

# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 28

June 2009



Children

## Quakers and the Kindertransport

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

## Getting ready

### The Quakers and the Kindertransport

On 1 December 1938 a train full of children left Berlin. This was the first train of the Kindertransport: the rescue of nearly ten thousand children of Jewish heritage from Nazi-occupied Europe. The trains continued until 1 September 1939, hours before war broke out, and Quakers in Germany and Britain had been instrumental in enabling the rescue to happen. Quakers working in Germany had been invited by Jewish groups to help call for the British government to relax its immigration rules to allow the children to be saved. They had organised for children considered Jewish by the Nazis but not by the Jews – "non-Aryan Christians" – to be included in the rescue. And when many of the children arrived in London, they were given a home by Quaker families.

This edition of Journeys seeks to mark the Quaker role in the Kindertransport, and to tell a largely untold story of courage, generosity, and a welcome to strangers in difficult times.

The full story of the Kindertransport is one of grief and separation as well as hope and kindness. We cannot hope to cover the whole experience of everybody who was rescued. We focus on the difficult flight from danger made by the children, and on the welcome provided to many of them by Quaker families.

There is an online gallery of memories, tributes and personal accounts from people rescued by Quakers, or from people whose family offered sanctuary to rescued children. These are available at [www.quaker.org.uk/kinder](http://www.quaker.org.uk/kinder)

There is more background on *Sheet 28.A* and a map on *Sheet 28.B*.

### Underpinning references

**Quaker Faith & Practice** 1.02.18; 23.

**The Torah:** "Do not wrong a stranger who resides with you in your land. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens: you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

**The Good Samaritan story**

# Gather

On the floor, in the middle of where children's meeting usually gathers set up a toy train set, some cars and maybe a ship. The train doesn't need to be moving – that would be distracting. Everybody settles and gets comfortable and still. After a few moments ask, 'who has been on a journey in a train, a car or a ship? Then ask who was on the journey with them. Wait whilst everyone who wants to has spoken. Then say something like, 'today we are going to hear stories about some children who went on very long journeys, quite dangerous journeys, without mums or dads although maybe with sisters or brothers.' Now say something like, 'let's be still and quiet some more and think about journeys we have been on. If somebody needs to pick up a toy that is alright – just don't encourage it to happen. End the worship by saying thank you.



# Engage

The activities in this section encourage empathy with the children of the Kindertransport. The children are invited to imagine a little of what it must have been like.

We focus on sharing stories: hearing what the Kindertransport children themselves have said, and imagining what we would do in their place. It may be possible to introduce the idea of separation from families. Although the Kindertransport children were being rescued, they were also being forced to leave their families – in many cases forever. Separation is a difficult topic and may not be appropriate for very young children, but touch upon it briefly.

## 1. The children's stories.

*The best thing you can do when you want to know what happened to somebody is to ask them! Last year, some of the men and women who were on one of the Kindertransport trains when they were boys and girls told us their stories, so that we could write them down and save them for people in the future to read. Now we're going to hear some of what they said to us.*

See *Sheet 28.C* for extracts from the stories told to us by the children themselves, seventy years after the events took place. They are numbered in the order that they should be read.

If the children are able, they might like to read one or more extracts each, perhaps in turn. Explain that each is from a different person's story, but that together they show what the Kindertransport rescue was like.

## 2. Kindertransport statues

On *Sheet 28.D* there are pictures of three sculptures to remember Kindertransport. Lay down copies of the pictures and ask children to look at them. Then ask questions like, 'I wonder what you like best about these pictures'; 'I wonder what is most important about them'; 'I wonder if the pictures make you think anything about yourself'. Children could then quietly move to creative activities – drawing, painting, plasticene, clay or writing.

## References & other resources

**Quaker News 69  
(Winter 2008)**  
- pages 6-10



## Quaker Faith and Practice 24.49

"People matter. In the end human rights are about people being treated and feeling like people who matter... The multitude and complexity of the problems of oppression and injustice often seem to overwhelm us. We can do something. Above all we must take risks for God: look around us to the people who need help; listen to those who experience oppression; engage in the mutual process of liberation."

