

# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 3 May 2007

Children



## Introduction

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. "Journeys in the Spirit" offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition for 5 –12 year olds comes out monthly. It is offered with the intention of providing an opportunity for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of 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. 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.



The fourth of four issues on exploring our spiritual journeys together in a Quaker context. This issue offers ways to look downwards - to the earth, the world we live in.

## Exploring our spirituality together - downwards

### Getting ready

#### Preparing Hearts & Minds

There is a growing awareness of the need for a testimony of care towards the environment. It has been suggested that a care for the environment is the common unifying link between the world's major religions. Exploring our spirituality downwards asks us to value creation and the earth, to understand the way in which the environment is being abused, to raise our attitudes and concerns, and consider what action can be taken to protect and enhance the environment.

- Genesis 1: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and called the darkness night..'.(See side bar).
- .... and Advice 1.02 42 reminds us: "We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation."

#### Suggested questions for getting ready include:

Is the room prepared? Do my colleagues and I feel supported and comfortable with our plans and ourselves? Do I know and understand the needs of the children who are coming? Am I confident of the health and safety arrangements? Can I hold the whole session in a spirit of worship, with a sense of expectation and adventure? Am I ready to respond to the immediate issues and concerns of the children and young people?

**Equipment Needed:** Check for equipment on additional sheets, CD, books, copies of activity sheets. Remember to seek permission if visiting a neighbouring garden.

#### Underpinning references

The Bible  
Genesis 1.1-27

Quaker Faith and Practice 20.32

Quaker Faith and Practice 29.03

Quaker Faith and Practice 25.01

Quaker Faith and Practice 25.08

Quaker Faith and Practice 25.15

# Gather

- Remember to ask for 1 or 2 children to be elders of children's meeting – explain the task. This can help children learn about and accept responsibility in meeting for worship. (See *Sheet 0.A of the sample 'Journeys in the spirit; to obtain this see sidebar*).
- Prepare the children's room beforehand with all you need. Arrange the chairs and cushions in a welcoming circle. It is better to add chairs if more children arrive than to have too many. Have a focal point of a candle or some flowers, shells, a smooth stone as a talking token, a teddy. Once everyone is settled have a simple 'go-round'; for example, "My name is Tom and I'm feeling ..... today". Ask a further question if someone is bursting with news. Thank for contributions - make it clear that it is OK to pass.
- You could start with a co-operative game followed by the period of stillness, to draw the group together and allow for latecomers to join in. See *Sheet 3.A*

# Engage

There are three possible ways into the theme. They could fit different ages but can also be multi-age.

## The Starfish way downwards.

- The story on *Sheet 3A* highlights the importance of even the smallest acts. See *sidebar for resources*.
- Arrange a blue piece of material in the centre and place objects from the sea on it, e.g. some shells, seaweed, driftwood.
- Play some atmospheric music such as 'The Sea' by Global Journey to set the scene. See *side bar for how to obtain*.
- Invite everyone in turn to say what they do to help the environment, give some examples to encourage thinking, choose simple ideas, put my litter in the bin, recycle paper, make my own birthday cards. Allow people to pass.
- Tell the story, *Sheet 3.A*. This story has been retold in many ways. *Resources: Blue material, sea objects, music, CD player,*

## The Wildlife Park way downwards.

- Give each person a piece of string one metre long and four small flags. Use cocktail sticks with trimmed ends or drinks stirrers and a small piece of card stuck on one end for flags. Take the children into the Meeting House garden, or use a neighbouring green space or garden – ask permission if necessary. Ask them to look for a special piece of ground to surround with their piece of string. This makes their very own wildlife park. Invite them to study their park, they are the Park Keepers, and look for four special things to mark with a flag. This might be a special leaf or where an ant disappeared into its 'home'. Each person invites the rest of the group to visit their park and admire the special places of interest. *Resources: String cut in lengths, cocktail sticks or drinks stirrers, card for little flags.*
- Other activities outside might include giving each person a paper cup with some almond oil in and a small spoon or stirrer. Each person collects small leaves and/or flowers, breaks them up into the oil and smells the scent. Invite people to share their fragrance with each other. *Resources: Paper cups, almond oil, spoons or stirrers*
- Give each person a small mirror and take them on a walk under some trees. Ask them to choose a particular tree, and then a particular branch. Study the branch in their mirror for a little and then put the mirror down and look at their branch directly. *Resources: Small mirrors with safe edges.*

