



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition January 2016 Issue 101



Accompanying the people of Palestine and Israel

Getting ready

As you prepare, it is helpful to reflect on your own knowledge of the current situation in Palestine and Israel and of the long, complex history of the conflict and suffering.

It is also worth reflecting on the knowledge and experiences of others within your meeting. Some Friends may have attended events to learn about the work of ecumenical accompaniers or even undertaken this work themselves. Consider which adults might help you to engage the children of your meeting with different aspects of this topic. This issue focusses on the experience of Palestinian children.

Think carefully how much information is appropriate to share with the children in your meeting. It is important that they gain an idea about the realities of children's lives in places of conflict but some things that you come across might be too distressing to share. These might include information about the detention of Palestinian children, which has become a regular occurrence in many Palestinian communities or details about the demolition of families' homes.

Gather

Journeys to school

After welcoming everyone, ask the children to tell you about their usual journey to school. If the group is large or has some children who talk more than others, you might like to pass around an object and ask the children to wait until they are holding the object for their turn to share. Explain that it is fine to pass the object on if they don't want to speak.

How do they travel to school? Who accompanies them? Are there any dangerous roads to cross or places where they feel less safe? How do they make sure that they stay safe on the way to school?

Share the pictures of Palestinian school children in *Additional Resources 101.A*. Explain that because of the conflict in their country, children often have a scary journey to school. Sometimes the safest path to school is closed and they have to walk on busy roads with no pavement. They have to pass through check points: huge metal gates, where soldiers check through their school bags. The soldiers have guns and sometimes big dogs. Sometimes the older boys get angry with the soldiers and throw stones at them but this only gets them into trouble. Sometimes people known as settlers throw stones at the children.

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

The word accompaniment comes from the Latin words 'com' and 'panis,' meaning 'with bread.' It suggests sharing bread with other people.

Luke chapter 24 in the Bible gives us an example when Jesus accompanies two travellers to Emmaus.

Additional resource 101.A can be found at

<http://old.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

Engage

A Bible story

Share this Bible story taken from Numbers chapter 13, verses 17-27. You could use puppets or act the story to bring it to life.

"A very long time ago there were some people, the Israelites, who didn't have houses to live in. They lived in tents and kept taking them down, travelling around and putting them up again. But they were tired of moving around. They wanted to find a good place to live, where they could build houses and farms, where there was grass for their sheep and cows. They knew that that their ancestors had come from a special place and they wanted to find it and return home.

Their leader was a man called Moses. One day when the people were very tired of travelling, he told them to rest and sent some men over the next hill to see what it was like. He said 'Bring something back to show us what the land is like'.

When the men came back forty days later they were hot and dusty but very excited. They said, "We have found a wonderful place. Look at what we have brought." They had huge bunches of grapes, dates and pomegranates.

Moses and his people believed that God had given them a special place. Thousands of years later, their descendants still live there. They call the land Israel. But there was a problem. There were already people living in the land and they believed that God had given the land, which they call Palestine, to them. This caused a lot of disagreement and fighting".

Over the years, there have been peaceful times and there have been times of war. Sometimes people have had to flee their homes. Sometimes other countries have got involved and made things worse. Today, different groups of people still don't want to share the land and there is still fighting.

Pause for a moment and then ask the children what they think about this story and if they have any questions.

Grapes, dates and pomegranates

Show everyone a basket of fruit, including grapes, dates and pomegranates from the Bible story above. Be sure to source the fruit with care, looking at any labels and avoiding buying fruit from Israeli settlements. In issue 51 of *Journeys in the Spirit* there is a topical activity about the Quaker campaign to end trade with Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories (see side bar).

Talk about the fruit and then enjoy tasting it together:-

- Do you know the names of these fruits? Which fruit do you like?
- Have you seen fruit growing? Where? Which ones?

The role of the ecumenical accompaniers

Point out the ecumenical accompanier in the fourth picture in *Additional Resources 101.A* and explain about the work that they do. They are adults who come from different countries and different faith backgrounds who agree to spend some months being alongside the Palestinian people to make their lives safer.

An important part of their job is accompanying children and teachers who have difficult journeys to school. They remind the soldiers that they should let the children pass safely. They also watch over the adults who have to wait for many hours at checkpoints on their way to work. If they see any problems or fighting, they stay calm and they don't get involved in the fighting but they write reports and tell people about it, so that people know it's going on. People tend to behave better when an outsider is watching. The accompaniers don't take sides.

Ask the children if they know of anyone with an 'accompanier' type of job. Examples might include playground monitors or buddies who watch out for bullying in school and let the teacher know if there is a problem. Perhaps some children have experience of this role? How does it feel to do this?

References & other resources

Bible reference:
Numbers, chapter 13, verses 17-27.