## References & other resources

'When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit', Judith Kerr  
ISBN 0440490170

'Carrie's War', Nina Bawden  
ISBN-10: 0140364560

Other books about children in the Second World War include: 'The Silver Sword', Ian Serraillier.

'Goodnight Mr Tom', Michelle Magorian.

'I am David', Anne Holm.

**Gathered Stories: Commemorating the Kindertransport** - available from Quaker Communications Department in Friends House, London.



- a child's identity card.

## Engage (continued)

### 3. Our own stories.

See *Sheet 28.E*. Say things like: 'Now we've heard a little about what it was like to be escaping on those trains and ferries. If you had been there, and had to run away from home, what would you want to take with you in your suitcase?'

*You might like to write or draw some of the things you would take on this picture of a suitcase. Would you take your favourite toys with you? Is there a book that you like? Or some photographs of your family or friends?'*

After an appropriate time, bring the children together and ask them if they would like to say something about what they have drawn, and to show it to the group. Why did they choose what they did? Was it something practical like an umbrella? Was it something to help them feel safe or 'at home', like a favourite teddy bear or toy? Explore the children's choices and how they reacted to the idea of having to escape from danger to a foreign country, or how they felt about the safety of a new family overseas. Use 'I wonder' questions like: 'I wonder how it would feel to be....'.

## Respond

We will now focus more closely on the Quaker role in the rescue. Having helped to make arrangements for the trains to take so many children to safety, Quakers also took in many of the arriving children, opening up their homes or meeting houses and finding work for the older children, and sometimes for their families.

*Now that we have thought about what it was like to be escaping on those trains, it's time to think about what happened next.*

*When the children arrived in Britain, many of them knew where they were going. Some of them had uncles or aunts or friends in this country. But many didn't know anybody. Quakers helped by giving many of the children a home and looking after them during the war.*

*Earlier on we thought about what it would be like to escape from danger and go overseas to safety. Now let's think about what it was like to welcome the children who escaped.*

### **If the Kindertransport happened today, what do you think our Quaker meeting could do to help new children arriving on the trains?**

Encourage the children to think of as many things as possible that your meeting might do. In 1939, many meeting houses were opened up as temporary hostels where children could stay (perhaps yours was among them!). Some offered English classes or social events. In some Meetings, Friends near to each other offered homes to children who were brothers and sisters, so that they could live close to each other.

**If a child who was a refugee came to live with you, or came to our meeting, or joined your class at school, what might you do to help him or her settle in?** Children might like to think about more personal ways, like being friendly, helping the new child learn English, listening to his or her story, offering to share toys, showing him or her around, or other ways.

You might like to ask the children to produce a "train mural" based on this. *Sheet 28.F* has a picture of a train carriage, which can be photocopied for each child. He or she can colour it in or decorate it, and write above it one thing that he or she would do to welcome a child. Cut the carriages out, add an engine, and post them on the wall to show how many ways the group could provide a welcome, and show how our individual efforts join together as a whole – just as all the separate carriages make up a single train!



## Reflect

In December 2008, a hundred of the men and women who were on those trains when they were boys and girls came to Friends House in London to say “thank you” to the Quakers for helping them to escape and find new lives in the UK.

Lets be still together and think about the thank you that these grown up children gave to us as Quakers. We can all be proud of what Quakers did to help the children.



**Elga Isom (left) with Brenda Bailey** at the Kindertransport event in December 2008 in Friends House. Brenda’s parents helped with Kindertransport from within Germany.

Photo: Karel Choc [maverick\\_97@seznam.cz](mailto:maverick_97@seznam.cz)

## Review

The review can happen at the time or later – it maybe by yourself or with others. Some useful questions for you to use to look back over and learn from the session include:

Have children been able to participate in their own way? Were they able to imagine the Kindertransport from the perspective of the Kindertransportees, as well as thinking about what it might be like to provide a welcome? Did they draw links with refugees in today’s world? Were they able to engage with issues of welcome and sanctuary? What might you learn for another session? What might you do differently?

