



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition January 2015 Issue 95



Exploring Advice & query 1:19

Getting ready

Advice and Query 1:19. (See *Additional Resource 95.A*).

This well known and well used advice and query is one that on the surface feels joyful – how lucky we are to have children and young people in our meetings. But on further examination we are being charged with serious responsibilities in how we nurture our children and young people.

“How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them?”

“Do you invite them to share their insights with you?”

“Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?”

Our responsibility extends beyond providing care and “entertainment” for children and young people. We must be willing to share with them our spiritual lives, our ups and downs, doubts and fears as well as the joys of being a Quaker. We must listen to children and young people, encourage them to share and truly value their contribution. We must ensure that children's meeting for worship is held in a spirit of equality – one where we can all share and learn from each other. This issue offers ways to use elements of the Advice in children's meeting as ways of encouraging what the Advice urges us to do.

Set out the room and gather the resources you need for the chosen activities

Gather

“Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring”

Once everybody has gathered in a circle ask people to say their names. Say something like, ‘our names are a gift given to us at birth’. Perhaps some of the children know the meaning of their name – encourage the adults to share the meaning of their names.

Say something like, ‘gifts are things that people are good at or like doing’. Lay out the pictures of gifts on *Additional Resource 95.B*. on the floor or a table. You might also use actual objects - a paintbrush, football, musical instrument, a pencil, a book for example.

Ask the children to look at the “gifts”. Talk about the different gifts and explain everyone has gifts. Encourage the children to talk about what their gifts might be and how they might share them with others.

Move on to *Engage*.

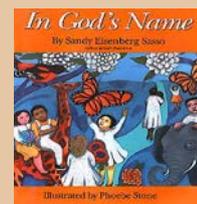
Journeys in the Spirit offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

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.

Underpinning references

In God's Name by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso ISBN-13 978-1-879045-26-2



Additional Resource 95.A and *95.B* can be found at:

www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

Engage

1. “....recognise the gifts they bring....Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God’s gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours.”

After the Gathering exercise say that gifts can be presents we give to each other but we all have gifts that we can share anytime. Ask children to think things they are good at - sport, music, art etc but also help them to think about other less obvious gifts like helping someone, being a friend, listening to someone, helping at home or seeing when someone is sad or in difficulties and helping, explaining how to do something. You and the children will think of others. It is important to “recognise the gifts we bring”. Knowing what we are good at or like doing helps us feel good about ourselves. It is also important that we know what each other’s gifts are. Read the story of “*Mr Rabbit and the lovely present*”.

2. “Do you invite them to share their insights with you?”

As adults do we make time in our meetings to really listen to children? Are our lives so taken up with our own problems and concerns that we don’t have time to stop and listen? The story “*Rhinos don’t eat pancakes*”, (see sidebar), deals in an amusing way with what happens when we are not listened to. Read the story to the children.

Again, talk with the children about how this story and thinking about listening could be shared with the rest of meeting because, as the advice and query advises, everybody has a responsibility for the care and nurture of our children and young people.

3. “How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them?”

Have we thought enough about our beliefs to share them with children? Are we willing to share our beliefs with one another (including our children) using language they can understand? The *Simple plan for all age worship* with this issue (see www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children) offers a story and ways to explore and think about this. Adapt some of this for use in your children’s meeting – this could also serve as preparation for a meeting for worship for all ages.

4. “Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?”

Resources for this activity: White A4 card; pencils; oil pastels; wax crayons; felt tip pens.

How do children access that deep place inside them? Indeed how do any of us do this? When we witness children experiencing this extraordinary happening how do we learn from them? Can we then nurture our children?

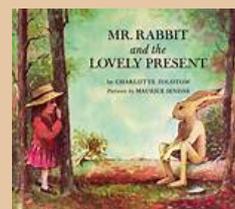
This exercise is about safe places. We all need a safe place to retreat to whether it is a physical space or somewhere within ourselves. Are we able to talk to others about our safe place and the peace, light and comfort these can bring? Ask children to think or imagine about what a safe place is for them – say something like: ‘If you have or had a safe place what is it or would it look like? Where might it be? What might it feel like to be in or have your safe place inside you?’ Listen to and talk about their answers.

