

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 23

January 2009



Children

Turning the Tide

Nonviolence training and children

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

Getting ready

In our meetings for worship and private times with God, we receive an idea of how the world should be. We become clear that we should treat all things with care, respect and fairness. We shouldn't hurt or kill each other.

Yet when we look at the world, we see the opposite happening. Why is it that God tells us one thing and we humans do the other? How can we be how God wants us to be in a world that seems to disregard all that? How can we turn the tide?

Being a Quaker is about strengthening our connection with God, striving to become a better person and being able to relate on a deep level to the world and other people. It is also about being part of a divine effort to heal the world and turn it to how God would have it be. And that is about going out into the world and being a nonviolent soldier for God.

Early Quakers understood this very well. They talked of "putting on the armour of Christ" and fighting "the Lamb's War". They renounced "outward" or "carnal" weapons – physical weapons that harm and kill people, but were clear that they would use "weapons of the spirit", like love, truth and justice. Those early Quakers were very controversial in their day, and society disliked and rejected them. Many were beaten up, persecuted, imprisoned and even killed because of their beliefs and actions. Although we use different language today, some Quakers are still led to take nonviolent action for justice and peace. And this causes them to be controversial, disliked and imprisoned.

Underpinning references and information

"Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for the prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear."

Advices & Queries 35

Gather

Ask one or two children to be elders of the children's meeting. Explain what this involves.

Prepare the room beforehand in a way that is different from any other time - in a state that the group may not like, perhaps place a very big box or other obstacle(s) in the room, arrange chairs and cushions very untidily – maybe overturned, facing different directions. The idea is to pose a problem which is preventing you from gathering and for the group to respond to the problem.

When everyone is in ask what should be done about the room arrangement. Talk about possible changes and ask everyone to sort out the room. Once the group has arranged the room to its liking welcome everyone and congratulate them on overcoming the problem.

Place an object like a stone or stick in the centre and explain that this is a talking-object. When someone is holding it nobody else should speak. Ask everyone to use the silence to reflect on how they felt when they first came into the room and, importantly, why they felt like that, what they wanted to do when they saw the room and how they feel now. Once the group has settled into silence everyone has an opportunity to pick up the object, say their name and share their reflections, returning the object to the centre when they have finished with it. Make it clear that it is OK to pass. Settle into silence. End the session when it feels right to do so.

Engage

Expressing our feelings

After the initial gathering and talking object sharing, remain in the circle, but ask the group to stand. Ask them to remember how they said they had felt both upon entering the messy room and after arranging it for the meeting.

Then ask them to remember times when they have seen things, witnessed situations that they wanted to change. Specifically ask them to think, if they can, of situations of unfairness, injustice, cruelty, unkindness, hurt or violence. Give a few moments for this.

Ask everyone to describe in turn the feeling they are remembering. The person to the right of the one talking has to use their body or their face or both to show what the feeling might look like. This may lead to lots of laughs and making connections between the effects of justice and injustice on our emotions.

Respond

The Respond section activities are linked. They begin with an opportunity to think and choose for oneself about a personal or social concern. There are then two examples of people acting to prevent or undo an injustice and tell the world about it – one Quaker and one about Jesus.

References

Knowing what to say:

“On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say”

Matthew 10:18-19

Paying Taxes to Caesar?

Read Matthew 22:15-22



References

“My charge is that I entered a protected area without authority or permission. My claim is that I had authority – the authority of my Christian conviction that a gospel of love cannot be defended by the threatened annihilation of millions of innocent people. It can never be morally right to use these ghastly weapons at any time ...”

Quaker Faith & Practice 24.27

Mark 11:15-18

Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

1. What would you do? See Sheet 23.A.

Tell the group that you are going to give them a situation that they might find themselves in. Say that you are going to ask them to think about what they would do. Emphasise that there is no right or wrong answer, but it's important to know that we all have choices. You are going to suggest 4 different responses to the situation and ask them to go to the one they think is closest to what they think or feel.

