

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 18

August 2008

Children



Introduction

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 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.



Tenth in the series exploring Quakers: a people of God: being and doing

Listen, hear and act.

Quaker decision making, clearness and business method

Getting ready

Preparing Hearts & Minds

This issue explores how Quakers make decisions. It is intended as an introduction to the Quaker Business Method, the practice of discernment and Meetings for Clearness as well as thinking about why Quakers make decisions in this way.

Quaker decision-making can sometimes be difficult and boring it can also be exciting and moving and engage all those present. It is a key aspect of Quaker practice and it is important for children to have an understanding and experience of this.

- As Quakers, 'our experience [is] that God speaks to and works through children as well as adults' - *Qf&P* 23.73.
- Seeking the will of God, whether in Meeting for Worship, or Meeting for Worship for Business is a spiritual exercise not an intellectual one.
- Central to the process of Quaker decision-making is the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Our experience as Friends leads us to affirm that that the guidance of God can be known and followed without the need for a separate clergy. The priesthood of all believers necessarily includes children. See *Quaker Faith & Practice* quotation in sidebar
- *Some questions:* What is your experience of Quaker meetings for worship for business? What do you like? What do you find difficult? In what ways is a business meeting different from a Meeting for Worship?

Equipment needed

Check what equipment is needed for the various activities, this is stated in each section and on the additional sheets.

Underpinning references

Advices & Queries 14

'The Spirit in which the apostles lived... which was poured out at Pentecost on all the church, young and old, women and men, continues in our experience to empower all members of the church in a variety of ministries'

Quaker Faith & Practice
27.35



'The Presence in the Midst'.
See Sheet 18.C for a larger picture to use in children's meeting

Gather

Begin with a time of quiet. Suggest that everyone present (children and adults) shares their name and if they want to, something about themselves or what they have done in the last week.

Engage

1. How do you sort out problems?

- Say, "I wonder if anyone here has had a choice to make or a problem to solve? (Some examples of choices you might have had to make: What pizza topping to choose when you go out for dinner? What to ask for your birthday? What to spend your pocket money on? How to help a friend in trouble? How to help someone who is being bullied?). Wait for any answers.
- Was it a choice you could make yourself or did you need help? Again, Wait for any answers.
- Then ask if anyone has had a really hard problem to sort out, a big puzzle, that you maybe needed help with?
- Explore the following with the children:
What did it feel like?
What did you do?
Did you have to think about it really hard?
Who helped you to make the decision?
Does anyone pray or ask God for help with a choice that they have to make?
See follow up activity in Respond 1.

2. How Quakers sort out problems. What is a Quaker Meeting for business?

A simple explanation to help you. When a Quaker Meeting has a problem they want to find the right thing to do. This is called a Quaker Meeting for Business. Everybody can speak, listen or just be still and quiet – it is a mixture. It can be very special. Some Quakers say that they want to find out what God, the special, small voice inside, wants us to do. Some people want to find the 'feeling of the meeting'. This is special. It will not be the choice of the loudest person, or even what most people say they want. Sometimes the quietest idea might be the right way forward. Sometimes we may need to forget what we said we wanted. See sidebar on Page 3 for more description of a meeting for worship for business.

A Meeting solves a problem - Benjamin the Meeting House Mouse':

- Ask the question: I wonder how Quakers sort out problems? (On the floor or table lay down the big **Q** for Quakers from Sheet 18.A and then the big **?** for questions from Sheet 18.B. Lay out a circle of the simple figures on Sheet 18.C and the painting about Meeting for Worship from Sheet 18.C.
- Say, this is a **Q** for Quaker, a **?** for questions, a circle for Meeting and a painting about Meeting for Worship.
Say, 'here is a story about a difficult choice for a meeting and a mouse.' Read pages 1 – 8 from 'Benjamin the Meeting House Mouse'- see side bar for details of how to obtain the book. See follow up activity in Respond 2.

