

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 8 October 2008

Children



Introduction

There are four directions to our spiritual journey. **Inwards** to ourselves; **outwards** to others; **upwards** towards God, the deeper mystery; **downwards** to the world we live in. "Journeys in the Spirit" offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition for 5 –12 year olds comes out monthly. It is offered with the intention of providing an opportunity for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of partnership on our shared journey in the spirit. Included are sections on: **getting ready**, for those co-ordinating the programme; **gather**, meeting, centering, focusing; **engage**, beginning to think about the theme; **respond**, activities linked to the theme; **reflect**, ending appropriately; and **review**, evaluating what has happened. To offer a balanced session you should aim to do something from each section. Some of the activities are included on additional sheets. Timings or ages are not stated, as this will depend on the group and how the guidance and activities are used.



The last of five issues on looking at the Quaker testimonies. This issue offers ways to explore the testimony to peace.

Exploring the testimony to peace

Getting ready

Preparing Hearts & Minds

A commitment to peace has always been important to Quakers. It is felt to be the right and only way to affirm the humanity in every person, even people we don't like or who have committed cruel and violent acts. Quakers also feel that it is the only way to achieve lasting positive change in the world; God overcomes violence and injustice through the loving acts of ordinary people.

Many children and young people face violence in school and on the streets; it can take a great deal of courage not to be swept along in it and many feel confused about what to do. Younger children in particular often instinctively feel the rightness of peace, while looking out on a world of wars supported and fought by adults of their parents' generation.

In preparing for the session, reflect on what these passages mean:

'Let us then try what Love will do... Force may subdue, but Love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel.' (William Penn, 1693, Quaker Faith and Practice 24.03)

'They [the peoples] will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.' (Isaiah 2:4)

Equipment needed

Check each activity for the equipment needed. Some activities can be adapted if you don't have the right equipment or materials available.

Underpinning references

Quaker Faith and Practice,
Chapter 24

'And the word of the Lord came to me and said, "Put up thy sword into thy scabbard; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my children fight," which word enlightened my heart and discovered [uncovered] the mystery of iniquity, and that the Kingdom of Christ was within, and the enemies was within, and was spiritual, and my weapons against them must also be spiritual, the power of God.'

William Dewsbury, 17th Century
Quaker

Gather

Ask one or two children to be elders of the children's meeting, explaining what this involves. Prepare the room beforehand. Arrange chairs and cushions in a welcoming circle. It is better to add chairs if more children arrive than have too many. Have a focal point of a candle (if the meeting house fire policy allows) or some flowers, shells or similar. Once everyone is settled have a go-round. For example, you could ask everyone in turn to say their name and their favourite animal or food. You could invite everybody to think about a time or place when they have felt peaceful. Make it clear that it is ok to pass.

Engage

1. What should Paxa do?

Purposes: to link feeling hurt and feeling angry; to explore feelings that can underlie violence; to explore ways of letting ourselves be angry without becoming violent.

- Say that you're going to ask the group some questions - there are no wrong answers; everyone can have a different answer and that's ok.
- Ask everybody to think whether they have ever felt hurt by something that someone said to them? 'Maybe something your mum said, or dad, a friend, a brother or sister, a teacher, or someone you don't like so much. Put your hand up if it's ever happened to you.' Facilitator to raise his/her own hand, and acknowledge, yes, everyone, has.
- 'I want you to remember a time when this happened to you. [pause] 'Let's imagine that this same thing has just happened to Paxa [*holding rag doll, teddy or puppet*]. I wonder how she's feeling, can anyone say?' They might say that she's feeling upset, and they might say that she's feeling angry and wants to hit something or someone or get back at them.
- Say that often when we feel hurt and upset, we also feel angry, and when we feel angry, underneath we're often hurt or upset. Ask the group whether they think Paxa feels more hurt than angry, or more angry than hurt, or both. Ask for more than one view.
- 'I wonder where she's feeling it, can you tell me?' Point up and down Paxa's body. Group may say that she's feeling upset in her tummy, chest, throat, or somewhere else (wobbly legs, for example). If the group finds this difficult, the facilitator might need to say where he/she thinks Paxa might be feeling the hurt/anger, and check with the group whether they agree or think it might be somewhere else. 'So what's that feel like? What do you think Paxa is holding in her tummy? A big lump? A volcano waiting to explode?'
- Summarise what the group have said so far, which could be, for example, that Paxa is feeling upset and angry, and she has a lump in her tummy. She wants to get back at the person who hurt her feelings.
- 'Let's imagine that you're Paxa's best friend and she tells you what happened to her and how she's feeling in her tummy: really angry and upset. She asks you what you think she should do to feel better again? What do you tell Paxa she should do to feel better again?' *Resources: a rag doll or teddy bear, called Paxa*.

