

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 19 September 2008

Children



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** towards God, the deeper mystery; **downwards** to the world we live in.



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

Quaker work in post-Yugoslav countries: stopping hatred

Getting ready

Some background and a story to tell.

There was a country in South-East Europe called Yugoslavia. It was like a puzzle - lots of different peoples speaking different languages and going to different churches and mosques. It broke into 7 small countries including Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. There were lots of horrible wars. People in one big group that had been hurt a lot in the wars wanted the country to stay together – one big puzzle. They thought they would be safer, stronger that way. But other people felt bullied by these people and unsafe. They thought it would be safe living in their own little countries – their own bit of puzzle.

In the end everyone was scared. No one could agree. People started getting lots of weapons - guns and bombs. There was terrible fighting, many people died, families split, lots of people had to run away to other countries to be safe. Today, the fighting has mostly stopped but people who used to just about get on as neighbours find it very hard to like or trust people they have been fighting with.

All along, Quakers have helped local peacebuilders who try to stop violence and fighting, stop hatred and help people be good neighbours. We have given money for peace work and paid local people, peacebuilders, in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia.

The children we help now weren't even born or were very tiny when people were fighting but their mums and dads are often still scared of or hate their neighbours. This can make their children scared of and hate other children who speak differently or go to different churches or mosques. Supporting children from different backgrounds to have fun and play together has been a big part of what Quakers have done. This helps stop hatred.

See *Sheet 19.A for a map.*

Underpinning references

Blessed are the peacemakers
– **Matthew 5.9**

I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles within which transforming events take place
Rufus Jones.

'We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity'
Margaret Fell, QFP 19.46

Gather

- 'Come in and sit in a circle together.'
- 'Lets get ourselves quiet and still. Feel your breath go in – and out, in and out – slowly.'
- 'Now look into the eyes of someone next to you; say hello to your neighbour.'
- 'Now look around our group – what is different about everybody? What is the same? Do you like some people more than others? Or do you like everyone about the same?'
- *(If possible have a child read the text below out loud).* 'Now listen to this:

'We are going to think about one place in Europe where people have been very afraid and very angry with one another for many years - so afraid that they stay apart and don't want to mix and tell bad stories about one another. The grown-ups are even more afraid than the children because they remember horrible fighting with their neighbours. Many don't want their children to mix or have fun together. They even have their children in separate schools on opposite sides of the town. If no one did anything, they would never meet and just go on being afraid and angry and so would the children. But some brave grown-ups and many children did do something.' Have a copy or copies of the map on *Sheet 19.A* available.

Engage

A story to tell about stopping hatred. *Sheet 19.E for a story for younger ages.*

'Jasminka is a teacher in Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje, Central Bosnia, (GV-Usk for short) in a valley in the mountains. There are two names because the grown-ups can't agree about one name. *Write these names very big on a sheet of paper.*

After the war, children just had lessons in school - no clubs or safe places outside to play. Children were frightened of one another and bored.

Jasminka wanted to help. She asked teachers from the different schools to help her. They remembered good things that people had before the war.

They started clubs – reading, art, singing, dancing, photography, languages, computing; even did walking in the mountains - they had to do this with special helpers who knew the way because there were unexploded landmines in the mountains. *See sidebar for reference to a landmine activity.*

They wanted to start a new centre for children and young people on a street in the middle of the town between two enemy groups (it was the ceasefire line). Nobody dared to walk there usually.

They had a bombed building to use. They asked Quakers and others to give money to help and we did. A broken house became a lovely building with windows, heating, books and music, bright walls, pictures and play spaces.

The children started coming. The very young ones, those whose mums and dads dared to let them come, were OK and able to play. They weren't so scared – they didn't remember the horrible things.

Older children or teenagers were so afraid that they couldn't come on the same evening as children from other parts of town. Clubs were held on Mondays and Wednesdays for one group and Tuesdays and Thursdays for the other.

A year after the clubs started Quakers paid a woman from Sweden, called Shirin, to teach English.

The children had told the teachers they felt safe enough to come on the same evening. But they sat in opposite corners of the room and wouldn't talk to one another – only to Shirin.