3. In God's Name.

This lovely book was recommended in Journeys issue 2. It can be used to simply explore disagreement that ends in surprising harmony through seeking clearness. Tell the story and ask some wondering questions at the end, such as: I wonder which part of this story you liked the best? ; I wonder which Part of the story you think is most important? ; I wonder which part of the story is in you or you are in? ; I wonder which part of the story you could leave out and still have all the story that you need? See side bar for book details. There is a follow up activity in Respond 3.

4. Find a way. Read the story on Sheet 18.D about a dilemma for some children. Ask the wondering questions as in 3 above. Older children could read what the different characters say. See follow up activity in Respond 4.

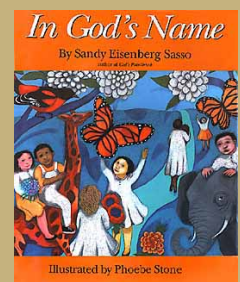
References & other resources

Quaker Faith & Practice
3.28-3.30

Quaker Faith & Practice
3.02-3.07



No ISBN but available from the Quaker Bookshop 020 7663 1030. This is a classic and may be in your meeting house library



ISBN 1 879045 265
Available from the Quaker Bookshop 020 7663 1030

There is an Additional activity on Clearness on Sheet 18.F

Quaker business meetings are a Meeting for Worship where problems or questions are looked at in the spirit of worship.

It starts with some silence before a Friend or the Clerk speaks about something that needs to be solved. People can ask questions to help understand what the problem is. If someone wants to speak they stand and wait for the Clerk to ask them. It is not a debate or discussion and no one responds to what someone else has said or interrupts. When the Clerks feel that there is a sense of unity, a gathered sense in the meeting she or he will write a Minute reflecting this and present this to the meeting. The Clerks will ask the meeting if the minute is acceptable. If you are happy with what has been written it is customary to say 'I hope so'. No vote is taken. This works when people are open-minded, considerate and sensitive to others. Everyone has a responsibility to support or 'uphold' the Clerks and the meeting – whether by trying to be clear when they speak or by listening carefully and keeping quiet when the Clerks are writing a minute. A minute comes from the feeling and experience of the whole group and is not just a summary made by a few people afterwards.

Respond

1. How do you sort out problems?

Draw, paint or colour a picture of your face when you have a problem and another when you have sorted it out.

2. A Meeting solves a problem - Benjamin the Meeting House Mouse':

On *Sheet 18.E* there are some little mice. Each person in your group writes the name of a Friend in main Meeting on the back of a mouse and writes, or is helped to write, the words 'still, small voice' underneath the name. The front can then be decorated with paints, small pieces of coloured cloth, sequins, cut up magazine pictures. You will also need scissors, PVA glue, glue sticks and brushes. When children go to main Meeting the mice can be given to people after the story extract has been told or outlined.

3. In God's Name.

Prepare a rich variety of collage materials – bright tissue, thick paper, gold and silver wrapping paper, wool and threads, cardboard tubes. Also have scissors, PVA glue and glue sticks. Everybody can work together or by themselves on recreating a picture from the book. This is an opportunity for lots of conversation.

4. Find a way.

Talk about how you might make a big map of your meeting house, what is around it and where it is. Use the story as a way of preparing the resources and equipment that could be used to make it. This could be a big project. You could also use the example of the story to talk about 'what map could we all make?' Reflect with older children about how they made their decision.

5. A little bit of discernment.

Ask people to decide a game that the group, however small, could play together without voting or without choosing the one that the most people like. Ask the group to make a decision where everyone is happy. Explain that people might want to play their favourite game but everyone's favourite game won't be the same. Once the group has decided, play the game that they have chosen. Some thoughts to help you with this: *Ask the group what they might have to think about if the group is going to make a decision like Quakers? Can you make a decision where everyone is happy? After the game ask the group to think about how they decided which game to play?*

6. Children's Meeting for Worship for Business

For children to feel part of the meeting it is important for them to take part in the whole of the meeting, including its meetings for worship for business.

