



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition July 2018 Issue 116



Dementia explored

Getting ready

Dementia is an issue for us all: we may worry about our own capabilities or that of people we love. We may know people or there may be Friends in your Meeting experiencing dementia. Consider if you are the right person to lead this session. If the topic is sensitive for you it may be upsetting: or perhaps that means you are the perfect person to lead the session. Make sure any helpers know what you are planning and feel able to be part of the session. Think about the children who may attend. Are you aware of anyone they may know who has dementia.

Spend some time in worship together with your helpers.

Gather your resources – information, stories and materials for activities. Decide which activities in the Respond section will suit your group.

Gather

If the children come first into children's meeting they might need help to settle. Welcome everyone and ask them to sit in a circle around a centrepiece such as flowers, pebbles or, if it feels safe, a candle. Ask everyone to sit quietly; introduce this, using words that are comfortable for you: e.g. "We will start our meeting today with a little time of stillness to help us to be ready to listen to ourselves and to each other. Be still for a moment, either with your eyes closed or looking at the flowers (etc.)."

If the children have been in Meeting for Worship first, invite everyone to wriggle and stretch. Welcome them into a circle. Make sure everyone knows everyone's names.

Tell the children that you will be thinking about dementia today. Explain that dementia is an illness that can affect anyone when they get older. It affects how people think and remember things and can affect how their bodies work. We will be thinking about how memories work and what's really important about each one of us and what might help people who have dementia.

Every group of Quakers is a community; every community includes people with all sorts of problems. *'As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love and forgiveness.'* A&Q 18. Dementia raises spiritual issues: are you the same person if your memories and thoughts are altered? Do spiritual experiences require language? What is our experience of worship and how do we share this?

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

'How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured?' *Advices & Queries* 18

'Although old age may bring increasing disability and loneliness, it can also bring serenity, detachment and wisdom. Pray that in your final years you may be enabled to find new ways of receiving and reflecting God's love.' *Advices & Queries* 29

Engage

Can you remember?

Ask everyone to think of three things that they remember. Give examples of different types of memory such as:

- Facts: how to spell 'because', who last won the FA Cup, who was George Fox?
- Skills: how to play the flute, do a handstand, tie a shoelace.
- Memories: what did you have for breakfast? what was the topic last time you came to children's meeting? when did you last go swimming?
- Physical memories: can you remember the taste of chocolate? feeling hungry? the feel of a cat's fur?

Is remembering a tune a skill or a physical memory?

Ask everyone to share one or two of the things they remember.

Discuss how they are all different. Explore the following questions with the group:

- Is it easy to remember? How do we do it?
- What sort of things do we forget?
- Is it different for different people?
- How much does it matter if we forget things?

Go on to share the stories of some people who have dementia (see below)

Richard's story

Share Richard's story (see photo & *Additional Resources 116.A in sidebar*).

Richard Hilken is a member of Exeter Quakers and wants to share his story in the hope that this may help other people. The story shows a little of the rich life he has led and the challenges he faces now he is living with dementia. Encourage the children to ask questions about Richard's story.



Other Friends

If there is someone in your Meeting, whom the children may know, who is living with dementia they may be happy to share something of their story. You must ask their permission. Some children will have grandparents or know other people who are experiencing dementia. They may feel able to share, but be aware that this might be upsetting.

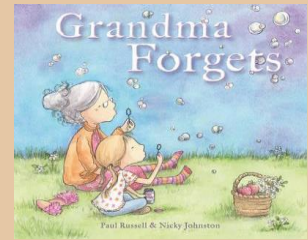
Other stories

Younger children will enjoy the two picture books: *Grandma Forgets* or *Grandma's Box of Memories* (see sidebar).

William Penn

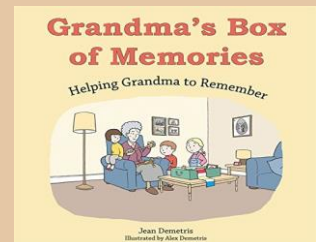
Read *Quaker faith & practice* 21.62 which describes the old age of William Penn, when he had dementia.

