



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition Issue 54 August 2011



## Benjamin Lay and the Quaker Slave-Owners

### Getting ready

This issue offers a short play script about the Pennsylvanian Quaker Benjamin Lay (1681–1760) and a protest he made to Quakers who owned slaves. In a single session the children can take parts and read the play, leading into discussion. Performing the play or preparing to perform it could take a whole session. The following discussion could lead to the topic of child slavery today. The American state of Pennsylvania was founded by the Quaker William Penn in 1681. People from Britain settled there, and many of them were Quakers. It was hard work turning the forest into farmland and, like everyone else, the Quaker settlers bought slaves to do much of the work on the land and as servants in their homes.

In Burlington Meeting in 1738, Benjamin Lay came in clothed as a soldier with a sword. He gave a long message detailing the evils of slavery, and at the climax of his ministry pierced his bible with the sword. Concealed in it was a bladder filled with red juice that splattered onto Friends sitting near him, symbolising the blood on Quakers' hands for not standing firm against slavery. This display proved too much for Quakers to bear and they formally disowned him not long after.

Only a few Quakers realised from the first that slavery was wrong. They tried to persuade the others who answered, "But everyone uses slaves! How can it be wrong?" It was only in 1759 that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting decided to disown any Quaker who still kept slaves.

"Journeys in the Spirit" offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

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

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

### Gather

After a short gathering silence, ask the children to tell you what a slave is. If necessary amplify their answers as follows: *Slaves are seen as the property of their masters like animals or furniture. They can be bought, sold, told what to do and where to live, and punished if they disobey. They had to work without pay, often at hard, dirty and dangerous tasks. They cannot leave their masters, and will be brutally punished if they try. When they have children, these too are considered to be the property of the masters, who can sell them if they wish at any age. Whatever the masters do to their slaves they will not get into any trouble.*

Now say that you are going to do a play together. Talk about doing it for the whole Meeting, just for yourselves or for an all age meeting. It is about the true story about two of the first Quakers to protest about slavery - Benjamin Lay and his wife Sarah. They were both very short (about 120 cm or 4 ft tall). They were vegetarians and lived in a cave in the forest. They wanted to convince the other Quaker settlers nearby that slavery was wrong – one time Benjamin went to meeting barefoot in the snow, to make the point that many slave-owners didn't give shoes to their slaves. See *Additional Resource 54.A* for a picture of Ben.

### Some background

There is little printed material readily available on Benjamin Lay, who was not admired by most Quaker historians. One helpful source is:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/plain/A68240973>

*Additional Resource 54.A* can be found at

[www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

## Engage

This play needs at least 6 readers or actors - see sidebar for a list. Print or copy the script below. Read the 'stage design' on *Additional Resource 54.B*. If your children's meeting is small ask adults to help. Do the play in your children's session, after meeting or in an all age meeting for worship. It can be acted or told using stick puppets (it's hard to read and hold a puppet so have readers and puppeteers). The play and preparation might need two sessions. Give an outline of the story first. Children can then do one or both of the following activities.

### Puppet making.

There are two choices here. Children can make the stick puppets ready for a performance - see *Additional Resource 54.C* for stick puppet figures cut-outs. Alternatively children can make their own figures for a performance or just for fun and to explore the story. See *Additional Resource 54.D* for cut out people templates. You will need copies of the figures, scissors, PVA glue, drawing pencils, colouring pens and pencils and lolly sticks – saved from home or bought from arts & craft shops.

### Making pictures for the play or illustrating the story.

If you are going to do the play it will need scenery. Talk about what it might look like and where it might go. Have flipchart paper or wall lining paper to draw and paint on. Have big pots of ready mixed children's paint or acrylic paints, pencils and big brushes.

**Scene: In the centre a forest.** One side leads to a cave where Benjamin and Sarah live. On the other, far away, is Billy's homestead. Billy and Benjamin meet in the forest. Make big pictures to represent the different places.

**Billy:** Hallo, friend Benjamin!

**Benjamin:** Hallo, Billy. Thou art far from home.

**Billy:** Not very far. And besides, Father and Mother are gone to Philadelphia, and Polly has too much work to mind me.

**Benjamin:** Poor Polly. They give her too many jobs. I have a thought. Billy, wouldst thou like to see the cave where we live? Thou canst eat a cake.

**Billy:** Yes, please!

**(They move towards the cave).**

**Benjamin:** Sarah, bring out a cake for young Billy here!

**Sarah (coming out):** Here, take one, Billy.

**Billy:** I thank thee. Oh, thy cake tastes strange.

**Sarah:** 'Tis because I will not use sugar in my cooking. Sugar is made by the poor unhappy slaves.

**Billy:** Is not our Polly a slave?

**Benjamin:** Indeed she is. Take Billy into the cave, Sarah, and put a drop of honey on his cake.

**Billy:** But are not the honey-bees slaves as well?

**(Sarah laughs and takes him into the cave. Benjamin stays on stage, working in his garden. The action shifts to Billy's homestead. His parents arrive home.)**

**Father:** Billy, we're home. Billy, where art thou? Billy! Polly, come here!

**Polly:** Yes, master and mistress. Your meal's almost ready.

**Mother:** But where's Billy?

**Polly:** I don't know, I'm sure. I haven't seen him since I began the wash.

**Mother:** Lazy slave! Didn't we tell thee to mind him? Polly, thou wilt be beaten! Get a lantern!

**Father:** John Woolman! Neighbours! Come and help us!

**John (arriving):** I'm here. What is amiss? **[Other neighbours arrive]**

**Father:** Help us find Billy, John. He's lost! Help us, neighbours!

**(They start to search everywhere, through the forest.)**

**Mother:** He's only six years old, and it's getting dark. Billy! Billy! **John:** Look, there's Benjamin Lay. He may have seen thy child. **Benjamin:** What ails ye?