If anyone feels they'd respond in a way not covered by the four options, they stand in the middle.

Choose a scenario from the list on *Sheet 23.A* and read it out. Each person goes to 1,2,3,4 or the middle. Ask each person why they chose that place. Then ask someone else why they chose that one and so on. Encourage discussion. Reflect back on key points you have heard in discussion. Don't make a judgment yourself. Choose a different scenario and do it again.



2. What would you like to do? Planning your own action.

See *Sheet 23.B*. This could be used as follow-on from the 'What would you do?' exercise, perhaps when you next meet – there may not be time to do both in one session.

3. Monica and Paul – stopping bombs.

See *Sheets 23.C & D*. In advance of the story set out the room with a range of lovely art and craft materials. Let everybody walk around a bit looking at what is available for later. Make sure everyone is comfortable and then read the true story on the sheets. When the story is finished, give three matchsticks or tokens to each person. Explain that the matchsticks represent three opportunities for everyone to speak. When someone wishes to speak about their responses to the story, they throw a matchstick into the centre. When their third matchstick has been thrown in they have no more opportunities to speak. Nobody has to speak if they don't want to.

4. Jesus and the Money Changers.

See *Sheets 23.E & F* and quotation in sidebar.

This is a story about saying, 'this is wrong'. Jesus is angry and acts on it. He also knows that other people will see what he has done – he is sending a message about the kingdom of heaven on earth. It's tough, risky and OK. The acting out of this story offers a way to get inside and explore the issues of what happens when someone, any of us, says no to an injustice and yes to a nonviolent way of acting.



Reflect

Yes we can

Bring everybody back together into a still circle. Be still for a little while. Ask if anyone would like to say something they have liked about the meeting or that they found hard. Listen and then say, 'we are all small but we can all help, in little or big ways, to

make our world better and we don't have to hurt other people to do that. Everybody then stands up in a circle facing inwards, puts their right hand on the shoulder of the person next to them and gives them a pat on the back for whatever they have done in the meeting. If you are able to, make and give each person a yes we can label or badge

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 ability to act to change the world whilst being nonviolent and strong? What is there to learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

Topical activity

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the son of peace to you.

This is a poem with roots in Celtic culture. It states and invites connection to the depth and power of creation – of love, power, beauty and truth. In January we stand at the beginning of a new year and half way through winter. It is a moment when we wish one another well for the coming year.

Use the poem as a way to offer greetings and share in the bigger blessings of the world we are in – sea, air, earth, stars and the potential for peace. Read the poem out loud – give out copies. Begin a conversation about each line – I wonder what that means; I wonder what that feels like to you.

Have A4 sheets of white or black card, a wide variety of coloured tissue or craft paper, scissors and glue sticks. Build a picture using torn or cut strips of paper to represent the different parts of the poem stuck in layers across the card – maybe start with the waves at the bottom? Finished cards can be given as greetings.

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.turning-the-tide.org/ for the Yearly Meeting nonviolence training programme

www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw for lots about Quaker peace work and nonviolence

This issue was written by Steve Whiting of Quaker Peace and Social Witness and edited by Chris Nickolay who also wrote the additional activity. Jamie Farrell took the 'Angels' photo' Sheet 23.B

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit*, issue 24, is a second issue on Quaker work in South Asia, available February 2nd 2009. The final issue of this series, number 25, will be on Belonging and Joining, available March 2nd 2009.

Ways for all ages to connect with each other around the theme of being Quaker and acting nonviolently include:

The Jesus and the money changers activity; planning an action identified by the children.

and remember.....



**Published by
Children & Young
People's Staff Team,
Quaker Life**

Available free by
subscription.

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Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Sheet 23.A

Respond What would you do?

Clear a large space in the room and divide it into four squares. You can do this with tape, string, marking with chalk or simply by using sheets of paper on the floor numbered 1 to 4.

