

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 29

July 2009



Children

Quakers and Russia: Making Friends

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** (or even further inwards?) towards 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.



The third in the 'Our Quaker stories' series. May 2009 – August 2010.

Getting ready

What do you imagine when you think of Russia?

Relationships between the UK and Russian governments have not always been easy. During the Cold War particularly, mistrust prevailed. Sometimes this meant that it was easy for ordinary people in the UK to imagine the Russian people as strange or unfriendly. You may or may not know, however, that there has been a connection between English Quakers and Russia for several centuries.

Our format will be slightly different from the other editions. In this issue we are going to take you on a journey that starts by introducing you to a girl in Moscow called Marfa. We then learn about the theatre project called Krug ('Circle') that has supported Marfa to live a fuller life. Beyond Krug is the Quaker project called Friends House Moscow that has helped support Krug. From there we go back in history to hear the story about some early British Quakers who went on a very long sleigh ride indeed! Along the way you will get to learn a little about Russia, a country not often travelled or understood by Westerners. So welcome to this issue; this is a chance to make new friends.

Resources: an open mind, your curiosity and readiness to learn and reflect. Other resources needed for each activity to follow will be listed separately.

Underpinning references

'Не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей.'
'Better to have one hundred friends than one hundred roubles.'
Russian proverb

In **Quaker Faith and Practice 27.02** John Woolman talks about being open to discovering the life of the Native Americans. This spirit of openness to difference and willingness to live in sympathy with a people other than his own strikes the right tone for this issue.

Gather

You might begin by sitting in silence with an object in the centre: it could be the photos of Marfa or map of Russia, or a souvenir such as a *matryoshka* (nesting dolls), a painted wooden spoon, any object associated with Russia that might stimulate curiosity. See *Sheet 29.A* and the bottom of this page. Out of the silence, say: 'We are going to hear a story about a child who lives in a country a long way away called Russia; Russia is a very big country: almost 70 times as big as the UK, with 142 million people' Now say, '– just get comfortable and I'll tell you something about her.'

'Hello. My name is Marfa. I am 12 years old. I live in Moscow, the capital of Russia. I am going to tell you something about what it is like to live and grow up in Russia. Like most Russians, I live in a high rise block of flats. Sometimes the lift does not work and it is a long walk upstairs for the people on the top floor. I am lucky; I live in a three room flat with my father and stepmother, my sister and one of my brothers. My other brother is at Naval Cadet School in St Petersburg. I am in Year 6 at school. I usually have mannaya kasha (semolina porridge) for breakfast in winter. Sometimes I go to school on the tram and I need to wrap up very warm when the temperature gets down to -10. Our money is Russian roubles. With 50 roubles I could buy one of your pounds. My favourite thing is acting and dressing up in costumes. I go to a special theatre school called Krug (Circle). I have a special problem because I cannot grow and need special medicines. Of course I speak Russian and we have a different alphabet which will look quite strange for you. Some of the letters look the same but actually are different so you might get confused. I will tell you about the alphabet later.'

Engage

In Russia, schools for children with disabilities like Marfa exist but sometimes don't help children to have the best lives they can. Krug (Circle) works with children with different kinds of disability, and families can go there for free. Marfa has been going to Krug for four years and has done all sorts of things there: making dolls, pottery, drawing, and now theatre, dancing and pantomimes. In one photo, see *Sheet 29.A*, she is performing in a modern ballet show called 'Do Flies Have Individuality?'

Marfa might introduce you to Sergei and Natasha (see the picture in the side bar), who are also Russian and live in Moscow. Sergei and Natasha work for a place called Friends House Moscow which has helped many Russian children (and adults) in charities like Krug.

Quakers from all over the world have come to Russia for all sorts of reasons over the years. Before reading the story on *Sheet 29.B* ask, what is the longest journey you have been on? Where was it to? How long did it take? Read the story then pause to pose the questions within it. Then show or read the contents of the letter on *Sheet 29.C*. You might need to paraphrase this for younger children. These efforts to speak truth to power and to go on a really hard journey are an example of the call to 'live adventurously' that George Fox talked about and is in *Advices and Queries 27*.