References & other resources



Grandma Forgets by Paul Russell: a story of remembering Grandma and loving her now, even though she forgets.

ISBN-13: 978-1925335477



Grandma's Box of Memories by Jean Demetris: Grandma has dementia and gets confused. Her family find objects which remind them of good times with Grandma. They fill a box with objects (lavender, a knitted scarf, music, a photo etc.) to help her to remember.

ISBN-13: 978-1849055178

Both books are available from the Quaker Bookshop

Tel 020 7663 1030

quakercentre@quaker.org.uk

Additional Resource 116.A

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren selecting 'resources for current issue'

References & other resources

The Alzheimer's Society website has lots of useful information. There are factsheets you can download. This link is to 'What is dementia'

https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/info/20007/types_of_dementia/1/what_is_dementia

This gives advice on talking with children and young people about dementia

https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/download/downloads/id/1835/factsheet_explaining_dementia_to_children_and_young_people.pdf



Dementia Friends are people who learn a little about dementia in order to be able to support anyone who needs help. Businesses, communities and churches can become dementia friendly

<https://www.dementiafriends.org.uk/>

Quaker faith & practice 21.43-48 offers reflections on old age.

Respond

Select one or more of these activities, as suits your group today.

Reflection and discussion

Ask everyone to close their eyes and in silence remember a time when:

- you were in a new place and didn't know what to do or how to behave (e.g. first day in a new school, first time at Quakers, in an airport)
- you were trying to do a task that you just couldn't get right even though other people could do it (e.g. a difficult maths problem, crochet, a skateboard trick)
- you were trying to convince someone who just wouldn't listen or understand (e.g. talking to a sibling, a teacher, a politician)



Take the feelings from each situation and then put together. This might be a bit like how it feels when you have dementia.

Talk about this. What is it like? What would it be like to feel like this? What would help you? How could we help people who have dementia?

Some creative activities

Memory Box: create a box of memories, as in *Grandma's Box of Memories* (see sidebar p.2). You will need a pretty box (perhaps bring in a trinket box or cover a cardboard box with wrapping paper); paper, crayons, scissors and/or model making material (Lego, clay etc.) and/or a collection of possibly meaningful objects.

Think about Richard's life, or the life of someone else you have discussed. Or think about people the children know who are old – grandparents, neighbours, Friends.

Discuss what might be important things /feelings / people that they would want to remember. What objects might help to remind them?

Draw pictures or make models or choose from your selection

Place these in the special box and talk about how they might help someone who has dementia.

My memories: you will need a large sheet of paper, small sheets of paper, crayons, scissors and paper glue.

Different things are important to different people and everyone has different memories. Everyone can draw small pictures of some of the memories and the things that are important to them – a holiday, a person, a pet, a football team, chocolate cake etc.

Cut these out and make a big poster together
Compare how different the important things are.

Finding more facts: you will need printed copies of the Factsheets (see sidebar).

Look at the Alzheimer's Society Factsheets to read more about what dementia is, how common it is and what causes it.

Reflect

Come together in a circle – you might like to gather around the centrepiece you used earlier.

Consider what you have done and thought about together.

Encourage the children to reflect and to share.

- Has it been upsetting to think about dementia? How have we been able to support each other as we think about this topic?
- Have we found new ways of understanding people who have dementia?
- Are there practical things we can do to support people who have dementia?
- How can we make sure our Meeting welcomes and supports everyone?
- What will we remember from today's Children's Meeting?
- What will we share with other people about children's meeting today?

Review

It is always helpful to take time afterwards to reflect on the session – take time to reflect quietly, but also talk with your helpers to get their perspective.

Think about what worked well, what didn't work, could things have been done differently? Are there follow up activities or themes? Is this a theme that should be explored further, in Children's Meeting or in some other way?

