



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition July 2012 Issue 65



The story of Jesus and the children

Getting ready

Having shared many Quaker and bible stories with children in my meeting, the one that brings out the most wonder and excitement is Jesus welcomes the children: Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 19:13; and Luke 18:15-17. There is awe, too, that such a revered person would welcome children and think them so important.

As you prepare to introduce (or to share again) this story, think how you perceive Jesus. Who is he to you; who may he be to children in your meeting? There may be similarities, there may be differences. In presenting the story, you are providing an opportunity for children to experience wonder and to develop their own views, feelings and thoughts about Jesus.



Sit in the children's room and have a look around and think of your main worship room. How are the rooms similar, different? Is the Children's Meeting room a place conducive to worship for children: uncluttered, comfortable, welcoming? Might you need to drape some gentle coloured blankets over cluttered bookshelves? Might the notice/picture boards need tidying? Are there items to interest children's wonder? Rocks, shells, pine cones...?

Gather

Welcome each child at the door while another adult is ready to welcome each child into a circle where they are greeted by name as they sit, ensuring they each know each other's name. Engage in conversation about their week. Encourage everyone to listen and to leave a pause after someone has spoken.

When all are gathered, calm and quiet, light a large candle to remind everyone that "God is present". Light a small candle for each child saying their name. Light a candle for "absent friends". Sit quietly for a moment in worship. If children are restless, lead them in a brief meditation. See *Additional Resource 65. A*

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

A&Q 9. In worship we enter with reverence into communion with God and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Come to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared. Yield yourself and all your outward concerns to God's guidance so that you may find 'the evil weakening in you and the good raised up'.

Engage

With the children sitting calmly, quietly and comfortably tell them you are going to share a story about Jesus. Pause, and then say, "I wonder who Jesus is." Look to the children for their comments. Be aware that some children may know nothing or only a little, others a lot. Again, if needed, encourage turn taking, listening and to allow for two or more breaths between each other's comments.

Listen to and accept whatever answers or silence greets the wondering; do not feel you need to respond or offer more than an acknowledging nod.

At an appropriate moment, when responses wind down, affirm that Jesus lived a long time ago. No one knows what he looked like and that what we do know of him is from stories in the bible. Pause. Then ask the children "Are you ready for the story?" Wait for the affirmative response. Then respond, "Then let us begin".

Try to learn this story before hand, so that you may tell it rather than read it. Or you may have your own favourite version from a particular bible you would prefer to read. If you are experienced with Godly Play - see *Links and resources sheet* at www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children - use that technique and this story or the one in *Young Children and Worship* – see sidebar.

Bible references: Mark 10: 13-15 and Luke 18:15-17. Tell the story as set out below.

Jesus welcomes the children

Long ago, there was a temple, like a church, in a place called Jerusalem. Many people worshipped there.

And on the day of this story, a man named Jesus was travelling there. He walked many days with his friends, who were called disciples. They slept outside. They walked in the early mornings and late evenings when it was not so hot. So it came to be that Jesus approached a village.

The people of this village were excited. They had not met Jesus yet, but they had heard that he told wonderful stories. They had heard that he was kind, friendly and welcoming. They were very excited because he was coming through their village. They wanted to hear his stories. They wanted to be with this wonderful person and feel his goodness.

When the children and their parents arrived, large crowds had already gathered.

Jesus' friends, the disciples, were worried for Jesus. They knew he was tired. They knew he was hungry. They watched as parents tried to push closer with their children, and the children tried to squeeze through the crowds to be near Jesus.

The disciples tried to stop the children. They told the children to go away. But Jesus heard this, he was cross. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these children. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."

So the crowds moved apart, and the children crept up and sat by Jesus. And Jesus smiled and hugged each of them.

Leave a moment for the story to reverberate. Then ask the children all or some of the "I wonder..." questions below. "I wonder" questions are an open, non-compulsory invitation to reflect on the story in a personal way. There are no right or wrong answers. There is simply reflection.

I wonder, what part of this story you like the best

I wonder, what part of the story you think is the most important

I wonder what Jesus meant when he spoke about the children – repeat the words

I wonder, what questions you would want to ask Jesus if you met him

I wonder who you have met who reminds you of Jesus

References & other resources

Young Children and Worship. By S.M. Stewart & J.W. Berryman (1989). ISBN 978-0664-2540-9

More on Godly Play

www.quaker.org.uk/using-godly-play

Compare texts from different bibles:

<http://bible.cc/mark/10-13.htm>

Advices & queries 1.02.4

The Religious Society of Friends is rooted in Christianity and has always found inspiration in the life and teachings of Jesus. How do you interpret your faith in the light of this heritage? How does Jesus speak to you today? Are you following Jesus' example of love in action? Are you learning from his life the reality and cost of obedience to God?

References & other resources

The Message by Eugene H. Peterson: The bible in contemporary language.

The book of books by Trevor Dennis: the bible retold (p.365: Jesus welcomes the children). ISBN-13: 9780745969121

Making simple salt-clay stick from kitchen materials: <http://www.svam.org/education/04a.pdf>

Additional Resources mentioned in this issue can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

Respond

Speaking with Jesus

Invite children to make a puppet of themselves. Tell them they are going to use these to have a special discussion. Puppet making might take a whole session, so you may need more than one session for this.