## References & other resources

To obtain Journeys sample Sheet 0.A go to [www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp) and follow the link in the side menu to Resources

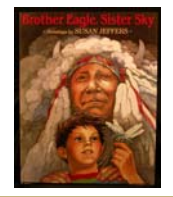
'Consider that glorious but perfectly useless flower set in green velvet on some inaccessible ledge of the Alps where no one will ever see it.'  
Pierre Ceresole

Also search on the Internet using *starfish beach difference as* search criteria

'The Sea' available to buy from [www.global-journey.com/nature](http://www.global-journey.com/nature)  
CD Code GJ 3632

How can we '...see a World in a grain of sand, and Heaven in a wild flower, Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and Eternity in an hour.'  
William Blake.

## References & other resources



Brother Eagle, Sister Sky; Susan Jeffers  
Puffin Books ISBN  
9780 1 40545142

For 'Starfish Malawi' project – see:  
[www.starfish-malawi.org.uk](http://www.starfish-malawi.org.uk)

'How big is a tree' is from 'Child's Play' by Marion Stapleton ISBN 0352 306807 and 'bark rubbing' is from Piccolo Craft Book, D.Manley and D. James ISBN 9780330251884 – try secondhand bookshops or Amazon

All books recommended here are available from the Quaker Bookshop, Amazon Books and to borrow from the Quaker Life (QL) Resources Room unless stated otherwise.

Please use this opportunity for children to place objects in their 'Who am I?' box for a final time – think about when you might encourage them to do this. See *Sample Sheet 0.E* [www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp) and follow the side menu to Resources

### 3. Brother Eagle, Sister Sky way downwards.

This book is based on the purported words of Chief Seattle, leader of the Northwest Indian Nations. There is doubt about the origins of the words, but the book has beautiful illustrations and the words carry a powerful, relevant message:

- Arrange a centrepiece of a candle, some water in a bowl and some leaves and natural objects (fire, earth and water).
- Introduce the book or brief story by talking about the things outside that we enjoy, the seaside, climbing trees, the park, gardens, talk about how we care for things, each other, our pets, wild things and our land.
- Tell all or some of the story, read from *Sheet 3.C*. You may want to slightly adjust the language for different ages. *Resources: See Sheet 3C.Candle, a bowl, leaves & natural objects*

## Respond

Do one of the first three zones - zone 4 can also be done

**1. Starfish zone** -If you started with the 'The Starfish' story. See sidebar for a link to an application of this story to a real life project - Starfish Malawi.

- Give each person a 'starfish' cut from card – copy using template on *Sheet 3B*. Invite each person to colour or decorate one side and write or draw on the back things they do or their family does that helps to look after our world - feeding a pet, playing with their dog, feeding the birds as well as recycling etc. Also encourage them to think of one thing that they would like to do. This could lead to a future action or activity as witness. See Reflect over the page for a way to share what has been thought and done. *Resources: Card starfish, felt pens, wax crayons and oil pastels, coloured pencils, scissors.*

**2. Special Wildlife Park zone** -if you started with the Wildlife Park.

- Provide large sheets of paper so that the children can make a poster welcoming people to their Park or a map of what is in it.
- Use a laminator or sticky back plastic to make a beautiful mobile of leaves that are tied to and suspended from a ring of cardboard, such as an old large sellotape ring. Feathers and beads can be tied on as well. *Resources: Sheets of white paper or card, felt pens, wax crayons and oil pastels, coloured pencils. A laminator, sticky backed plastic, wool or thread, rings made from recycled card or plastic.*