Choices scenarios:

A. *You are really looking forward to a school trip, but it is cancelled because of the actions of two children:*

1. Talk to the leader of the trip about another punishment
2. Help organise a 1-day strike for the class
3. Confront/ beat up the 2 students
4. Make a rude sign at the leader every time they turn their back

B. *A classmate is suspended from school for something you know they didn't do*

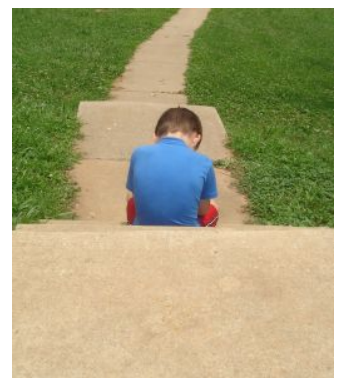
1. Protest with placards at the school gate
2. Ask to speak to the Headteacher
3. Carry on as normal
4. Meet with other, maybe older pupils, and try to find out the truth. Tell a teacher what you find out.

C. *In a shop you overhear a customer make a racist remark to a shop worker.*

1. Carry on shopping
2. Challenge the customer and ask them to apologise
3. Glare at the customer so s/he can see you
4. Talk to the shop assistant in a friendly way

D. *You see a recognised bully beating up someone you know outside your school:*

1. Dive in between the two and say break it up/ help your school friend
2. Walk home
3. Stand at a safe distance and shout "I'm watching you"
4. Call a teacher



Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Sheet 23.B

Respond What would you like to do?

Clear a large space in the room and divide it into four quadrants. You can do this by using four sheets of paper with one of the four words on and placing them in different parts of the room. If you have enough people, divide the group into four, perhaps by counting round 1 to 4 so that all the 1s go together etc, and assign them to each of the four areas. Otherwise assign people in 2's or 3's or even 1's.

1. Group	2. Town
3. Country	4. World

Ask each group or individual to think of something they believe is unfair and would like to change in the area they have been given – group, town, country or world. Try for groups of no less than three – you could ask for additional help from Meeting. Part of the purpose of this exercise is to encourage the idea of working together for change so if numbers are small you might focus on less than the four categories rather than reduce groups to singles or pairs.

Ask each group to agree on their issue or what they want to change and then to plan a group action that would help to bring about the change they wish to see. Explain that they will need to prepare to report back to the whole group and this can be in any way they would like, eg using drama, drawings, or spoken description. The reports back should include:

- the specific change they wish to see.
- what their action is.
- what they hope will happen as a result of their action.

Bring the group back together and ask the questions:

- I wonder what you felt when you decided on your action?
- I wonder what you felt was the most important part of what you have done?



Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Sheet 23.C

Respond Monica and Paul – stopping bombs

A Story

Monica lived in Bristol and Paul in Birmingham. They are both Quakers. They were both feeling the same. Millions of other people were feeling this way too. The British government was copying the American government, and planning to invade a far-off country called Iraq. Monica and Paul did not want this to happen.

They knew that Iraq had lots of oil that the Americans wanted, and that Iraq's leader was a brutal man. They also knew that bombing and invading Iraq would mean that many thousands of ordinary Iraqi children, women and men would be killed. They believed it was wrong and felt in the core of their beings that this was not God's way. They wrote letters to the Prime Minister to try to persuade him to change his mind. They met their Members of Parliament to try to persuade them to vote against war. But they felt that everything they were saying was being disregarded. The powerful people had made up their minds.

Monica and Paul were frustrated by this and went to a large demonstration at Fairford, an airbase in England that had been given to the Americans. They held placards saying "No War" and "Not in My Name" and talked about their feelings of despair and anger. They wished they could do more to prevent the killing of Iraqi people.

As they talked, they looked through the wire fence and saw lots of huge B-52 aeroplanes, which would soon take off for Iraq and drop bombs on the capital city, Baghdad. It seemed to them that whilst they were outside with their placards, the business of war was carrying on as usual, completely unaffected. "There must be something more we can do" said Monica. "If only we could stop those bombers taking off", said Paul. They looked at each other, and that's when they started to plan their action.