**Father:** Oh Benjamin, Benjamin! Billy is gone. He's been missing for hours.

*Continued on Page 3...*

## List of characters:

### Essential characters played by children:

Billy (aged six),  
Polly (his parents' slave, aged fourteen),  
Benjamin Lay,  
Sarah Lay.

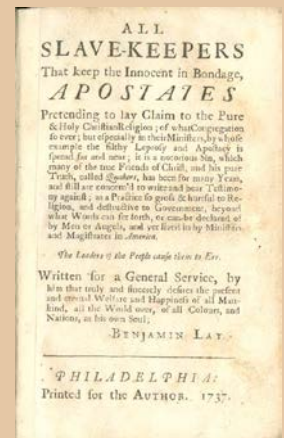
### Essential characters played by children or adults:

Billy's parents,  
John Woolman (aged eighteen).

### Extra characters played by children or adults:

Neighbours and Friends.

Ben wrote a book attacking Quakers for owning slaves



*Additional Resource 54.B and 54.C can be found at [www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)*

## Resources and information

### A note about John Woolman:

Note: Though this is a true story, it is unlikely that John Woolman (who was 18 at the time, and later played an important part in persuading Quakers to renounce slavery) was present. But we have put him in the play because he certainly heard about Benjamin Lay and he may have played a part in convincing him that slavery must be ended.

### Abolition

**Journeys** was published to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. It is full of resources, activities, information and links to Quaker and non-Quaker organisations. It is free to download at:

[www.quaker.org.uk/journeys-spirit-abolition](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeys-spirit-abolition)

### Additional

Resource 54.B, 54.C, 54.D & 54.E can be found at [www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

**Benjamin:** Be ye worried for him? Be ye afeard?

**Father:** There are bears in these woods. And Indians not far off.

**Benjamin:** Let us first pray for his safe return, then all search. **(All stand still).**

**John:** Oh God, keep Billy safe and guide our steps to find him. Amen.

**(A silent pause. They prepare to search.)**

**Benjamin (suddenly):** My friends, your prayers are answered. Billy is safe here.

**Father:** Ben thou didst not tell us - when our hearts were breaking with sadness.

**Benjamin (forcefully):** Ye have now tasted the sorrow ye gave the parents of Polly here, when ye bought her as a slave. They have never seen her again.

**Sarah (bringing Billy from the cave):** It was your greed and laziness that tore Polly from the arms of her mother.

**Parents (ignoring Benjamin and Sarah):** Oh, Billy! **(Big hug)** Let us go home.

**Billy:** Mother, they live in a cave! May we live in one too?

**Neighbours [or parents] as they go):** Shocking! Outrageous! That was a kidnapping! Something should be done to that Benjamin.

**Polly:** Sir, madam. God bless you for what ye said about me. I think of my poor mama every day.

**(She follows the others into the forest. Benjamin and Sarah go into the cave).**

**John (alone):** I thank thee, God, for what thou hast taught me today.

## Respond

### Talking about the play.

After acting or reading the story everybody comes back into a group and settles down for a little time. Do this whether the play has been read, performed or the children's session has been spent in getting ready for a performance or all age meeting for worship. This might be just the children or it could be everybody in Meeting. After a few moments ask some questions and just wait for answers.

- How do you think Billy's parents felt when he was missing?
- Why did Ben and Sarah Lay want to make them feel like that?
- What do you think about what they did?
- Do you think the parents or other people who were there might have started to change their views about slavery?
- How did Polly feel?
- Do you think Billy was worried or was he alright?
- What do you think John Woolman is thanking God for at the end of the play?

Alternatively children can paint, colour or draw their own picture of a scene from the story – this could have something about the story written on it.

### More about slavery.

This play can lead to more exploration of slavery in the past and what Quakers did. It can also lead to talking and thinking about slavery today. See *Abolition Journeys* for lots of information and ideas for activities and action. See sidebar for details.

### Journal work.

If the children in your meeting have been keeping journals they may want to use them at the end of this session.

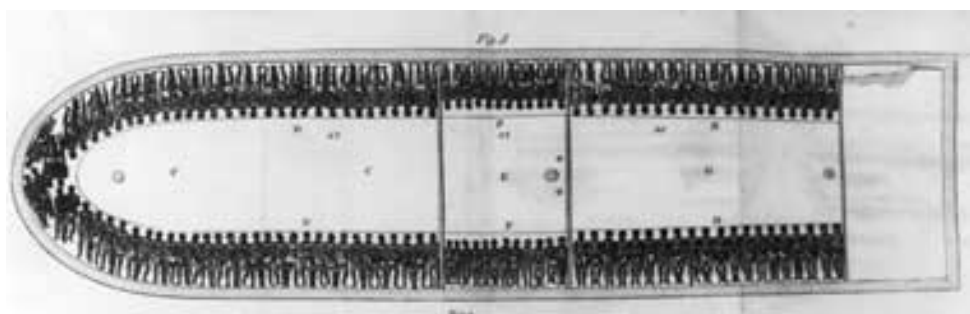
### Reflections for older children on what Ben, Sarah and John Woolman did to stop slavery.