Provide socks, buttons, glue (or/and needle and thread), ribbons, pieces of cloth. Have the relevant resources in baskets. Only provide what is needed for the children present. More detail about how to make the puppets can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/files/Journeys-in-the-Spirit-Children-Mar-07-No-1.pdf

With their completed puppets, ask the children to gather quietly on the rug. Remind the children that these puppets are puppet portraits: rather than a photo of themselves, they have made a puppet of themselves. Invite them to introduce their puppet by their name and say something about themselves. Give them a moment to think of what they might say. When the children feel comfortable using their puppets, ask again, "I wonder what your puppet might say to Jesus if you met him." Encourage children to listen to each other's questions.

After this, suggest the puppets might now want to share responses to what has been said. Encourage discussion, with two or more breaths between each comment. When appropriate, bring the discussion to a close and move to Reflect.



Jesus is... (Making a treasure doll)

Invite children to make a doll to remind them of Jesus. See *Simple Guide to All Age worship sheet* included in this issue for more information about how to make these figures – go to www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children.

Provide the many small items for the "inner bundle" and describe some of them. Children can also create their own symbolism, which they may wish to share with you and others, or not.

My images of Jesus

Explain that Quakers believe "there is that of God in each of us": the goodness of God exists in everyone. In some people it hard to see, in others this goodness glows. Ask children what they think of this idea. Ask children to think about and share words that describe Jesus. It might help to remind them of their responses to "I wonder who you have met who reminds you of Jesus?"

Then, provide a copy of the "framed" sheet of paper - see *Additional Resource 65.B* and crayons and coloured pencils. Invite children to draw a picture of Jesus with friends, family or people who remind them of Jesus. They can include themselves, too.

Quiet Worshipful response

This is a style of silent worship that works well with children of different ages with different attention spans and interests. Different "reflective stations" are placed around the room. Following the story, the children will choose where they want to continue their worship. This is based on a worship process known as "Way of the Child". Go to www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Journeys 35 final.pdf & www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Journeys 35 Sheets final.pdf for further details and fuller explanation.

Reflect

At the end of the activities gather in a circle again. Ask if anybody has anything they want to say about what they have been doing.

Move on to say that lots of people said Jesus was a teacher but not the sort of teacher who just tells you what is right or wrong. He was the sort of kind teacher who made people think. He would tell stories, could be cross about people being hurt or bullied, he looked after people when they were sad. He thought being kind was most important.

Ask a question like, 'What do they think Jesus was trying to teach everybody who was there on that crowded day – the children, the mums and dads, his friends?' If there is time ask if anybody knows a kind teacher or somebody who has helped them.

After any conversation that follows go on to ask if there is anything anybody would like to tell the grown ups in the meeting.



Review

Reviewing can happen at the time or later, and may be particularly helpful where a series of activities is planned around the same themes. Some useful questions to consider are:

- What went well, and why?
- What didn't go so well, and why?
- What might you do differently another time?
- What were children's responses to this story?

This issue was written by Eugene Nanning and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. The Topical activity was written by Chris Nickolay.

Issue 66 is the first in a new series. The theme for Series 8 is 'Our Senses'. The first of these, Issue 66, has all sorts of ways to explore 'Touch'. Available 1 August 2012.

Issue 67 is about ways to explore our sense of 'Smell'. Available 3 September 2012

Issue 68 is all about different ways to explore our sense of hearing. Available 1 October 2012.

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 sharing favourite stories.

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 65.A

Gather

A meditation structure



This is an outline of what to say to take children through a simple meditation – adjust the language according to the age of the children

Make yourself comfortable, start to relax all the muscles in your body. Tighten, and relax your feet... then tighten and relax your legs, tighten and relax your thighs. Tighten and relax your stomach, and on up. Tighten and relax your chest... Tighten and relax your shoulders... Tighten and relax your neck. Tighten and relax your face - scrunch it up, relax. Allow your eyes to close and be aware of the weight of your head and arms and legs as you gently come to rest, sitting comfortably in contact with the floor.

Now think about your breath, feel it gently coming in and going out - all by itself inside your body.

Take a few moments to feel your breath coming in and going out, in and out. Then, when you breathe out, think about a worry leaving you; with each in-breath – think about breathing in a nice peaceful feeling. Just feel the breath moving into your heart as we relate to ourselves with kindness and with care and with calmness.

With your eyes closed, think about a warm and golden light in the middle of the room, with its gentle light shining all around you so that it holds you and protects you. Let the warm glow go all over your body starting with your head, going down your chest and arms.....hands and fingers..... your tummy and on down your legs, to your feet, into your toes and all through your body.

Feel your breath going easily in and easily out, in your own rhythm. Just breathe in and out. Continue to think about a warm golden light around you, in the room.

After a little while ask everybody to open their eyes if they were closed and to have a little wriggle about. Move on to your next activity.





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Additional resources 65.B

Respond

A picture frame

