

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 16

June 2008

Children



This children's work edition for 5 –12 year olds comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children 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 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.



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

Prayer

Getting ready Preparing Hearts & Minds

What do you understand prayer to be? How do you do it? Is it for the benefit of the Divine, other people or ourselves? How can you enable children to gain an understanding of what prayer is?

Prayer is not about reciting the correct words, so we should not be seeking to equip children with a vocabulary of prayer suitable for childhood. Children are deeply spiritual. An American Quaker educator and writer, Dr Parker Palmer, describes children's spirituality as a 'shy wild animal'. What do we need to do to encourage this 'shy wild animal' to show itself? Perhaps we can nurture it by befriending it, enticing it out and encouraging it to trust us.

Children need to know that their relationship with God, however they choose to understand it, is special, personal and private. Children learn best when they are doing and when they feel they belong. Children are made for praying. They are curious, being full of enthusiasm and have a sense of awe and wonder. We should seek to involve them in prayerful activities. These activities should be low-key, encouraging children's participation, not just in the doing but also in the initiation and implementation. Prayerful activities should be non-threatening and fun. Children should not be told that they aren't doing it properly. We should take care not to impose or to be too prescriptive, but instead should endeavour to create situations that enable wondering.

We may not know the answers about prayer. That is OK. Trust and trusting is a quality of childhood that needs to be acknowledged and remembered.

Equipment needed

You should check for the equipment needed for the various activities, these are stated within the sections and on the additional sheets.

Underpinning references

Helping children to pray and thus develop spiritually gives them the opportunity to become open minded, flexible, contemplative and open to relational consciousness. This is the basis for a moral society.
Dr David Hay

Prayer, springing from a deep place in the heart, may bring healing and unity as nothing else can.

Quaker Faith and Practice
1.02.10

Prayer must never become pejorative, judgemental or behaviour linked.

Archbishops' Council of the Church of England 2006

Quaker Faith and Practice:
2.20, 2.26 and 2.25

Gather

Begin with a time of quiet. Suggest that each child and adult present that wishes to, shares something about themselves or what they have done in the last week. You might ask 2 children to be the elders of this time, they should ensure that everyone has had the chance to speak and end the time when they are ready.

Play the song 'The Understanding Tree' from Walt Disney's Friends Forever Winnie the Pooh album. You can obtain this by downloading it from www.tesco.co.uk go to entertainment then music downloads and search for Winnie the Pooh. It is song 9 on the Friends Forever album and costs 79p to download. If it's a nice day and your meeting house has a garden, you could go outside and listen to the song while standing under a tree. Ask the children to listen closely to the words. Afterwards in quiet ask the children to think of the place where they feel safe and understood. Any who want to could share their places.

Engage

Thinking about what prayer might be

For older children: Read the poem on additional sheet 16.A. Read it slowly. Afterwards explain that the writer scribbled these words on an envelope while riding on a bus. Ask them to choose a title from 'silence', 'words', 'prayer', 'thinking', 'meditation' or 'stillness'. Handout used envelopes and ask them to write down their thoughts – their own poem maybe – in just a few minutes in relation to the title they have chosen. Encourage those who want to, to read out their words and the others to listen very carefully.

For younger children: Show the children the picture on additional sheet 16.A. Ask the group to share their thoughts in relation to the following:

- I wonder what you think is going on in the picture
- I wonder how you think the person feels
- I wonder when you might feel like this
- I wonder what you think might happen next

Accept all responses and be prepared to ask the questions again gently if there is no response. Leave quiet in between responses.

Listening, speaking and reflecting

Pose the following questions and encourage a discussion around them:

- ❖ Why do you think that people pray?
- ❖ What might people do when they pray?
- ❖ What do you think is necessary to do in order to pray?

Suggest that prayer requires us to listen, to speak and to reflect. Do the activity as on additional sheet 16.A. Afterwards come back together and say that we have listened, spoken and reflected. Ask people how it felt to be praying.

Magic?

State that prayer is not a magic wand, a list of 'I want....' that will then magically happen. But maybe there is some magic in prayer..... Ask everyone present (including yourself) to think of a person or a situation that they have a concern about. Invite them to draw, write or doodle about what they are thinking about, reassuring everyone that they will not have to show this to anyone else. Now ask them to think about what they can do to make a difference to the person or situation. Invite them to write, doodle or draw, what they have thought they could do on the same piece of paper. Make the point that the magic of prayer is that it might change the person who is praying so that they can make a difference.