One March evening, Monica and Paul went to the Fairford base again. A beautiful full moon lit their way as they took out their bolt cutters and cut through the fence. They climbed inside the base and made their way to the bomb compound, full of low loaders and trailers for taking the bombs to the aeroplanes. They damaged the trucks and trailers so they couldn't be driven and put signs on them that said "Out of Order" and "Do Not Use", so that no one would drive them and get injured.

Then they cut through another fence and entered the main airfield. They made their way to the fuel compound where they found three big fuel tankers, which would take the fuel to the aeroplanes. They climbed inside each of them in turn and damaged the controls so they could not be used.

"It's a shame we can't get to the aeroplanes", said Monica, "they're too well guarded". "But they can't take off without fuel and bombs", said Paul. "Even if it delays the bombing by an hour, at least it will give Iraqi people more time to escape Baghdad". Just then a long shadow fell and a young American soldier came round the corner. When he saw Monica and Paul, he looked horrified. But he kept his gun pointed to the ground and called for reinforcements – *continued on Sheet 23.D*

Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Sheet 23.D

Respond

Monica and Paul's story continued



Monica and Paul did not resist arrest. "We wondered how long it would take you to discover that we were here", they said, "We were making so much noise damaging the trucks, we thought you'd come sooner". In court, Monica and Paul pleaded guilty to damage, which would cost £10,000 to repair. They admitted that they had taken the action, but said they believed they were helping to prevent war crime. Paul said to the judge and jury, "I did it to prevent the murder of innocent civilians". Monica said: "If we can help to prevent the murder of one civilian by what we have done, then the action will have been worthwhile".

They knew that they could be sentenced to 10 years in prison. The jury took 3 hours to decide. When they returned, the judge asked them for their verdict. The spokesperson for the jury stood and said "Guilty!"

The judge recognised that Paul and Monica had acted under "honestly held beliefs", but had broken the law. He gave Paul a conditional discharge and a fine to cover court costs. The judge told Monica that she had broken the law lots of times before on peace actions and told her she would have to stay in her home from 7pm to midnight, Tuesday to Saturdays, for six months. "Even if I'd gone to prison, I'd do it all again" said Paul. "I'd definitely do it again", said Monica.

Now ask the following wondering questions. Leave a good gap between questions and remembering not everyone has to speak. Say, 'I wonder:

- Which part of this story you liked the best?
- Which part of this story you think is most important?
- Which part of this story is in you or you are in?
- ...and, finally, which part of this story you could leave out and still have all the story you need?
- You could also ask, after a pause: Has anyone ever felt like breaking the rules because they felt so strongly about something?

After the wondering conversation everybody can move to use the art and craft materials to further explore the story they have heard in whatever way they choose.



Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Sheet 23.E

Respond Jesus and the moneychangers

The Jewish Temple when Jesus was alive was huge – even bigger than a cathedral (*has anybody been to a cathedral?*). The Temple had lots of enormous spaces and halls. The most special part of the Temple was the Holy of Holies – only priests went there. There were lots of rules about who could go where – some places men could go and women couldn't. Something else we need to know – in one part of the Temple there was something like a market – there was lots of money – it was like the Temple, or Church, had become a shop or supermarket. People bought things they they needed to go into the Temple but other things were sold too. It was noisy and busy...

This enactment has been done successfully at Greenbelt, a Christian arts festival, and in other settings.

Prepare to enact the story. Say, 'we are going to hear about a time when Jesus took direct action.'

