

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 7

September 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.



The third of five issues to focus on the exploration of Quaker Testimonies.

This issue offers ways to explore the testimony to truth and integrity.

Testimonies: Truth and integrity

Getting ready

Preparing Hearts & Minds

Early Friends had a deep sense that they were experiencing Truth in their worship. This same Truth was expressed in their actions and way of life; there was no division between worship and action. The word "Truth" today can have many different meanings; the Quaker testimony to Truth and Integrity refers to Truth in action; it is both inwardly experienced and outwardly expressed. In our everyday lives we come across situations where our inward conviction leads us to speak or act in ways which may be uncomfortable or unpopular. As Friends we are encouraged to follow the promptings of Love and Truth in our hearts. For children too, who usually have a strong sense of justice, there may be situations where they feel they have to act or speak because of that Truth of the heart. We need to encourage them to share these experiences, and to share our own with them, being honest about the fear that might prevent us as well as the special joy that can come from acting out Truth.

Suggested questions for getting ready:

Are my colleagues and I willing to share our own experiences with the children? Are we ready to listen to theirs? Can we be honest about our fears and hesitations when confronted with the challenge of inward promptings? Can we share with the children how we have overcome these? Is everything outwardly prepared for the session? Have I considered the needs of every child likely to attend?

Equipment needed: check for equipment needed in Engage, Respond and Reflect. Bibles or children's Bibles, a copy of *Advices and Queries*, a candle, a talking token, crayons, paper, glue, collage, scissors, some dressing-up clothes and props.

Underpinning references

'Engaging with the Quaker Testimonies- a Toolkit'
Quaker Peace and Social Witness Testimonies
Committee, chapter 2: Truth and Integrity
Available from the Quaker Bookshop

Quaker Faith & Practice 19.34

Advices and Queries 1

The Bible: New Testament
John 14.6

Quaker Faith & Practice 19.61

Gather

Ask one or two children to be elders of children's meeting. Light a candle and sit round it quietly, either on chairs or on the floor. Ask one of the elders if he/she could read *Advices and Queries 1* during the quiet – ask an older and younger person. When the elders think the time is right, use a talking token and everyone in turn, who wants to, says what it feels like in the silence watching the flame.

Resources: a copy of Advices and Queries, a candle and holder, a talking token.

Engage

The best way to engage with the theme of Truth and Integrity is through stories of people who followed their inner calling or responded to Truth. Choose the story or stories that best fit the needs of your group. Think about choosing two – 1 biblical and one other.

1. **The call of Samuel: The Bible 1 Samuel 3.** This story shows how a child sometimes hears a voice inside more clearly than an adult. Samuel heard or felt a hard message - things were wrong in the Temple and in the end he had to say something. Ask everybody if they have a voice inside that they sometimes listen to. Alternatively go straight to Respond Zone 1. Use a talking token if appropriate.

2. **Elijah learns to listen to the still small voice: The Bible 1 Kings 19.v 9-13.** This story tells how Elijah learns about the difference between the still small voice of God and the noisy sounds of the world like earthquake, wind and fire. Relate this to sitting still, listening inside for the still small voice in meeting, and in particular to anything people said about sitting in silence looking at the flame when Gathering. Is it harder when there's a lot of noise? What noises might stop us?

3. **Saul's Conversion: Acts 9 v 1-19.** This story shows how hearing or feeling what he called the voice of Jesus made him change. Saul had been hurting Christians and putting them in prison, but after this experience he stopped and took the Christian message to many countries. What does it feel like when you have to put something right that you've done wrong? Use a talking token if it seems right.

Resources for 1,2 and 3: Bible, children's Bible, text from online or your own version of the story, talking token.

4. **The Children of Reading Meeting.** This story shows how children continued to hold Meeting for Worship when their parents were in prison, and to stand up to the authorities. What does everybody think that must have been like? How would everybody do today if the adults were imprisoned?

Resources: Children of Reading Meeting book, see side bar; Sheet 7.A

5. **The Magic Paintbrush.** This story in poetic form brings out themes of artistic integrity and not selling out or being scared by the powerful. Was Shen right to let the Emperor believe she would paint his tree? Can it be right to tell lies?

Resources: The Magic Paintbrush book, see side bar

6. **Mercury and the Axe by Aesop.** This story shows the consequences of not telling the truth. Use the questions on truth at the end of the story.

Resources: First Stories for Thinking book, see side bar.

References & other resources

Advices & Queries 1

<http://www.kidstalkaboutgod.org> for versions of the Elijah and Samuel stories to use or help you write your own. Look at www.lionhudson.com for a range of bibles for children and young people and a good information leaflet. Reading from a Revised Standard Version, New International or Good News Bible also means children and young people are getting to know the whole book.

Books may be available from the Quaker Bookshop, a local library or bookshop or amazon.co.uk also try Quaker Life Resources Room.

'The Children of Reading Meeting' by Dorothy Shewell and Joanna Forsyth ISBN: 1 900259 11 7

'The Magic Paintbrush' by Julia Donaldson ISBN: 978-0-333-96443-9 (Macmillan Children's Books)

(See side bar on next page for ways to get 'First stories for thinking' and the 'Mercury and the Axe' story.