Quotes from Quaker Faith and Practice

Prayer is an act of sharing with God, and not an attempt to prompt God to action. It is a promise that I will do my best even if what I am able to do seems too insignificant to be worthwhile.

When I pray for peace, it is a promise that I shall do such things as write to those in power. When I pray for others who are in need, it is a promise to make my own contribution, perhaps by writing, by visiting, by a gift, by telling someone whom I know could help.

When I pray for forgiveness, I try to open my heart, making it possible for me humbly to receive.

Quaker Faith and Practice: 2.27

God does not do things for us – he enables us to do things for ourselves.

Quaker Faith and Practice: 2.28

Whenever we intercede in prayer we must be prepared for an answer that places a practical obligation upon us.

Quaker Faith and Practice: 2.29

Other quotes

Sometimes I pray – I focus on one person in my thoughts and hold them in my light, loving them from the centre of my heart.

'Who do you think we are?'

Extract from Section F6 Swarthmore lecture 1998

Do you see Divinity as immanent – as here and now in me and in you and in the world? If godde is truly immanent, doesn't that give us a lot of responsibility? We are truly their 'hands and feet'. All the more reason for listening very carefully to the still small voice inside.

'Who do you think we are?'

Extract from Section F18 Swarthmore lecture 1998

See *'Whispers of Faith', the Triangle of God page 14 and Talking with God page 79.*

Available to borrow through the Quaker Life Resources Room

'Prayer is not only a communication with God, but also a reaching out to other people and a communication with that of God in others.'

'Whispers of Faith' - Prayer.

Pages 20 - 22

Respond

Prayerful activities

There are 16 suggested prayerful activities on additional sheets 16.B and 16.C. Set up your room with these activities placed around the room. Or alternatively set up a space outside with the activities placed around. Whichever, take care to set up a space that looks attractive and neat. For each activity put the name of the activity on a card, have the resources needed ready and have the instructions alongside, stuck onto a piece of card if possible. You may want to choose just some of the activities rather than using them all. Maybe ask a couple of the children to come early to help you set up the space.

Tell the children that for the next period of time they will have the chance to take part in a variety of activities that involve them being quiet and still. Maybe do a run around game with the children before embarking on the prayerful activities.

Ask the children to choose an activity to start at, or you might ask each child to start at a particular number. If possible have each child starting at a separate activity. Have a specified time for the children to be at an activity, maybe 90 seconds or 2 minutes (not too long). Then play a piece of music for 30 seconds while the children choose the next activity to go to or find next activity number. During the activity it is important for everyone to be quiet. Children should be encouraged to move quietly between each activity. Each time playing the music is the indication that time is up and everyone should move to a new activity. All adults present should join in the activities so that the children do not feel that they are being watched. Remember children who find reading hard will need to be helped at the start of each activity time.

Continue until all the activities have been done or the children have had enough. Maybe play a loud run around game afterwards (see links to other resources).

Prayer tree

Bring in some small branches of a tree with lots of twigs on and arrange them nicely in a vase. Cut out some people shapes on paper or card, different colours if possible. Thread a piece of wool through a hole on each person shape. On one side of each figure ask the children to write the name of a family member, a friend or someone in the meeting. On the other side suggest that they write any special needs that the person has or just something about that person. They might like to decorate their shape. When they have finished they should hang their person on the tree. Each child could do more than one figure. When everyone has finished, place the vase somewhere prominent, perhaps on the meeting house table. State that this represents people who are special to us.

Prayer walk

Take your whole group outside for a prayer walk. Stop at intervals to ask the children what they can see, hear, smell or touch. Be aware of your surroundings. Encourage children to think about things that may concern them, such as safety, pollution or environmental issues.

It is a good idea to plan your route beforehand if you are leaving the meeting house, be especially aware of safety issues and remember to seek parents' permission.

Prayer flags

See additional sheet 16.D for some information about prayer flags and ideas of how to engage children with prayer flags.

Reflect

Give each child a circle of paper and ask them to fold it in half and then fold the half circle into thirds. They should then cut out small pieces of the sides of their folded paper. When every one has done this, they carefully unfold their paper in turn to reveal the shape that they have created. Encourage the children to compare all the different patterns.