Russians love drinking tea just as much as – if not more than - people in Britain! Take a look at *Sheet 29.C* that shows a little about how Russians make and drink tea differently.



References & other resources

Advices and Queries 31.

<http://www.worldtimezone.com/time-russia1.htm> for a map of all 11 of Russia's time zones



Marfa

'And most importantly, we began to make friends with the children and become friends ourselves. Marfa learned to behave as if she were accepted and not shunned by society. Her self-esteem increased and she made friends at school. I think its thanks to Krug that our relationship has become so good.'
Marfa's mother.



Sergei and Natasha in Friends House Moscow.

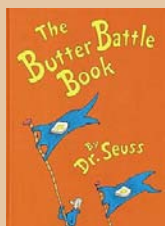
References & other resources

Sleigh Ride to Russia: The Quaker Mission to Russia to Try to Avert the Crimean War by Griselda F Mason (ISBN: 0900657995 / 0-900657-99-5)
Full story of historic Quaker journey as in *Sheet 28.B*

'Love your enemies: bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.'
The Bible – Matthew 5.44

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God'

- From the letter from Meeting for Sufferings to Tsar Nicholas I



The Butter Battle Book by Dr Seuss (ISBN: 0394865804 / 978-0394865805)



Some Russian tea party games:

<http://www.child-tea-party-game-ideas.com/russian-tea-party-crafts.html>

Respond

The following are some ideas for building on the earlier parts of the session. Use them in whatever way feels most appropriate for the children in your Meeting.

Writing or drawing or painting. Say things like: 'If you were writing an email or sending a picture to Friends House Moscow, or to Krug what would you like it to say or show? If you were writing a letter or sending a picture to Gordon Brown or President Obama what would you like it to say or show? Is there anything else that you would like to make a picture of that is to do with the stories we have heard today? You could create Russian-style painted 'spoons' by drawing or painting them on paper. You could decorate plain wooden spoons using enamel or acrylic paints – choose black, reds, greens and gold. Friends House Moscow email address is dd.moskva@gmail.com – email is best.

Make some 'friends' with part of the Russian alphabet – see *Sheet 29.E*.

АБВГДЕЁЖЗИЙКЛМНОПРСТУФХЦЧШЩЬЫЪЭЮЯ

Tell or act the story of the three Quakers' trip to see Tsar Nicholas I.

If you have enough children in your Meeting, work with them to re-enact the journey of Joseph Sturge of Birmingham, Robert Charleton of Bristol and Henry Pease of Darlington – the three Quakers who went on the journey to visit Tsar (like a King) Nicholas with their letter from Meeting for Sufferings on *Sheet 29.C*. The story and letter could be read whilst children and adult helpers move between different points in the room or represent different characters. What else can you find out and use about the three Quakers? See the sidebar on this page for quotes and references. A story could end with a wondering question – 'I wonder if you have ever helped someone in a way that might have got you into trouble but you did it anyway.'

Have your own Russian tea party!

See *Sheet 29.D* under 'Engage' for more information. Children and adults could make a tea party team to lay on a Russian-style tea for the whole Meeting. *Here is a Russian tea recipe - ingredients:* 2 oranges, sliced; 1½ lemons, sliced; 1½ cinnamon stick, ; ¼ tbsp cloves, whole; about 1pt .water; ¾ pt pineapple juice; about ½ cup sugar; 1½ pts tea. *Directions:* Combine fruit slices, cinnamon, cloves, and water in a large non-aluminum saucepan; bring to a boil. Boil 5 minutes. Press mixture through a strainer, discarding pulp and spices. Add pineapple juice, sugar, and tea to citrus mixture, stirring well. Serve hot. Makes about 4pts.

