



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition March 2020 Issue 126



Climate Activism

Getting ready

This edition of *Journeys in the Spirit* looks at climate change activism. Previous editions of *Journeys in the Spirit* have looked at activism more generally but here the focus is on acting for climate change.

The issue of climate change is important and urgent for all of us but young people have taken up this concern as something they feel passionate about and maybe very worried about.

It seems, therefore, as adults we must ensure we are also informed about the facts of climate change. We must be prepared to discuss the issues with children and young people and support and encourage them in their desire to be activists.

There is no lack of availability of the facts of climate change. As Greta Thunberg says – listen to the scientists. Go online, read books and become informed.

This edition is not about giving you the facts. It is about ways to enable children to become aware of what is happening in the world around them and recognising the call to activism. Quakers through the ages have gone against the tide and listened to the 'still small voice within'. They have turned the tide to effect change.

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

Prepare the room in advance arranging chairs or cushions in a circle. Enable yourself and other helpers to have a moment of quiet together before welcoming the children.

Start with introductions, everyone to go-round and say their name. There may be children who don't know each other.

Arrange the images of climate change (see the link in the sidebar on page 2 for *Additional Resource 126.A*) in the centre of the circle.

Start with a short period of quiet. Ask the children to look at the pictures. Perhaps ask them to choose one and then talk about what is happening in the picture. This exercise will help to encourage the children in thinking about the effects of climate change.

Have plenty of time for this activity so that the children really begin to understand the enormity of climate change and the effect it is having on our planet, and that people are responsible for this.

Underpinning references

Each time a person stands up for an ideal, they act to improve the lot of others, or strike out against injustice, he or she sends forth a ripple of hope. Crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Robert F. Kennedy (1925-1968)

Engage

Looking at our own environment

Encourage the children to become aware of their own world around them. Even in their short lives things have been changing. They need look no further than the place where they live. Perhaps there are more cars on the road, new buildings going up and even trees being cut down.

Use the book *Window* by Jeannie Baker (see sidebar). The book has no words but images that graphically tell a story. Encourage the children to do this. Give plenty of time for them to tell you about each picture before turning to the next page.

Destruction of the environment

Think with the children about what happens when people are greedy and have no care for their surroundings? Explore how the effects of industry and factories can pollute the environment.

Read the story of *The Lorax* (see sidebar). This was written a long time ago but is so pertinent today. After you have read the story encourage the children to talk about what is happening and how the effects happened so fast.

What drives us to take action?

Ask the children about how they feel when they look around and see how our world is being destroyed? Sometimes we become angry and need to do something with this energy. Talk about how we need a channel for directing our anger towards useful and productive action.

Read the story *Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish* (see sidebar).

Talk about what the man was doing when he built lots of factories and how it polluted the planet. Eventually it got so bad that the dinosaurs who had been asleep woke up and became very angry. They certainly took action didn't they?

Local climate

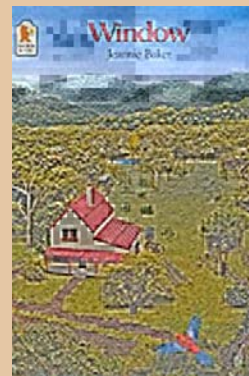
Ask the children if they can think about the area around the meeting house. Is it mostly concrete or brick or is there a meeting house garden? If there is a garden what's in it? If there isn't a garden, are there trees in the streets or local gardens or is there a park? How do these things affect the climate? Do they make it better?

Ask the children if they can draw the surrounding area from memory and then if you can organise it see if you can have a walk around the neighbourhood with notebooks and pens to see what's actually there.

If there is a tree nearby, ask the children to draw it. This could be an individual or group activity. Think of all the jobs the tree does and write about these on the picture. Is the tree a house for anything? Caterpillars, birds, squirrels, grasshoppers all live in trees. Did you see any of these? What are the leaves like? Are all the roots underground? Does it provide shelter for anything? Does it stop anything from growing with its shade? *The Nature of Play* book (see sidebar on page 3) has many ideas for nature based activities you could use to engage the children's thinking about the local climate.



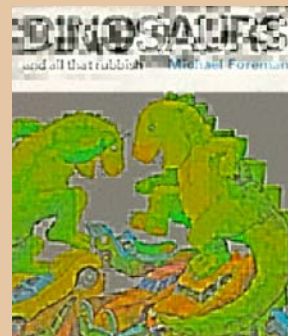
References & other resources



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Additional Resources 126.A
www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren
selecting 'resources for current issue'.