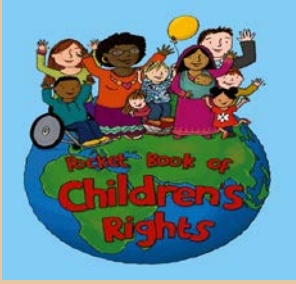
In issue 51 of *Journeys in the Spirit* there is a topical activity about the Quaker campaign to end trade with Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. Go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/otjkgod>

Videos about ecumenical accompaniers and life in Palestine
<http://eappi.org/en/resources/videos> .

Additional Resource 101.A, of *Journeys in the Spirit* can be found at:
<http://old.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

References & other resources



Pocket Book of Children's Rights by UNICEF. This is available from the Quaker bookshop. 020 7663 1030 quakercentre@quaker.org.uk

The song *Freedom for Palestine* by OneWorld, an international group of musicians, was released in 2011 in response to the struggle that Palestinians face daily. See <http://www.stopwar.org.uk/music/one-world-freedom-for-palestine>

A web page that explains about the work of Defence for Children International in Palestine <http://www.defenceforchildren.org/about-dci/palestine/>

Additional resource 101.B can be found at <http://old.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

Respond

Find out about the lives of Israeli children

Israeli children grow up in communities which might be safer than those of Palestinian children but they still in a place where soldiers and guns are a part of everyday life and where there is a fear of bombs and rockets. Also, because of the money spent on the Occupation and fighting there is less money for other things like hospitals and schools. They also know that, when they reach the age of 18, they will be expected to become soldiers in the army. Boys stay in the army for three years and girls for two years. Some children want to be soldiers when they grow up but not all. If young people refuse, their lives can become difficult and they might spend time in prison. Their family might become unpopular and neighbours might be unkind to them.

- What might it be like to be frightened of bombs and rockets?
- How would you feel if you were expected to be a soldier?
- Would you agree to be a soldier or would you refuse? Why?

Children's rights

In 1989 many countries came together and agreed that all children should have rights such as the right to be kept safe, to have homes and families, to learn and to have a say in decisions. Using a resource such as *the Pocket Book of Human Rights*, explore the idea of children having rights (see side bar). Consider: -

- What rights do you think children should have? Are these different to adults? Why?
- Are your rights always respected? Are the rights of Palestinian and Israeli children always respected?

Build a model of the separation barrier

Read the text and show the pictures about the separation barrier in *Additional Resource 101.B* and build a model of the barrier, using bricks, cardboard or papier maché. As you build, talk about: -

- How do you think it feels to live close to the wall? Explain how some people might feel protected, whilst others might feel imprisoned.
- Why do you think the Israelis started to build the wall? Explain how awful experiences can lead to fear. Fear can make us forget that other people are just like us.

You might like to add some artwork to your barrier, as Banksy has done on the Palestinian side of the wall.

Making a difference

For things to change in Palestine, it is important that as many people as possible become aware of the situation. Ask the children to think how they can share what they have learned with other people. This might include:-

- Families and friends. What will you tell them or show them?
- The wider Quaker meeting. How can you share what you have learned with the adults? Can you help to plan and lead all age worship?
- Schools. You could ask your head teacher to invite an ecumenical accompanier to visit and talk about their work.

Children may like to think about how they could make a difference in a practical way by raising some money for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme or another organisation working in Palestine. Defence for Children International (see side bar) provides legal help for children arrested in Palestine and works to raise awareness of children's rights and protect them.

Reflect

Have enough time to come together and share as a group before the end of children's meeting.

Questions to think about:-

- How did finding out about the lives of Palestinian and Israeli children make us feel?
- What have we decided to do about sharing what we have learned with other people?

Encourage the children to share their thoughts and make firm plans to share with others.

Review

To what extent were you able to explore and explain this complex issue with the children? Are there any parts of the activities or discussions which some children might like to have the opportunity to explore further at a later date? Is there any aspect of the issue which you would like to explore further yourself? How did the children respond emotionally to hearing about the struggles of other children's lives? Are there parents/carers you may need to talk to afterwards? How can you support the children to share what they have learned and how they feel about the situation in Palestine more widely?

How did you feel the session went? Are there Friends within your meeting who take an interest in how children's meeting has gone and provide support for you? They are your 'accompaniers'.

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

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:

<http://old.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

and choose from the range of links in the sidebar.

This issue was written by Kathy Chandler, with help from Teresa Parker and edited by Mel Cook and Howard Nurden.

Journeys in the Spirit is published in two formats – on alternate months. One month the issue is on a theme with an easy to use structure set out in a four page booklet with additional online resources. The alternate month is a topical activity – this is about something in the news or of seasonal interest.

Available from 1 February 2016: **Topical Activity**: What are Quakers?: a leaflet project for children to share with their friends.

Available from 1 March 2016: **Issue 102** Taking Action. Considering what leads us to take action.

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Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 101.A

Gather & Engage

Journeys to school



Palestinian children pass soldiers with guns on their way to school.



Palestinian children go through a check point on their way to school.



Israeli soldiers check a school bag



Palestinian children walk to school with an ecumenical accompanier

Source of photos: <https://www.eappi.org/en/resources/photos/access-to-education>