Here is a recipe to make about 20 Russian tea biscuits - ingredients: 100g/4oz Plain Flour; 2 tbsp unsweetened Cocoa powder; a pinch of salt; 225g/8oz butter, softened; 50g/2oz icing sugar; 1 tsp vanilla extract; 50g/2oz chopped hazelnuts; icing sugar for dusting. *Instructions:* 1. Preheat oven to 170C, 325F Gas Mark 3; grease 2-3 baking trays. 2. In large mixing bowl, cream together the butter and icing sugar. 3. Add vanilla extract, flour, cocoa powder and salt – mix until well blended. 4. Make walnut-sized balls – place well spaced apart on the baking trays. 5. Make a dent with your finger in the centre of each ball, fill with hazelnuts and bake for 12-15 minutes. 6. Remove from oven, sprinkle with icing sugar -cool on wire racks.

Cook mannaya kasha - semolina porridge. See *Sheet 29.F*.

Read aloud. See side bar. *The Butter Battle Book* by Dr Seuss is a satirical look at Soviet-Western relations during the Cold War that is accessible to children. You could read it together and use it to explore both its historical relevance and the theme of interpersonal differences – and how these can lead to fear and violence - with children.

Reflect

Depending on the children you are working with, you could either reflect out loud on the session sitting in a circle, or creating a quick group 'poster' where they can draw or write their responses. Questions that might help them reflect:

- How do you think the lives of Russian children might be different from yours? And how are they similar?
- Are there any questions you still have?
- You might ask them to share one 'feeling word' they are left with – 'I wonder what you feel about Marfa or the story of the three Quakers?'
- Is there anything you would like to share with anyone about what you have learnt or done today in relation to the story of Quakers and Russia?

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 thoughts and feelings about Quakers in Russia and the stories you have shared? What is there for you to learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

Topical activity Yearly Meeting Gathering

This is again about the theme of Yearly Meeting Gathering - *creating community, creating connections*. If there are people going to YMG from your meeting they could be asked to take letters of greeting to be read out in Home Groups, or in the 0-15s programme times of worship. What would your children's meeting want to say as a greeting to people going to Yearly Meeting Gathering? What would they hope Yearly Meeting Gathering would do? Maybe children could write a letter of support or prayer for people who are going – children or adults. What would their wish or prayer be for people going to Yearly Meeting Gathering? Writing a prayer or letter could be a way of holding people in their thoughts, in the light as they go to Yearly Meeting Gathering. Letters or prayers could be given to people before they go. This creates connections and expresses community.

Links to other organisations and resources

www.quaker.org.uk/cyp and click on Ideas Store in the central panel of the page.

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.

<http://www.friendshousemoscow.org.uk/> - information on Friends House Moscow

<http://fhm.quaker.org/links.htm> - a brief history of Quakers in Russia

This issue was written by Peter Dyson, Bonnie Grotjahn and Natasha Zhuravenkova and edited by Chris Nickolay who also wrote the Topical Activity.

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* Issue 30, August 1st looks at stories of Quaker concerns for animals; Issue 31, September 1st at stories from Quaker work in Burundi; Issue 32 October 1st stories of a Quaker family in China a long time ago.

Ideas for everybody to worship and share together:

One or both of the two stories, of Marfa and of the three Quakers, could be told to everybody as part of a Meeting for Worship. This could be followed by a time of stillness and worship. After this Friends could share an activity – painting spoons for example. Then there could be a Russian style tea and money could be collected to help Friends House Moscow. Think about inviting people of all ages from other churches, faiths or ecumenical groups. For details of how to donate money go to: http://www.friendshousemoscow.org.uk/how_to_support_fhm1.htm

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Contact:
Bevelie Shember,
CYP Staff Team,
Friends House,
173 Euston Road,
London NW1 2BJ

Phone:
020 7663 1013

Email:
bevelies@quaker.org.uk

Website:
www.quaker.org.uk/cyp