**3. Brother Eagle, Sister Sky zone** if you started with the story or the extract.

- On *Sheet 3D* there is a reflective and quite deep activity to help children look at what they love about our world and may feel concerns for. This needs care as it is intended to help children explore things they are not often asked about. *Resources – see Sheet 3D*
- Take margarine tubs; make a hole in one edge. Tie a large knot in the end of a piece of thick string - thread through the hole. Melt a pound of hard fat (non-animal) in a saucepan or microwave - add birdseed to make a thick mixture, spoon into tubs. When set, hang outside for the birds. Give out copies of the words on a card. *Resources – Margarine tubs, thick string, hard fat, birdseed, copies of story.*

**4. Tree zone.** Two outside activities – 'how big is a tree?' and 'bark rubbings.'

- Turn your back on a tall tree and walk away from it to a spot where you can see the top of the tree when you bend down and look through your legs. The distance from this spot to the base of the tree is the same, just about, as the height of the tree. How amazing! Fix a piece of paper onto the bark of a tree with masking tape, use wax crayons to make a rubbing. Try and name the tree from a book of trees. *Resources: Thick paper, large wax crayons, masking tape. See side bar for reference books for these activities.*

## Reflect

Bring the children together to share what they have done – if they wish. Receive the sharing as ministry. If you have used a piece of music you might like to use it again. If you have told the story of the Starfish, invite people to place their starfish in turn on a blue cloth (you go first with this) and say what your action to help care for the environment is. As the starfish are placed down, it suggests how each individual action leads together to a much bigger action. You can also draw round each person's hand, then cut it out, draw or write the action they take now or are going to try to take on the hand and place in turn in the centre as a symbol of everyone's individual contribution.

## Ongoing activity

**'Your bodies belong to us, your music belongs to us.'**

Africans forced to become slaves were made to leave everything behind: their families, their friends, homes, work, everything, as they were taken from Africa across the sea to work on plantations in America. After abolition of the British trade in slaves in 1807, it took nearly fifty years before slaves really were able to gain their freedom.

In many African cultures song and performance was a very important part of life, from celebration of the birth of a new baby to the death of respected elders. The horror of being captured and transported to a totally new world had a big effect on the music slaves took with them. They took it with them in their hearts and minds. In the new world not only were African slaves expected to work for their masters, they also had to conform to new ways of living. We know that slave owners 'seasoned' new slaves by making them give up their African names, and culture, that included their language and songs. See *Sheets 3.E and 3.F*

## 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 relationship with the earth? What is there for you to learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

## Links to other organizations and resources

[www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp) and click on Database of Ideas.

[www.quaker.org.uk/library/1807](http://www.quaker.org.uk/library/1807) for resources on the abolition of slavery.

[www.starfish-malawi.org.uk](http://www.starfish-malawi.org.uk) - a project that links to the story of the starfish.

[www.climatechange.org](http://www.climatechange.org) - information and campaigns.

[www.tearfund.org/twelve](http://www.tearfund.org/twelve) - has a form to complete about how environment friendly a church is.

'Sharing nature with children' - Joseph Bharat Cornell; ed. George Beinhom ISBN 0905521366; very useful book – Quaker Bookshop or the QL Resources Room.

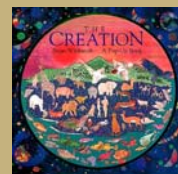
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Email [bevelies@quaker.org.uk](mailto:bevelies@quaker.org.uk) Website: [www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp)

## References & other resources

Psalm 139 v 8 -10

'Lighting Candles in the Dark' – Friends General Conference – P.200 Children campaign to save rainforest. ISBN 0962091235 & Study Guide ISBN 1888305703 and 'The Creation' by Brian Wildsmith beautiful pop-up book. ISBN 0192799908



All from the Quaker Bookshop, Amazon Books and to borrow from the QL Resources Room

Linking with the wider meeting - each time you do one of the downward activities why not think about using it in an all age meeting for worship or simply as a shared activity.

**The next series of 'Journeys in the Spirit' children's work issue is going to focus on the 'Quaker Testimonies'. The first, considering 'Simplicity' will be available on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2007.**