

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 9 November 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. 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.



An introduction to the series exploring: Quakers: a people of God: being and doing

An introduction to: Quakers: a people of God: being and doing. Getting ready

Preparing Hearts & Minds

This introduces a new series running from now and through 2008. Issues will alternate between offering ways for children's meeting to explore Quaker work and Quaker spirituality. Journeys in the Spirit is always about equipping children and adults to explore being Quaker. This series will offer opportunities to dig deeper into what Quaker being and doing means.

Chuck Fager, in presentations to Canadian Yearly Meeting 1997, suggests that, "...the Religious Society of Friends is a people raised up to bear witness to the universality of the divine light in all, and the priority of the spirit and the truth as the basis of religion over forms, hierarchies and doctrines". He also suggests that "A people of God is different from a society, a community, a family, a movement or a revival although they might all describe aspects of what we do...". (See side bar for how to obtain these presentations.) . In older language, "The kingdom of heaven did gather us all in a net, and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in." Frances Howgill Quaker 1663.

Some years ago a small group of children, with adults, from an isolated Quaker Meeting, visited Friends House in London. They picnicked in the garden, toured the building and then, when they met Quaker peace work staff, something happened. On the faces of some there was fascination, interest and, also, it seemed, recognition – 'I could do that'. Faces were alight. This is as an example of experiencing being part of **a** people of God. It involves feeling, sensing, calling and belonging - personally and corporately; child or adult. It is not about arrogance of belief or certainty of being **the** people of God. This sense leads to some form of doing – tiny or big to the eye; the measure isn't about scale.

Underpinning references

'Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.'

Issued by a meeting of elders at Balby, 1656 – in the Introduction to Quaker Faith and Practice.

The Bible: John Ch.15 verses 16 – 19.

'Quakerism is not just a faith but a way of being in the world. A central tenet of Quakerism is the importance of having our lives be an expression of our testimonies. our lives - our choices and our interactions in the world - tell who we really are.' Introduction to 'Lives that speak' published by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Chuck Fager presentations to Canadian Yearly Meeting from: <http://quaker.org/quest/peoplehood-1.htm>

Gather

Invite everyone to come and sit in a circle. Light a candle. In the middle of your circle, around the candle, have 1 or 2 footballs, some tennis balls, a couple of bats or rackets of different sizes and 1 or 2 shuttlecocks. Ask everybody to close their eyes and think about one of the things in the middle of their circle – a ball, a bat, a racket, a shuttlecock. Now ask everybody to imagine standing (or sitting), just about to hit or kick a ball or shuttlecock – if football suggest taking a penalty, if tennis or badminton suggest taking the serve. Ask each person to breathe in and out slowly as they imagine standing or sitting and just hold their breath for a moment before getting a picture in their imagination of kicking or hitting the ball or shuttlecock. Everybody opens his or her eyes, the candle is blown out and you could then spend some time, if possible, in a garden playing with the balls, bats and shuttlecocks before coming back in for an Engage activity.

Engage

1. A people of God: 'I am a Quaker' or 'I like Quakers' because...:

Start a conversation with your group by asking everybody to answer the question, 'I am a Quaker because...' and/or 'I like Quakers because...'. This can be a simple 'go round' or there could be more of a discussion in which people can ask each other questions to find out more about what has been said. *This links to the first Respond Activity.*

2. Being: 'On sitting still' – a story by Mary Test. See *Sheets 9.A and 9.B*. This writing is a mixture of accessible and more complex ideas – it is offered as an example of a way into enabling people of any age to think about and be part of stillness, waiting and worship.

- Ask everybody to make themselves comfortable and settled on a chair, a cushion or the floor and get ready for a story.
- Introduce this by saying that this story was first in a book more than 50 years ago and the Quaker who wrote it, Mary Test, who lives in America, was happy for it to be told to people in our Quaker meetings in Wales, Scotland and England – her hundredth birthday was happening the same week that this *Journeys in the Spirit* was sent out.
- Tell the story slowly and carefully – it should take about 10 minutes at most. At the completion of the telling of the story use these questions to help exploration of the experiences, issues, and ideas it raises:

- I wonder which part of this story you liked the most?
- I wonder which part of the story you liked the least?
- I wonder if there is part of the story that you could leave out and still have all the story that you need?
- I wonder if there is part of this story that is in you or that you are in?

Offer time for people to answer – don't expect everyone to contribute.

Resources: Sheet 9.A, card, scissors and glue sticks and a comfortable space.

