



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition January 2017 Issue 107



## Quaker faith & practice Chapter 26

## Reflections

### Getting ready

This issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* looks at Chapter 26 of *Quaker faith & practice* 'Reflections'. This chapter is a collection of insights, stories and experiences across generations of Friends, as they reflect on the way their experiences in life shaped their relationship with God.

These can be experiences of joy, friendship and family; they can also be experiences that come from times of challenge, change and sadness. It looks at how these can all still inspire and give strength and hope in our lives.

This issue will explore those experiences in our lives that give us a glimpse of God or the divine, that help us recognise what is most precious and real and important. It also explores the difference between catching a glimpse of something and seeing the whole thing.

*'As we reflect on our experience, intimations emerge about the nature of God. In this we are helped by the experiences of others which enlighten our path.'* Qf&p 26.01

*Resources Needed: pictures of famous people, places or animals cut into pieces, with each piece small enough not to see the whole picture. Plain exercise books, coloured pens, felt tips, sequins, glitter, coloured paper and glue, playdough and card.*

*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

As you gather, welcome everyone and make sure that everyone knows each other's names. It is helpful to begin with a time of stillness; you might want to use a lit candle as a way of focusing.

It can be helpful as you begin to share any news from the past week(s) that children or other adults might want to share. Hold this quietly for a few moments.

Begin by talking about the way Quakers think about and reflect on their experiences – as the children have just done – as a way of helping them to think about God or the divine. Ask the children what the things are that are most precious, real and important to them. Perhaps ask: What in your week has made you happiest or feel sad? What has made you feel joyful? Who were you with who helped you feel happy? Remind the children how helpful the silence can be in enabling them to feel peaceful and to see things clearly.

### Underpinning references

1 Kings 19:11 and 12

Suggested versions:  
The Good News Bible /  
New International  
Version

# Engage

Talk about *Qf&p Chapter 26*, 'Reflections' and how it is full of stories and insights that share a sense of being nourished, prompted, held and inspired by something greater than ourselves. For the writers there are little glimpses of God; not the whole thing, but a fragment, a flicker of light or a feeling of love surrounding them. For them it is like seeing a fragment of a picture that helps you to imagine what the rest might look like.

## Pictures



Give each of the children a fragment of one of the pictures you have brought. Without showing them to the others, you might want to ask them to describe what they see in the picture– it might be someone's ear or the branch of a tree. Ask each to imagine what the whole thing might look like. Then you can ask the children to find the rest of the pieces of their picture. Who has them? How do they fit?

Reflect with the children that when we see just one piece of a picture, it can be hard to know what the rest of it is. But when we share those fragments, when we talk about them to each other, we begin to build up a bigger picture. It can be the same when we talk to each other about God, about those things that are precious and important to us; we understand each other better and we begin to see the bigger picture.

## What am I talking about?

Write on pieces of card various words: these could be an animal or object such as a zebra, a giraffe, a car. Take a child to one side and give them a card at random. The child describes what is written on the card to the rest of the group and everyone else has to draw it – not what they think it is, but what is being described. With children who are less confident in their reading, you might need to read the word for them.

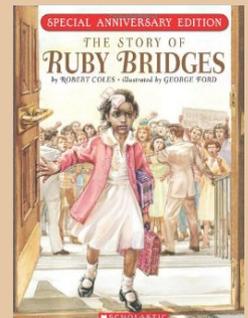


You can repeat the game above, but using play-doh. For this, the list will need to be a little different as the objects need to be simpler. An elephant works well, as does a chair or a laptop; a hamster is especially challenging! Reflect on this as for the 'jigsaw pictures' activity.

## Story

Ruby Nell Bridges Hall is an American activist. She is known for being the first black child to attend an all-white elementary school in the South. Read the story using *Additional Resource 107.A* (see sidebar) or another suitable version. Wonder with the children how the act of Ruby going to school every day shaped her life, and also brought about progress in the civil rights movement in America. While Ruby faced a lot of angry, aggressive people every day for months, there were people who stood by her and helped. After reading the story wonder with the children who these people were and why they might have done this. Wonder if these people were the flicker of light in Ruby's situation and if Ruby ever thought that she was part of a bigger picture?

## References & other resources



ISBN:  
9780439472265

For more info on  
Ruby go to:

<http://bit.ly/1U7u8F4>



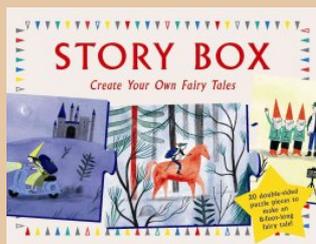
ISBN:  
9780544792562

This book tells the story of an aviator stranded in the desert, meeting a mysterious child who claims to be from another world. It explores the meaning of love and friendship and what is most precious in life.