2. Quaker peacemaking

Purpose: to give an example of practical peacemaking by Quakers.

Introduce the story *Sheet 8.A*: 'As Quakers, it is important to do what we can to make the world more peaceful and less violent, and to do things in a way that treats everyone as if they matter. This is a true story about that.'

You can either read the story out (take care to read very slowly so the youngest can understand it) or ask group members to read each paragraph in turn. [*Also see Sheet 8.B for a William Penn and a wampum picture*]. Once you've read the story, ask if anyone had trouble understanding it and clarify accordingly; then use the questions at the end of the text with the group. *Resources: Sheets 8.A and 8.B*

References & other resources

'...we do earnestly desire and wait, that by the word of God's power and its effectual operation in the hearts of men, the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ...'

Quaker declaration to Charles II, 1660

'Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace ... So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who were far off, and peace to those near by; for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one Spirit.'

Ephesians 2:14-18

References & other resources

'May we look upon our treasures, and the furniture of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions, or not.' John Woolman, 18th Century Quaker

Resources for **Sadako's story:**

http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/sadako_sasaki.htm

a page-by-page story to be printed out

http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/kids/KPSH_E/top_e.html

a variety of links

'Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes' (Paperback) by Eleanor Coerr ISBN-10: 0698118022 Try Quaker Bookshop, local bookshop or Amazon or a library



A sewing pattern for a 30cm rag doll is available online at www.sewing.circleofcrafters.com/freeragdollpattern.html



'I will write peace on your wings and you

3. Cooperation is better than conflict

Purpose: To show that we often need to compromise and cooperate for everyone to get what they want or need.

Put a hoop on the floor with plenty of space around it and ask two children of similar size to stand inside it and hold hands – right hand to right hand or, left hand to left hand. Put one apple on opposite sides of the hoop, out of reach of each child. Say that there are three rules: Don't step outside the hoop, keep holding hands, and don't pull the other person over on the floor. Say, 'Now, when I say go, I want you to try and get your apples. Ready? Go.'

Let them struggle for just a few seconds, ask them to stop, and then ask the group to say whether there might be another way for them to get the apples. The easiest way is for one person to let the other get their apple, then vice versa.

Remind the group that you said, 'Try to get your apples when I say go.' You didn't say compete for the apples, just to get them. Reassure the two children that everyone tries to compete when given this exercise, unless they know about it already, so they didn't do anything wrong. 'The exercise is for the whole group to learn from, and well done for being volunteers.'

Ask the group what they think the game is trying to show them. *Resources: PE or play hoop or large bike tyre.*

4. Sadako's story

Purposes: to encourage the group to think about their response to war; to show that war and suffering have a human face.

Decide which age groups this is suitable for. Introduce the theme: 'Quakers have always tried to get terrible weapons called nuclear rockets and bombs banned. In a moment we are going to have a story about a girl who became ill when, in the 2nd World War, over 60 years ago, a nuclear bomb destroyed a Japanese city, called Hiroshima, near where she lived. The girl's name was Sadako.' *Resources: See side bar for how to access this story; mount a reading copy on card - have some.*

Respond

1. 'What should Paxa do?'

Following the thinking about Paxa suggest that people may want to make their own Paxa rag dolls. You could start work on some dolls before the meeting. Talk during the making of dolls about what might make people's doll angry, hurt or sad and what they would advise their doll to do.