After another year, they were talking to one another and even meeting outside the classes, but they wouldn't visit one another's homes.

Over the years, the children of all ages began to trust each other much more. They do lots of things together. They go on holiday to the sea with teachers and helpers and some become close friends. But when they come back, the town is still divided. They see one another for a bit and then not always. But some say the Youth Centre has changed their lives forever and taught them a good way to live with their neighbours'. *See Sheet 19.B for pictures – have these on display.*

References, another resource & quotations

Be kindly affectioned one to another, in brotherly love, in honour preferring one another

Romans 12.10

Plough up the fallow ground ... walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone
QF&P 19.32

See Journeys in the Spirit Childrens' issue no.11 for an activity on learning about landmines.

"I started writing poems when I was nine..., it helped me survive the stupid war. With my poems I just wanted to tell the world that we can't forget, but we can forgive and we have to because hate is the worst poison..., because hate can destroy us. That's why we have to stop hating and start forgiving." **Valentina Malec on Forgiving**

"While I am writing this, tears are running down my face, I cannot stop emotions from pouring out..

Gornji Vakuf–Uskoplje is for sure a better place with the Youth Centre in it. Every child or a young person who wants to join the Youth Centre family makes a difference."

Dragana

More quotations and some reflections on fear

'When we take them out of this environment [on holiday to the coast], children are happy,' said one of the trainers. 'They play together, they are very close to one another, but already on coming back home they tend to separate, and they seem to part ways.'

Adnan Gavranović,

. 'Every time I come here, I feel so sad, you expect things to change, but it's painstakingly slow. I can't remember when anyone asked me last time if I'd like to stay here.'

Sead

"All of the activities in Respond are to help everybody work with fear - imagining and acting it to get a feel for it without being too scared by it" 😊. This can include thinking about how fear works in other people's lives and in our own - feeling and talking about how it is the same and different, how it affects all of us – of any age in many places and with different intensities"

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities:

1. Wondering about the story of Jasminka:

After telling the story of Jasminka in as simple or detailed a way as you choose ask some open, wondering questions: I wonder which part of the story you like the most? I wonder which part of the story you think is the most important? I wonder which part of the story is in you or you are in? I wonder if there is any part of the story that you could leave out and still have all the story that you need?

2. Bosnia and you:

- Look at the pictures on *Sheet 19.B* - the houses and fields and mountains where the people of Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje live; the children having fun together in the club. Remember that many of them lost relatives or friends in the war, but somehow they are able to find their way back to fun and happiness.
- Now, I wonder if there is a moment in your life when you have been afraid? Have you been afraid for a long time? I wonder how you found a way out of being afraid?
- I wonder how it is at school? Are there some groups of children that you don't talk with? Is there a reason for that? Are there some children that you don't like or may be afraid of?
- Do some people dress differently because of their religion or where they come from? I wonder how you feel about that?

3. Acting scared 1 and 2. Two dramas – one very simple and one longer. Scared children learn to smile and children teach scared grown-ups to smile.

See *Sheets 19.C and 19.D*

4. Cooking to stop hatred. Recipe for Palacinke - Bosnian pancakes or crepes. This recipe is quite like what you already know. Only the fillings and toppings may be a little bit different. See *Sheet 19.E*.

5. Drawing, painting and collage

What would a picture of the town look like? It might be a picture of houses on opposite sides with the grown-ups also on opposite sides. The children could be mixing together in the Youth Centre in the middle, where the grown-ups might be afraid or too proud to come. What about the children inviting their parents to come to the Youth Centre and watch them dancing and singing together - having fun and becoming less afraid? Lay out good quality drawing and painting materials and invite everybody to make a picture of the story they have heard or of the town. The pictures could become a display for Quaker Week.

