



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition November 2019 Issue 124



Children's voices: The boy Jesus in the temple

Getting ready

This issue is the first in a series which focus on children's voices and how they can be heard in their meetings, their communities and our world. It reflects on the story of the boy Jesus in the temple and encourages us to think about its relevance for our lives today.

As Quakers, we believe that there is 'that of God in everyone' and our testimony is that all people are equal, but this can be challenging to live out in practice. As you prepare, think about your own Quaker meeting and how often the voices of children are truly heard. When was the last time you remember hearing ministry from a child? Was this the babbling of a baby, a picture drawn during meeting for worship or spoken ministry? How often does meeting for worship for business take account of children's views on a topic? Are there opportunities within your meeting for children and adults to get to know each other and share ideas?

Read *Additional resource 118.A* (for a link to this see the sidebar of this issue, page 2) about sharing Bible stories. Consider asking a meeting elder and clerk to join in with your discussions.

Gather

Experiences of being heard

Welcome everyone in your usual way and ensure that everyone knows each other's names. You might like to have a short time of silence with a lighted candle or have an opportunity to share news about the week or play a game that involves listening to each other perhaps from the *Journeys in the Spirit* games supplement (*link in sidebar, page 2*)

Explain that today we are going to think about listening to children. Ask the children about their experiences of being listened to.

- How do you know if someone is listening to you? Perhaps they look at you, nod or smile, ask questions, or let you finish without interrupting?
- Who is good at listening to you? Can you think of one person who always listens carefully when you have something to tell them?
- What are your experiences of being listened to within the Quaker meeting? Are Quakers good at listening?

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 do we listen, hear and talk with the children, young people and their families in our meeting, and nurture their gifts and talents? *All are welcome*, A&Q number 6.

Available from cypadmin@quaker.org.uk

Quaker Faith and Practice A&Q no.19

Engage

The Bible is full of stories about the voices of those who were not usually listened to, some are about children. The following are two of these:

The story of the boy Jesus in the temple

The Bible does not tell us much about Jesus' experiences when he was a child, but there is one story about him talking with adults: (see sidebar) :

When Jesus was 12, he went to the city of Jerusalem with his parents for the Festival of the Passover. On the way home, Jesus' parents suddenly realised he was not travelling with them and they looked for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem. After three days they found him at the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Why have you treated us like this? We have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Read this and then talk about the story together. Some questions you might explore:

- What does the story tell us about Jesus?

Explain that the tradition in Jesus' community was for the religious teachers to teach by asking challenging questions with the students having to respond. So, Jesus was teaching the teachers (and challenging them), and this surprised everyone. The story also tells us that Jesus knew himself to be a child of God with a valuable voice and he didn't need anyone's permission for that.

- As Quakers, we believe that there is 'that of God in everyone' and that all people are equal. What does the story tell us about ourselves?
- If you could ask some questions to anyone you chose, who would it be and what would you ask?

The story of Jesus and the children

Read, or ask one of the children to read, the story: (see sidebar)

People were bringing little children to see Jesus and the disciples spoke sternly to them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Talk about this story together. Questions you might explore include:

- Why do you think people were bringing small children to meet Jesus and why do you think the disciples tried to stop the children spending time with Jesus?
- What did Jesus mean when he spoke about the kingdom of God?
- How do you think the children felt when Jesus welcomed them?

References & other resources

The story of the boy Jesus in the Temple in the New Testament section of the Bible in Luke 2:41-52

The story of Jesus and the children in the New Testament section of the Bible in:

Mark 10, 13-16;
Matthew 19:13-14;
Luke 18:15-17 and also in Issue 65 of

Journeys in the Spirit

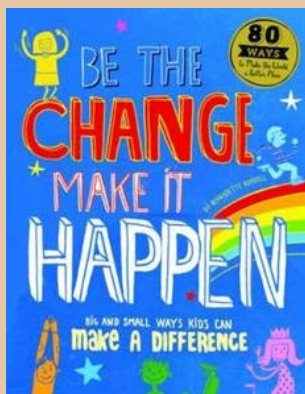
https://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/quake.r.org.uk_mirror/Journeys-issue-65-Jesus-and-Children-Main_0.pdf

Games supplement
www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren

Additional Resources 118.A
<https://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/asset.php?a=JC118P2>

References & other resources

Quaker faith & practice 10.09 describes how Sophie is welcomed into meeting by the unspoken ministry of Cathy, age 3.