Resources: Sewing equipment, rag cloth, soft stuffing, and a rag doll pattern. See side bar for how to get a rag doll pattern.

2. 'Quaker peacemaking'

The group can now make friendship bands or a picture of wampum. Tell the group that the idea of modern-day friendship bands actually came from *wampum* belts.

They are ways of showing friendship and peace between people, just like William Penn and the Indians. *Resources: Sheet 8.C for instructions.*

3. Sadako's story

You could use all or one of the following questions for exploring the story and the feelings it might create:

- I wonder which part of this story you liked the most?
- I wonder which part of the story you liked the least?
- I wonder if there is part of the story that you could leave out and still have all the story that you need?
- I wonder if there is part of this story that is in you or that you are in?

Allow time for everybody to respond in a way of their choice after conversation – have a range of art materials available for creativity without prescription; also see *Sheet8.C*.

Some other questions you could use are: Sadako hoped that the world would be more peaceful - what do you think she meant? What sorts of things could we do to make the world more peaceful?

4. Making paper cranes

Usually, folding paper cranes is suitable for ages nine and up; you'll need to help the younger ones or fold their cranes for them. Folding cranes is easy but takes a while to learn from written instructions. Familiarise yourself well with the process before the meeting, then you can show everybody how to do it. You can send the paper cranes to your MP or the prime minister, or hang them in the meeting house.

Resources: You'll need pieces of coloured paper cut into exact squares, 17cm across and Sheet 8.D.

Reflect

Bring everybody back together after the respond activities. Be sitting still. Look around at each person. Say:

'We have been thinking about peace and the Quaker testimony to peace (if you have spoken about war, say we have also talked about war which is horrible). As Quakers we believe that there is a special place in everyone; a place of peace, of God. In a moment we are all going to hold special candles to remind us of the special place in others and ourselves. We will light the candles and hold them still for a moment in our circle'. (You could think about everybody walking slowly into the other meeting for worship with their candles and follow this with a member of the meeting you have facilitated saying what you have all been doing. You could also have candles for everybody else.). *Resources: Slender candles from a church or gift shop; card candleholders to protect from wax drops, matches.*

Ongoing activity

We come to the end of the ongoing activity on the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and contemporary slavery. This ends but slavery and exploitation haven't. Greedy people will hurt and enslave other people to make more money. On *Sheet 8.E* there is a picture of chains. Look back over previous issues of Journeys; identify ways to think about slavery today – this can be challenging. Think about how you can talk carefully about this with everybody. Have copies of the chain pictures – tell everybody that they can decorate the chains with their thoughts about slavery today. Discuss to whom chains could be sent – Overseas Development minister? The Prime Minister? Could you do an exhibition at the local library or community centre?

Review

The review can happen at the time or later – by yourself or with others. A review could be done in a children's committee meeting or over an after meeting drink. Some useful questions include: Have children been able to participate in their own way? What went well and why? Has each child been able to reflect, even a little, on something about her or his thoughts and feelings about the peace testimony? What can you learn from this session? What might you do differently another time?

Links to other organisations and resources

Quaker and peace resources can be borrowed from the Quaker Life Resources Room. Use this link to search for resources - phone and email for resources on the contact details below: www.quaker.org.uk/cyp

For a list of things to do for peace go to: www.peaceexchange.org.uk and click on Children and Young People

Britain Yearly Meeting peace work in the world: www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw

For peace bags, hats, scarves and tee shirts: www.peacenik.ekkleisia.co.uk

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References & other resources



'Making Paper Cranes' sheet available from QPSW
020 7663 1067
disarm@quaker.org.uk

Links with the wider meeting:

The Quaker peace making story, and the corresponding Respond and Reflect activities would be good to combine for an all age meeting for worship just for your meeting or for an ecumenical peace gathering.

This is the last of the Journeys issues looking at the Quaker testimonies. The new series: 'Quakers: a people of God: being and doing' begins with the November issue, which is an introduction. This series will run through 2008 and will alternate between offering ways for children's meeting to explore Quaker work and Quaker spirituality.