6. Scary monster masks

- Everybody make the scariest masks they can, using card, elastic, scissors, bright colours and poster paints.
- Divide into two groups and stand on opposite sides of the room.
- Everybody takes it in turns to say to each other, from behind the masks: 'You're a scary monster and I'm not coming anywhere near you!' or 'I'm not scary; you're the scary one!' Then listen to the other ones saying the same things.
- Everybody takes their masks half off and keeps saying 'you're the scary one'.
- Everybody takes the masks off, saying 'I thought you were scary; but you're not as scary as I thought'. 'Did you think I was scary?'. Everybody looks at their mask – ask 'can you see why other people thought you were scary?' Sit together for a moment; ask: 'What it is like being scared?' 'What is it like being scary?'



Reflect

Come back together and settle down into quiet. Everybody closes their eyes apart from one person who slowly reads the following: 'We have heard about people who worked hard to make peace and be good neighbours. In our quiet together let us hope and pray that, if we are trying to be peaceful and good neighbours, we can remember the story of Jasminka and her friends. Their story is like a little bright light shining in the dark'. Leave a little quiet after reading and then shake hands and end the meeting.

Topical themes Georgia



The fighting in Georgia. Quakers in Georgia – Friends House Georgia - are asking for donations to help buy mattresses, blankets and towels, as well as food and medical supplies for hospital patients (who have to pay for these supplies themselves). Talk about this in children's meeting – ask about ideas about raising or getting money to help; could Meeting help? Donations can be sent directly to the FWCC World

Office using PayPal. You can use the secure link from the [World Office website](http://www.fwccworld.org/news). This picture, taken by a young Georgian Friend, shows desks being used as beds.

National Quaker week

Make a welcome banner. Children could begin to make a welcome banner or sign for National Quaker Week. It could be themed on the Quaker testimonies – see previous issues of Journeys in the Spirit for ideas. Alternatively look at www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk for small pictures of the tapestry panels - children could use them for ideas about making a big Quaker picture. Which one do they like the best? Can they make their own picture and then join lots together in a welcome sign. No Internet access? Ask Meeting to buy a Quaker Tapestry book from the Quaker Bookshop or borrow one from the Quaker Life Resources Room.

Stories of our meeting. Everyone in Meeting writes, draws or illustrates something about being Quaker that is important to them or that they have been part of. Make a 'Stories of our meeting book' – decorate, label, arrange and stick in contributions, make a front cover. Display it prominently in Quaker Week.

Review

The review can happen at the time or later – it maybe by yourself or with others. Some useful questions for your use 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 bit, about fear, being a good neighbour and people who help make peace or about former Yugoslavia? What is there for you to learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

Links to other organisations and resources

www.fwccworld.org/news - Friends World Committee for Consultation news.

www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - click on Ideas Store for lots of ideas for children's work

www.quaker.org.uk/cyp - the Quaker Life Resources Room can be found via this link - phone and email for resources using the contact details below.

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Quotation, ideas and information

"In giving and accepting kindness we can learn how to lose our fear - even in horrible and very scary situations; whatever our age."

Alan Pleydell

Linking with the wider meeting:

The dramas, the story of Jasminka & the 'Stories of our meeting' all offer ways to be together as a whole meeting. Work continues in post-Yugoslav countries. As a meeting can you think of ways at all age or Quaker Week events to raise money to support the work?

The next children's work issue of

'Journeys in the spirit', Issue number 20, October 2008 will be on Quaker ways to deal with bullying; Issue number 21, November 2008 will be on Advices and Queries; Issue 22, December 2008 will be on 'Quaker work in South Asia'

Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 19.A Getting Ready and Gather Some maps



United Kingdom



Former Yugoslavia



Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 19.B Engage The town, the centre and the children.



The town of Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje



Fields and mountains near the town



A house broken in the war



Small children from different sides do street art



A music class in the new centre



Celebrating 10 years of the centre

Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 19.C Respond Acting scared 1 A little play



This is a simple script and could be read or performed to Meeting by children wearing badges or labels with their character name on – older children could help younger; adults could play a role in smaller Meetings. This could be part of an all age worship session or to illustrate what Children's Meeting has been working on.

Children teach scared grown-ups to smile:

Scene 1 Mum, dad and child.

Mum or Dad:

I don't want you to go to the club. The wrong kinds of people go there. They did bad things to us during the war. They can't be trusted. They attacked us and killed our relatives, friends and neighbours. What will the neighbours say if they see that we let you go there?

