

Journeys in the Spirit



July 2023

Outdoors

All species and the Earth itself have interdependent roles within Creation. Humankind is not the species, to whom all others are subservient, but one among many. All parts, all issues, are inextricably intertwined. Indeed the web of creation could be described as of three-ply thread: wherever we touch it we affect justice and peace and the health of all everywhere. So all our testimonies, all our Quaker work, all our Quaker lives are part of one process, of striving towards a flourishing, just and peaceful Creation – the Kingdom of God.

Audrey Urry, 1994

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Read

[This Moose Belongs to Me by Oliver Jeffers](#)



This beautiful picture book about friendship and the nature of ownership is set in the great outdoors. There are so many conversations you could have

about this book: Should we care about animals? Why? Is there anything you can't own? Are there some animals you can't own? Can you own nature? If you own something – are you equal to it? We are stewards of our environment rather than owners. Start by asking children which part of the story they liked the best and see where that takes you.

Images courtesy of [Canva](#)

Summer Time

The summer holidays are a great time to be outside, and being outdoors has many benefits. When children are involved in and with nature, they are absorbed and attentive. Being outside will enable children to understand their connection to our fragile yet powerful earth.

Exposure to nature can be as simple as going for a walk, playing in a garden or park, or hiking in the woods.

Take the opportunity to hold children's meeting outside in the meeting house garden, if there is one, or at a nearby green space. Wonder with the children how being outside feels different to being indoors? What would it feel if the weather was different?

Meditation

Use a simple meditation outside listening for new sounds:

Gather in a circle and sit quietly, close your eyes, breathe in and out and be still; listening to all the sounds around. After some time, open your eyes and reflect on what you've heard. There are a number of creative visualisations for indoors and out in Mary Stone's book '[Don't just do something, sit there](#)'. You may already have this book in the Meeting House library.

Nature's Art

Outdoor spaces offer new creative opportunities to make art. Use fallen leaves and sticks to make a mandala or lash together some sticks to make a frame for weaving. Find ideas for nature art on [Pinterest](#), or The [Stick Book](#) offers plenty of ideas.



Shinrin-Yoku 森林浴



Shinrin-yoku translates as forest bath. This practice, forest bathing, is different from hiking or taking a nature walk. It invites people to be aware of

their connection to nature and is without a particular destination or intention for the walk. There might be an opportunity to organise an all-age visit to local woods or a local park to soak in the surroundings, experience the vastness of creation and dwell in that feeling.

The Lost Words

[By Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris](#)

All over the country, there are words disappearing from children's lives. These are the words of the natural world -- Dandelion, Otter, Bramble and Acorn, all gone. The rich landscape of wild imagination and wild play is rapidly fading from our children's minds.

Lost words was a reaction to changes made to the Oxford Junior Dictionary, where new words such as “broadband” were introduced, and many of those describing the natural world disappeared. It is a magical celebration of nature words and the natural world.

The book has inspired people worldwide to write stories and poems, create art and form nature and activist groups.

Use the book [and other](#) available resources to inspire the meeting to create their own artwork, music, poems or actions. [This poem](#) was written for the people of Sheffield, during their battle to save more than 17,000 trees and is freely available to reproduce and share:



Sing

There is an invitation to set the poem [Heartwood](#) to music and that is something you might do. You can also listen and share the beautiful adaptation by musicians brought together on the project [here](#). [Spell Songs](#) – a folk-musical adaptation of The Lost Words.

Play

Pass the pinecone. Use a pinecone and pass it round the circle whilst singing a short nature song. When the song finishes, the person who is holding the pinecone shares something they love about being outside. [Sing me on a Journey](#) has a selection of songs you could learn and use.



Mystery object – have a nature object in a bag, whisper what is in the bag to the child next to you. Pass the bag to them to pass around the circle, each child whispering to the next what is in the bag. When it gets to the last person, open the bag to reveal the object and see if the right whisper got all the way round.

Other games that can be played indoors or out can be found in the [Journeys in the Spirit Games Supplement](#).

Let it grow

Get the children excited about nature by growing their own food or flowers. Easy-to-grow plants are sunflowers, basil, lettuce, cress, beans, tomatoes and poppies. This could also be an opportunity for older Friends to get involved if keen gardeners are in the meeting. When it's harvest time, celebrate with egg and cress sandwiches all round!