See *Additional Resource 54.E* for a suggestion of how to discuss very different ways that different Quakers put their faith into action.

## Reflect

When there are about five minutes left, gather into worship again. Ask each person to offer one word in the silence which they would use to describe Benjamin Lay.

You could print out the oil painting of him, see *Additional Resources 54.A*, and paste it in the centre of a larger sheet of paper. Use a marker to write the words the children give you around the picture. This sheet could be used if your children's meeting reports on what they have been doing when they rejoin the adults, and displayed in the children's room afterwards.



Picture of the inside of a slave ship

## Review

This review can happen at the time or later, with just the children's meeting leaders or inviting others too. Some useful questions for looking back and learning from the session might be:

- Were the children from the whole age-range able to participate in their own way?
- Could they grasp something of the historical background?
- Did Benjamin Lay's methods of protest appeal to them?
- Were you able to link the history to the modern problem of slavery?
- Has each child been able to reflect, even a little?
- Did you enjoy the session yourself?
- If you staged the script as a drama for the whole meeting, is there anything to learn for another time?
- What was the impact on the adult members of the meeting?

The Children & Young People's Staff Team of Quaker Life would welcome your feedback on using this material.

**This issue was written by John Lampen and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. The Topical activity was written by Chris Nickolay.**

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* is **Issue 55** and is about Waldo Williams a Welsh Quaker, poet and pacifist and will be available on September 1<sup>st</sup>. **Issue 56** is about Lucretia Mott an American Quaker, 1793-1880, committed to living her faith in action and will be available on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. **Issue 57** is about **Bertha Bracey** a British Friend who was organiser of Quaker relief work in Germany in the 1920s and an advocate for the support for Jewish refugees in the 1930s and will be available on November 1st. These are all part of Series 6, '**More Quaker stories**'.

## Materials available online are:

Current issue additional resources sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity about making Peace Poles

There is also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

Go to:

[www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren) and choose from the range of links in the sidebar.

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# Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Additional Resources

54.A

Gather

A picture of Benjamin Lay



BENJAMIN LAY

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nostri-imago/3438348014/in/set-72157616707711308/#/>



# Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Additional Resources

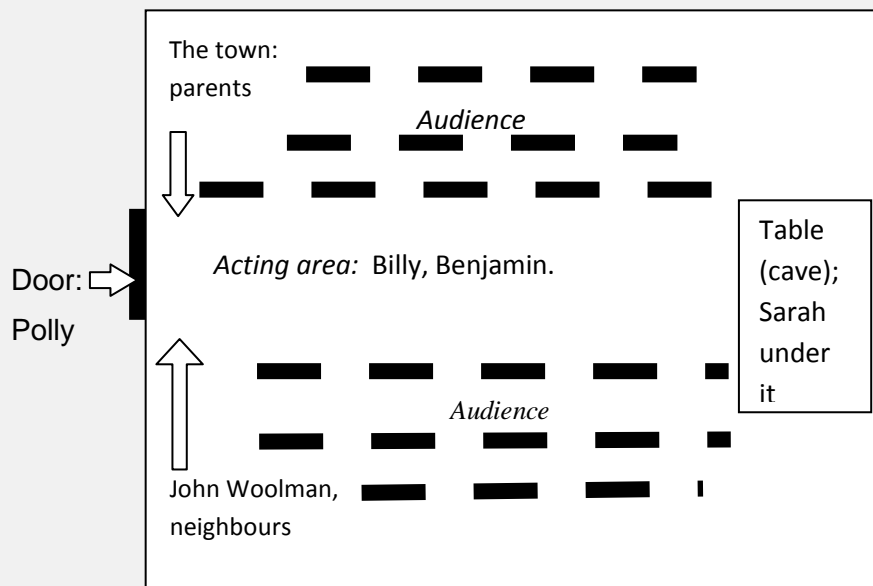
54.B

Engage

'Stage design' for the play

## NOTES for an acted performance:

1. The staging will depend on the size and shape of the meeting room. One way which works well is given in the following diagram, with the starting points for the actors:



2. The minimum number of performers for an acted performance is six, which might be supplemented by other members of the meeting in minor roles. Children too small to take a speaking part can join in the searching for Billy. The search can be conducted among the members of the meeting, and the actors can ask them if Billy is with them (don't ask "Have you seen Billy?" because they have!) Similarly the actors could address the comments "Shocking...etc" to individual Friends in the audience as they pass them. The cave area and homestead area need to be distinct, so that the returning parents don't walk past Billy as he goes into the cave (which could be under a table). The scripts can be read in performance, but if the actors are able and willing to learn their parts this will greatly enhance the show. When copying the parts, it helps to write a character-name on each copy, and highlight that person's speeches.