Available from: The  
Quaker Bookshop  
Tel: 020 7663  
1030/1031

Find *Additional Resource 107.A* at:  
[www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren)

## References & other resources



Story Box is a colourful box which contains 20 double sided, interchangeable puzzle pieces to build up and create stories.

ISBN-  
139781856699808

Available from the  
Quaker Bookshop:  
020 7663 1030/1031

### *Examen for Young Children.*

A resource that has been adapted for use in children's meeting using wondering questions to reflect on the day.

The original text can be found at:

Friends General  
Conference

<http://bit.ly/2gkAk2i>

Find *Additional Resource 107.B* at:

[www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren)

## Respond

### Reflection and journaling

*You will need some school exercise books – the plainer the better – and some craft materials such as coloured pens, felt tips, sequins, glitter, coloured paper and glue.*

Talk to the children about how important and helpful Quakers have found it to use a journal as a way of thinking about and reflecting on their life and experience. The stories we see in *Qf&p* Chapter 26 are written by Quakers looking back and thinking: What did I learn there? Where was God in that moment? What was special and good about that experience?

Ask the children to decorate a book with pictures and patterns – perhaps pictures of their favourite places or people or things – and encourage them to think about doing a little bit of reflection at the end of each day: What was good? What was difficult? What do I feel grateful for? They might want to write or draw pictures or do something creative in a different way. Remind them that it is private and they don't need to share it with anyone if they don't want to. Remind them, too, that some Quakers keep doing this for their whole lives, looking back weeks or months or years later as a way of thinking about their own journey. Have a conversation with the children a few weeks later about how they are getting on with their journals.



### Examen for Children

Children have deep spiritual lives, but may not have adequate vocabulary or tools for expressing them. There are numerous ways to help, including the regular use of Examen, a variation of which is described in *Additional Resource 107.B* (see sidebar). Examen is an Ignatian (Jesuit) daily examination of conscience and reflection on the movements of the Spirit. Asking “wonderings” instead of pointed questions can help greatly.

This resource has been adapted for use in children's meeting. Gather the children in a circle and invite them to look back on their week, using the wondering questions set out. Children may or may not speak out their ‘wonderings’. If no one speaks, just move on to the next wondering question.

## Reflect

It is helpful to have some time at the end of the session to reflect and share together as a group. You might want to ask the following questions:

- What are the places that help you feel closest to God; most peaceful and safe and happy?
- When sad or difficult things happen, what could you do to remember that you are precious and loved?
- What kinds of things might you write about if you keep a journal?



## Review

It can be very helpful to take time afterwards to reflect on the session.

How did the children respond to this topic? Were there aspects of it that they found difficult or unsettling?

Where were there any particular issues for the adults leading the session, particularly around the ways in which some Quakers speak about God (or don't)? Or perhaps around the struggle to hold on to our faith in challenging times.

How might you share some of these questions with other adults at the meeting?

How might you return to some of these issues over the coming weeks, perhaps by asking the children about their own reflections and perhaps journaling?

**This issue was written by Alistair Fuller and edited by Mel Cook and Howard Nurden.**

Journeys in the Spirit is published in two formats on alternative 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 alternative month is a topical activity – something about the news or of a seasonal interest.

Available from 1 February 2017: **Topical Activity Love**

Available from 1 March 2017: **Unity of creation Qf&p 25**

## 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 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's work

Additional Resource 107.A

Engage

The story of Ruby Bridges



Ruby Bridges is famous for doing something most of us take for granted today: going to school. But that simple act by one small girl played an important part in the Civil Rights Movement in the USA.

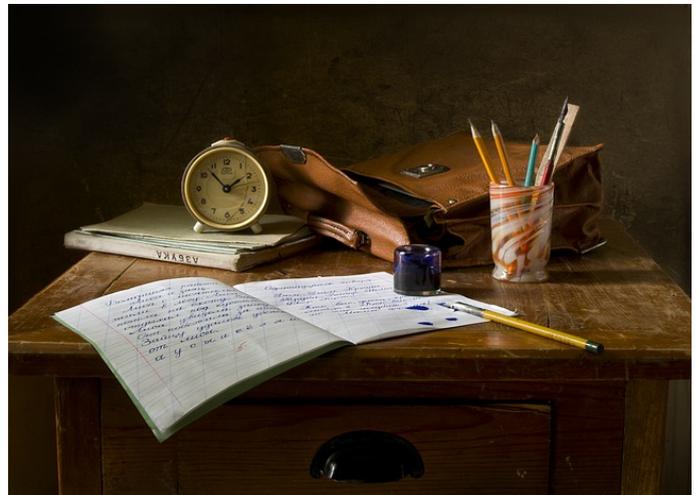
Ruby was born on September 8, 1954 in Tylertown, Mississippi. A year later, her family moved to New Orleans, Louisiana. At that time, people wanted to keep African American people and white people separate because white people didn't think that they were as good as them. For example, they had separate drinking fountains, and had to sit in the back of buses and their own separate schools.