- First, read the text on *Sheet 23.E* about the 'Jewish Temple'.
- Pause and then read, or have a volunteer read, the quotation from Mark chapter 11:vs.15 – 18.
- Then say, 'we are going to make this story happen in our Meeting'.
- Get the group to organise itself into these four roles - Money changers, Chief priests, crowd and Jesus and the disciples. You could do this by simply counting round from 1 to 4, by asking for volunteers, or a lucky dip system that divides each group fairly equally. Brief each group as on the strips overleaf - give each group copies of their role card.
- If your children's meeting is small you will definitely need to do this as an all age or all meeting activity. You can just have a few people in each group.
- Decide where Jesus and his friends are walking into the Temple; decide which room is the Court of the Gentiles where the money changers are going to be – set out tables with cardboard boxes and money (pretend or real); decide which room or space is the Holy of Holies where the Priests will be and rush from. Talk a bit about whether tables are going to be turned over and, or, goods and money thrown about.
- Remind everybody, briefly, of the story. When everybody says they are ready begin the action. Jesus and his friends walk into the Court of the Gentiles; Jesus speaks or calls out and then.....
- Judge when to end the action. Everybody sits and says their own name – 'I am...'. Talk about what it was like acting it out – ask people how they feel and what they think now about the story. Any thoughts about our world now? End with a little stillness and quiet. Tidy up!

Journeys in the Spirit

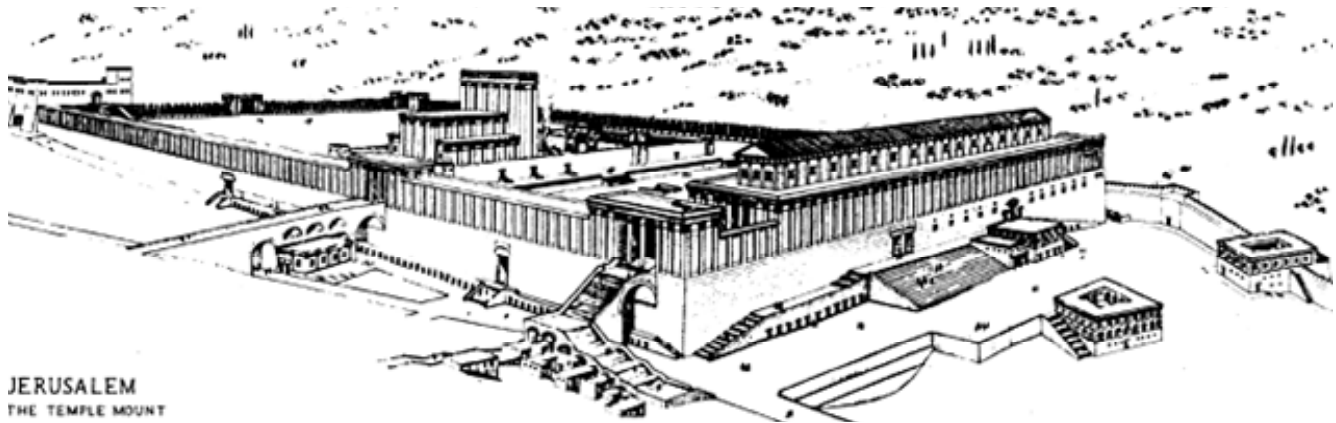


Children

Sheet 23.F

Respond

Jesus and the moneychangers continued



Money changers: The priests in the Temple authorities give you permission too work here. It's a good job- it pays lots of money. Everyone who comes to the Temple has to change their money into Temple money to buy things in the Temple. You change their money and keep some for yourself.

Chief priests and scribes: You are very important people. You are like Government Ministers and judges in our society. You are very powerful, in this Temple and the country. People do what you tell them to do you. You hear noise and commotion and rush out to the Court of the Gentiles to see what it is.

Crowd: You are the ordinary people who come to worship in the Temple. You are very poor because of taxes you have to pay the Roman army, and the taxes you have to pay the Temple and the money you pay to the traders before you can worship at the Temple. You see or hear somebody doing something about your poverty and the treatment of the Temple.

Jesus and disciples: This is your first visit to Jerusalem, the big city. The temple is huge. Until now Jesus worked and preached in the rural areas and built up a large following of people who are inspired by his healing acts, his message of God's love for them, of hope and liberation. These followers include faithful disciples, or close friends, that accompany him wherever he goes and help him in his work. Identify one of your group to be Jesus. Jesus becomes angry at the bad things happening in the Temple.