Point out that no two shapes are identical. This is the same as snowflakes. Microscopes have shown that each snowflake is made up of tiny six sided ice crystals and that no two crystals are the same.

Point out that no two people are identical either, each of us is unique – even twins are quite different. Stress to each of the children that they are unique and special – maybe have a small gift for each of them. Also state that each of us has a special and unique relationship with God, however we choose to understand the Divine – whichever word or name we use.

Ongoing activity

This activity continues the link with this year's Yearly Meeting of the last four that happened in May. Some of the 7 – 11 year olds in the Under 19s Programme helped with the design and content of a new children's guide to Quaker meeting. The old one is now out of date. It would be great to have the ideas and thoughts of as many other children as possible. See *Sheets 16.E & F for some ways to do this.*

Review

This is not a curriculum. It is offered as a collection of ideas that it is hoped will spark off other ideas and processes right for your children and your meeting. It is useful to reflect on the session to see what went well and why, to see if there is anything to learn from the session and what might have been done differently. It is also good practice to keep simple records of the session. Such a review can happen at the time or later – it maybe by yourself or with others. Some useful questions 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 prayer? What is there for you to learn from this session about prayer? What might you do differently another time?

Links to other organisations and resources

Quaker Life Resources Room: www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - see below for contacts
Kids Essence: interactive sessions to encourage children to explore their spirituality, drawing from the teachings of Jesus and the Christian mystics, published by Kingsway ISBN 1-84291-1093-7, includes a session on prayer
Prayer flags links: www.tibetanprayerflag.com ; www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibetan-prayer-flag ; www.festivalshop.co.uk ; www.westwindflags.com
Games books: Golden Hours ISBN 1-903855-25-X New Youth Games book ISBN 1-898924-00-7

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Edited by Chris Nickolay who also wrote the ongoing activity.

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The Journeys in the Spirit issues in this series focussing on the spiritual practices and insights of Friends, are intended to offer children and adults opportunities to develop experience, awareness and knowledge. The activities outlined are intended to be diverse and multi-age.

All Age Worship

Maybe the children could organise an all age worship session for the whole meeting. The prayerful activities might form the basis for this. The children could organise these in different parts of the meeting house for people to participate in. This time could be preceded by the poem activity in Engage and followed by the tree activity in Respond. This would make an hour's all age session.

The next children's work edition of Journey's in the Spirit

Issue 17 is on Israel and Palestine and out on July 1st. Issue number 18 will be on Quaker process and available from August 1st, then issue 19 on Serbia is out on Sept. 1st.

Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 16.A

Engage

Thinking about what prayer might be

For older children

WORD

I, who live by words, am
wordless when

I try my words in prayer. All
language turns

To silence. Prayer will take my words
and then

Reveal their emptiness. The stifled voice
learns

To hold its peace, to listen with the heart
To silence that is joy, is adoration.

The self is shattered, all words torn apart
In this strange patterned time of
contemplation

That, in time, breaks time, breaks
words, breaks me,

And then, in silence leaves me
healed and mended.

I leave returned to language, for I see

Through words, even when all

Words are ended,

I, who live by words, am
wordless when

I turn to pray

Listening, speaking and reflecting

Clear a space inside or if it is a nice day go to an appropriate space outside.

Invite the children to lie down and for one to two minutes listen to whatever is in their head.

Then ask them to walk around for one to two minutes thinking about the things that concern them in their lives. This might be in relation to their friends and family, in their neighbourhood or in the world.

Finally suggest that they stand very still for one to two minutes and think about what they did yesterday, what they are doing today and what they will do tomorrow.

By Madeleine L'Engle from 'Lines scribbled on an envelope while on the 104 bus'. Agents: McIntosh and Otis, New York. (Taken from 'Enjoy the Silence' M & D Robbins 2005).