## NOTES for a lollipop-stick puppet performance:

1. Stick puppet figures for this play are available on the *Additional Resource 54.C*. Print them on thin white card if possible, or thick paper.
2. For the staging, the main requirement is for a wide enough space. A broom handle resting on two chairs would be the minimum, and a 2 to 3 metre length of plastic pipe would be better, with a sheet or tablecloth pinned on to hide the puppeteers; or a bench or row of chairs draped in cloth. Sides and a backdrop are not necessary but these would offer more opportunities for making things if the children's group is large. Imagine that the Lays' cave is on the left, and Billy's home on the right.
3. It is almost impossible to read from a script while manipulating puppets convincingly. So ideally the performance needs six readers who would sit behind the stage area as well as three or four puppeteers



# Journeys in the Spirit



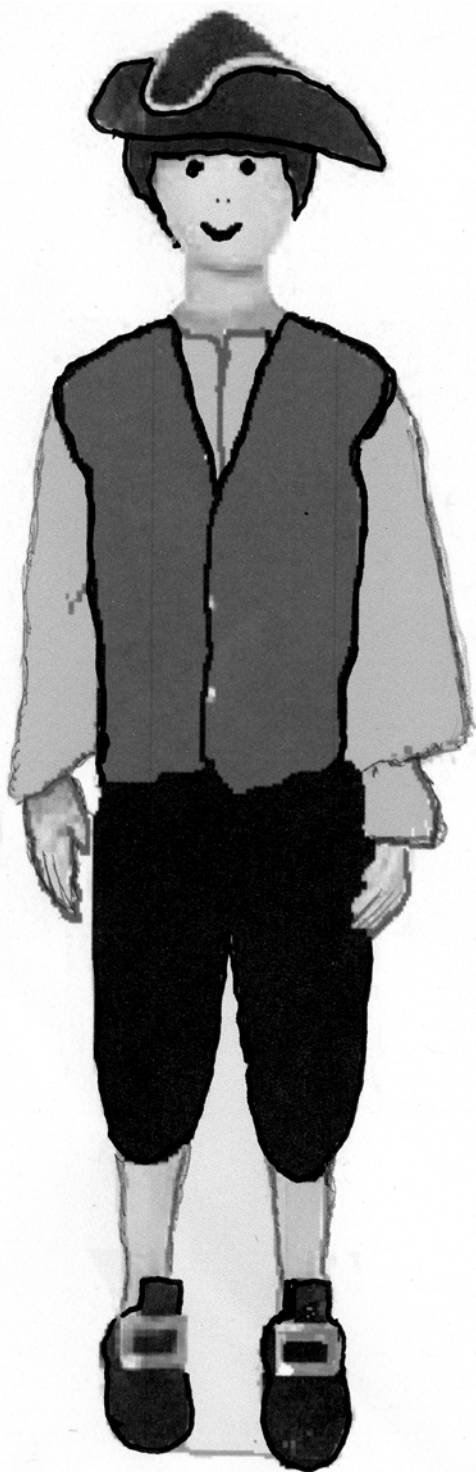
Children

Additional Resources

54.C

Engage & Respond

Stick puppet figures



John  
Woolman



Polly



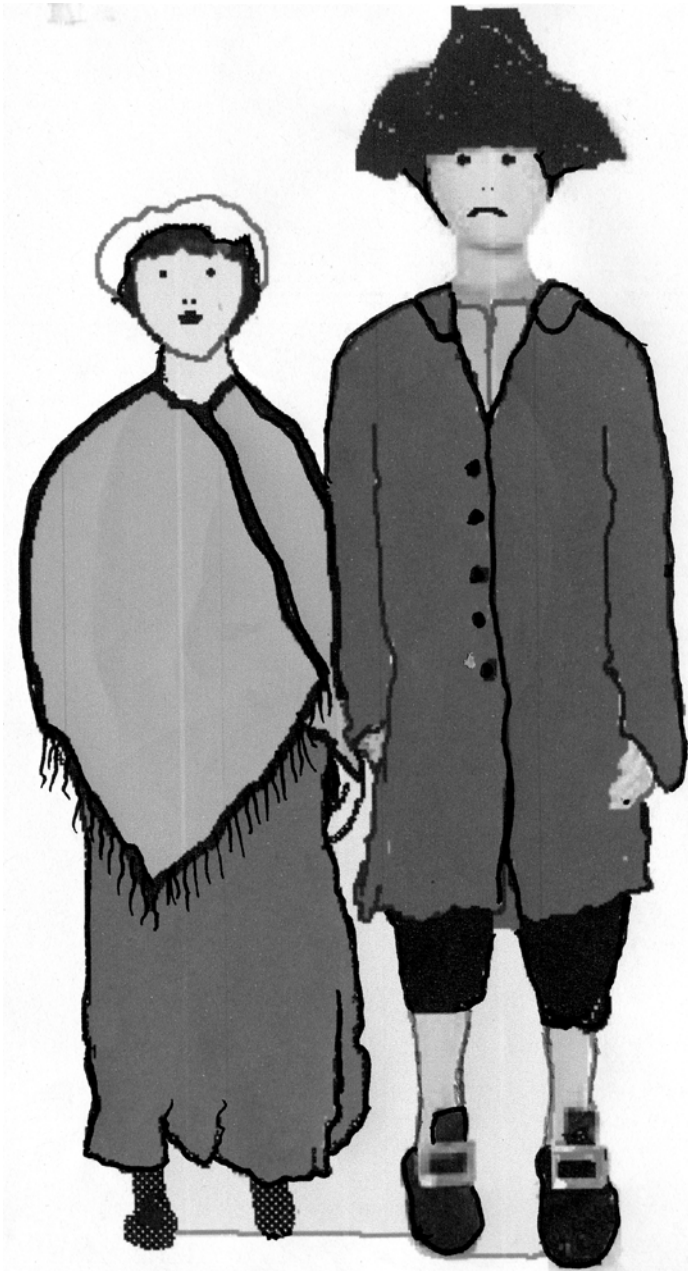
Billy



**Ben**

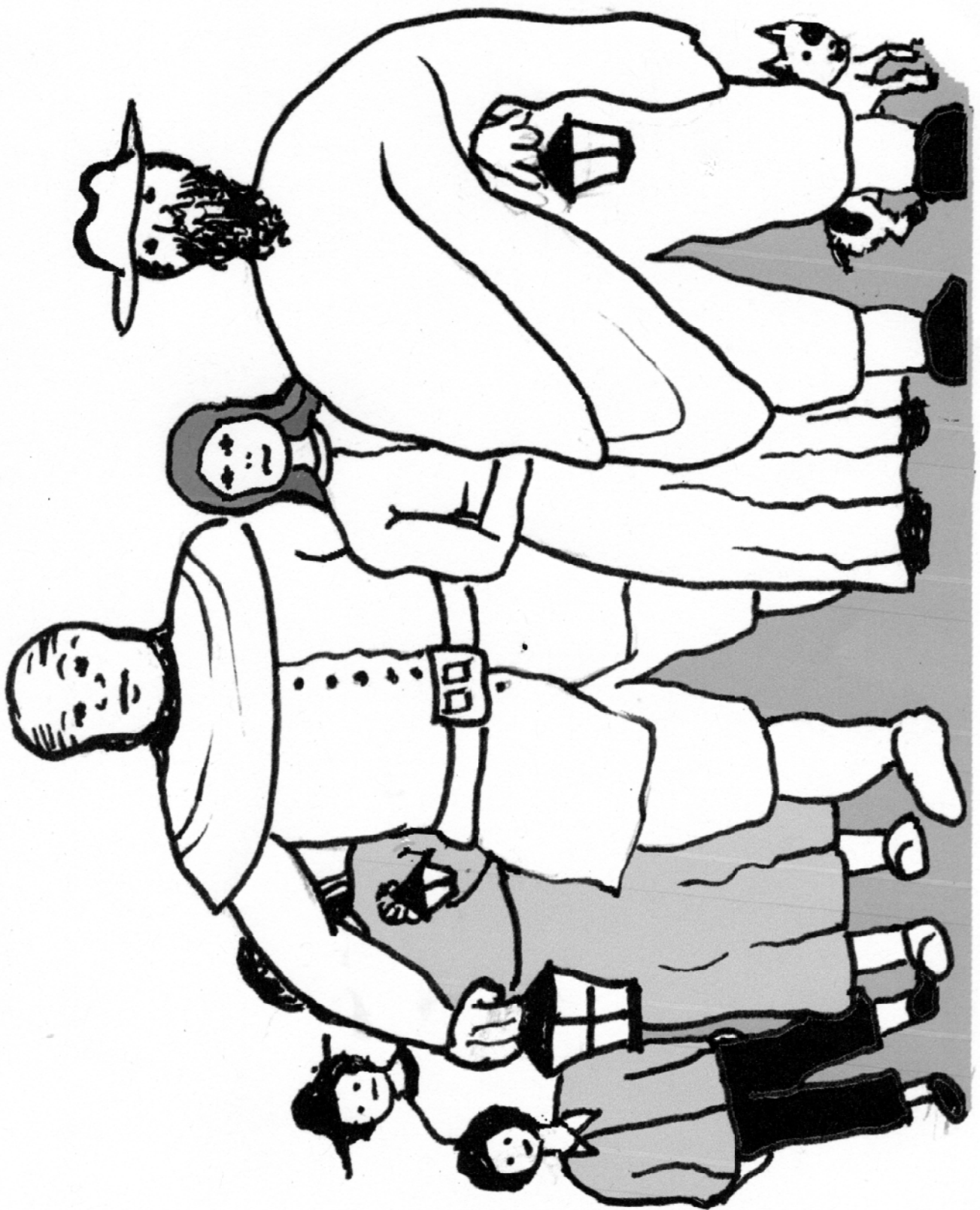


**Sarah**



**Billy's mum and dad**





The neighbours



# Journeys in the Spirit



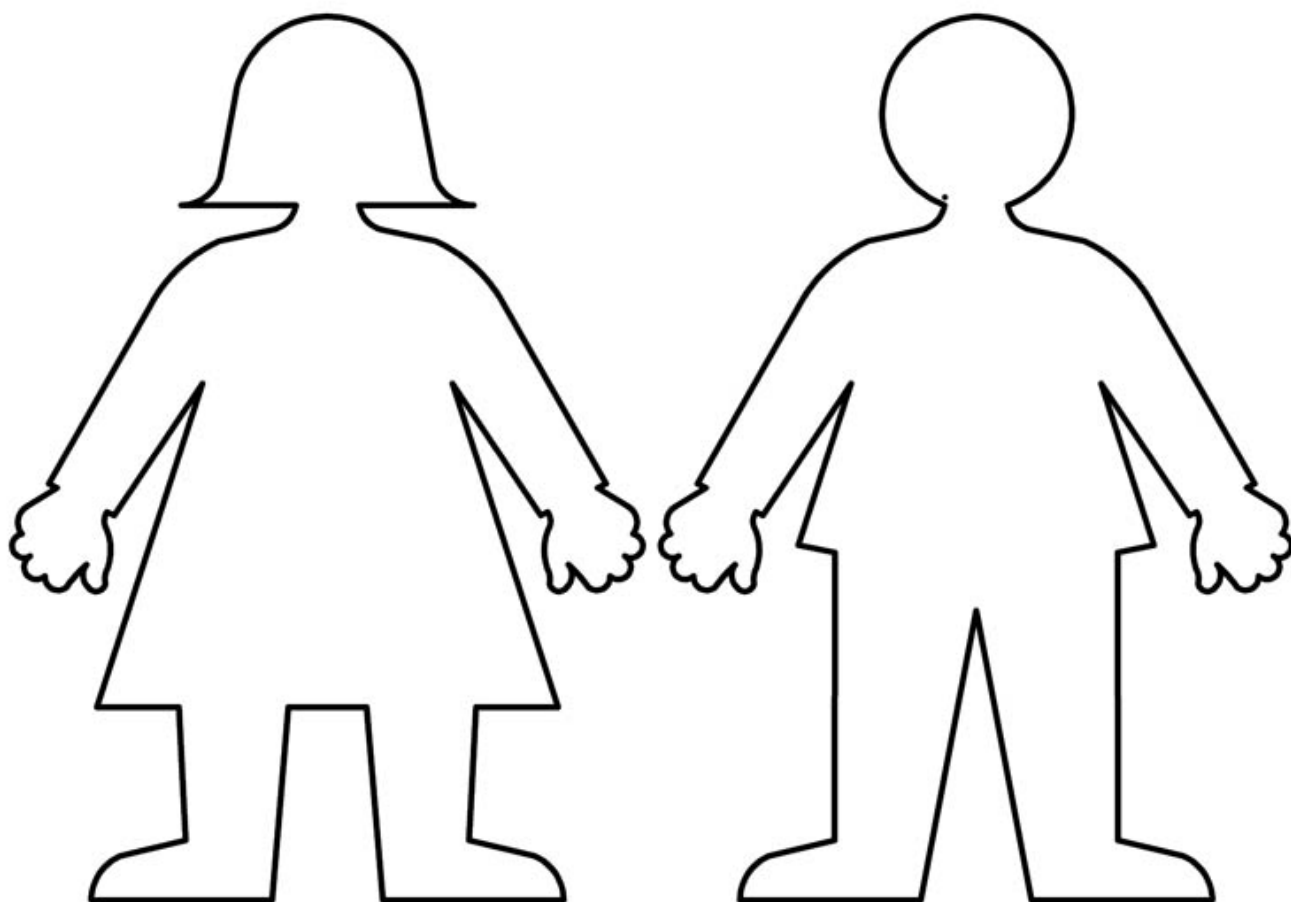
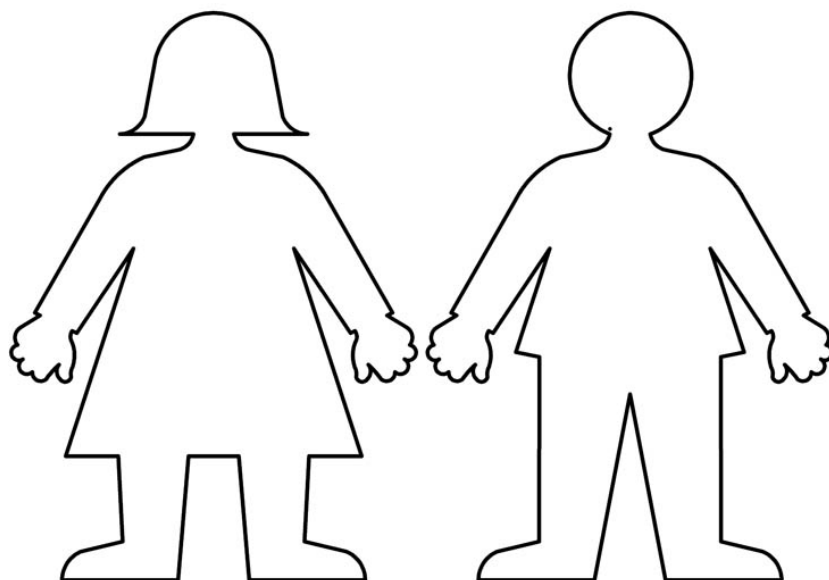
Children

Additional Resources

54.D

Respond

Cut out people templates





# Journeys in the Spirit



Children

Additional Resources

54.E

Respond

Reflections for older children  
on what Ben, Sarah and John  
Woolman

The Pennsylvania Quakers responded to Benjamin Lay by disowning him (that is, suspending his membership). In contrast, John Woolman gradually persuaded his Yearly Meeting to renounce slavery in its Epistles of 1758 and 1759. John Woolman traveled round the eastern States of America to talk to Friends about slavery. His journeys were often difficult and distressing. Although he had strong views he was not nasty to Quaker slave-owners. He told them what he thought. He tried to persuade them to free their slaves. If he stayed in a house where slaves looked after him, he left money to pay them. John would not use silver cups, plates, knives and forks because slaves were forced to work in silver-mines. He tried to avoid using any products of slavery; so he wore undyed clothing because slaves were used to make the dyes, though it made him look odd.

Later Quaker historians have had rather a low opinion of Lay's methods. But we should not forget that he may have influenced Woolman when young; sometimes protest (prophecy) and persuasion (reconciling) are both needed and can work together. Benjamin Lay was reconciled to Quakers as he grew old, and when he heard of the 1759 Yearly Meeting decision, he said, "Now I can die happy!"