3. Doing: Peacebuilders - 20 ways to build world peace.

Print or write out and cut up the '20 ways to build world peace' on *Sheet 9.C*. Tell the group that everybody can be a peacebuilder – sometimes children can show adults the way. One at a time, reading each out loud, lay the words on the floor or table, whichever you use. Invite children to read and lay out words. When they are all laid down, say each one again, pointing to each in turn. Ask if anyone has any questions or is not sure what each one means; the group can help. Ask which one people like the most – have spares available. Encourage people to pick up the one or ones they like. Ask what it is people like about their choice. *Resources: Two sets of copies of words from Sheet 9.C, scissors.*

References & other resources

'We have wondered whether there is anything Quakers today can say as one. After much struggle we have discovered that we can proclaim this: there is a living God at the centre of all, who is available to each of us as a present teacher at the very heart of our lives. We seek as people of God to be worthy vessels to deliver the Lord's transforming word, to be prophets of joy who know from experience and can testify to the world, as George Fox did, 'that the Lord is at work in this thick night'. **Young Friends from 35 countries 1985 North Carolina**

'Peacebuilders' is a programme developed by the Methodist and United Reformed Church in partnership with churches in India. There are activities and programmes run in local churches – this could be a way for children from different groups to meet up and share what they do.

www.peacebuilders.info/

References & other resources

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

The Bible: Isaiah
Ch.11 vs. 6 - 9



On sitting still



The peacebox idea on the website www.peacebuilders.info/ could be an excellent outreach and ecumenical children's activity. Order copies of the Peacebuilders booklet free from the website – lots of games, ideas, readings and background.

Respond

1. A people of God: 'I am a Quaker' or 'I like Quakers' because...:

- On *Sheet 9.D* there are templates for a simple card. Print or copy these onto card, cut them into strips and fold into little cards. Alternatively print them onto paper, stick them onto card and cut and fold into little cards.
- Have enough cards for each child to use when they talk with one or two adults in the meeting and one for themselves.
- Arrange with meeting as a whole for an all age meeting or for older Friends to visit children's meeting when children can talk with them about 'I am a Quaker because' or 'I like Quakers because...'. Children or the older Friends could write in the card – that will depend on the confidence and ability of each child and the older Friend. When discussing the idea at a business or Preparative meeting talk about this as a way to share and explore spiritual journeys, accompanying each other in simple ways.
- Display the cards on a table or wall in the meeting house under the title, 'I am a Quaker' or 'I like Quakers'.
- Everybody in Children's Meeting can complete their cards after the conversation and a display can be started.

Resources: Card, paper, pens and pencils glue sticks.

2. Being: 'On sitting still'.

- When you know that you are going to tell this story think about the range of creative and art materials in your meeting house or children's room. Before your session begins make an array of materials around the children's room or space of good quality things like: 'playdoh' or clay, felt pens, pencils, crayons, oil pastels, glitter, sequins, white and coloured paper, card, coloured tissue paper, scissors, glue sticks, PVA glue, glue brushes, gold and silver pens, picture books with related pictures, fabric pieces and anything you particularly like.
- After the 'wondering conversation' that follows the story ask everybody what materials they would like to use to make or do something about what they have felt, know, heard or said; describe, briefly and without direction, what is available. Remember to finish with enough time for reflection but remember that response time after the story is crucial; if there is any work that is incomplete it can be taken away for finishing or completed at another time. Don't hurry. The work that is done should be seen as personal rather than for display.

3. Doing: Peacebuilders - 20 ways to build world peace.

- Suggest that people work in pairs on making a peace mobile – see *Sheet 9.E*. Some may need help with the thinking and working out what to do. The task is to make simple pictures, shapes or cut out word patterns to hang on a mobile to represent which of the 20 ways each person liked the most. If people think of other ways they can be added. This can then be talked about in notices at the end of main meeting for worship and may be something some children want to talk about at school in 'news' or 'circle time'.

4. Friendly biscuits.

Recently we asked for feedback from Friends, older and younger, using or engaging with Journeys in the Spirit in Meetings. One younger person said that they really liked making biscuits with a particular Friend in their meeting and could they make more. This simple act seemed to encompass sharing and shared purpose, companionship across the ages, tasty food, community, kindness and belonging. It became an important memory of encounter. These were the magical ingredients, the practical ingredients can be found on *Sheet 9.E*.