Child:

But my teacher and my best friend invited me. I want to go because my friend told me they do really nice things there. They do dancing, singing, painting, computers and walking in the mountains. There's nothing to do in school here or at home or anywhere else. I've met the teachers there. They're really nice and kind and they'll look after us.

Mum or Dad

But – oh all right but just this once. Make sure you go with your best friend; all the way there and all the way back. I don't want you to get into any kind of danger. Make sure you're back in time.

Scene 2 Child, Jasminka or teacher

Child (to Jasminka or teacher)

My Mum and Dad are afraid and angry. They don't want to let me come here in case something bad happens to me, because I'm meeting children from the other side. They don't like their parents. They certainly don't want to let me go across the line to **their** houses.

Jasminka (or teacher)

But look. What do you see? You're having fun with the other children. You laugh and you feel safe. At first you were afraid and shy with one another and didn't want to talk. You stayed in different corners of the room and you would only look at and talk to me but not to one another. Then you found that you liked the same things and could play with one another. Would you like me to come and talk with your parents?

Child

Yes: that might help. Please come and talk to them

Scene 3 Children (Ermina/Fatima/Ahmed), Jasminka or teacher, mum and dad

Jasminka

Thank you for letting me come. I know you are afraid. But listen to what Ermina, Fatima/Ahmed have got to say about what it's really like in the Centre.

Ermina, Fatima and Ahmed

I had a really nice time there. At first I was a bit nervous of the others and they were nervous of me. But then we were asked to sing some songs together. We like hearing each other's voices at the same time. It's really safe and we feel fine together now.

Wouldn't you like to come along and see me dancing? Of course, you might bump into Marija's parents from the other side and you might feel nervous. But they'll only be there because they want to see her how beautifully she dances – just like you coming to see me.

(This little story could be followed by worship and then reflective wondering questions as in Respond 1- wondering about the story of Jasminka; these questions need to be spaced out and the answers, if any, received without comment).

Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 19.D Respond Acting scared 2 A longer play



Scared children learn to smile.

A chance to explore Shirin's story - see Engage. What would they say to her? What would she say back to them? If she asked them to do it slowly, would they be able to look at one another? Might they even manage to say hello or try a very little smile?

For children (maybe 8 –12 years old) follow the teacher's suggestions. This one is all about body language and going very slowly when you're nervous). **Characters: Shirin; Ante, Croat boy; Ahmed, Bosniak boy; one or two other children as classmates. Shirin could read from a script as this is quite long to learn**

Shirin (*volunteer teacher from Sweden sent by Quaker Peace and Social Witness*)

I notice, Ante that you're only looking at me and never across the room at the others.
And that's true of you too Ahmed [*Bosniak boy; in the other corner*].

It feels like there's a wall between you and you can't see across it. That's true of all of you actually. I notice that none of you finds it easy to look across. But you're doing just fine by being here at all in the first place. Last year you were in separate classes on separate nights. Well done for being here. That's very brave. Are you feeling a bit scared Ante - Ahmed?

Ante and Ahmed - [very shy nods from each in turn]

Shirin It's all right to be scared. I won't blame you for it. Even the bravest people are scared sometimes. And that's true for men too, Ahmed. I know it's not easy for you or your Dad to admit that here in this town after everything that has happened, in front of the other boys on your side of the room – and specially in front of the girls. And I know that's just as true for you too, Ante.

I want you each to look at me and smile. Now smile at yourself inside. Think of something that made you smile. First Ante and then Ahmed.

Now Ante, don't smile, but see if you can manage to turn very, very slowly to look at Ahmed just for a moment, no more. Ahmed – just keep looking at me, don't turn towards him.
That's tremendous! Well done!

OK Ante. Take a breath. Now you can relax and look at me. You don't have to look across the room. Now it's your turn Ahmed. Ante will keep looking at me. See if you can turn very, very slowly towards him and look at him for just a moment. And then away again and relax. That's brilliant!