- Hold a business meeting in the Children's Meeting to consider the questions: 'What would you, as a group, like to say to the adults in your meeting? What do you like about meeting? What would you like to change?' Or, 'Is there a particular issue in your meeting on which children could reflect?'
- Either ask for two volunteers to be clerks or ask the group to nominate (suggest) who they think would be good in that role. You may want to act as a 'minute clerk' and do writing to support the clerks.
- Explain Quaker meeting for worship for business and the role of clerks. Remind people that it is a meeting for worship.
- The clerks can ask to start with some silent worship then read or be helped to read the question to the group. The clerks can invite the group to share their thoughts about the questions and make notes. Once the clerks think that the group has reached unity they should write a minute. This doesn't need to be long. The minute can be written on large paper – help can be given.
- Speak to the local meeting Clerk about the minute going to local business meeting. The children go to the meeting to present their minute. The whole local meeting would then consider what younger Friends have to say in the usual way.

Reflect

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

- *What do you like about the Quaker business method or the way Quakers make decisions?*
- *What is the most important thing about it?*
- *How is it like Meeting for Worship? How is it different?*
- *Is there anything that you could leave out of a Quaker business meeting and it still be the same?*
- *Is there anything missing?*
- *How could you use this method to make decisions yourself?*

Make a graffiti wall - have a big sheet of paper and big pens for everybody's answers and thoughts to be written, doodled or drawn on.

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 how Quakers make choices? What is there for you to learn from this session? What might you do differently?

Topical activity

This year national Quaker week runs from October 4th - 12th.

- How could children in your meeting be involved in telling the neighbourhood and visitors about your meeting and the Quaker way?
- What might be done in relation to their schools?
- Before plans are made can you find ways to involve children in the process of discerning what your meeting might do?
- Could there be a special meeting to explore it using Quaker business method?
- The outcomes of any discernment could be work that is done over several children's meetings.
- In the September issue of Journeys there will be some specific suggestions but there is time between now and Quaker week to develop something as simple or complicated as your meeting is able to discern.

Links to other organisations and resources

www.quaker.org.uk/cyp and click on **Ideas Store**.

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/qfap - for seeing Quaker Faith and Practice online

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Quaker Faith & Practice
2.85-2.92

Linking with the wider meeting:

The 'Benjamin the Meeting House Mouse' would be a good activity for the whole meeting to share in as part of a planned all age meeting for worship.

A thought. Why do so few adults attend Meetings for Business? Could this issue of Journeys in the Spirit help to change this?

The next children's work issue of 'Journeys in the spirit', number 19, September 2008, will be about Britain Yearly Meeting work in former Yugoslavia; Issue number 20, October 2008 will be on Quaker ways to deal with bullying.; Issue number 21, November 2008 will be on Advices and Queries.

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Sheet 18.A Engage A Meeting solves a problem



Journeys in the Spirit

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Sheet 18.B Engage A Meeting solves a problem