References & other resources

'First Stories for Thinking' by Robert Fisher
Nash Pollock Publishing
ISBN-10 1898255291
ISBN-13 978-1898255291

The story of **Mercury and the Axe** is available as a sample
www.teachingthinking.net/ click on web resources, stories for thinking



Make a story in a box – see *Sheet 7.C*

Some ideas for talking objects:



Respond

1. **The stories.** There are a variety of ways in which children can respond to any of the stories that have been read. What did they like about the story or stories? Would they like to read it again or look at any pictures in the books? Is there something in one of the stories they would like to draw, paint or make a model of, or represent with collage? See *Sheet 7.B*. On *Sheet 7.C* there are instructions on how to make a model of a 'story in a box'. If more than one story has been read, which story did they like best?

Encourage the children to talk about the issues that have arisen for them from the stories by asking questions such as:

- Is it hard to hear a still small voice guiding you to do the right thing?
- Has anybody thought or felt something that was hard to say?
- What might stop you hearing it or following it?
- Are powerful people always right?
- How can we stand up to them when they're not? Would that be scary? *Sheet 7.D* for an activity on speaking truth to power.

Resources: crayons, paint, paper, collage, clay, scissors, glue. Sheet 7.B; Sheet 7.C; Sheet 7.D.

2. **Drama.** All of the stories lend themselves to dramatic presentation. Choose the one that the children seem to respond to best or which has the right number of characters for the group. Read the story again, asking the children for ideas as to how it could be acted and who might like to play which part. Find or make suitable props and simple costumes- this may need to go over into a further session so that things needed can be brought the following week. Talk with each child about their character - what would they be feeling? How could they best portray the character? Encourage the children to improvise the drama, letting the ideas come from them but asking questions as they go along such as, "What is **x** feeling at this point?" "How might **y** react to that?" Discuss the possible use of music in the drama and bring it the following week. If possible, share the drama with the adult meeting at the end of Meeting for Worship. Children could introduce the theme and outline the story.

Resources: dressing up clothes, music, CD player, simple props

3. **Talk about someone brave.** In a circle, using a talking token, ask the children to talk about someone they know who has done something brave, and one well-known person they have heard about who has done something brave. What about Quakers? Are there people in the wider meeting with a story to tell? Make a list of the well-known people mentioned; encourage everybody to find out more about them and bring information to the next session. Discuss together what it means to be brave and afraid at the same time.

Resources: talking token, large sheet of paper, pen

4. **Play a game of Chinese Whispers.**

One person thinks of a sentence and whispers it into the ear of the next person. They may not repeat it. The next person whispers what they think they have heard into the ear of the next person and so on until everyone has had a go. The last person says out loud what they think has been said to them. This could lead to a discussion if the sentence is very different from the first one. Why is it difficult to listen properly? Was the message not loud enough? Did you lose concentration? Did it not make sense? Did you pass on what you felt it ought to say? What could we do to help people hear each other better?

Reflect

Return to the circle around the candle. Maybe read Advices and queries 1 again or remind the group of the story they have heard. Ask, 'what have you liked about our meeting today' – say that people can speak if they want to. Finish with some silence.

Ongoing activity Slave trade abolition

Make a Quilt Square to go into a display in Friends House in London. An invitation from the Committee for Racial Equality.

All children's meetings or groups are invited to work on squares for a quilt in the style of those designed to give directions and messages to slaves who were escaping to freedom. Squares could also include messages about slavery today. In the American South, such quilts were hung out on verandas in the evenings to give messages to escaping slaves about what route to take and what places to avoid. See *Journeys Issue 2 April 2007 for template ideas and more information – see side bar.*

We would like Children's meetings to design squares, with messages they decide on; for example the message, "follow the North Star", might be represented by a hexagonal star with a winding line below it on a navy blue background. Any media can be used; actual quilting appliqué, drawings or paintings on paper, collage, or computer generated digital images, are all acceptable. The dimensions for these quilt squares are 10cm x 10cm. Children could design one square, or possibly more. Each square however should have its own message. *Sheet 7.E can be used to work on or stick on what has been made. Sheet 7.E. has the postal and email addresses to which any work should be sent. Please send squares to arrive by November 7th 2007.*

Review

The review can happen at the time or later – it maybe by yourself or with others. Some useful questions to help volunteers consider and learn from the session include:

What went well and why? What might you do differently if you did this session again? Were the children able to express themselves freely? Were you surprised by any of their responses? Are there things you want to develop that arose from the session? What have you learned for your own life about following the Quaker testimony to Truth and Integrity?

Links to other organisations and resources

The Quaker Life Resources Room can also be found via www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - phone and email contact details below.

The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia has lots on this testimony

For discussion about dilemmas in telling some truths see www.school-for-champions.com - also see Quaker Faith and Practice 20.44.

For peace education dilemmas linked to this testimony see www.quaker.org.uk/gpsw

The Quaker Tapestry can be visited at the Friends Meeting House, Stramongate, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4BH. 01539 722975; 77 panels made by 4000 men, women & children explore 3 centuries of history. The website is: www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk.

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References & other resources

Advices and Queries 1

For Journeys in the Spirit Issue 2 go to: www.quaker.org.uk/cyp and click on Resources and then Archive, choose Children's Work Issue 2 extra sheets and look at Sheet 2.F.

Linking with the wider meeting.

The Respond activities 2 & 3, Drama and Talk about someone brave, would be good to present to or try with the whole meeting.

The next children's work issue of 'Journeys in the spirit' will focus on the testimony to Peace and will be published on October 1st.