**Thinking
about
what
prayer
might be**

*For
younger
children*



Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 16.B

Respond

Prayerful activities



Title	Resources needed	Instructions to put out
1. Busyness	A diary and a calendar	Take a look at the diary and the calendar. Sometimes we are too busy. Take a moment to think about what is important to you each day, think about the things that you have to do in the next few days.
2. The world	A globe	Look at the globe – which places do you recognise? Think for a moment about any parts of the world that you've heard are going through difficult times.
3. Thumb prints	An ink pad and paper	Place your thumb in the ink pad and then make a print on the paper – do it again if you like. No one else has a thumb print like you – you are unique. Look at your thumb print, no one else is just like you – think about that for a moment.
4. Wind	A fan plugged in and turned on	Sit by the fan. Feel the breeze on your face. We cannot see the breeze but we can feel it. We cannot see God's Spirit, but spend a moment thinking about whether you sometimes feel it. Enjoy the breeze.
5. Friends	Chocolate	Take some chocolate and eat it. Think about the last time you ate with your friends. Who were they? Think about your good friends for a moment until the taste of the chocolate has gone (then have some more!).
6. Water	Some chilled bottles of water	Take a gulp of water, feel it going down inside you, cool and fresh. Pause for a moment and think about those who survive without clean and fresh water.
7. News	A newspaper	Have a look through the newspaper. Choose a story that reflects sadness, pain or hurt. Think about those involved and imagine a better situation for them.
8. Senses	An oil burner and some scent	Concentrate really hard on what you can hear, touch, smell and see. Which of your senses do you like the best? Why?

Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 16.C

Respond

Prayerful activities (continued)

Title	Resources needed	Instructions to put out
9. Us	A mask or two	Place the mask on your face, or just look at it. A mask hides our true look from others. What things about yourself do you hide from others? Why are you sometimes not able to be yourself?
10. Time	A clock	Watch time going by. How much time do you spend being quiet each day? How much time do you have just for you? How much time do you have for others?
11. Family	Some 'Allsorts' sweets	Take a sweet (or two) and eat it if you like. Our families are made up of a variety of different people. Think about your family. Focus on each individual. Which of the sweets are they like? How about you?
12. Art	Coloured pens and paper	What do you feel happy about? Use the pens and paper to express your worship to God.
13. Breath	A balloon	If you like, blow up the balloon. What is in the balloon when it is blown up? Another word for Spirit is Ruach, which literally means breath. Without your breath the balloon is lifeless. Think about how God's Spirit can breathe life into you.
14. Fruit	Some grapes	Take and eat a grape (or two) if you like. Eat them slowly. Notice how sweet and refreshing they are. Grapes are the fruit from vines. If you were a vine what would your fruit look like, would it be sweet and refreshing? Think about this for a moment.
15. Links	Jenga game	Look at the bricks in front of you. Take a brick and add it to the structure being careful not to knock any bricks off. Your brick is part of the building. It is individual but relies on the other bricks. Think about yourself and your relationships with others.
16. Doing good	Some ready salted crisps	If you like take a crisp and eat it. Taste the salt. Salt was used to preserve food. What good can you do for others today? What about tomorrow?

Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 16.D

Respond

Prayer Flags



Blessings on the breeze

Buddhist prayer flags are a distinctive and colourful feature of the landscape of Tibet, often found strung along mountain ridges and peaks in the Himalayas.

There are two distinct types of prayer flags:

1. Dar-ding: these are long strings of flags hoisted horizontally between trees or pillars with five coloured flags kept in the following sequence. Yellow, green, red, white and blue. Each colour representing one of the five elements earth, water, fire, cloud and sky respectively.
2. Darchen: these are narrow flags flown vertically on a pole and can be hoisted outside homes.



These colourful flags are printed with text and images e.g. a horse representing good fortune, a tiger symbolizing wood/air and a snow lion symbolizing earth. As they blow in the wind this releases the mantras on them to benefit the world.