Dramatic protests have been seen also in modern times, taking the forms of symbolic action, street theatre and direct action – for example big demonstrations like the student protests or Greenpeace people dressing as polar bears to protest about oil drilling in the Arctic in July 2011.

Ask the questions:

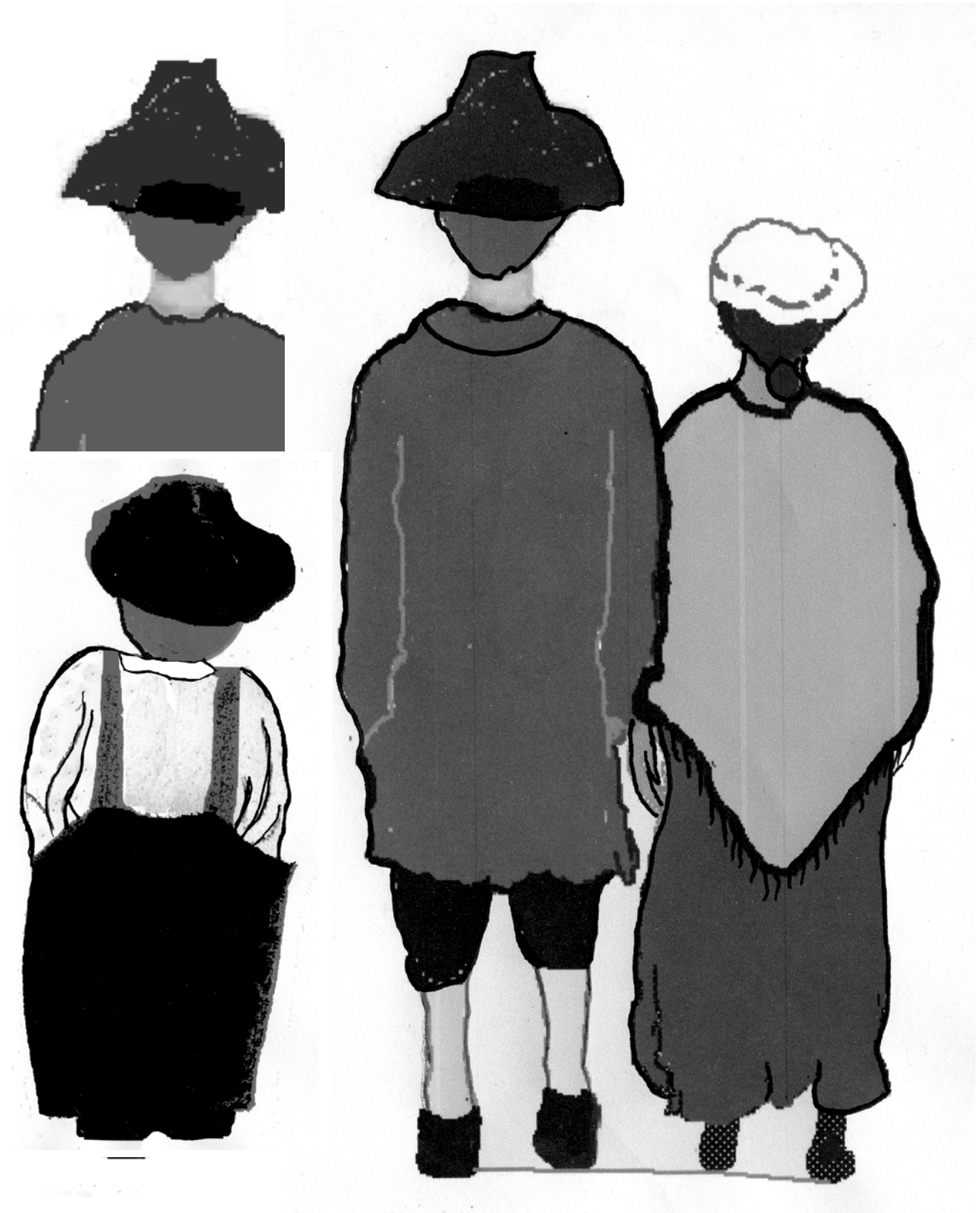
- What approach to bringing about change do you like the best?
- Is there anything you would like to see stopped or changed today?
- Which approach do you think would be more likely to help people change their minds about this issue?



**Backing figures for stick puppets.** Print these on a separate sheet of paper or card, NOT on the back of the front view.



**Backing figures for stick puppets.**  
Print these on a separate sheet of paper or card, NOT on the back of the front view.



**Backing figures for stick puppets.** Print these on a separate sheet of paper or card, NOT on the back of the front view. No backing sheet is needed for the neighbours; if you wish to strengthen the paper, print two copies, cut out and glue them together.



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's Work

August 2011

Issue



**A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship**

*Preparation: You will need the following sheets copied from Journeys in the Spirit children's work edition issue 54: the picture of Ben Lay - Additional Resource 54.A; the Ben Lay play script – page 2; the 'stage layout' - Additional Resource 54.B.*

Talk with Meeting Elders about doing the play as the core of an all age Meeting for Worship. Agree a date.

Introduce the idea to the Meeting before it is going to happen – at least 3 – 4 weeks beforehand. Ask for adult volunteers to be actors and to help set up the 'stage space'.