Reflect

Come back together as a circle. Ask each person to say one thing that they have enjoyed and one thing that they have learned. Ask what they think it might mean to be a people of God. What is it that Quakers are? What is it that Quakers do? State that in the coming weeks and months, we are going to explore together what Quakers are and what they do and will be thinking more about what it means to be a people of God. Read the last paragraph from 'On sitting still' again to close the session. Alternatively, this could be read in main meeting for worship if your practice is to go in at the end.

Ongoing activity Peace picture

This issue's ongoing activity continues a peace theme. A project to raise money for children's education in Palestine called 'The Art of Peace' was begun by two students from Birmingham University who approached 'Journeys in the Spirit' about ways to involve children in Quaker meetings. The project involves children in the UK and in Palestine drawing about peace and the vision of peace. The artwork is to be exhibited; postcards and calendars will be produced. Using *Sheet 9.F* for drawing, painting or photo collage, children will have the opportunity to:

- Think about peace and what it means to them and encourage appreciation of the safe environment we are living in and that other children don't have.
- To draw about peace and think of ways to achieve peace in Palestine. This may also encourage some children to take an interest in Palestine and what they could do to influence what happens.
- To discover that there are Palestinian people who wish to live peacefully and are striving to make that feeling a reality. *Resources: Sheet 9.F, felt pens, crayons, paints, magazines, scissors, glue sticks, pencils, brushes, gold and silver pens.*

Review

The review can happen at the time or later – it may be 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 being Quaker, being part of the meeting, about themselves? What is there for you to learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

Links to other organisations and resources

The Quaker Life Resources Room can be found via www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - phone or email for resources on the contact details below. The previous series of Journeys in the Spirit can be found at www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - follow the links in the sidebar to Resources and Archive. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has a new website for its children's work with all sorts of good things that they are glad to share; www.pym.org/children Peacebuilders website: www.peacebuilders.info/

This issue was written by Chris Nickolay and edited by Howard Nurden. The ongoing activity was provided by Sandra Ool. We are very grateful to Mary Test and Philadelphia YM for permission to use 'On sitting still'.

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

Available free by subscription.

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

References & other resources

"As it hath pleased the Lord in these latter days, by his spirit and power, to gather a people to himself; and releasing them from the impositions and teachings of men...these have been engaged to meet together for the worship of God in Spirit". **Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 1806**

This issue offers several ways of working in a multi-generational way in your meeting. 'I am a Quaker because..' is quite simple to do; why not also try using 'On sitting still' for an all age meeting for worship?

The next issue of Journeys in the Spirit is an exploration of the quotation from George Fox: 'Walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone'. It will be available from December 1st 2007.

Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 9.A Engage 'On sitting still' – a story by Mary Test



Anyone can wiggle and anyone can make a noise; even the smallest babies do. When you were a few weeks old you were only quiet when you were asleep, and even then you sometimes made queer noises and clenched your tiny fists. All young creatures like to keep moving, as you will remember when you think of a kitten playing ball with a scrap of paper or chasing its own tail. But little animals soon learn that, more important than chasing their tails is the art of sitting perfectly still. They know that often the only way to be safe is to be so quiet no one knows they are there. Have you ever watched a young rabbit on the lawn or field at dusk? He comes out of the shadows and starts across the grass to nibble a few of the lettuce leaves in your garden. But he catches a glimpse of you as you come around the corner

to put away your bike and suddenly he sits as still as a statue, not even twitching an ear. As soon as you have vanished toward the garage he starts slowly hopping again until—bang! The door closes after you, and he "freezes" again. Only when his world is quite still again does he finally dare to cross the grass to the vegetable patch and start his dinner!

Maybe you have read the book or seen a film called *Bambi*, which tells the story of the life of a wild deer in the forest. When Bambi is a little, spotted fawn his mother leaves him alone in the undergrowth while she goes off to eat, and Bambi lies so still that his spots look just like sunshine filtering through the leaves. The American Indians learned to walk through the woods when hunting without stepping on twigs that snap, or crashing into bushes that crackle when they break. The next time you are in the woods you might try to walk silently and you will see how hard it is. And the Indians even learned to paddle their canoes silently so that there was no gurgle or drip from the paddle to warn game of their approach.

Sometimes it seems as if the most wonderful things in the world happen in stillness. Great storms of wind and rain and lightning that destroy houses and forests make tremendous noise, but the most astonishing miracles of creation happen without a sound. Did you ever hear the sun rise in the morning or set at night? Do you hear seeds push up through the earth, or apples grow round and fat?



Do you hear even the faintest rustle when a rosebud opens on a summer morning?