OK. Now both relax. Breathe and smile and then look serious. I'm not going to ask you to run before you can walk. Now each of you turn very, very slowly and see if you can look at one another at the same time. Just for a second or two. Then turn away. Great!

Now see if you can both do it for five seconds, turning slowly towards each other and noticing. Don't try to smile, just keep your face with no expression. Notice what you feel and notice what you see in the other person's face.

And now see if you can manage it for a little bit longer. Maybe 15 seconds. Same. Notice what you feel and notice what you see in the other person's face. Try not to smile or frown. But if you find yourself smiling despite yourself; I'm not going to stop you.

[Shirin Alemdar was sent by British Quakers ten years ago. She's Swedish, very fair with blonde hair and a Muslim name – her dad was Kurdish. Some of the children couldn't make that out, exactly who she was or where she was from. But in Bosnia people are pretty mixed in appearance - It's more clothing, language and accents that count.]

Journeys in the Spirit

Children

Sheet 19.E Engage A simple version of Jasminka's story



Once upon a time, not very long ago but maybe before you were born, there was a country called Bosnia. In Bosnia there was a town with a big name. In fact it was two names because the grown ups who lived there couldn't agree which name was best. The town was called Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje ['Goorny Vakoof Ooskopulljay'].

There had been lots of horrible fighting with guns in Bosnia and the town. People who went to different churches or mosques were fighting. Even when the fighting stopped people were still very scared. They didn't like the people they had been fighting with.

Grown ups who had been fighting or hurt in the war were very scared of being hurt again or having their children hurt. The grown ups told their children not to talk to the children who went to different churches or mosques.

The children were sad. They had nowhere to play. They couldn't play with their friends.

Now. In the town there was a woman called Jasminka. She was scared like everybody else but she wanted children not to be sad. She wanted children to play, paint, dance and sing. She wanted children to be friends.

She asked teachers in schools to help and they started lots of clubs. When the children came they were shy and scared but they loved to play. Soon they made friends. This made them smile. It made their parents smile.

Later on Jasminka and her friends found a broken down house. They made the broken down house into a big club for children and teenagers. The new club made lots more people smile. See Sheets 19.B & 19.F

Respond

Cooking to stop hatred.

After a drama or just anyway try this favourite Bosnian recipe, loved by children (and adults!) on both sides of the divide in Gornji Vakuf /Uskoplje (c. is American Cup measure).

Palacinke (pah-lah-cheen-kah) Crepes

Beat together:

2 eggs

1/4 tsp. salt (1 ml)

2 c. milk (500 ml)

2 tsp. oil (7.5 ml)

2 c. flour (500 ml)

1/2 c. water (125 ml)

Let mixture stand a few minutes. Pour scant 1/4 c. batter (60 ml) into a hot, oiled frying pan. Rotate pan until batter is evenly distributed, forming 1 large, thin pancake. Fry until surface looks dry and bubbly. Turn and fry briefly on other side. Note: if palacinke are too thick add more water to the batter. Spread each palacinka with:

chocolate sauce

marmalade

fresh fruit or

chopped nuts

Roll up and top with:

whipped cream or powdered sugar.