Read through the Getting Ready, Gather, Engage and Respond sections of *Journeys in the Spirit* children's work edition issue 54 before talking with the children.

At a children's meeting introduce the idea of the meeting for worship. Tell the story of Ben and Sarah Lay. Ask for volunteers for the roles. Say that at the next children's meeting there will be a rehearsal of the play and some adults from Meeting will come to join in. Talk about costumes. Let parents know what they might bring. Tell adult volunteers about the roles available. Arrange the rehearsal.

Spend time at a subsequent children's meeting making and painting simple paper and card scenery. Some children could make invitations to give to people in Meeting and maybe elsewhere.

Have the rehearsal.

On the day of the all age worship set up the room.

Once everybody is gathered and still say a little about Ben and Sarah Lay. Then, after some stillness and centering the play begins.

After the play is over have a short time of still worship. Then lay down a large piece of paper with a copy of the picture of Ben Lay – *Additional Resource 54.A*. Lay out plain pieces of card or postcards and pencils. Ask everybody to think of one word or a smiley type face to describe Ben and Sarah and write or draw it on the card – some people might need help with this. The word can be spoken and the card laid on or near the picture.

End with a further period of stillness and reflection.

Share food and drink.



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

August 2011

Issue



## An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting on the Ben Lay story

*Make sure you have a little time of worship for yourself and other volunteers before the session – even a couple minutes are good.*

This outline is based on a 45-minute children's meeting.

Materials: Copies of Benjamin Lay play script from page 2 of *Journeys in the Spirit* children's work edition issue 54. Stiff card sheets, copies of the lolly stick figures from *Additional Resource 54.C* with *Journeys in the Spirit* children's work edition issue 54, lolly sticks, PVA glue, scissors.

**Gather** After a short gathering silence, ask the children to say, if they can, what they think a slave is. Appreciate their answers. If necessary amplify their answers as follows

Now say that you are going to do a play together using stick puppets. Talk about taking the stick puppet play into Meeting at the end. Say that it is about the true story of two of the first Quakers to protest about slavery - Benjamin Lay and his wife Sarah. They lived in America more than 300 years ago. They were both very short (about 120 cm or 4 ft tall). They were vegetarians and lived in a cave in the forest. They wanted to convince the other Quaker settlers nearby that slavery was wrong. For instance, Benjamin once went to meeting barefoot in the snow, to make the point that many slave-owners didn't give shoes to their slaves.

⌚ 5 mins

**Engage** Read the play through a first time. Have a little time for children to ask questions. Agree who is going to make which figures and who is going to do the reading – it's hard to read and hold a puppet. Make the puppets. Have a practice of the play and then do it again as a 'dress rehearsal'.

⌚ 25 mins

**Respond** After doing the stick puppet play everybody comes back into a group and settles down for a little time. After a few moments ask some questions and just wait for answers. *How do you think Billy's parents felt when he was missing? Why did Ben and Sarah Lay want to make them feel like that? What do you think about what they did? Do you think the parents or other people who were there might have started to change their views about slavery? How did Polly feel? Do you think Billy was worried or was he alright?*

⌚ 10mins

**Reflect** When there are about five minutes left, gather into worship again. Ask each person to offer one word in the silence which they would use to describe Benjamin Lay.

You could print out the oil painting of him on the *Additional Resource 54.A*, and paste it in the centre of a larger sheet of paper. Use a marker to write the words the children give you around the picture. This sheet could be used if your children's meeting reports on what they have been doing when they rejoin the adults, and displayed in the children's room afterwards.

⌚ 5 mins





# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

August 2011

Issue 54

Topical Activity

The Peace Pole project



**The Peace Pole Project** is the official Project of The World Peace Prayer Society. It started in Japan in 1955 by Masahisa Goi, who decided to dedicate his life to spreading the message, "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in response to the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Peace Poles are handcrafted monuments erected the world over as international symbols of Peace. Their purpose is to spread the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in the languages of the world.

Mr. Goi believed that Peace begins in the heart and mind of each individual. As war begins with thoughts of war, Peace begins with thoughts of Peace. The Peace Pole reminds us to keep Peace ever-present in our thoughts. As we learn to honor one another, our environment, plants, animals and all creation on Earth, the vision of global Peace will gradually become a natural way of life, a true culture of Peace.



## Peace Poles Around the World

Peace Poles can be found in town squares, city halls, schools, places of worship, parks, and gardens - any place where the spirit of Peace is embraced by people of good will. Since the beginning of the project over 200,000 Peace Poles have been planted in over 200 countries around the world.

Some of the extraordinary locations include the Pyramids of El Giza in Egypt, the Magnetic North Pole in Canada, Gorky Park in Russia, and Angkor Wat in Cambodia. They are promoting healing of conflict in places like Sarajevo, the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima, and the Allenby Bridge on the border between Israel and Jordan.

Mayors in many parts of the world have planted Peace Poles to dedicate their cities and towns to world Peace. Both political leaders, such as former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, and religious leaders, such as Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama, have dedicated Peace Poles.

Have a look at the website, <http://www.maypeaceprevailonearth.org.uk/whatis.php>

Talk with your children's meeting and then the rest of Meeting about making a peace pole – maybe do it with others from different churches or faiths. Plan it with the children if it is agreed – support the children with any contribution or design ideas that they bring to the project. It could be very exciting and full of outreach potential. Take pictures and send them round to Friends to inspire them – add a children's message.