When you go to a shop and buy a new pair of shoes, you find that your feet are bigger than they were the last time, but did you hear them grow? Of course you didn't, but all the time in the silence you are growing, and when you stop to think of it, it is a most wonderful thing.



When we go together to a Quaker Meeting, we must learn to sit still, too, to give our souls inside of us a chance to grow, and to help us to find God. Many people used to think that their gods spoke to them in claps of thunder, or in the roar of forest fires, but the early Hebrews learned that God spoke to them in a "Still, small voice."

We who are Friends sit quietly in Meeting, when nothing seems to be happening, so that we will be able to hear that small voice when it speaks to us. We don't always recognize it when it does speak, but sometimes as we sit quietly watching a patch of sky through the window hoping that an airplane will go past, or swinging our feet just far enough to miss the bench in front of us, something pops into our hearts or into our feelings. "I really *could* be nicer to Johnny (Sally) if I tried, and the next time it is my turn to be helper, I'll choose her (him) to help me and see what happens." Just that way miracles of friendship begin to grow! Or, "Now I know why mother was cross yesterday. She was very tired, and if I had only picked up my pyjamas without being reminded, it would have made her so happy." Or, "I like to look at that man who sits on the facing bench each week. He has such a gentle, quiet face. I wish I could look like that when I grow up. Maybe I can find something in Meeting that will help me to be like him."

(Continued overleaf..)

Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 9.B Engage 'On sitting still' – a story by Mary Test



Even if we can only see the branch of a tree through a nearby window or watch a patch of sunlight on the floor, or hear the insects drone on a warm summer day, we can thank God for the wonderful world he has given us for our home, and make up our minds to thank Him by being more loving every day. So the miracle of love, and God is love, takes root in us.

But let's be clear about it that this is not an easy thing we are setting ourselves to learn. It would be much easier to whisper and giggle with our neighbours than to keep our mouths, hands and feet quiet for perhaps a whole hour at a time. But it is a skill which we can learn with practice just as we learn to swim or ride a bike.

At first it seems as if you could never stay up in the water, doesn't it? Or it seems just as hopeless to balance a bike long enough to catch your breath. But after you have practiced and practiced, falling off the bike until every inch of you hurts, suddenly something happens and you can ride! As you keep at it, you get better and better and then comes the glory of doing something difficult really well. Why did you stick at it so long? Because you wanted more than anything else to know how!

Suppose you try learning to sit still the same way, as a skill to be learned, just as little rabbits and Indians have learned. If you keep on trying each time you go to Meeting it will get easier and easier, and some day you will say, "Why Meeting didn't seem long at all today." And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are one member of a fellowship of girls and boys and men and women near and far, that is growing in understanding of the silence, and that is listening in the silence for the still, small voice of God.

One of the best ways to help us guide our thoughts in Meeting is to say over to ourselves Bible verses that we have learned by heart. An especially beautiful one comes in the Ninety-First Psalm which compares the love of God for us, His children, to the care of a mother bird for her nestlings. The fourth verse reads: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust..."

Often when we see birds in their nests we are standing on the ground and looking up to a high branch or ledge where we see a bundle of twigs with a sharp bill showing on one side and long dark tail feathers on the other. We know the mother bird is keeping her babies warm and safe under her wings even when we can't really see her doing it. But one day we really saw a mother duck covering her babies with her wings, and it happened this way:

We went to the duck pond one evening, but by the time we got there it was nearly dark, and all the birds everywhere were getting ready for bed. A mallard had settled herself comfortably on a flat rock in the middle of the pond, and was waiting quietly for her ducklings to come to her. Ten or more of the little brown babies were swimming happily around her, and we could almost hear them saying, "Just *once* more, please!" Then all at once they began to scramble upon the rocks and hide under her wings, which she had stretched out to make room for them. Just as the last one tucked herself underneath, and we thought they had all gone to bed at last—pop! out came one in front to drop into the water, swim around to her mother's tail and crawl under the wing again. Every time one went under, another popped out in front and the little ducks kept at their game till it was too dark for us to see. But we knew that when the last streaks of light faded from the sky and the stars shone down on the duck pond, all the little ducklings would be safe and warm under their mother's wings. 'He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust'."