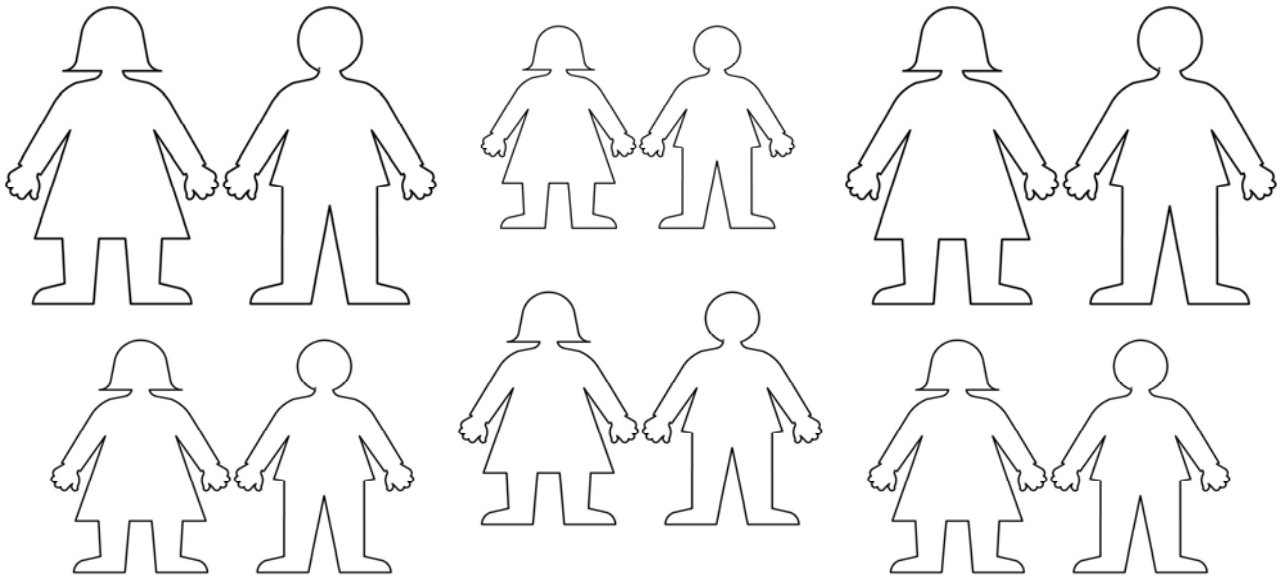


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Sheet 18.C Engage A Meeting solves a problem



As well as laying this picture down when talking about Quakers and problems you, could, at another time, ask children to look at it and ask them what they can see in the picture and then talk about it.

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Sheet 18.D Engage Find a way

"I think it would be a good idea if we painted a big map on the wall," Sarah said. She really likes to paint.

"Well I'd rather make some things out of clay!" Johnny was very sure he didn't want to work with drippy paint.

"If the little ones use paint, we'll have it all over everything." Joe said.

"No we won't!" Rachel and Jimmy called out.

"We'll be very careful," Akie said very softly.

"I don't care how careful you are," Tom said loudly. "I don't want to paint. It is always messy."

The children of different ages were going to do some work together. They were talking about what to do. They were going to make a big map of where their meeting house was in the town. The trouble was there were all kinds of ways to make it. And no one agreed!

"How could you make a map out of clay?" Beth laughed.

"You could make buildings, trees and things," Dick said.

"That wouldn't be a map." Sara said. "That would be a whole mess of things just anywhere".

"Well, how would you show buildings on a flat old paint map, silly?" Tom asked.

"I know! Why don't we use paper?" Jimmy asked.

"Paper!" everyone said at once. "Yuk!"

"Well, I mean, you could make paper trees better than clay and use clay to stand them in!" Jimmy defended himself.

"What a mess!" Tom laughed. "How can anyone do anything with such stupid ideas!"

"We're trying to make a map," Sara agreed.

"Not a farmyard," agreed Johnny.

"I don't like your ideas either," Rachel said. "It isn't any fun if you have to boss the whole thing!"

"I think so too," Jimmy said.

"Wait a minute," their helper interrupted. "I don't think you are helping by being unkind to each other. Can't you try to agree on the way to do this?"

"It would be too bad to start if everyone isn't happy," the other helper agreed.

"Well, Tom doesn't want to paint and neither do I," said Johnny.

"I don't like clay," Sara said. "Even if I did, I don't see how you could do it."

"I know! We could do two maps," Joe suggested.

"Some could paint and others could make a clay one."

"That would spoil all the fun of making a big map altogether, though," Beth reminded him.

"Besides, I like to make paper things," Jimmy said.

"We're wasting time!" Dick said. He wanted to get started.

"Don't be stupid!" Tom said. "We can't do it all today anyway."

"Tom. Please think a minute before you speak," the helper said. "You're right, Dick. I think we are wasting time. Tom's right, too. We can't do it all in one day."

"I think we may not be able to do it all if we can't agree," a helper added.

"Let's take a vote," Joe suggested.

"No. The people who want to paint would get it." Johnny said.

"Can we wait until tomorrow to decide?" Akie asked.

"That's a good idea," Beth agreed. "I really do want to do it."