Be the change, make it happen by Bernadette Russell contains many ideas for helping children get their voices heard and make a difference in their communities and the world. You might be able to borrow this from a library.

Issue 94 of *Journeys in the Spirit* explores Quaker business method. See <https://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/as/set.php?a=JC94P1>

Respond

Play wink ministry

This game is like wink murder with a difference; the person who is winked at shares some spoken ministry rather than pretending to die. If your children's meeting is small, ask some extra adults to join you. Everyone sits in a circle and an 'overseer' is chosen to leave the room. A 'clerk' is then chosen to do the winking and perhaps an 'elder' who can intervene if some ministry is too lengthy or inappropriate. The 'overseer' returns to the middle of the circle and has three goes to guess the identity of the clerk who tries to wink at others unseen by the overseer.

Experiences of ministry

After playing this game, take some time to talk about children's experiences of ministry in meeting for worship. You might like to invite an elder from your meeting to be part of the discussion. Children may not realise that everyone who worships together, regardless of their age, can minister and that ministry does not have to be spoken. It might come through joining in with an activity, writing, drawing, singing or even just a smile (*Quaker faith & practice* 10.09). Discuss with the children:

- Have you ever ministered in meeting for worship or thought about doing so? If you did, what happened? If not, why not?
- What are the 'rules' around ministry in meeting for worship? Does everyone in the meeting understand them? There are unspoken rules that everyone gradually learns and the elders in the meeting help people to learn them. These might include only speaking once, leaving some time in between ministry, not speaking for too long and not preparing the ministry beforehand. It is also important to think about whether what you have to say will be helpful for everyone.
- How should we listen to ministry in meeting for worship?

Experiences of decision-making

Before the session, look at the agenda of your meeting's next meeting for worship for business and pick out some of the items that might be of interest to the children. Write these on a flip chart.

Explain about Quaker business method and how this works (for a link to issue 94 that explores Quaker business method, see sidebar). As with meeting for worship, there are rules about each person only speaking once and leaving a pause in between, so that the meeting does not become a discussion. It is about listening and finding a way forward together. You could invite your local meeting clerk to explain their role.

Ask the children if they would like to explore one of the issues on the flipchart. If not, perhaps there is another issue they would like to think about. It could be a change they would like to see in their meeting or a change they would like to see in their community or the world. Ask if anyone would like to take the role of the clerk and write a minute to capture everyone's contributions. A child might prefer to do this with some help from an adult or two children might work on the minute together before sharing it with the rest of the group.

Reflect

Before the end of children's meeting try to have some time to reflect on what you have shared.

Questions to think about:

- How can we be better at listening to each other and particularly at hearing children's voices?
- Would the children like to share the minute they have written with the local meeting clerk and the wider meeting?



Review

When reviewing the session, think about.

- How did the children engage with the Bible stories? Which ideas from *Additional Resource 118.A* did you use and how well did they work?
- Did relationships within the children's meeting enable the children to be open about their feelings and experiences?
- Are there any issues which the children might like to have the opportunity to explore further?
- Are there any issues that need to be followed up with parents/carers or with the local meeting as a whole?

This issue was written by Kathy Chandler 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 2 December 2019: Topical Activity

Available from 6 January 2020: Privilege

Materials available online are:

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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Contact:
CYP Staff Team,
Friends House,
173 Euston Road,
London NW1 2BJ

Phone: 020 7663 1013

Email:
cypadmin@quaker.org.uk

Website:
www.quaker.org.uk/cyp