Prayer Flag Activities

- Buy some prayer flags to look at with the children. Ask everyone to touch and look closely at them. Encourage careful handling of the prayer flags, try to instill a sense of respect as they are filled with special images and prayers. Prayer flags are available to buy online at www.festivalshop.co.uk and www.tibetanprayerflag.com
- Make some Dar-ding prayer flags. Use cloth or paper rectangles. Encourage the children and adults in your group to draw images and write down situations and people that they want to pray for on their flag. String your flags up across the room paying attention to the sequence of colours used (see above). If the weather is suitable you could string them up outside and watch them blowing in the breeze as your prayers are released. If indoors perhaps you could use an electric fan to blow the flags. Take the string of prayer flags in to the main meeting to share.
- Make Darchen flags (individual flags). Use cloth or paper rectangle and green garden sticks to attach them to. Decorate the flags with prayers and symbols as above. When everybody has made a flag, stand or sit in a circle around a bowl of soil (earth), a bowl of water, a candle (fire), cotton wool (cloud) and a blue scarf (sky). Play some ambient music e.g. Biosphere:Nature sounds, the Concert of the Earth, wind and waves (track 3). This can be downloaded from www.bignoismusic.com Oxfam's music website. Wave your flags gently during the music. While the music plays encourage everyone to think about the situations and people represented on the flags. When the music has finished, invite any who so wish to share what they have been thinking about. To draw or write on materials, use fabric pens, - available from craft shops (such as Hobbycraft) or fabric shops.



Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 16.E Ongoing activity A new child's guide to Quaker Meeting

Here is what was in the last leaflet. Children helped to write it. Ask questions like: 'I wonder - what do you want to go in a new leaflet or even a web page about Quaker children's meeting?'

'I wonder - what do you want to tell other children about Quaker meeting?' Talk about the old leaflet – show the photos as below. Use the space on *Sheet 16.F* to send in children's ideas to Quaker Life.



Front page: What happens in a Quaker meeting for worship?

When you come to the Quaker meeting house there will probably be someone to say hello to you. When you go into meeting for worship with the adults it will be for 10 or 15 minutes. This will be before or after your children's meeting for worship. When you join everyone, go into the meeting room quietly and sit down, be still and make yourself comfortable.



Inside left hand page: What are people doing in meeting?

☆Thinking? ☆ Praying? ☆ Worrying? ☆ Remembering? ☆ Sleeping?

The adults will sit quietly in meeting for about 1 hour. It ends when people shake hands. Sometimes people will feel want to speak, read or pray in the meeting – this is called *ministry*. Just listen if they do. Meeting for worship is a time for us to think about God, to listen to God and to feel God. We sit together sharing the quiet and the stillness with other people in the room.

Inside right hand page:

What can you do in the quiet? You could.....

Sit still – count to 10 slowly – think about a beautiful animal or bird or a place.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Sit still and straight – listen – what can you hear? Cars? A bird?

Someone breathing? The rain? The wind?

Keep sitting still and count

how many different sounds you can hear. Tell someone after Meeting how many.



Close your hand tightly – now open it slowly, bit by bit – think of a tall tree in the sun, a flower and its petals, giving a friend a present.



Close your eyes for a little bit - be as quiet and still as you can – think about God



Look at each person in the room – what do you notice about them?

What do you think she or he is feeling?

Back page:

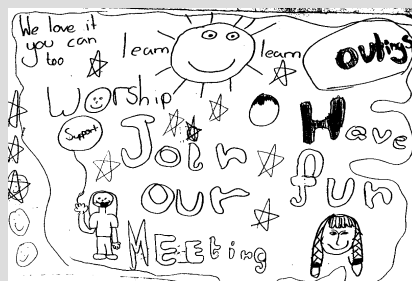
Quakers think that everyone is special. We feel that *there is something of God in everyone*.

Because of this we work to stop wars and violence and bullying.

★ Quakers try to live in ways that do not harm other people or our planet and help other people be kind to each other and our world. We hope you feel the same.

★Lots of Meetings have special children's meetings. There is a lot to do – stories, art, learning about God, being quiet together, games, making things, hearing Quaker stories and helping other people.

★After Quaker Meeting there will probably be drinks and biscuits and a chance to chat with new friends. We hope you liked meeting with us. Please come again.



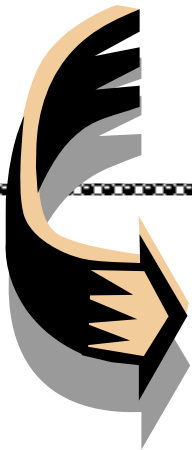
Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 16.E Ongoing activity A new child's guide to Quaker Meeting

What should we tell children about Quaker Meeting and children's meeting? Here is a space to write words, draw pictures or cartoons – ask for help if you need it.



A large rectangular area with a decorative border of small black and white squares, intended for children to write or draw.

Please send any sheets or copies to the CYP address on the back page of this issue. Thank you.