"I do, too," Johnny said. Everyone seemed to agree.

"I think that is a good suggestion," the teachers both said.

"We can all think about it and decide how to do it," Sara added.

"Yes! There ought to be a way so that everyone can have fun doing it." Beth said. "Let's think hard over night!"

"We'll call our thinking, 'Find A Way,'" Joe declared.

"If we try to see that others are having fun maybe we will be able to do it after all," a helper said.

The next afternoon everyone gathered in the meeting room.

"Did anyone get a good idea how to make the map? A helper asked. Everyone was quiet. They all looked thoughtful.

"I really tried." Rachel said softly.

"So did I," Sara said.

"I did, too!" Johnny added. "I think we ought to try to be nice to each other. It isn't any fun when we aren't, but I couldn't think of a way."

Everyone murmured agreement. No one spoke.

"I think I know a way," a soft voice spoke out of the quiet. They all turned to look at Akie.

"How?" they all said at once.

"We could use a great big piece of paper on the floor," Akie started hesitantly. "we could paint the roads and grass and streams on it. The ones who wanted to make clay could make the houses and set them on it. Even paper things" – She looked around. She saw the light beginning to shine in their eyes as they understood her plan.

"We could use anything and everything!" said Johnny.

"We could use sticks to make the old log cabin by the creek," Sara added.

"How about pebbles for the dam?" asked Dick.

"A mirror for water!" Jimmy cried.

"Where can we put it," Beth wanted to know.

"There's lots of room here in the back corner of the room if we move those chairs a little," a helper said.

"Is everyone happy with this idea?" the other helper asked.

There was a loud chorus of "Yes's."

"Let's do it!" Everyone jumped up and the bustle of activity began.

"Everyone is happy! If we wait a while and try to think of other people's feelings, things work out, don't they?" Beth stopped to say to her teacher.

"You are right, Beth!" the teacher agreed.

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Sheet 18.E Respond Benjamin the Meeting House mouse



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Sheet 18.F An additional activity on clearness

Meeting for Clearness: Some information to help with an explanation.

A type of meeting to help one person get clear about a problem or worry. The group does not tell the person what to do but helps them make their own decision.

A clearness group should be made up of people that the person wanting clearness feels easy with. There should be one person who makes sure that what happens sticks to clearness rules. A meeting starts with silent worship before the 'clearness person' outlines the issue or question, during this time the group members should listen carefully. The group can then ask questions for information or to provide more detail. In the second half when the clearness person has moved on to possibilities and ideas the facilitator should ask for responses from the group. These may make suggestions, see other options or foresee difficulties in particular courses of actions. People should remain non-directive and focused on helping the person rather than providing an answer.

Activity. This could be done in your children's meeting – perhaps with children aged 7 upwards but it could work with younger ones as well

- Explain simply what a clearness group is – say that everybody can join in. It is important to stress that the session needs quiet except when one person is talking. An adult or older child should be the Elder for this process and be aware of when to check that the person seeking clearness may be ready to stop having reached an outcome. Sometimes there is no clearness - just more to think about; sometimes there is a move towards clearness; sometimes an outcome is very clear. It is not a process to hurry and it can teach all sorts of things about listening, being kind, asking non-directive questions and reflective thinking. Remember, there may be an Elder in your meeting who has experience of this and could help a little.
- Ask if anyone in the group has a choice or a decision that they would like the help with. This could be anything, from something small like what colour to paint their bedroom to something big like which school they'd prefer to go to.
- Start with a short period of silence, remind people that it is a Meeting for Worship and they should talk one at a time and be kind and thoughtful in the way they speak.
- Ask the person with the question to outline the issue or question.
- The group can then ask questions for information (e.g. what is your favourite colour, what colour are the curtains in your bedroom).
- Then ask for responses and suggestions – remind people not to be directive for example asking 'what would happen if you painted your room orange, would it clash with the carpet?' rather than saying 'you should paint it blue'.
- Bring the process to an end when it seems appropriate.
- Ask people to say what it was like.