When you think everybody has spoken who wants to, lay out the writing and drawing equipment. Say that the equipment can be used to draw or write about a safe place they might have thought about or wished they had.

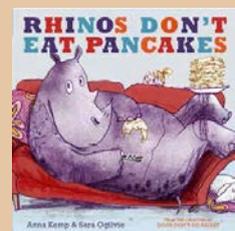
How can you involve the rest of meeting? Could you repeat this session with the children leading? Maybe this could be done before or during local meeting for business?

References & other resources

Books here are available from the Quaker Bookshop 0207 663 1030 www.quaker.org.uk/shop or online from other sellers:



Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present by Charlotte Zolotow
Pictures by Maurice Sendak
Puffin Books
ISBN D 14 050.037 5



Rhinos don't eat Pancakes
By Anna Kemp and Sara Ogilvie
Simon and Schuster
ISBN 978-1-84738-878-0

References & other resources

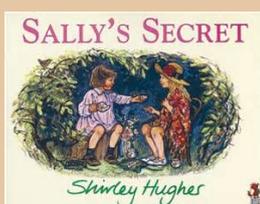
Also see *issue 33* of the children's edition *Journeys in the Spirit: 'Inner stories, ourselves and each other'*; *issue 12* about stilling, centering and listening inwardly and *issue 16* about prayer.

For these go to:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/archive-children

A description of talking sticks can be read on this web page:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talking_stick



Sally's Secret by Shirley Hughes
Picture Puffin
ISBN 0-14 050-160-6

Additional Resource 95.C and *95.D* can be found at:

www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

Respond

1. Recognising the gifts we bring

Resources for this session: enough copies of the hexagon template from Additional resources 95.C for each child to have two each; pencils; oil pastels; wax crayons; felt tip pens; writing pens.

Having read the story of “*Mr Rabbit and the lovely present*” and talked about gifts go on to do the following activity using hexagons.

Give each child two hexagons, and ask them to draw or write something about their gifts on one hexagon. On the second hexagon ask them to write or draw something about the gifts of somebody else in the group – child or adult. Be mindful of anybody who might be left out and have hexagons ready to write on yourself. While doing the activity talk about how to get the adults in meeting to contribute to this patchwork. Create the patchwork by sticking all the hexagons together on a large sheet. Children can then look at what has been written or drawn.

2. “Do you invite them to share their insights with you?”

Repeat the discussion set out in Gather but this time use a talking stick or stone; it can be any object really – sometimes a small teddy bear has been used. Invite the children to speak about their gift while holding the token. This will encourage listening. (See the sidebar for a link to a website with a description of ‘talking sticks’.)

After you have read the story “*Rhinos don’t eat pancakes*” explain that this activity is about careful listening. We all feel better when someone pays attention to what we are saying. Move on to do one or some of the listening exercises on *Additional resources 95.D*.

The final exercise on *Additional resources 95.D* could be done with other adults in meeting. Talk with the children about how you might do this.

3. “How do you share your deepest beliefs with them?”

See the *Simple plan for all age worship* at www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children that is part of the additional information with this issue for an approach to this aspect of the Advice.

4. “Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?”

Resources for this session: clay or playdough; pens; paper; some scrap material; coloured tissue paper; A4 card.

Continue the exploration of ‘safe places’ by reading the story “*Sally’s secret place*” see sidebar. Say that it is good to have somewhere we can go to get away from everyone and everything. Ask the children some different questions from those asked in *Engage*. Do they have somewhere like Sally has to go where they might do some thinking? These thoughts might be happy, sad, angry, make us laugh or even frightened. Ask the children to make another version of their safe place using clay or play dough. Provide other scraps of paper or material to decorate them some more. Have time for them to talk to each other about their special place. Also ensure there is time to discuss how they can share this with others in the meeting.