Given the topic you have worked on take time to consider if it has been upsetting for you or for your helpers. What support can you give each other? Do you need support from other people?

Should the whole Meeting be considering dementia and how to support each other? How will you pass on this idea?

This issue was written by Alison Mitchell 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 August 2018 Topical Activity Summer

Available from 3 September 2018 Quaker Stories

Materials available online are:

Additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

These can be accessed through

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren by scrolling down to 'resources for current issue'.

For a 'How to use Journeys in the Spirit guide', the catalogue of previous issues and a link to the resources for recent issues, go to www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren and scroll down to find what you want.

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Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 116.A

Engage

Richard's story



Richard was born in 1934, the eldest of 3 boys. His father was in the Navy and his mother looked after the family. It was a comfortable and conservative sort of family – but there were adventures! When Richard was 5 the family moved to Australia – his father was helping the Australian navy. That meant a long journey by sea. In 1943, during the war, Richard and his mother and brother travelled back to England by sea – across the Atlantic with all the risks of attack. Every night they went to sleep wearing their life jackets, in case the ship was torpedoed.

After school Richard joined the Navy himself. He spent most of his time as a submariner – he says he really enjoyed being part of a team, relying absolutely on a small group of men. Richard was involved in helping people on the island of Zante after an earthquake and felt that was useful. In 1956 the Suez Crisis saw the Navy involved in fighting which disillusioned Richard so much that he left.

Richard has always enjoyed drawing and in 1960 he went to university to train as an architect. University was fun – he rowed in the college boat team and regularly went skiing. Richard earned a bit of extra cash helping a Swiss student with her English conversation. Before she'd gone home, Richard proposed to her – but Sylvia wasn't quite sure. It was when Richard gave up his skiing holiday to visit her family that his father knew he was serious!

Richard and Sylvia went on to have a happy family life together. They had two children, Joanna and Nick. Richard worked as an architect in public authorities – for local councils, Housing Associations and the Housing Corporation. They moved around quite a bit – but they've been in Exeter since 1982.

Richard was brought up an Anglican; he found Quakers by chance. Joanna went to a play group based in a Meeting House and on a Sunday morning wanted to show Daddy where she went. A Friend there invited Richard to come to a talk the next week – and Richard says it felt like coming home when he joined the Quakers.

Quakers is very important to Richard and he has been an important part of Quakers, in Exeter and nationally. He was clerk of Local Meeting, ran courses called 'Quakerism for the Curious' locally and across the country, wrote a booklet called 'Reason, Faith and Experience' introducing Quakers, helped to run Eldership courses all over the country and in Switzerland and Sweden, served on the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and was very involved in work with children and young people. Richard often gave important ministry in Meeting for Worship.

Richard noticed he was becoming forgetful around 2010 and in 2012 was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Now Richard forgets things a lot. He's always polite and chats – but often he doesn't really know who he's talking to. He has a lovely sense of humour and can recite lots of poetry – but he needed Sylvia to tell the story of his life. Richard might have a shower and not know what to do next. He doesn't go out alone, can't deal with phone calls, couldn't cook a meal, can't remember what he's just done. Sometimes Richard just can't find the word he's looking for: this makes him frustrated. Sometimes he has a bad dream and gets very upset because it feels so real.

Richard worries a lot. He worries if he can't see Sylvia – he doesn't feel safe. He worries that he's not being useful: a key theme of all of Richard's life was that he wanted to serve people – in the Navy, by building council houses, in his Quaker work. Now Richard feels useless. He agreed that his story should be shared here not because he wants people to know him, but because it might help other people. Richard enjoys coming to Quakers; he feels safe in the Meeting House because he knows it so well and everyone knows him and everyone helps to keep him safe. People in Meeting remind Richard that he is still part of our community. In the silence of Meeting for Worship it doesn't matter if you can't remember names – it matters that you are open to love. We know Richard doesn't remember what he had for breakfast – but we know he loves us and we love him.