## Topical activity

Yearly Meeting Gathering theme

The theme of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2009 is: *Creating community, creating connections*. On *Sheet 28.F* there are simple outlines of jigsaw puzzle pieces. To explore a little bit about how everybody in your meeting is connected cut enough jig saw pieces for everybody in the meeting – do some spares. You might want to make them bigger than the example. Have an array of pens and pencils and felt pens on tables and the floor. Ask everybody to write their name or draw themselves on a piece of puzzle. Ask everybody to lay down their puzzle piece so that it joins to four other people’s pieces. When it’s done – it can be noisy and fun – everybody sits and, in stillness, looks at how everybody is connected. End with handshakes.

## Links to other organisations and resources

[www.quaker.org.uk/kinder](http://www.quaker.org.uk/kinder) - links to a page on the BYM website and lots of people’s Kindertransport stories. Make a book of the stories?

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

[www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://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.cityofsanctuary.org](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org) – a Quaker-founded organisation seeking to restore society’s sense of duty to provide a secure welcome to refugees in the UK.

This issue was written by Paul Peros in Quaker Communications Department and edited by Chris Nickolay who also wrote the topical activity.

Next children’s issues of *Journeys in the Spirit* are: Issue 29, July 1<sup>st</sup> - stories of Quakers in Russia; Issue 30, August 1<sup>st</sup> - stories of Quaker concern for animals; Issue 31, September 1<sup>st</sup> - stories of Quaker work in Burundi.

### Further ideas:

Today, the countries that made the Second World War are at peace. But there are still refugees. People have to escape from wars around the world, from disease, from disasters like earthquakes or floods.

What could your meeting do all together about asylum seekers and refugees? Are there ways to particularly help children who are held in detention?

Is there a detention centre near your Meeting or a campaign you could connect with?

The meeting as a whole could share these questions or they could be talked about and worked on in adult and children’s meetings and thoughts and possible actions and activities shared.

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# Journeys in the Spirit



## Children

Sheet 28.A

Getting Ready

The story behind the Kindertransport

Nearly a hundred years ago, all the countries of Europe went to war with one another and the fighting spread all around the world. On one side were Britain, France and Italy. On the other were Germany, Turkey, and a country called Austria-Hungary. These countries lost the war and had to pay many millions of pounds in compensation. This war is known as the First World War.

In the years which followed, all of Europe – the countries that won, as well as those that lost – fell on very difficult times. There had been a lot of destruction and disease. People were very poor. There weren't enough jobs for everybody and even food became scarce.

In Germany, people felt that they had been punished too harshly for fighting in the First World War, and in 1933 a man called Adolf Hitler came to power. He promised to restore Germany's strength and wealth. He blamed the Jews for what had happened to Germany. Jewish people stood out in Germany not because of their appearance, but because of their religion, and Hitler's government began to persecute them. Even if you had one Jewish grandparent, you would have been in danger.

During one night in November 1938, Jewish homes and businesses were attacked, and it became clear that Jewish people were in great danger. Jewish community leaders in London turned to another group of people who were already known for giving help to those in trouble: the Quakers.

In just three weeks, the Quakers helped the Jewish leaders to make arrangements for hundreds of trains to take many thousands of children away from the areas of Europe where they were in danger. They helped to persuade the British government to allow the children in. They raised money to pay for their travel and entry to Britain.

If your parents were Jewish, they wouldn't have been allowed to see you off at the station. So Quakers were there to help the children get on to the right trains and to wave them off. Some travelled with them. And in London, many Quakers gave the children a new home.

Although many of the children never saw their parents again, the Quakers helped to give ten thousand children the chance of safety and a new life in Britain.