References & other resources



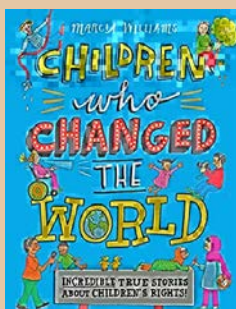
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Respond

Looking at our own environment

Having looked carefully through the book *Window*, ask the children if they have noticed changes happening around where they live. It might just be small changes such as a tree chopped down or it might be more significant changes like new houses being built or new roads. There also might be positive changes and that is good and brings hope.

Give the children two sheets and suggest they draw a large window on each. In the first window they could draw how the view from the window, maybe of their bedroom, used to be and in the second window how things look now. It might only be small changes but significant ones.

The effects of industry and factories

The story of the Lorax looks very bleak doesn't it? But this is exactly what is happening to our planet and there is plenty of evidence to show this. Invite the children to come up with suggestions. What can we do about the destruction of the environment? Is there a small chance that things could improve? Remember in the story the small boy had a chance. Can you remember what this is? He was given a small seed to plant that just might mean the truffula trees can grow again.

Talk about what we can do to change things? Remind the children of Greta Thunberg (see *Greta's Story* and *Greta and the Giants* in the sidebar) and how she started by sitting outside the Swedish Parliament on her own and then others copied and things grew.

They might want to write to their MP. They might tell you about the school strikes for climate change.

You could plant some seeds, flowers that attract the bees. Put them in the meeting house garden if you have one or in a window box

What drives us to take action?

We are destroying our world a bit like the man in the story *Dinosaurs and all that rubbish*. It is like going into someone else's house and trashing it. That is criminal. We have no right to do this.

We are all doing our bit e.g. recycling, composting, not buying lots of new clothes. But now is time to take action. Governments need to listen and make changes to stop our planet being destroyed. Soon it will be too late.

Your meeting may already be doing something like writing to MPs (MSPs). Discuss what your meeting is doing and involve the children. They can write postcards to MPs, make a poster to put in the meeting house window about what is happening to the planet and what we can do to start change.



Reflect

At the end of the session have some time for the children to ask any questions. There may be issues that have arisen as a result of the subject and children may need clarification if there are things they have not understood.

It is a good idea to involve parents and others by telling them what you are doing with the children as they may go home with questions.

Of course, climate activism is a concern for the whole meeting and it may be important for the children to raise the issue with the meeting, perhaps after their session. Encourage them to talk about what they want to tell meeting and make a time to do this. It could be immediately after meeting for worship or at another time.

Are there ways the whole meeting can get involved and demonstrate their concern? Is your meeting involved with Extinction Rebellion or with the school strikes? If not, maybe they should be!

Review

The review can happen at the time or later but volunteers may well feel they need to speak to someone immediately after the session, particularly if children are keen to take the concerns about climate change further

For yourself reflect on how the session went. Did the children participate well? Did they learn about climate change and the need for urgent action? Were they inspired to take things further? If so make this known to others and involve others in making this happen. Don't let the children's enthusiasm get lost.

It may be necessary to have more than one session on the topic. Is it worth joining with other meetings in the Area Meeting? It is important to share ideas and thoughts. Perhaps this is a topic for an all age area meeting for business. This might be a good forum for children and young people to share their views. It is such an important and urgent issue and we can make a difference.

This issue was written by Madeleine Harding 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 April 2020: Topical Activity VE Day

Available from 4 May 2020: Consumerist Activism

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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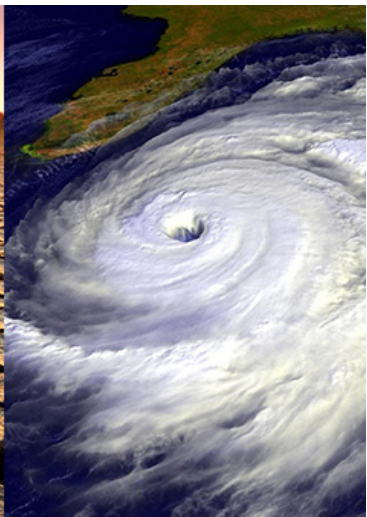
Children's work

Additional resource 126.A



Gather







Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

March 2020



A simple plan for Children's meeting session

Make sure you have a little time of worship for yourself and other volunteers before the session – even a couple of minutes are good.