Here are some examples:



Reflect

At the end of each session have some time for the children to ask any questions. It is also important they have had time to share with each other their thoughts and ideas on these topics.

Consider all the wonderful “gifts” among the group. Imagine how many more gifts there would be if everyone in meeting shared their gifts.

Ask the children for their ideas on how to share what they have been doing with the rest of meeting. It is important they feel involved and part of this process. Agree and record how you will move forward from this session.

Finish with a short time of stillness together.

Review

The review can happen at the time or later. It will probably be helpful to talk with others doing sessions from this edition of *Journeys in the Spirit*. It would be good to let parents and others know what the sessions are about and how the work relates to the whole meeting.

Most importantly the essence of *Advice and query 1:19* is that it focuses on the meetings’ responsibility in caring for and nurturing the children and young people in our meeting. It is therefore essential to think about how to include the rest of meeting. It might help to discuss this not only with children’s committee but also with some of the elders and overseers. It is good to have the support and backup of meeting. A meeting in Edinburgh is using some of this material to feed into a spiritual review.

For yourself reflect on how you feel the session went. Did the children participate well and feel able to contribute? Are there things you might have done differently?

This issue was written by Madeleine Harding and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. Chris Nickolay wrote the Topical activity.

After this issue *Journeys in the Spirit* will be a full issue every other month and a *Topical Activity* every other month.

Issue 96 is the seventh in the series about *Living as a Quaker* and has the title *Quakers and the Bible*. Available from 2 March 2015.

Issue 97 is the eighth in the series about *Living as a Quaker* and is about the Nobel Peace Prize and the Friends Ambulance Unit. Available from 1 May 2015

Issue 98 is the first in a new series for 2015-2016 that focusses on Quakers in the world. The title is *Live Adventurously*. Available from 1 July 2015.

Materials available online are:

Current issue additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children’s Meeting

Links to other resources and information

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity – this time about thinking about a new year

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.

All these are available at:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren

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Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 95.A

Getting Ready

Advice & query 1:19



Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring.

Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care.

Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God's gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours.

How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them?

Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?