**The yellow star Jews were made to wear**



Children around Menorah candelabra



Inside a synagogue

# Journeys in the Spirit



## Children

Sheet 28.B

Engage

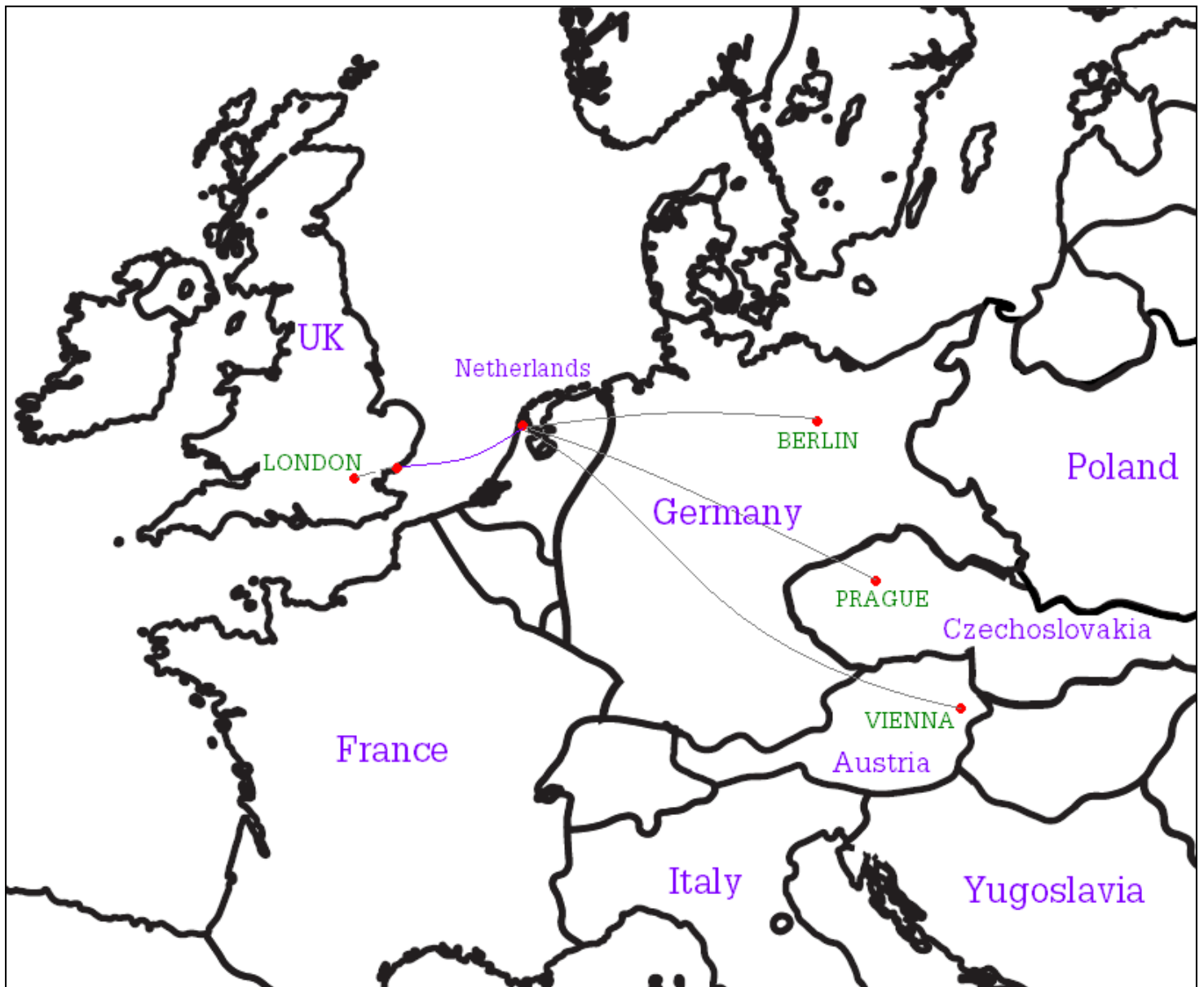
The Kindertransport journey

The children of the Kindertransport travelled thousands of miles to safety, from Berlin in Germany, Vienna in Austria and Prague in what was then called Czechoslovakia, as well as other cities across Nazi-occupied Europe.

For most, the trains took them from their home countries to a port in the Netherlands called Hook-of-Holland, and there they caught ferries which took them to Harwich in Essex.

After reaching Harwich they travelled, again by train, to London's Liverpool Street Station.

This map shows how far they came – and how far they were from home.



# Journeys in the Spirit



## Children

Sheet 28.C

Engage

Kindertransport stories

1 “I was born in Berlin. My parents were Jewish. I felt no different from my German friends. At Christmas we had a Christmas tree and we had Easter eggs at Easter.”