All that changed with Ruby, who was one of the first African American children to go to an all-white school. Her dad didn't want her to go to the all-white William Frantz School. He feared that angry people, who wanted to keep African Americans and white people separate would hurt his family if Ruby went to the all-white school.

But Ruby's mother wanted her to go to the school because she wanted her child to have a better education than she did, and to have a good job when she grew up and for Ruby to have an easier life. Ruby's mum had to work hard even when she was pregnant. The day before Ruby was born, her mum had to carry ninety pounds of cotton on her back. She knew that if Ruby went to William Frantz School, she would have a better life.

Some white people didn't want African American people going to their schools because they thought they shouldn't be treated as equals. They didn't want them to have it as good because they were a different colour. People threatened to poison Ruby and hurt her if she went to their school. Her dad even lost his job because his boss didn't think that someone should be working for him if his child was going to an all-white school.

Ruby's mother got six year-old Ruby into the William Frantz School because Ruby passed a very hard test. When Ruby started first grade, U.S. marshals took her to and from school and protected her from the angry people. On the first day of school in 1960, Ruby and her mum sat in the office. Some adults took their children to school but most others did not. Ruby saw some people dragging their children out of the classrooms because they didn't want their children going to the same school as an African American. Ruby and her mum stayed in the office for the whole day of school. Many of the white parents and their children were outside the school protesting. They were shouting and holding signs. The teachers still tried to teach the few students at school that day.



The second day Ruby, her mother, and her teacher sat in the classroom. No white parents would allow their children to be in the same classroom with Ruby. Her teacher, Mrs. Henry, started to teach and was very loving toward Ruby. She supported and helped Ruby through the difficult time. On the third day of school, her mum didn't go with her. For the rest of the year, she was the only one in her class and she was taught on a different floor from all the other children. The principal and many teachers also didn't think Ruby should be taught with the white children. At first this didn't bother Ruby, but after a while she wondered why she couldn't be with the other children.

The abuse wasn't limited to only Ruby Bridges; her family suffered as well. Her father lost his job at the filling station, and her grandparents were sent off the land they had sharecropped for over 25 years. The grocery store where the family shopped banned them from entering. However, many others in the community began to show support in a variety of ways. Gradually, many families began to send their children back to the school and the protests and civil disturbances seemed to subside as the year went on.

What Ruby did so bravely paved the way for other African Americans, making it easier for other children to go to white schools, get a better education and help improve relations between all people. She didn't think it was much of an accomplishment until years later.



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional Resource 107.B

Respond

Examen for children



## Examen for children

This has been adapted for use in children's meeting. Gather the children in a circle and invite them to look back on their week, using the wondering questions that follow. Children may or may not speak out their 'wonderings'. If no one speaks, just move on to the next wondering question.

Children have deep spiritual lives, but may not have adequate vocabulary or tools for expressing them. There are numerous ways to help, including the regular use of Examen, a variation of which will be described here. Examen is an Ignatian (Jesuit) daily examination of conscience and reflection on the movements of the Spirit. Asking "wonderings" instead of pointed questions can help greatly.



Here is a suggested format using wonderings inspired by those used in Godly Play® stories. With very young children you might want to use only two or three of these. Experimentation will let you know whether this model needs any adaptation for your particular situation.

*I wonder what you liked best about this week.*

*I wonder what is most important to you about this week.*

*I wonder if there was any part of the week we could leave out and still have all the week we needed.*

Depending on the age of the child and how the wondering is going, you might add:

*I wonder if there was anything about this week that you*

*want to keep in your heart and remember.*

Wonder one or more of these: *I wonder where God was in your week.*

*I wonder if you felt God this week.*

*I wonder how you listened for God this week.*

*I wonder if there is anything we might say to God about this week.*

Depending on the age of the child, the energy level, and the mood of the moment, you might consider adding a period of silence. Children are often able to be more contemplative than we think. Initially, it is helpful to give the child something to do in the silence, such as feel and listen to their breath, listen to all the little sounds in the silence that we don't usually notice, or simply enjoy God. The child might even suggest something for all to do in the silence. The adult or the child may decide on the length of the silence.



Adapted from *Examen for children and parents in the home* by Michael Gibson, FGC Faith & Play Coordinator. With kind permission from Friends General Conference: <http://www.fgcquaker.org/>