Quaker Faith and Practice



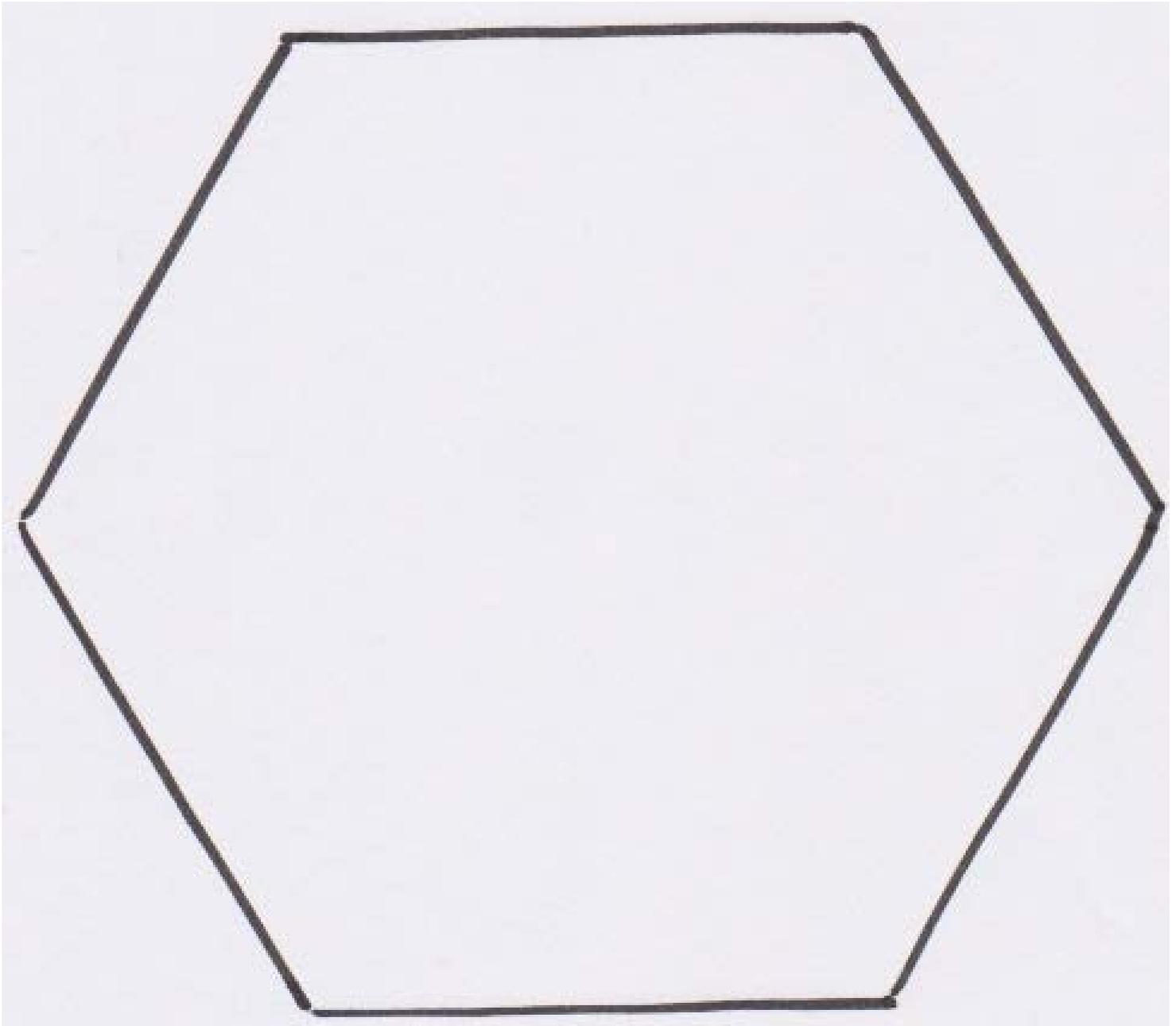
Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 95.C

Respond

Recognising the gifts we bring -
hexagon template





Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 95.D

Respond

Sharing insights -
listening exercises



Back to Back listening

An exercise in pairs to explore the effect of body position in listening:

1. Participants sit opposite each other and speak for one minute each on a simple topic like their favourite game, book or T.V. programme. (Adult to time this)
2. Next repeat the exercise but this time the speaker faces the back of the listener's head. It might be best to choose another topic to speak about and each person speaks for one minute
3. Finally the pairs of children sit back to back with their heads touching and repeat the exercise as above.

After all have spoken, talk about how it felt to talk in the different positions. When did you feel listened to? Do you ever feel you are talking to the back of someone's head? What does it feel like if you can't see the person you are talking to?

Three tokens

Give each participant three tokens such as pebbles, beans or sticks. Participants sit in a circle and are invited to speak about an interesting topic such as what they did yesterday, a holiday, their favourite food etc. However they can only speak when they put a token in the centre of the circle. Encourage children to listen as well as speak and once they have used all their tokens they cannot speak and need to simply listen.

Circle Storytelling

Participants sit in a circle. Explain they are going to make up their own story. Someone starts the story and says a couple of sentences and then move round the circle, each person adding their part of the story. The aim of this exercise is for the story to move forwards, to be engaging and exciting. This requires that everyone listens carefully so that their part of the story connects to the previous contributions.

Afterwards talk about the story. Did it go as you expected? Might things have worked out differently? Did you listen carefully enough that you could now retell the story?

Listening to a story

Choose a favourite story and ask the children to listen carefully as you read it. Afterwards try any of the following to see how well they listened to the story:

- Reflect on the story and ask children if they have had a similar experience.
- Dramatise the story in small groups.
- Choose to be a particular person in the story and in pairs take it in turns to tell the story from the chosen characters point of view.