This outline is based on a 45 minutes children's meeting for worship

Materials

Images of climate change (see link in sidebar on page 2, main issue). The book 'Window' by Jeannie Baker (see link in main issue). An A5 sheet of paper for each child. Pens, crayons, scissors, glue sticks and any creative materials such as tissue paper or scraps of material or wool. You might like to use paint for the creative part of the session.

Gather

Settle with a few minutes of quiet. Ask everyone to go-round and say their names, especially if people do not know each other. Continue with the gathering exercise on page 1 of *Journeys in the Spirit* main issue.

10 minutes

Engage

Encourage children to become aware of their own world around them. Even in their short lives things have been changing. They need look no further than the place where they live. Perhaps there are more cars on the road, new buildings going up and even trees being cut down. We are also seeing plants flowering at odd times of the year or flowering twice.

Use the book *Window* by Jeannie Baker (see sidebar on page 2 of main issue). The book has no words but images that graphically tell a story. Encourage the children to do this. Give plenty of time for them to tell you about each picture before turning to the next page.

10 minutes

Respond

Having looked carefully through the book *Window*, ask the children if they have noticed changes happening around where they live. It might just be small changes such as tree chopped down or it might be more significant changes like new houses being built or new roads. There also might be positive changes and that is good and brings hope.

Give the children two sheets and suggest they draw a large window on each. They could draw two pictures of how the view from their bedroom window might have changed since being in their house or moving to their present house. Help them to think about what these changes might be.

20 minutes

Reflect

Finish with a short period of reflection. Ask the children if they want to share any of what they have done this morning with the adults in meeting. If so decide what and how they will do this. Remind the children that adults have been thinking about these issues as well.

Finish with a few minutes of quiet

5 minutes



Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

March 2020

Issue 126



A plan for an all-age Meeting for Worship

*Preparation: Have some cards with an article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/humanitarian/uncrc19-summary2.pdf>) written at the top of each card, pens, pencils, crayons, scraps of tissue paper, glue sticks and any other bits of suitable materials. The book by Marcia Williams – *Children who Changed the World*, available from Amnesty International (<https://bit.ly/390HErw>).*

Begin by welcoming everyone to this all age worship. Start with a few moments of quiet

Read the following passage:

A young girl was walking along a beach where thousands of starfish had been washed up during a storm. When she came to each starfish, she would pick it up and throw it back into the ocean. She had been doing this for some time when a man approached and said, "Why are you doing this? Look at all the starfish on the beach! You can't begin to make a difference!" The girl listened, paused and after a few moments bent down, picked up another starfish and hurled it as far as she could into the ocean, saying: "I made a difference to that one!"

Adapted from Loren C. Eiseley (1907-1977)



Go on to share:

Some times when we think about things going on the world – the big things like climate change, but also wars or the politics of today we feel overwhelmed and daunted by it all. We say to ourselves it all feels hopeless and difficult to even think about changing things.

But then we look at someone like Greta Thunberg who from very small beginnings and single-handedly began to bring about enormous change. Through her determination to demonstrate outside the Swedish Parliament she started inspiring thousands of young people all over the world to make their voices heard. Her message? Listen to what the scientists are telling us about climate change.

Children and young people are an inspiration to us all. Because children have rights and understand that. They take risks to help and improve the lives of other children.

Greta is now well known for her work, but there are other children who have used their knowledge of human rights to help other children and make a difference. We will hear two of these stories now. The change they effected gives us all hope. Think about what they did and how it might inspire you to do something, particularly about climate change

Choose and read two stories from the book, *Children Who Changed The World* (see sidebar on page 3 of main issue). As well as reading the text, talk about what is going on in the pictures and what people are saying.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes 30 rights of the child to help keep children around the world safe and to help give children the confidence to stand up for that they believe in. Print off cards with some of the rights which can then be illustrated. People might have some words you want to add to a card or they might want to share with others – this is ministry.

Give people time to do the activity and bring the cards to place in the centre on the floor or on the table

Some example postcards are below from All Age Worship at Edinburgh Central Meeting on Sunday 3rd November 2019