Share and keep sharing

Journeys in the Spirit

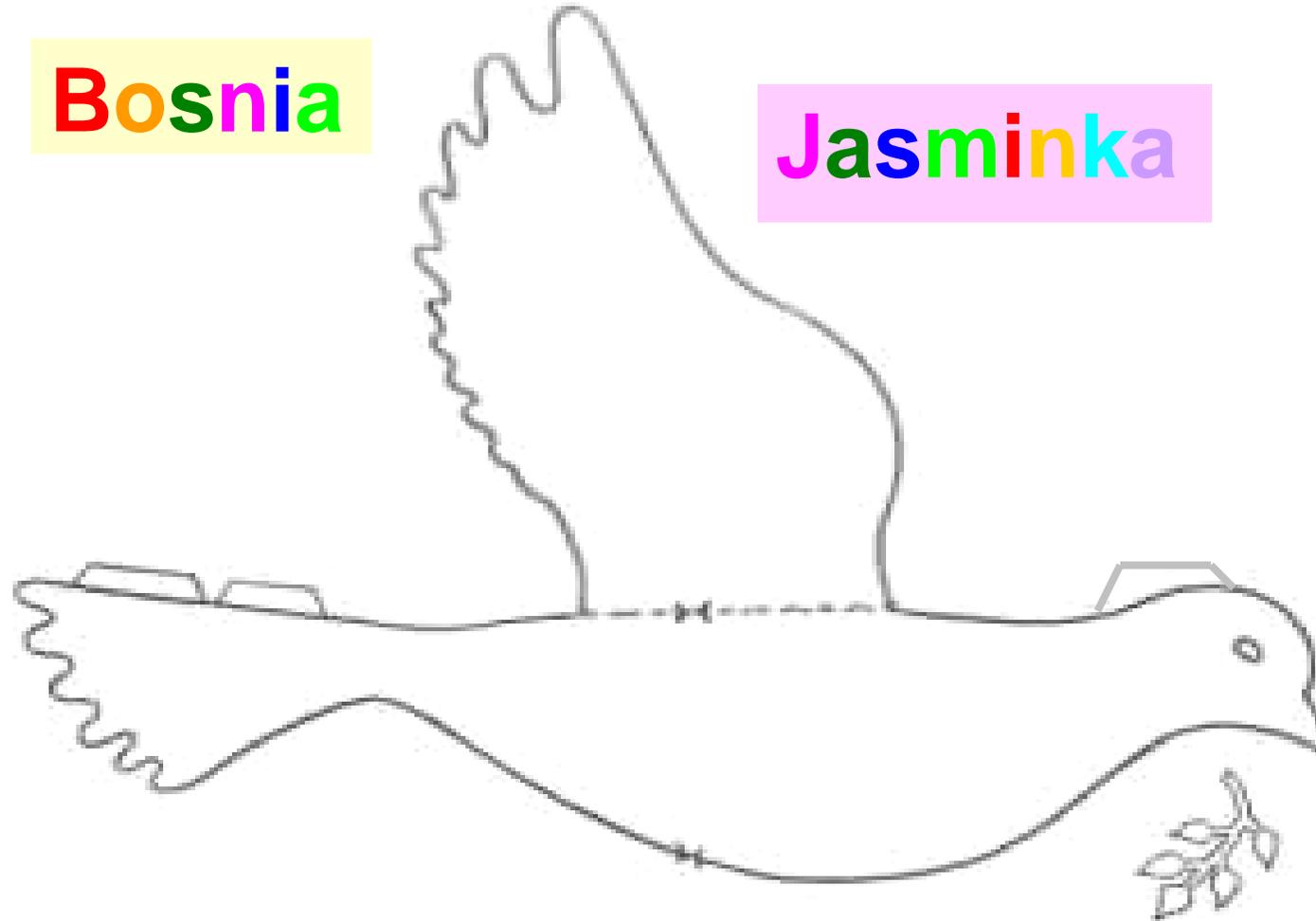
Children

Sheet 19.F Respond Make a peace dove to remember Jasminka and her friends



Bosnia

Jasminka



Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje

- You will need: pencils, white card, flat pieces of wood or old rulers, PVA glue and masking tape, green card or green felt pens or pencils, scissors.
- The idea is for younger children to make, or be helped to make, a peace dove – see blue insert below. This is intended to be a way of remembering and celebrating the good things done by Jasminka and friends.
- Cut out and draw around the dove shape onto white card.
- Cut out or have ready to cut out two for each child.
- Once children have their two cut outs ready the piece of wood should be stuck on using PVA or masking tape – this is going to be a 'handle'.
- The 2nd dove should now be stuck over the first on the wood side. Do not put glue on the tail (apart from the tabs) or the wings or the end of the beak. The tail can be fanned out and the wings folded down.
- The olive branch can be cut out and coloured green or be made from green card & stuck in the beak.
- Once the dove is finished, and before the tail or wings are fanned or folded, the dove can be decorated as children choose and also with the coloured cut out words from this sheet and cut out pictures of children from Sheet 19.B.

This picture came from a *raging granny*.
See www.raginggrannies.org

