lovely buildings, simple buildings, old buildings – use books, magazines or the internet.*

### 2. What are Quakers like?

If you have done **Engage 2** go on to ask some more questions like “I wonder what you enjoy about being a Quaker or coming to meeting?” & “I wonder what being part of this Quaker meeting means to you?”

Invite each child to share (if they wish) something they like, or not, about coming to meeting, and stories of particular times that they've enjoyed themselves with Quaker friends, young or old.

Invite each child, or some may like to work in pairs, maybe with an adult, to draw or make or write something about these stories of being a Quaker or coming to meeting. These can then be assembled in a collage on a large piece of art paper or displayed on a table. Maybe a child can talk in big meeting about what has been talked about and done. You could ask for a volunteer to make an eye-catching title for the collage.

*Resources: Have a range of arts and crafts materials available – as above but including modelling straws, a selection of boxes, string and wool, masking tape – just so there is a lot to stimulate imagination and excitement.*

### 3. Who belongs to Meeting? What are their names?

Following on from **Engage 3** the paper figures from *Sheet 26.A* can be drawn on and coloured to be like the people who have been named. They can be set out in a pattern like Meeting for Worship. The whole group could work together on making a picture of the Meeting House on which the figures can be fixed.

### 4. What is your Quaker story?

You will need copies or bigger versions of *Sheet 26.B*. Make sure everybody has one. In the circle at the top of the sheet everybody draws a picture of their own face or, if this session has been planned a bit in advance, a photograph could be stuck in. Then a wiggly line is drawn from the circle in any direction the person chooses away from the circle – this is going to be a life or personal story line. Along the line each person draws, writes or otherwise illustrates different bits of their Quaker story – special events, stories, meals, holidays, meetings for worship, holidays, children's meeting, activities, demonstrations, things they have loved to do, special people, happy times and sad times. This might include help that has been given to Meeting by even the smallest person or help that has been received from meeting. This activity can be done individually or in pairs – especially with little children. They could be put into a big belonging to meeting or sharing our stories book.

### 5. What would a Quaker children's club be like?

Imagine you are setting up a Quaker club for children of your age - what would it be like? Who might come? What would you do? What would you call it? Where might you have it? What would be your best time to go? *Sheets 26.C and 26.D* can be used to write, draw and design things about a Quaker club. Send copies of sheets Simon Best in Friends House – these will help us as we think about some new ideas. The address is on the back page.



## Reflect

Bring the children together and spend a short time sharing everyone's contributions to whatever activity has been done. Ask for one or more people to tell big meeting what has been thought about and done. Just sit quietly for a while. If you are still outside – tidy up before your closing worship and then walk quietly back to Meeting.

On *Sheet 26.E* there are some words to help when talking about membership. These could be used as part of the reflection on what everyone has been doing together in any sessions based on this and issue 25 of *Journeys in the Spirit*.

## Review

The review can happen at the time or later – it 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, on something about her or his place in meeting and in relation to Quakers? What is there for you to learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

## Topical activity

By the time you receive this issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* there will have been a meeting in London of leaders of different governments in the world. They will have been talking about money, climate change – helping our world and other big problems. There will have been big demonstrations of people trying to get these leaders to do more to make these big problems better.

What can children do? On *Sheet 26.F* there is a picture of children's hands holding the world. There are also different shaped speech boxes. These sheets are for children to write, draw or colour messages to the Prime Minister of our country to tell him things that they would like him to do about climate change or other problems. Start a conversation in children's meeting about what things are wrong with our world that children would like to make better - see where this leads; try not to be directive – be led by children's concerns.

## Links to other organisations and resources

[www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp) and click on Ideas Store for all sorts of ideas and inspiration.

[www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp) - the Quaker Life Resources Room can be found via this link - phone and email for resources on the contact details below.

[www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk) and look at the online edition of Quaker Faith and Practice – see section 11 on membership.

Quaker Bookshop for gifts for children when they apply for membership or other important milestones.

## This issue was written by Chris Nickolay and Ginny Wall

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* is the first of the new series which is entitled 'Our Quaker Stories' and will be available from May 1<sup>st</sup> 2009.

**Ways for all ages to connect with each other around the theme of belonging include:**

**What is your Quaker story?** – this could be done as a whole meeting in one session or over a period of time with Friends of different ages sharing stories at different times in the whole meeting or in children's meeting.

**Series 4 of Journeys in the Spirit** begins on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The title for the series is 'Our Quaker stories'. There will be issues on well known and lesser known Quakers. There will be issues that tell the story of something Quakers have been doing in the world – in the past and right now. The first issue, in May, the introduction, features the story of a young Quaker Benjamin West. The second, in June, focuses on the Kindertransport story.

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