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2 “I left in March 1939, aged 15. I and many other children boarded a train that was going to Great Britain. It was a children’s train taking Jewish children to safety in England. My father was Jewish but not my mother, but we were in danger.”

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3 “It was the Quakers, looking after children like me, who secured places on the trains for children of Jewish descent or from mixed marriages.”

---

4 “We crowded to the carriage window and caught our last glimpse of our loving parents.”

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5 “We breathed a sigh of relief when we crossed the German border into Holland and were welcomed with warm milk and white bread rolls.”

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6 “The train stopped somewhere in the Netherlands in the evening, and we all got out to sleep in the village hall. Local people made us welcome and gave us a meal.”

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7 “We boarded a ferry from a place called Hook of Holland. For most of us it was the first time we had ever seen the sea.”

---

8 “I lost my teddy bear overboard on the sea journey, but we arrived safely in Harwich.”

---

9 “Then we were put on another train, which brought us to Liverpool Street station in London.”

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10 “My guardians were waiting for me at Liverpool Street station.”

---

11 “It was a big culture shock – different attitude, different food, a different way of life.”

---

12 “I am full of admiration for the Quakers for the part they played in organising the escape of so many children. Without their help, escape would not have been possible.”

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# Journeys in the Spirit

## Children



Sheet 28.D

Engage

Three Kindertransport statues



In Vienna station.



In Friends House, London.



In Liverpool Street Station, London.



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 28.E Engage

Our own stories – a suitcase



# Journeys in the Spirit

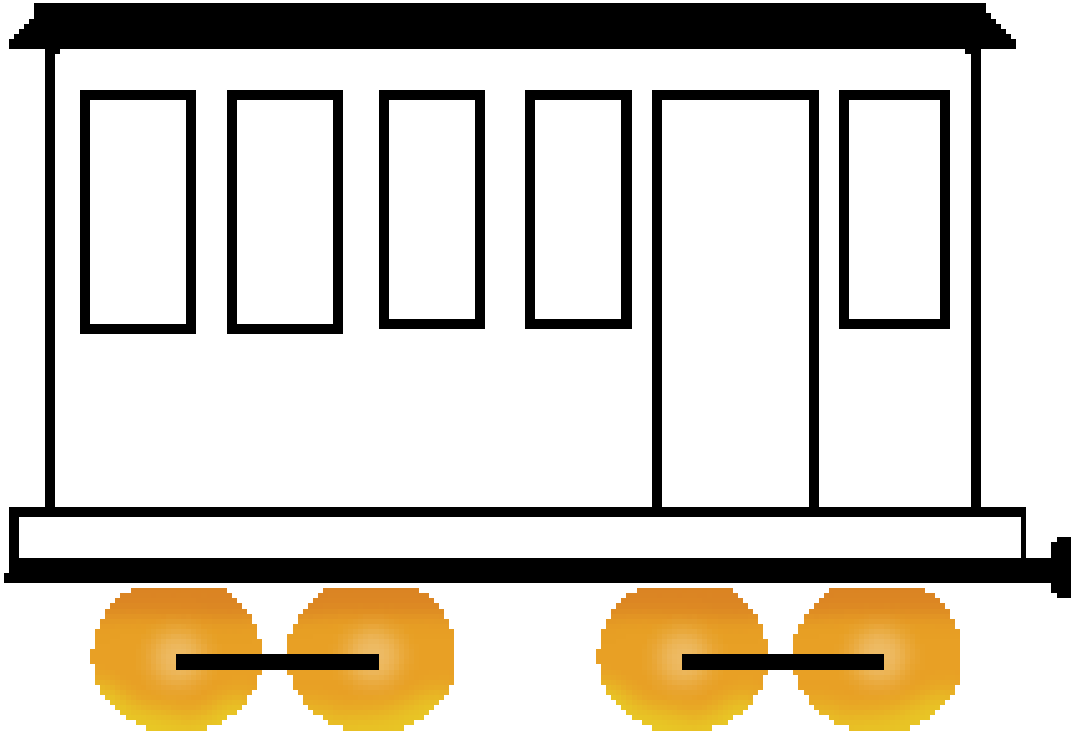


Children

Sheet 28.F

Respond

Welcoming new people



Topical activity

How do we connect?