Reprinted with permission from Mary C. Test and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

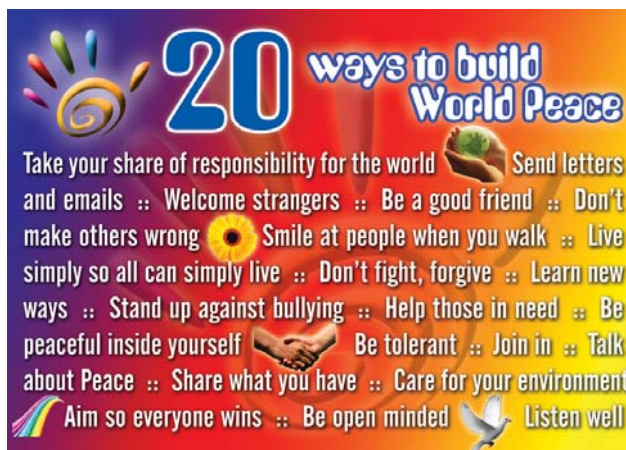


Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 9.C Engage Peacebuilders - 20 ways to build world peace



Copies of this card can be downloaded and printed for everyone from the Peacebuilders website www.peacebuilders.info/

Take your share of responsibility for the world	Send letters and emails	Welcome strangers
Be a good friend	Don't make others wrong	Smile at people when you walk
Live simply so that others can simply live	Don't fight forgive	Learn new ways
Stand up against bullying	Help those in need	Be peaceful inside yourself
Be tolerant	Join in	Talk about peace
Share what you have	Care for your environment	Aim so everyone wins
Be open minded	Listen well	and...

Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 9.D Respond 'I am a Quaker; I like Quakers because..'



Journeys in the Spirit

Children

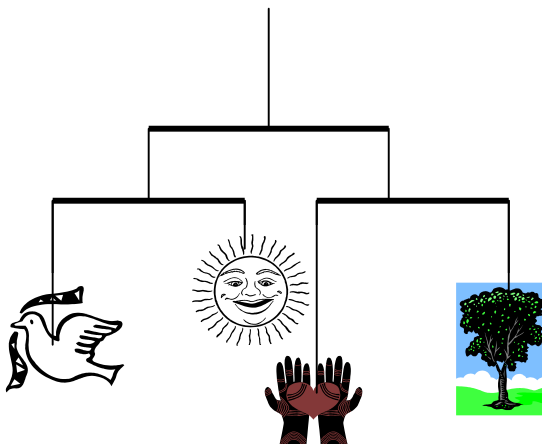


Sheet 9.E Respond Peacebuilders mobile

Making a peace mobile

You will need:

- Paper or card
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Pipe cleaners
- Thread
- Large upholstery needle
- 3 Twigs or green gardening canes (about 1 ft long each)
- Markers or crayons
- Pens, crayons, PVA glue, glitter, sequins, coloured tissue paper etc.



- ❖ Working individually or together everybody draws, cuts out, decorates words, pictures or patterns to represent the peacebuilding ways they have chosen
- ❖ Using a needle, pull a short length of knotted thread through the balancing point of their cut out (near its middle). Tie the other end of the thread to the end of a twig or cane.
- ❖ On the other end of the twig, attach another cut out in the same way.
- ❖ Tie a thread to the middle of this twig and attach it to the end of another twig
- ❖ Attach a cut out to the other end of this twig.
- ❖ Using a short length of thread, attach what you've made to the end of another twig. If you want the twigs to remain horizontal, tie the thread where the mobile will balance (but this is not necessary).
- ❖ Attach a cut out to the other end of this twig.
- ❖ Tie a longer length of thread to the top twig. If you want the twigs to remain horizontal, tie the thread where the mobile will balance (but this is not necessary). You now have a beautiful peacebuilder mobile to hang and display.
- ❖ Practice first!

Respond Friendly biscuits:

- ❖ Have enough plain biscuits for everyone to decorate - Marie or Rich Tea.
- ❖ Lots of 100's and 1000's sprinkles and other cake decorations
- ❖ White icing made from icing sugar and water
- ❖ Enough little bottles of primary food colours – red, yellow and blue – to share
- ❖ 2 bowls and a plate for each person – one for practicing mixing colours (one drop of red is enough for pink!)
- ❖ Teaspoons or small knives or lolly sticks for spreading and mixing icing
- ❖ Possibly aprons
- ❖ Quite simple really – everybody practices mixing colours and then applies icing, sprinkles and other decorations in their own design
- ❖ Make enough to share with meeting and have one for themselves and family not present

Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 9.F Ongoing activity A peace picture.



What does peace look like?

Please send any pictures to: 'Journeys in the Spirit', Children and Young People's Staff Team, Religious Society of Friends, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